We understand that retirement planning can be a daunting task. We have various resources available to help you navigate your defined benefit plan and what it means for your retirement.

Retirement Seminar
Retirement Seminars are hosted twice a year in January and July. These include valuable presentations from FCERA representatives, the Social Security Administration, Nationwide Deferred Compensation, Retired Employees of Fresno County (REFCO), and County of Fresno Human Resources. Retirement Seminars are recommended for members who are within 5 years away from retirement. We typically have over 100 members in attendance.

Retirement Workshops
Retirement Workshops are small group meetings of up to 10 members. In advance of the workshop, each member will provide FCERA with 3 potential retirement dates. The Retirement Specialists will prepare benefit estimates for those 3 dates, and then go over the information in a small group setting (with each member only viewing their own information). The information covered in the workshop is very similar to what is included in one-on-one counseling sessions when you are ready to sign your retirement application. Workshops are recommended for those who are 1-5 years away from retirement.

Member Portal
This is the most self-sufficient way to plan your retirement. The Member Portal is your online access to your defined benefit plan. It gives you the ability to view your personal information and verify that your beneficiaries are up to date. You can also see your years of service credit, employment summary, service credit available to purchase, and contribution balance. And of course – you can run your own retirement benefit estimates!

Counseling Sessions
When you have decided on the date you’d like to retire, contact us up to 90 days prior. You will be assigned to a Retirement Specialist, who will contact you to schedule a counseling session to go over your retirement options. Counseling sessions typically take 45 minutes to an hour. Retirement involves a lot of decisions: which benefit option will you choose? Who will you list as your beneficiary? Is the Temporary Annuity Option right for you? The Retirement Specialist can help you with information regarding these questions, but they cannot decide for you. Your spouse, other family member, or financial planner is welcome to attend with you, however we strongly discourage bringing children as it can be hard to focus on the information you are receiving.

Happy retirement planning!
As the New Year approaches we have updates to share with our retirees. By Federal law, your form 1099R must be mailed to you no later than January 31, 2019. Our bank, Northern Trust, will be mailing the tax forms out as soon as possible; per IRS guidelines, your social security number on the Form 1099R will be masked. If you have not received your Form 1099R by February 12th, please contact us.

As in prior years, the income tax withholding amounts will change effective January 1st which may affect your tax deduction. Please contact your tax professional or the IRS for tax assistance. Withholding forms are available on FCERA’s website if you wish to modify your income tax withholdings. The form must be received at FCERA by the 10th to be effective in that month.
Weather Delays and Retiree Checks

It’s that time of year when the weather plays havoc on the postal system. As a reminder to our retirees that receive paper checks, your check may be delayed as a result of weather or other conditions that are beyond the control of our bank or FCERA.

Whether you live in a sunshine state or in a snowy wonderland, your mail may be affected by the weather. Our bank, Northern Trust, mails checks from Chicago, IL. As you know, Chicago is notorious for their storms that can cause mail delays. Checks are mailed approximately five (5) days prior to check issuance date, which is the last Fresno County business day of the month. Checks are mailed with an expected delivery date of the last business day of the month.

PLEASE NOTE: Benefit checks received by mail are not considered late until the 10th calendar day after expected delivery, which is the last County of Fresno business day of each month. Should there be an extended delay in delivery that is caused by weather, FCERA cannot be held liable for any fees or other implications that may occur.

In order to eliminate potential mailing delays, FCERA highly recommends the use of direct deposit. Funds can be direct deposited in to most financial institutions: bank, credit union, or financial institutions that have debit cards available for direct deposit (much like Social Security uses). The utilization of direct deposit removes the potential for mail delays and provides immediate access to funds on the day of payment. In addition, a monthly benefit statement with an advice attached will be mailed to the address FCERA has on file for you. To establish direct deposit, a signed direct deposit form is required. You may request a direct deposit form by contacting us at FCERA@fresnocountyca.gov or 559-457-0681. The direct deposit form is available on our website at FresnoCountyRetirement.org, by email, or U.S. mail.
Before joining FCERA as an Office Assistant in October 2018, Unique Aguilar worked as a Traffic Controller for a local radio station. If you’re like most of us, you thought a traffic controller had something to do with road traffic. Not so! A traffic controller is responsible for fitting advertisements into the on-air broadcast. One of Unique’s favorite things about her new position is that FCERA staff were so nice and welcoming to her. She enjoys her job because it’s constantly busy and there’s always something to do!

Unique’s main hobby is exploring with her 3-year old son. She also enjoys going to the movies and wine tastings. Unique is an avid reader of true crime novels. Her favorite time of the year is the Holiday Season with Thanksgiving being her favorite holiday because of the food. Her uncommon name was the result of her parents trying to have children for six years before welcoming Unique. Not only did her parents give her a distinctive name with patriotic initials (U.S.A.), they later gave her 2 siblings.

We are happy to have Unique and her positive attitude on our team at FCERA!