Have you heard about PATHways, the performance management process that promotes ongoing dialogue between a supervisor and employee? Performance management is more than just a performance evaluation, the process should include PCER (Plan, Coach, Evaluate, Reward); learn more on page 6. To support this process, HR implemented its online Performance Management system in PATH (Portal Access for Total HR), accessed through Single Sign On.

The PATHways process formally begins in the PATH online system with the creation of a Performance Plan when a supervisor and employee meet to establish performance goals for the year. The PATH system also includes the ability to add personal progress notes throughout the year and for employees to complete their self assessment. PATH is again used at the end of the review period to create an online performance evaluation.

The PATH online system will be required for all non-faculty employees in next year’s performance review period. For the current review period, departments either use PATH or an alternate process that they internally manage. Employees should check with their HR Liaisons for any department-specific requirements. Regardless of process used, all evaluations for the current performance review period must be completed by May 31.

Learn more on the PATHways website for step-by-step instructions, videos, resources, and training classes, or you may email EOD at HRPATHways@tamu.edu and we’ll be glad to answer your questions.
Wow! It’s been a year since we launched the Human Resources newsletter “HR EXPRESS” to keep you on track with HR-related services and information that you need to know as an employee of Texas A&M University. Now we want to hear from you. Please complete our online survey HERE by February 28th for a chance to win a prize drawing! Your feedback will be used to make the newsletter meaningful and successful for employees at Texas A&M!

FEATURED ARTICLES

Your Elected SEBAC Rep Dr. Peter McIntyre

The System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee (SEBAC) is an advisory group that makes recommendations to The Texas A&M University System administration on issues related to employee benefits. Do you know who serves as our University representative on SEBAC? Our elected representative is Dr. Peter McIntyre, Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

Dr. McIntyre said, “I have been a faculty member at Texas A&M for 32 years, we have raised a family of 4 children here. I have no significant knowledge or skills in accounting or health care management, but I have common sense and I would do my best to represent the interests of faculty and staff.” He also indicated his desire to “achieve more transparency to the faculty and staff so that we can understand the reasons for changes and evaluate their impacts”.

We have dedicated representation through Dr. McIntyre, so remember to share your ideas for improvements to the group benefit program, make suggestions for new benefit programs and express opinions related to items under consideration by SEBAC as they carry out the responsibility of advising the System Benefits Administration Office on strategic matters relating to the group benefit programs.

You may contact Dr. McIntyre by email at mcintyre@physics.tamu.edu or call 979-255-5531.

Readership Survey

Have you seen the improved HR website? We moved to a content management system to organize information and update the site. As we mentioned in previous newsletters, this meant the URL addresses you bookmarked on the site would break. We apologize for this inconvenience, but we hope the site is easy to navigate and useful. Please contact us at HR-feedback@tamu.edu with questions or suggestions on how to improve the site.

Revised HR Website
**FEATURED ARTICLES**

**“Celebrating Staff!” - Staff Appreciation Week, March 3-7**

Texas A&M is known for its traditions and we hope to start a new one — Staff Appreciation Week! The University Staff Council (USC) is joining forces with Human Resources (HR) to plan events for the week of March 3-7 to recognize dedicated staff employees at Texas A&M!

Event details will be communicated throughout campus once finalized, but some activities in the works include: “Celebrating Staff!” event at Rudder Plaza on March 5&6, prizes from local business as well as PerksConnect vendors, and online contests. The President’s Office and other campus departments are also graciously contributing funds and prizes.

We’re also encouraging your department to plan now for this week and host events within the office. Resources and tips will be provided soon on the USC website or visit the HR site now for employee recognition ideas.

Department leadership should recognize staff regularly in addition to an annual event; letting you know that you are valued every day!

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**TO YOUR BENEFIT**

**Voluntary Benefits At Your Fingertips**

As a University employee, you have access to a comprehensive benefit program through our group insurance plans. Did you know you and your family also have access to additional voluntary benefits because you work at the University? Through the PerksConnect Employee Discount Program, you have access to:

- voluntary benefit plans and group discounts on items such as:
  - VPI Pet Insurance,
  - Legal Shield legal services,
  - identity theft,
  - home and auto insurance and
- individual insurance plans:
  - medical and dental for dependents who traditionally do not qualify for participation in the group plans offered by The Texas A&M System.

These voluntary benefit plans are individual plans offered by reputable organizations and made available to University employees at a discounted rate. To learn more or get a personalized quote on voluntary plans, just visit our PerksConnect site and log in for access to these plans and additional discounts offered under the employee discount program.
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Regular health exams and tests can help find problems before they start. They also can help find problems early, when your chances for treatment and cure are better. By getting the right health services, screenings, and treatments, you are taking steps that help your chances for living a longer, healthier life.”

The A&M System announced the Employee Engagement & Wellness Initiative (now referred to as the Wellness Exam Incentive) which encourages employees to be engaged with a health care provider in receiving preventive services by requiring employees and their covered spouses to annually have a physical or routine wellness exam.

You may be asking yourself, what exactly is the Wellness Exam Incentive and what does it mean to me? The short answer, The A&M System is incentivizing you to get the recommended annual wellness exam (annual physical or check-up) by financially impacting your insurance premium rates.

If you complete the annual wellness exam between Jan. 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 you will qualify for the lower wellness premium rate for your FY15 (beginning September 1, 2014) health insurance premiums. If you do not complete the wellness exam incentive, you will NOT qualify for the lower wellness premium rate and will instead pay a higher monthly premium. Spouses covered by your insurance are also required to complete the wellness exam.

We understand that you may have several questions related to your specific situation; therefore, we have developed a comprehensive Wellness Exam Incentive webpage to explain the full details of the wellness exam incentive.

CRITICAL TAKE-AWAY MESSAGE: Get your annual wellness exam by the June 30 deadline so that you qualify for the lower health plan premium; this will save you from paying the additional premium differential of $30 per month for each individual who does not complete the wellness exam. The annual additional premium could be as much as $360, or $720 for you and your spouse; so act now and make your wellness appointment before the deadline.

The Wellness Exam Incentive is only one part of a bigger wellness initiative that will focus on helping employees live healthier lifestyle. Watch for more information on additional wellness programs and activities under the Texas A&M University Wellness Works program.
Affordable Care Act—What’s Ahead?

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), is certainly a politically charged piece of U.S. legislation. Whether you love it, hate it or somewhere in between - it is important to understand how the legislation impacts or will impact your benefits here at Texas A&M.

The ACA legislation is complex and comprised of multiple phases with implementation dates scheduled through the year 2018. Previous phases already implemented, provided the expansion of coverage for dependents to age 26, preventive services covered at 100%, reduction in flexible spending account contributions, creation of the Uniform Summary of Benefits & Coverage (SBC) document for plan comparisons, reporting of employer-sponsored coverage value on the W2 form, additional required fees, and mandated notifications for the healthcare marketplace.

What’s new for 2014 that may impact you? Effective January 1, 2014 the individual shared responsibility provision took effect requiring all individuals to be enrolled in a health plan or be subject to a tax penalty. If you are currently enrolled in a Texas A&M System Health Plan, you do not need to take any action. If you or your spouse are not currently enrolled in A&M Care, but you want to be added, you may do so during the upcoming annual enrollment period in July.

You may still be asking, will I have to change my doctor or will my benefits be dropped or canceled because of ACA? While the ACA is major legislation that has significant impacts on the healthcare industry as a whole, you will not have to change doctors (you still have access to the same great BlueCross BlueShield Provider Network) and the A&M System will still offer a comprehensive health plan to employees and retirees as outlined by State legislation.

So what’s ahead? For the fiscal year 2015 benefit plan year the Employer Shared Responsibility provisions (also referred to the Play or Pay rule) require employers to offer affordable insurance that meets minimum essential benefit coverage to full-time employees, move the waiting period to no more than 90 days, and place limits on the annual maximum out-of-pocket.

The Texas A&M System sponsored health plans exceed the minimal essential coverage and meet the affordability for most employees. We are well positioned to address these requirements and the A&M System will continue to take actions to remain in compliance with the Affordable Care Act requirements.
SUPER SUPERVISORS

Performance Evaluations Best Practices

Often when we think of Performance Management, it’s the Performance Evaluation that comes to mind; however, effectively managing employee performance is not a one-time event. HR PATHways is a year-round systematic process aimed at maximizing employee performance by using supervisory best practices through the PCER (Plan, Coach, Evaluate and Reward) model.

- **PLAN:** Performance Management begins when the supervisor reviews the employee’s position description, creates the performance plan, and discusses it with the employee. This establishes a mutual understanding of the performance and behavioral expectations and provides the supervisor with a basis for holding the employee accountable for his or her performance.

- **COACH:** During the review period, the supervisor coaches the employee towards successful outcomes by using the Performance Plan as a working document. The supervisor monitors the employee’s performance, meets with the employee periodically to provide timely and specific feedback, and provides any needed developmental opportunities.

- **EVALUATE:** At the end of the performance review period, the supervisor completes a fair and consistent evaluation by reviewing the documentation kept through the coaching phase along with any other relevant information. The supervisor meets with the employee to discuss the evaluation, explain the ratings, and provide feedback about strengths and areas of improvement.

- **REWARD:** Supervisors should recognize and reward employee efforts as merited throughout the year, not just at year-end.

By using these best practices, supervisors are able to help their employees to better reach successful outcomes. When employees are successful, supervisors are successful, and this contributes to the overall success of the department and University.

For more information on supervisory best practices and available training, please visit the Supervisor’s Toolbox.
TIPS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

Establish a Daily Stress Management Program

Most of us are familiar with the word stress. This reaction is often synonymous with worry and change. Anything that involves change (good or bad) impacts you mentally and physically. Symptoms of stress can include memory or concentration difficulties, irritability, agitation, feeling overwhelmed, aches/pains, gastrointestinal problems, depression and anxiety.

Establishing a daily stress management program can assist you to positively cope with stress. Change in three areas, eating habits, personal schedule and exercise are the keys. Changes include eating a balanced diet while avoiding too much caffeine and sugar; reducing the number of demands you place on yourself and learn to relax; as well as establishing a regular sleep schedule to get enough sleep.

The HR Employee Assistance Program provides counseling and workshops to help you manage stress. Visit our website to learn about our services and to enroll in an EAP workshop (listed under Professional and Personal Development).

COMMON GROUND

Veterans Bring Unique Skills to the Workforce

As more veterans and reserve service members enter the civilian workforce, the potential to impact staff diversity is even more attainable. They not only bring the learned skills, knowledge, abilities and unique experiences of their military service, they also represent a diverse group of potential employees.

Departments can harness the benefits of employing veterans by:

1. using HR’s Veterans’ Outreach hiring resources;
2. considering a veteran’s application and resume in a new light, recognizing that core skills developed for the battlefield are very possibly the same skills needed to get the job done at the University; and,
3. maintaining the office environment as a welcoming place for all employees, understanding that veterans have experiences that build upon the benefits of diversity at its core: valuing and respecting individuals.

Veterans can possess a wealth of transferrable skills, such as innovation, leadership, teamwork, inclusion, efficiency, that can help Texas A&M succeed and contribute to a global 21st century environment.
J.J. started his career with HR in 2006 as a student worker and returned in 2012 as a full time employee in EOD. He is a graduate of Texas A&M with a Bachelors of Science in Human Resource Development and Technology Management. WHOOP!

**COMMON GROUND**

**Required Workplace Posters**

When was the last time you ventured into your office workroom or staff lounge, looked up at the wall of legal-written, acronym-laden, tiny-print posters and thought, “Why are there so many posters?”, or maybe you haven’t even been to the workroom in ages. Although we can’t force you to read all those workplace notices, we can explain them to you.

Each one of those posters is either required or recommended by federal or state law, or university rule, so you have access to information about your rights and benefits in the workplace. There are thirteen required posters that cover such topics as equal employment opportunity, pay rates, workers’ compensation, whistleblower protections and other benefits; and another eight recommended posters about campus emergencies, discrimination, harassment, fraud, etc.

So search out the workplace posters in your office, take a minute to read the information, and thank your HR Liaison for ensuring your department is in compliance! Happy reading!

**FACES OF HR**

**Jose J. Macias, Employee & Organizational Development**

Meet Jose J. Macias, a Training & Development Consultant with HR Employee & Organizational Development (EOD). J.J., as he prefers to be called, facilitates professional development workshops and develops resources for Texas A&M employees.

If you don’t recognize JJ’s. face, you’ll probably recognize his voice. He narrated the online training videos for PATH (Portal Access for Total HR) that launched in May 2013. J.J. created 15 custom videos to support the system used to manage online employment services, position descriptions and performance management. Lately he’s served on the EOD team working on PATHways, the performance management process for Texas A&M staff employees (see p. 1).

J.J. said, “At my previous employment I was a member of a training team that developed in-class and online training for a major software update. This experience proved helpful as I worked on the PATHways Performance Management support team.”

He added that having the opportunity to make an impact in people’s lives is very rewarding, stating that, “even if it’s just one thing that a person takes out of the training, that means a lot to me.”
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.

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

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Contributors: Human Resources Staff

University Holidays FY2013-14:
Spring Break
March 13–14, 2014
Memorial Day
May 26, 2014
Independence Day
July 4, 2014

Highlights for Spring 2014

FEBRUARY

2/1  Walk Across Texas: February 1 – March 29
2/12  Benefits Orientation
2/12  New Employee Welcome
2/21  Coffee Conversations: Offices of the Dean of Student Life – Supporting [YOU]
2/26  President's Meritorious Service Awards

MARCH

3/3-7  Staff Appreciation Week
3/4  HR Liaison Network Meeting—25th Silver Celebration!
3/19  Benefits Orientation
3/19  New Employee Welcome
3/21  Coffee Conversations: Global Warming
3/13-14  University Holiday – Spring Break

APRIL

4/1  Performance Evaluation Begins
4/9  Benefits Orientation
4/9  New Employee Welcome
4/18  Coffee Conversations: School of Law: The Past, Present & Future

MAY

5/14  Benefits Orientation
5/14  New Employee Welcome
5/26  University Holiday – Memorial Day
5/31  Performance Evaluation Ends