



Quarterly Human Resources Newsletter for VT Faculty and Staff

HR UPDATES

HR Offers New Workplace Service

We are pleased to announce that Wanda Osburn has joined Human Resources as the new Case Manager for faculty and staff. Funded by a Department of Education grant, Wanda will provide support to employees, management consultation, group meetings, custom trainings and resource development for issues related to 4/16/07 and when personal issues affect the workplace.

Call Wanda at 540-231-9331 or email her at wosburn@vt.edu for more information or to request service.

BOV Approves MLK Day Observance

The Board of Visitors has approved a resolution that closes the University on the third Monday in January in observance of Martin Luther King Day. This approval affirms President Steger's decision to close the University this past January in observance of the holiday.

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A Day of Remembrance



On this day, the Virginia Tech community reflects on the vibrant lives of the 32 students and faculty who were tragically taken from us a year ago. Through light, art, and music we pay tribute to each and every person we lost. We gather to honor our friends, colleagues, and family members. **We will never forget.**

For more information go to www.Remembrance.vt.edu.

Meet the New Chief Human Resources Officer



Dr. Hal Irvin, formerly the Executive Director of Organizational Development at Georgia Tech, has been named Associate Vice President for Human Resources.

In this position, Irvin will provide leadership for Virginia Tech's human resource strategies and services. Virginia Tech Human Resources serves the campus by providing support for recruitment and hiring, employee benefits, organizational development, leadership and employee development, quality of work life initiatives, and other employment-related practices and policies for 1,300 full time instructional faculty, 550 research faculty, 750 administrative and professional faculty, and 3,700 staff members.

According to Sherwood Wilson, V.P. for Administrative Services, "Hal has the right combination of skills, vision, leadership ability, and human resource experience from a large public university that will be a tremendous asset to Virginia Tech."

Please see **Irvin**, continued on page 2

Human Resources Service Center Launched March 31st

As part of its commitment to providing excellent customer service to its employees, the Human Resources department launched a new service center on Monday, March 31, 2008. The Virginia Tech Human Resources Service Center is the primary point of contact for current, former, and future employees to get answers to all their HR related questions.

The HR Service Center is staffed with existing HR representatives who have multiple years of service and experience in the HR department at Virginia Tech. If employees contact HR either by phone, email, or walk-in, an experienced HR representative will be there to help them get the answers they need.

The primary phone number for the HR Service Center is 231-9331 and it is open Monday through Friday, from 8:30am to 4:30pm EST. In addition to the 231-9331 number, several other existing HR phone numbers are answered by the HR Service Center. The HR Service Center processes all the emails that come into perserv@vt.edu, and will help all the people who walk into the HR office located in the Southgate Center.

More information on the HR Service Center and its capabilities will be made available over the next few months as the rollout continues.

Benefits Notes

Benefits Open Enrollment Starts Soon

2008 HEALTH INSURANCE & FLEXIBLE REIMBURSEMENT OPEN ENROLLMENT will take place April 16 through May 16 for a July 1, 2008 effective date

The State Spotlight on Open Enrollment and a List of Campus meetings was mailed out to all **Virginia Tech employees during the week of April 7.**

If you are enrolled in a Dependent Care or Medical Reimbursement Account, you **MUST** reenroll during open enrollment. Please contact the HR Service Center at 231-9331 if you have questions **OR if you do not receive your Spotlight by April 18, 2008.**

Weight Watchers At Work – IT WORKS

A WW At Work Meeting started in Southgate Center in February 2008. By week 5, the thirty-three participants have cumulatively lost an amazing 248 pounds! The success of these men and women is proof that group meetings & the support of coworkers really pays off!

During 2008, all state employees are eligible for special meeting prices and may be reimbursed for half of the cost of *Weight Watchers* services. For more information, call 1-866-614-9129 or log onto www.dhrm.virginia.gov.

Human Resource Restructuring Recommendations Being Reviewed by University Governance

On April 1st, 2008, a resolution outlining the human resource recommendations in support of the Higher Education Restructuring Initiative was presented to the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs. This represented the first step in the university governance process which will also include review and approvals by the Staff Senate and University Council. While various members of these university governance entities have been involved throughout the restructuring process, the formal approval process will occur this spring. After approval by university governance, the resolution will be presented to the Board of Visitors in August for final approval.

Overview of the Policy Design Teams

As you may remember from previous restructuring updates, a Steering Committee and an Employee Advisory Committee were formed to provide recommendations and goals for the HR systems and strategies to create linkages with the university's mission, values, and strategic plan. To assist in the Higher Education Restructuring Initiative, Human Resources and the Employee Advisory committee formed policy design teams to review and make recommendations for policies regarding compensation and rewards, performance management and employee relations, and staff benefits and work life issues. The three teams consisted of a diverse group of 8-10 employees each in both staff and managerial roles, representative of the various departments across campus and reflective of the demographic profile of the university. The teams also included expertise in HR practices and legal issues. The teams were comprised of university staff, classified staff, and faculty who supervise staff. A fourth team, consisting of members of the Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs and members of the Employee Advisory Committee, developed a recommendation focused on administrative and professional faculty definitions.

Overview of the Recommendation Development Process

The design teams were formed in November 2007 and have met regularly since then to review current human resource policies, focus group and survey results, and feedback from the Employee Advisory and Steering Committees in order to make policy and practice recommendations consistent with the university's strategic plan, the provisions of the restructuring authorization, the Principles of Community and best practices in the field. This review did not assume that changes were necessary or warranted, but provided the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of current staff policies and make recommendations that will benefit the university and its employees. The teams developed policy components and general procedures for any new programs and or additions/modifications to our current programs. They also recommended the phasing of changes, with some policy areas identified as priorities for the first year and others deferred for further consideration as time and resources allow. These policy recommendations were reviewed by the Employee Advisory Committee, the Staff Senate, the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs, and the Steering Committee. Additionally, two information sessions for randomly selected University Staff were held providing information about the recommendations and soliciting feedback.

Overview of the Policy Recommendations

The teams' recommendations for the first phase of implementation focused on performance management and compensation policies. Their recommendations for performance management include changing to a 4-point evaluation rating scale versus the 3-point scale currently used for all staff, simplifying and automating the performance management process, and providing more feedback opportunities regarding performance. The recommendations for compensation policies include the implementation of a merit pay system for university staff and more flexibility in the in-band and role change salary adjustment processes for university staff. To review the entire resolution provided to the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs, go to www.restructuring.hr.vt.edu. For more information or if you have questions concerning Human Resource Restructuring, please contact Brian Gittens, Human Resource Restructuring Project Manager at bgittens@vt.edu or 231-3294.

Irvin, continued from Page One

Before coming to Virginia Tech, Hal worked for 14 years at Georgia Tech. In his last assignment, he served as executive director of organizational development – reporting to the executive vice president for administration and finance and responsible for employee learning, change management, and internal consulting services. He played a central role in Georgia Tech's successful efforts to improve administrative services and transform its service culture.

Irvin received his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Vanderbilt University and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

The Board of Visitors Approves the Employee Assistance Program Policy

The Board of Visitors approved the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) policy No. 4345 at its meeting on March 31, 2008. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a counseling and referral service available to help employees deal with a variety of problems which might have an impact on their working as well as their personal lives. Help dealing with issues such as marital and family problems, child or adult care issues, alcohol and/or drug abuse, balancing work and family, depression and anxiety, work-related concerns, financial or legal problems, career transition issues, personal growth and development is available to employees who participate in the University's health insurance plan. The program reflects the university's concern for the well-being of its employees as well as its dedication to the effective accomplishment of university goals.

A committee has worked on drafting the policy for several months. They gratefully acknowledge the policy documents from Cornell University and the University of North Carolina system, which provided good models and guided their thinking. The draft policy was shared with the both Senates and three university commissions as a way to get employee input and to inform more employees about this important employee benefit.

The critical points of the policy and its benefits are as follows:

- Employees may access the EAP voluntarily and completely confidentially.
- To the extent that job performance issues may be affected by personal or family problems, the policy lays out expectations for both employees and supervisors as to the role of a supervisory or mandatory EAP referral in such cases. Thus the policy provides transparency and ensures consistency in how difficult situations are to be handled.
- The new policy approved by the Board of Visitors applies to both faculty and staff. Classified and University staff are already subject to the supervisory and mandatory referral provisions of this policy under the Standards of Conduct Policy 1.60. However, these issues also affect faculty in very similar ways. Consistency of our practices and availability of the services are important for all employee groups. The policy therefore identifies procedures to be used for any employee who becomes the subject of a supervisory or mandatory EAP referral.
- The policy provides a high level of privacy protection for sensitive employee health records, as is appropriate under state and federal law and good personnel practice. The university is never informed when an employee is self-referred to the EAP, and the policy outlines the severe limitations on what information is shared and how that information is handled even when the employer has made the referral.

The policy gives supervisors a tool to use in some of the most extreme cases of persistent job performance problems. The employee is offered the opportunity to address any personal problems that may be negatively affecting his/her performance. It allows the supervisor to demonstrate care and commitment to the individual employee who may be dealing with difficult issues, while insisting that appropriate behavior and adequate performance of job responsibilities are required. In order to ensure that a mandatory EAP referral is only used when warranted, such a referral cannot be made by supervisors alone – a proposed mandatory referral must be approved by the associate vice president for human resources for staff and by the relevant vice president for faculty.

If there are comments or questions, you may address them to Pat Burton in Human Resources at 231-9331

VT Employees Receive Certificates for Professional Development

University Leadership Development (ULD) and the Office of Sponsored Programs recently recognized a number of individuals from across the university for completing certificate programs in specialized areas of professional development. These two offices partner to offer a wide variety of opportunities for individual professional development, which include a number of certification programs. Courses customized for adult learners are offered to Virginia Tech staff during normal work hours, and many can earn participants continuing education and/or college credits. To date more than 600 certificates have been awarded to Virginia Tech employees. For more detailed information on any of the programs, please visit their website, www.uld.vt.edu.

Administrative Certification Group classes prepare participants to take the Certified Professional Secretary and Certified Administrative Professional exams. To date, 47 Virginia Tech employees have received their Certified Professional Secretary designation and 21 are Certified Administrative Professionals, many of them having prepared through these classes.

The **Administrative Excellence Certificate** offers college credit from New River Community College in both Human Resources (12 credits) and Fiscal Practices (16 credits). To date, Virginia Tech has awarded 35 Administrative Excellence Certificates in Human Resources, and 25 in Fiscal Practices.

Our **Office Software Skills** program offers instructor led computer classes in partnership with New Horizons Computer Learning Centers. Classes are offered supporting a wide variety of desktop computer applications, and a certificate is available upon completion of 6 full days of training. To date, 283 Office Software Skills certificates have been awarded at the university.

The **Supervision and Leadership Certificate** program offers entry level classes in supervision. In partnership with New River Community College, this certificate is awarded for completion of 21 credits in the program. To date 163 Virginia Tech employees have earned a special certificate for attending the first 2 core courses of the program, Principles of Supervision I and II.

The **Research Administrator Certificate** program is provided through the Office of Sponsored Programs and the Faculty Development Institute, and consists of 10 courses designed for staff who perform duties related to research administration. To date, 96 employees have earned the Research Administrator certificate.