



Quarterly Human Resources Newsletter for VT Faculty and Staff

HR UPDATES

**WEIGHT WATCHERS**

The State's partnership with Weight Watchers continues for **2009!** State employees, spouses and adult dependents are all eligible for special pricing for Weight Watchers' programs. Employees eligible for the health benefits program may also be reimbursed for **half** the cost of services. Find out about local meetings & get more information at: [www.dhrm.virginia.gov](http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov) or by calling **1-866-614-9129** Lose weight with the encouragement of your coworkers! Join a WW group right here on VT's Campus: [www.vthappyeat.blogspot.com](http://www.vthappyeat.blogspot.com)

**CHECK OUT "HAL'S CORNER"**

Be sure to read the latest news and insight from Hal Irvin, Associate Vice President for Human Resources. This month's article is titled "Masters of Mirth". New articles are posted monthly on the HR website at <http://www.hr.vt.edu/halscorner/index.html>

**2009 403(b) Tax Shelter Update**

As of January 1, 2009, IRS rules governing the 403(b) tax shelter program changed with more stringent requirements on the employer to monitor 403(b) vendors. Specifically, the employer is required for the first time to prepare a formal plan document and that document addresses the process for monitoring hardships, domestic relations orders, loans and related actions. A copy of the approved 403(b) Plan document can be found on the Human Resources website: <http://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/investment/taxshelter/index.html>.

Along with the IRS changes, the University has just completed a bid process for the 403(b) program and vendors will be identified in the near future that will work in concert with the University to administer the ongoing 403(b) plan. For 2009, the IRS has announced the following 403(b) limits and 457 (b) employee contribution limits for 2009:

General Deferral Limits 403(b)	\$16,500.00
General Deferral limits 457(b)	\$16,500.00
Age 50 and over catch-up Contribution Limit	\$ 5,500.00

Some employees with 15 or more year's service may be able to shelter an additional \$3,000.00 per year not to exceed \$15,000.00 in a life time. Please contact the HR Service Center to explore this option.

A Roth 403(b) program is being added to the traditional 403(b) program to allow individuals to make post-tax contributions to their current 403(b) program. The Roth contributions are not sheltered thus no tax savings at the time of deduction; however, the growth is tax free which provides tax free income at the time of withdrawal from these accounts. Please contact members of the Benefits staff or the HR Service Center at 540-231-9331 for additional information.

**Combat the Winter Blues**

The winter months sure can bring on 'the blues', which can be attributed to the decreased levels of sunlight, cold, dark days and frigid temperatures. Blues sufferers report excessive sleeping, fatigue, increased appetite, and loss of interest in social activity. It's important to find healthy ways to cope with the blues. Remember your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) Benefit (866-725-0602) and try the following tips and tricks!

- Go to the light!** Use your lunch time for light-therapy: Get outside or eat in a room with lots of windows.
- Wear bright colors!** Cheerful colors are proven to alter moods and make a person feel more alert.
- Make energy that lasts!** Snack on healthy fruits, veggies and whole grains to boost your energy and mood.
- Get organized!** Clean out a closet, go through stacks of things, or clear the countertops. You'll feel charged from completing the task, and reduce cabin-fever by having more room to roam happily indoors.
- Mark your calendar!** Make plans to bake cookies, prepare a favorite dinner at home, have a movie night, or a family game night. Planning, looking forward to the fun, and the fun, alone, are all ways to beat the blues!
- Cozy a corner!** Use a comfy reading chair, a snuggly blanket, a footstool, a small table and a reading lamp. The sight of your cozy corner will encourage you to slow down, relax and enjoy some precious quiet time.
- Try to stay positive!** Try not to become discouraged. Winter does end and spring will return! Do let someone know if you just can't seem to shake the blues.

## STAFF & FACULTY ORIENTATION CHANGES

The schedules for both staff & faculty orientations have been revised for 2009. To view the new schedules, you can log onto [www.hr.vt.edu](http://www.hr.vt.edu) or call 231-9331. Prior to orientation, all new hires can access the new employee paperwork online which can help the new employee obtain access to University systems. With the help of your department's Banner Representative, you can now get your new employee an ID Number, a PID, and some system access before the employee attends orientation. Please visit our website at <http://www.hr.vt.edu/orientation/index.html> for the instructions and forms you will need to get the process started.

## UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UPD's Faculty Development workshops are designed to meet the development needs of all types of faculty and staff in pay bands 5 and above. Visit the following link to learn more about the faculty development opportunities that are offered during Spring/Summer: [http://www.upd.vt.edu/fac\\_opp/index.html](http://www.upd.vt.edu/fac_opp/index.html)

UPD's Staff Development workshops and networks are designed to provide development opportunities for all Virginia Tech staff. Visit the following link to learn more about staff development opportunities that are offered during Spring/Summer: [http://www.upd.vt.edu/staff\\_opp/index.html](http://www.upd.vt.edu/staff_opp/index.html)

## Performance Plans Deadline!

The University's restructuring initiatives required that we revisit our approach to performance management. As a result, our performance planning and evaluation processes for all of our staff employees have changed significantly. It is critical that all supervisors participate in the performance management process because our next round of salary increases for university staff will be based on performance. Human Resources is conducting training sessions to review the new ratings, forms, goals, metrics, and associated compensation philosophy. Performance plans for staff are due in the January/February timeframe unless specified otherwise in your senior management area. The due date this year is an exception; typically performance plans should be completed no later than November 30th.

Human Resources will be conducting separate training sessions over the next 2 months for staff employees so that they will understand the performance planning process and the changes that they can expect with the new performance planning and evaluation process.

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have had well in excess of 250 managers/supervisors of staff employees participate in the training. If you have not had a chance to attend please contact your HR Representative for training options. If you do not know who your HR representative is, please contact the HR Service Center at 231-9331.

## Wellness Benefits - Online

DHRM has recently updated and consolidated the Commonwealth's free wellness benefits on their web site. Information about health plan wellness benefits may be found at [www.dhrm.virginia.gov/hbenefits/cova/wellness/wellnesstoc.html](http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/hbenefits/cova/wellness/wellnesstoc.html).

The wellness flyer highlights in one place all of the free wellness benefits offered to state employees from both the statewide health plans and CommonHealth.

<http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/hbenefits/cova/wellness/TakeCarePackageFlyer.pdf>



24/7 NurseLine is just a phone call away, even in the middle of the night. COVA Care and COVA HDHP members can dial the toll-free 24/7 NurseLine at **800-337-4770** from anywhere in the U.S. to speak with a registered nurse trained to help them make more informed decisions about their health situation. 24/7 NurseLine nurses are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## Restructuring Update

Virginia Tech's Board of Visitors approved two restructuring resolutions at its August, 2008 meeting. The complete resolutions and background information about Virginia Tech's restructuring efforts are available at: <http://www.restructuring.hr.vt.edu/>.

As a result of the two resolutions, Virginia Tech provided an open enrollment period for Classified Staff to convert to Administrative Professional (A/P) Faculty and for Classified Staff to convert to University Staff. The open enrollment period started in October 2008 and ended on December 31, 2008.

Of the 330 Classified Staff members in pay bands 5-7 who were determined to be eligible for conversion to A/P Faculty status, 55 chose to convert. Of the 2,909 Classified Staff who could convert to University Staff, only 12 chose to do so. Approximately 25% of the staff members at Virginia Tech are already University Staff, since all staff members employed since July 1, 2006 are hired as University Staff.