“TAMU Jobs” System Upgrades to PATH in April

Have you heard? Human Resources (HR) is launching a major (rather, “ginormous”) upgrade to the system used to manage university online employment services, position descriptions and performance evaluations.

Whether you’re an employee, a supervisor or a HR Liaison, you’ll benefit from the upgrades to the “TAMU Jobs” system, being renamed PATH (Portal Access for Total HR).

Starting in April, PATH will feature upgrades such as:

- An inbox to view pending actions, and a watch list to track actions through approval channels (i.e., updating position descriptions);
- Use of the BACK button;
- Embedded spell check feature for text fields;
- Ability to change between employee and supervisor roles while viewing a pending action;

Supervisors, visit our PATH project webpage at employees.tamu.edu/PATH to review the Project Deadline Calendar to meet urgent deadlines related to specific activities (such as hiring processes, reclassifications and position descriptions).

And, if you frequent our job website looking for other employment opportunities at the university, you’ll notice upgrades to that site as well, beginning in April.

There’s much more to PATH than listed here; if you can’t wait to learn more, read the news and FAQs on the project webpage or email jobpath@tamu.edu and we’ll be glad to help you!
Like our State and numerous other organizations, we find ourselves needing to stretch our hard-earned dollars and resources even more these days. A dollar just needs to go further! Human Resources understands and is working on an employee discount program that has the potential to help you S-T-R-E-T-C-H your dollars.

HR is looking to partner with an employee discount program vendor that has an online portal to give you easy access to valuable discounts and allow you to purchase merchandise, entertainment and other perks below retail cost—discounts specifically available to you because you are an employee of Texas A&M University! The discounts will be displayed by category type and will include both national and local businesses.

And, the BEST part is that it’s FREE to you and the University! Look for more details to come in future editions of HR EXPRESS.

SEBAC Election Coming this Spring

Do you know what SEBAC stands for? No, it’s not a new rock band; SEBAC is the System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee.

SEBAC is an advisory group that studies the design, operation and administration of the various benefit plans. This group makes recommendations to The Texas A&M University System Benefits Administration Office for System employees and retirees.

Each member of the Texas A&M University System has an elected representative on the committee. Texas A&M’s SEBAC Representative is Jane Schneider. She’s here to listen to your suggestions or concerns about our benefits plans. Learn about Jane’s responsibilities and how to reach her by visiting employees.tamu.edu/sebac.aspx.

The next SEBAC election will occur this spring for the Texas A&M University FY14 & FY15 representative. HR will coordinate the SEBAC nomination and election process for our elected representative.

Watch for more information regarding the SEBAC election process to be sent to you. However, you can start considering now who you may want to nominate for this important committee—including yourself.
FEATURED ARTICLES

HR EXPRESS Purpose — Promote HR-related Services, Information

All aboard for the inaugural issue of HR EXPRESS! This newsletter’s purpose is to keep you on track with HR-related services and information that you need to know as an employee of Texas A&M University. This isn’t exactly an “employee newsletter” with staff kudos, recipes and campus news. HR EXPRESS features HR-related services, programs and our HR staff.

HR EXPRESS will be published three times a year with winter, summer and fall issues. In 2014 we’ll conduct a readership survey to see if you found this newsletter helpful and useful.

Meanwhile, give us suggestions for future articles or ask questions about the issue now. We want two-way communication. GIVE FEEDBACK HERE!

TO YOUR BENEFIT

Healthy Resolutions: Get Fit and Walk Across Texas!

New Year’s resolutions are great ideas but do we keep them? According to the Statistic Brain website, only 8% of people successfully achieve their resolutions. But don’t give up, every step you take to improve your wellbeing makes a difference; and we are here to help you!

If your resolution was to stop using tobacco products, we have resources on our benefits website HERE for tobacco cessation resources.

If you want to exercise more or to lose weight, take a look at the following programs to help motivate you by tracking your activity and progress. Your activity can count for BOTH programs for the weeks that overlap! Look for Texas A&M University (main) when registering.

- GetFitTexas State Agency Challenge: January 14 – March 23
  www.getfittexas.org
  (We hope you are currently participating.)

- Walk Across Texas: February 23 – April 20
  walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu

If you want even more ideas and help, watch for upcoming announcements on our Employee Health & Wellness Fair later this spring.

Take advantage of these FREE programs and resources that can help you achieve your New Year’s resolution and live a healthier life. Wishing you a healthy and happy 2013!
TO YOUR BENEFIT

Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) Web Portal Enhancements

When you hear BAM, what comes to mind? A famous cooking show? Well, for members of the A&M Care health plan, BAM is Blue Access for Members; the web portal (bcbstx.com) for your health insurance plan. The BAM website was recently upgraded and includes some great enhancements. Here are just a few that you will find useful:

Estimate the cost of care – Use the Cost Estimator in the My Coverage section to learn how the cost of medical procedures and treatments may vary depending on the doctor or facility you choose. This tool uses your plan benefits to estimate your costs and shows you options that might help lower them.

Research your options for care – Under the Doctors & Hospitals section you can find information about the cost and quality of care to help you choose a doctor or hospital that best fits your needs.

Find help when you need it – You’ll find more than FAQs in the Help section. Visit Health Care School for articles and videos that can help you make the most out of your benefits. Learn how to avoid out-of-network costs, what you can do to prepare for a doctor visit and much more.

Glossary definitions and helpful tips have been added throughout the site to help better explain insurance terms.

Health Risk Assessment – You’ll find an enhanced more interactive health risk assessment to provide a comprehensive status report of your current health status and maybe some areas for suggested improvement. Remember, you and your dependents age 18 or older can earn a $50 deductible credit for completing the Health Risk Assessment!

Accessing BAM is easy! Just log into the Blue Cross Blue Shield website bcbstx.com. As a member of the A&M Care plan, you now have even more tools at your fingertips.

Free Counseling Services

Did you get our postcard? In January, a postcard featuring our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services was mailed to home addresses of benefits-eligible Texas A&M employees. If you didn’t (or did) get the card you can still visit employees.tamu.edu/eap for valuable information about EAP services, including free counseling services for you and your benefits-eligible dependents.
You too can become a Super Supervisor!

**Annual Performance Evaluation — Year-round Communication is the Key for the “Super Supervisor”!**

As a supervisor, one of the most important roles you have is to communicate with your employee. Meaningful two-way communications, held throughout the year, ensures they know what is expected of them.

During the spring, those communications take the form of the annual performance evaluation; when you officially review their job description, rate how they have performed their job, rate accomplishments of the goals established last year, and provide an overall rating. This is the time to reinforce the discussions you’ve had during the year, highlight their accomplishments, provide constructive feedback and discuss ways to improve, if needed. Prepare now for the evaluation by gathering relevant information.

Here’s some information to consider:

- What are some specific examples that demonstrate your employee’s job performance?
- Do you have meeting notes, performance logs, email communications, activity logs, training and professional development transcripts, corrective actions, compliments, other commendations, and last year’s evaluation for your employee?
- Do you have feedback from colleagues and other customers?

Encourage your employee to give you information regarding their accomplishments, any challenges they may have had during the year, and areas for improvement. This will give them an opportunity to provide input from their point of view; and allow you to set achievable goals with them. When they succeed, you succeed!

Remember, performance evaluations can be valuable and productive tools for both you and your employee. Make them even more meaningful by communicating expectations and feedback throughout the year and you’ll be known as a “Super Supervisor”!

For additional information about:

- conducting performance evaluations, go to employees.tamu.edu/managers/evaluations.aspx, and for
- classes for delivering effective performance evaluations, register at eodinfo.tamu.edu.
SUPER SUPERVISORS

Show Appreciation to Your Employees on March 1

Employee Appreciation Day is a time for organizations, whether small or large, private or public, to pause a moment in their hectic world to thank the very employees who keep the wheels running each day. Although not a formally recognized holiday, Employee Appreciation Day has gained attention and been embraced in the United States since its introduction in 1995 by a founding member of the Recognition Professionals International organization. This day is nationally recognized annually the first Friday in March, which for 2013 is Friday, March 1.

Why should you participate in Employee Appreciation Day? Years of research has shown that employees who feel appreciated and valued as a member of the organization are more engaged in the organization’s purpose and success. A more engaged employee equals a more motivated and satisfied employee, thus, employee recognition is an important focus.

Employee recognition can take on many forms - saying thank you, giving compliments, providing professional development opportunities, showing respect, recognizing a milestone, or congratulating an entire team on accomplishments.

What does this mean to you as a supervisor?

Just a simple “Thanks!” goes a long way to motivate employees! Let them know their contributions matter to Texas A&M and to you! You’ll see satisfaction and commitment elevate, making it a better work place for all.

The first Friday in March is dedicated to employees, while October 16 is devoted to bosses!

So, what can you do to show thanks to your staff? There are many ideas on the HR website, ranging from formal to informal, many of which have no associated cost. Ideas such as:

- Give a hand written note.
- Acknowledge an employee in a department-wide newsletter.
- Take an employee to lunch.
- Throw a department-wide pizza party.

Recognize your staff regularly in addition to the annual Employee Appreciation Day activities. Employees are Texas A&M’s most valuable resource; let them know how much they are valued every day.

So, be creative, be innovative, but most important, be sincere. Visit our Employee Recognition Resources page for ideas and easy-to-use templates at employees.tamu.edu/employees/WorkLife/recognition/resources.aspx online.
Navigating Change — Personal Change Management

Change can create stress, and stress can reduce workplace productivity. Shocking, right? Every change requires a transition process and this process may leave you feeling stressed, overwhelmed, anxious or fearful. But, how you adapt and react to change impacts your productivity level and ability to move forward, particularly with workplace changes.

Human Resources offers a workshop “Personal Change Management Strategies” which can assist you in identifying reactions to change and how to harness strategies to reduce the negative impact of change. Our workshop can help you identify positive coping skills, give you tips for moving forward so you can mitigate negative impacts on productivity and create efficiency in the office — basically it will make you feel better.

Sign up today, visit training.tamu.edu/Courses/Detail/91 for full details.

It’s About R-E-S-P-E-C-T!

As Aretha Franklin says, “R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me!” We all want respect but respect can mean different things to each of us, especially in the workplace.

Understanding the factors that contribute to a lack of respect in the workplace can help you understand how to demonstrate respectful behavior and what to do if you feel offended.

Human Resources has a new workshop, “Fostering Respect In a Diverse Workplace”. The workshop is an overview of Equal Employment Opportunity laws, a video to stimulate discussion about respect in the workplace and tabletop case studies dealing with workplace issues.

The class is designed to help you:

- Increase your awareness of what constitutes offensive or harassing behavior in a diverse workplace,
- Demonstrate respectful behavior in a diverse work environment, and
- Take positive and proactive actions when you feel offended
Meet Sarah Tobola, Employee Benefits Manager

Sarah Tobola, HR Employee Benefits Manager, oversees daily operation of the benefits program for roughly 11,000 employees and retirees. She collaborates with the System Benefits Administration office, Payroll Services and with over 300 departmental HR Liaisons across campus to assure open communications and improve and streamline our processes.

Sarah has an extensive human resources background that began at Rice University in Houston. She worked at Texas Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) and within The Texas A&M University System. These experiences, especially with TEES, help Sarah recognize the complexities of Texas A&M University and the overall University System. She understands the procedural differences, but also recognizes that the core mission and values are the same.

Sarah has served in various leadership roles in the Brazos Valley Society for Human Resources since 2006; on the Brazos County Walk Across Texas Taskforce; and she received the Texas AgriLife Extension Family & Consumer Science Volunteer Service award.

We all truly “benefit” (wink-wink) from Sarah’s expertise and experience in benefits management. Thank you, Sarah!
**HR MISSION:**
We provide human resource programs, services and expertise that foster employee and organizational success.

**HR CORE VALUES:**
- **INTEGRITY**
  We demonstrate uncompromising commitment to honesty and accountability.
- **RESPECT**
  We treat all people with dignity, recognizing diversity and unique experiences, perspectives and contributions.
- **QUALITY**
  We strive for excellence in meeting our customers’ expectations.
- **EXPERTISE**
  We develop and apply the highest level of knowledge and skills to address our customers’ needs.

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Human Resources publishes **HR EXPRESS** three times per year for Texas A&M University employees to promote HR-related services and information.

Editor: Pamela A. Praesel, Communications Manager
Contributes: Human Resources Staff

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**Highlights for Spring 2013**

**FEBRUARY**
- 2/7 HR Liaison Network Meeting
- 2/13 Benefits Orientation
- 2/13 New Employee Welcome
- 2/15 Coffee Conversations: Animal Embryo Transfer: Cloning, and Genetic Engineering at A&M

**MARCH**
- 3/1 Employee Appreciation Day
- 3/15 University Holiday - Spring Break
- 3/19 Benefits Orientation
- 3/19 New Employee Welcome
- 3/22 Coffee Conversations: Making a Difference in Veterinary Medicine

**APRIL**
- 4/1 Performance Evaluation Begins
- 4/4 Launch of PATH site
- 4/4 Launch of Job Path site
- 4/10 Benefits Orientation
- 4/10 New Employee Welcome
- 4/19 Coffee Conversations: Protecting Our Coast — The Texas Sea Grant Program

**MAY**
- 5/8 Benefits Orientation
- 5/8 New Employee Welcome
- 5/17 Coffee Conversations: Texas A&M College of Architecture: Enhancing the Quality of Life, Place in the Natural, Built, Virtual Environments
- 5/27 University Holiday - Memorial Day
- 5/31 Performance Evaluation Ends

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COMING SOON
Employee Health & Wellness Fair in spring; next HR EXPRESS in summer.