Healthy Lifestyle + Healthy Workplace = Wellness Works!

Human Resources proudly announces our new wellness initiative, Wellness Works, to encourage you to live healthy lifestyles, to support a healthy workplace, and to create a culture of wellness throughout the campus community. It incorporates existing campus resources, as well as new programs, focused on Physical, Financial, and Interpersonal Health. Mark your calendar for upcoming Wellness Works events:

**October 1 – Retirement & Financial Planning Fair**, at the Memorial Student Center (MSC). It will include 16 educational sessions including the Teacher’s Retirement System of Texas (TRS) and a vendor exhibit hall. Registration is required through TrainTraq by searching for course name FPF13.

**October 29 & October 30 – Flu Vaccine Clinic**, at the General Services Complex. As a step to encourage physical well-being, flu vaccines (shot or nasal mist) will be available at no cost to you (filed through your insurance plan).

**November 12 – Health & Wellness Fair**, at the MSC. This inaugural fair will include informative sessions that will cover many aspects of wellness, along with an exhibit hall with numerous health and wellness providers.

Wellness Works is designed to focus on the “whole” individual to increase awareness and provide resources and activities to empower you to be healthy in all aspects of your life. This will benefit you, your family and the university community. Visit the Wellness Works webpage for more Wellness Works information as this program continues to be developed.
Now that the new academic year has kicked off, this is a good time to review and update your personal, payroll and emergency contact information. Your participation in keeping your records up-to-date helps assure the university has correct information on your education or veteran status, knows whom to contact in an emergency situation, and helps us meet federal, state and university reporting requirements.

HRConnect is The Texas A&M University System's online application to record and view your employee personal information and collect federally-mandated reporting data, such as those under the Jobs for Veterans Act and the U.S. Census Bureau.

You can access HRConnect from the Single Sign On menu at sso.tamus.edu and select the "Personal Data" tab, then the "Edit/Update" buttons. The site has a retrieve or reset password, however, if you need assistance logging in contact your department's HR Liaison.

Under the Personal Data tab, take a moment to review:
- Email address
- Privacy Selection
- Gender
- Education Level
- EEO Minority Status (race/ethnicity)
- Veteran Status & Veteran Separation Date
- Home Address/Phone
- Mailing Address/Alternate or Cell Phone
- Employment Address/Phone
- Emergency contact names and contact information

If you have questions, please email HR-feedback@tamu.edu or call Human Resources at 979.845.4141.

**HR Website Changes Coming**

Watch for a new and improved HR website (employees.tamu.edu) late this fall. We are moving to a content management system (CMS) to organize information and update the site more quickly. As we mentioned in the summer 2013 HR EXPRESS, this also means the web URL addresses you have bookmarked for forms and pages may break. As we get closer to the launch date, we'll post notices on the website and send announcements through your department’s HR Liaison so you can be prepared for the changes.

Please share your ideas on how you would like to see us improve the HR site. Contact us at HR-feedback@tamu.edu anytime.
Employee Benefits & Insurance Updates

September 1 marked the beginning of the FY2014 benefit plan year. This is a busy time, but please complete the following action items to ensure your benefits coverage is complete:

- **ACTION ITEM – Review Current Coverage** - Review your current benefit coverage online through iBenefits from the Single Sign On menu under My Benefits and contact HR Benefits Services immediately if your intended selections are not reflected.

- **ACTION ITEM – Review Contact Information** - Review your current contact information under the Personal Data Tab in HRConnect and make any appropriate updates.

- **ACTION ITEM – Review the following information concerning your benefit plans.**

  - **Insurance Identification (ID) Cards** – New insurance ID cards (health, prescription, dental or vision) were mailed only to new enrollees with new coverage. ALL participants enrolled in the Graduate Student Plan will receive new ID cards because of the new insurance carrier for that plan. The ID cards have YOUR name as the primary policy holder. You will not receive a card with your dependent’s name printed on the card. Need to request additional or replacement cards? Use the Printable Insurance Enrollment/Contact Summary Sheet available in HRConnect under the Benefits Data tab to find the contact information for your insurance plan carriers.

  - **Insurance Premiums** – Your new FY2014 premiums will be deducted for September coverage starting on September 20 if paid bi-weekly or on October 1 if paid monthly.

  - **Insurance Deductibles** - Insurance deductibles are reset beginning September 1 and must be satisfied before receiving benefits subject to the deductible.

  - **Deductible Credits under the A&M Care Plan** – You (and your covered dependents) may each earn a $50 deductible credit for having an annual physical. Additionally, you (and your covered dependents age 18 or older) may each earn a $50 deductible credit by completing a Health Risk Assessment (HRA). **Important:** These deductible credits are available prospectively after the completion of the annual exam/HRA and apply through the end of the benefit plan year. Credits are NOT applied retroactively to deductibles already met for services prior to the completion of the annual exam/HRA.
TO YOUR BENEFIT

2013 Legislative Updates

The governor signed 1,573 bills as a result of the 83rd Legislative Session. A complete list of bills is online but here are two key bills that may impact you.

1. Senate Bill 1458 impacts members of the Teacher Retirement System (TRS).
   - The minimum age for a standard (unreduced) annuity was increased from age 60 to age 62 when using the rule of 80 to calculate retirement eligibility. This change in eligibility only impacts those who do NOT have 5 years of TRS service credit as of September 1, 2014. Individuals with 5 years of TRS service on September 1, 2014 will be grandfathered under the current rules.

2. House Bill 480 entitles the parent of a child who is a student attending prekindergarten through 12th grade to use up to eight hours of sick leave each fiscal year for the purpose of attending school-sponsored educational activities of the employee’s child such as: parent-teacher conference, tutoring, a volunteer program, a field trip, a classroom program, a school committee meeting, an academic competition, and an athletic, music, or theater program.

Flexible Spending Account Grace Period

Flexible spending accounts allow you to set aside tax-free dollars for eligible medical, dental, vision, hearing or dependent daycare expenses – helping you save money in your paycheck. Did you participate in the flexible spending account during FY2013? Do you still have a remaining balance in your FY2013 account? Are you unsure?

You can view your current balance by accessing your online account through PayFlex’s website. If you have a remaining balance, you can still incur expenses that can be claimed against the FY2013 balance through the grace period which ends on November 15, 2013. All eligible expenses for FY2013 must be incurred by November 15 and the claims for reimbursement must be filed by the December 31, 2013 claims submission deadline. A comprehensive list of both eligible and ineligible expenses may be found at the PayFlex website.
SUPER SUPERVISORS

Workplace Accommodations for Disabilities

As an A&M supervisor, are you aware of your responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)? The ADA prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. It emphasizes individual abilities rather than disabilities. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or regarding one as having such an impairment.

The ADA requires employers and you as a supervisor to make reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability unless doing so would pose an undue hardship. Similarly, a state or local public entity may be required to make adjustments in programs, services, and activities so that qualified individuals with a disability can participate and receive benefits similar to those received by individuals without a disability.

To be qualified, the individual with a disability must meet the essential eligibility requirements for the job, receipt of services, or participation in a public entity’s programs or activities with or without reasonable modifications.

Examples of reasonable accommodations include job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules, acquiring or modifying equipment, eliminating architectural barriers, providing qualified readers or interpreters, allowing additional time for testing or providing a distraction-free environment for testing, and reassignment to a vacant position. Degrees of disability differ; therefore, each accommodation request should be reviewed and considered on a case by case basis.

If your employee informs you of their need for a reasonable accommodation, you can consult with the HR’s Policy & Practice Review office or the Office of the Dean of Faculties as appropriate. Students requiring accommodations should notify the Office of Disability Services in the Division of Student Affairs. Accommodation requests should not be denied without consulting one of the offices listed here.

Please do not hesitate to contact HR or one of the offices listed above with any questions regarding compliance with the ADA.

NOTICE: The agency responsible for equal opportunity and affirmative action for federal contractors recently passed new rules about regulations regarding employment practices for individuals with disabilities and veterans. More to come from HR on this issue.
TIPS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

Time Management Tips

There are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of gadgets, tools and equipment that have become a mainstay in the workplace, eliminating significant amounts of manual labor and saving countless work hours. With so many time-saving devices, you may still feel overwhelmed by the number of things to do, stressed there is not enough time to get things done, and at a lost how to get a handle on it all. Cheer up! You are not alone and there are plenty of techniques and advice to help you manage your time.

Generally, the primary components of effective time management are to daily plan your schedule, be realistic with time expectations, spend the most time on the most important things, limit interruptions and distractions, and for all-around wellness, be good to yourself through a healthy lifestyle.

Just a few of the recommended techniques from the Mayo Clinic’s “Time Management: Tips to reduce stress and improve productivity” (published online June 20, 2012) include:

- **Plan each day.** Planning your day can help you accomplish more and feel more in control of your life. Write a to-do list, putting the most important tasks at the top. Keep a schedule of your daily activities to minimize conflicts and last-minute rushes.

- **Prioritize your tasks.** Time-consuming but relatively unimportant tasks can consume a lot of your day. Prioritizing tasks will ensure that you spend your time and energy on those that are truly important to you.

- **Say no to nonessential tasks.** Consider your goals and schedule before agreeing to take on additional work.

Learning or improving your time management skills can be a real boost to your self-confidence and a tangible boost to your career success.

Several courses are offered by HR on managing your time and productivity, such as “Efficiency and Procrastination”, “Perfectionism, the Double-Edged Sword” and “Stress Management”. See the [training course schedule](#) for Professional and Personal Development for more information.

If you need more of a personal approach, HR’s Employee Assistance Program is also available to provide counseling for personal and work-related issues such as stress management by calling 979.845.3711.
TIPS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

Online Learning for Your Career Success

If you think education is just for kids in grade school or young adults in college, think again. Education never stops – or shouldn’t stop – because the workplace constantly changes. New research, expanding technology, increasing regulations, expanding global markets, or just simply shifting customer expectations, drive changes in the workplace and how things are done. Often these changes require you to have knowledge beyond what you learned last year or even a decade ago! Learning is ongoing.

If you want to excel in your job, reach that next rung on the ladder or venture into a totally new direction in the workforce, you would be wise to stay on top of what’s happening in your industry, as well as strengthen the abilities and skills that make you a valuable contributor on the team.

One way to do this is to take advantage of web-based learning.

• Read the latest online news within your profession.
• Watch an online video “how to” on some specific task.
• Or, one of our favs is to take an online training course such as “Generations at Work” through HR Employee & Organizational Development. Take an online class today!

COMMON GROUND

Because You Can Help A&M Be a Disability-Friendly Workplace

October is Disability Employment Awareness month and Texas A&M Human Resources is proud to support the national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America’s workers with disabilities. The theme for 2013 is “Because We Are EQUAL to the Task”.

The history of National Disability Employment Awareness Month traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Continued on page 8
Sandra Edwards is an HR Advisor II for Recruitment & Workforce Planning, aka “the employment office”. Sandra’s primary duties are to post job vacancies online, coordinate with HR’s Classification & Compensation staff about posting requirements, and serve as the contact person for assigned campus departments.

Sandra works directly with hiring supervisors and HR Liaisons throughout the hiring process. She also assists applicants as they apply for jobs and helps with the background checks and degree verification checks. Helping people is what she enjoys most about her job.

“All of my HR experiences have provided me with lots of customer service experience which benefits me in helping applicants and the campus community,” said Sandra.

She received the HR “Excellence in Service Award—Unsung Heroes” for her work. Sandra is one of those “behind the scenes” people known for their dedication and caring attitude and it shows in her work. Thank you, Sandra, for making Texas A&M a great place to work!
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.

HR CALANDAR

Highlights for Fall 2013

OCTOBER

10/1    Wellness Works: Financial Planning & Retirement Fair
10/9    Benefits Orientation
10/9    New Employee Welcome
10/18   Coffee Conversations: What Do Faculty Do All Day?
10/29-30 Wellness Works: Flu Vaccine Clinic

NOVEMBER

11/7    HR Liaison Network Meeting
11/8    Coffee Conversations: 25 by 25 – Transforming Engineering Education
11/12   Wellness Works: Health & Wellness Fair
11/13   Benefits Orientation
11/13   New Employee Welcome
11/28-29 University Holiday – Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

12/11   Benefits Orientation
12/11   New Employee Welcome
12/23-31 University Holiday – Winter Break
& 1/1

Next Issue: January 2014

Look for the readership survey and please give us your feedback!