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HR Messenger

It's time to review your benefits choices for Annual Enrollment 2006

Submit any changes online by November 17. These changes will be effective Jan. 1.

It is again time to announce the 2006 employee benefits program for the University of St. Thomas. There are no changes in this year's program for the medical plan or medical premiums, and just a small increase in dental plan premiums. All changes become effective Jan. 1, 2006.

The following is an overview of the 2006 plan year premium rates:

Plan	2005 Rates	2006 Rates
Base Medical-Single	\$28.97	\$28.97
Base Medical-Family	\$171.15	\$171.15
Alternate Medical-Single	\$4.53	\$4.53
Alternate Medical-Family	\$113.49	\$113.49
Dental-Single	\$11.39	\$11.76
Dental-Family	\$41.48	\$42.69

All UST employees' annual enrollment packets should have arrived during the last week of October. Annual enrollment changes will be accepted until November 17. This year, all enrollment changes will be made online.

Note: The only employees who need to participate in annual enrollment are those who:

- Participate in Health Care or Dependent Care spending accounts.
- Want to make a change to their Medical plan option.
- Want to change from single to family coverage.
- Want to change from family to single coverage.
- Previously waived their coverage and now want to enroll in Medical and/or Dental plans.
- Do not wish to continue with Medical and/or Dental plan coverage at UST.
- Want to add a dependent.

For more information, contact the Benefits Office at (651) 962-6497 or stop by the Human Resources Department in Room 217, Aquinas Hall.

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Contact us ...

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Benefits Section
AQU 213, Ext. 2-6519

Compensation Section
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How does the new Performance Assessment and Management Policy and process work?

Outlined here is a brief explanation of the Performance Assessment and Management Policy and pay-for-performance system and answers to some of the most common questions.

St. Thomas' new Performance Assessment and Management Policy went into effect July 1, 2005. To be effective, policies need to support an organization in achieving its mission and goals. The performance assessment and management policy supports St. Thomas by:

- Establishing and clarifying goals and priorities;
- Providing an opportunity to discuss work-related interests and problems;
- Encouraging employee communication and involvement;
- Providing a mechanism for feedback regarding performance;
- Providing documented history of performance; and
- Linking employee performance to compensation.

The foundation of the policy is to provide honest and accurate feedback to employees throughout the year, and then to assess employees' performance based on the established performance standards and goals at the end of the assessment period.

In conjunction with the new policy, St. Thomas also implemented a pay-for-performance system. In a pay-for-performance system, pay decisions are based on set defined levels of performance, rather than on non-performance-related factors, such as cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), entitlement or seniority.

This pay-for-performance system will benefit St. Thomas and its employees by:

- Helping St. Thomas achieve its strategic directions through goal alignment;
- Differentiating between and among varying levels of performance;
- Rewarding at and above satisfactory levels of performance;
- More effectively addressing marginal and/or unsatisfactory levels of performance;
- Stimulating employee motivation;
- Providing greater incentives for employees to contribute and grow professionally; and
- Contributing to employee retention.

Like any performance assessment and management system, this system will not yield the desired results if it is not used properly. Therefore, St. Thomas has implemented a number of resources to assist managers, supervisors and employees in this process. For more information about these resources, please read the article titled "What is St. Thomas Doing to Prepare People for the New Performance Assessment Policy and Process?"

As managers and employees have started to use this process, a number of questions have been asked. The following section answers some of the most common questions. If you have any additional questions, please contact your Human Resources Partner.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What should I have completed in this process?

A: The performance-assessment period is the timeframe for which the employee is assessed that aligns with the university's fiscal year, July 1 through June 30. The first element in the performance-assessment process is planning. In the planning element, supervisors and employees discuss the job behaviors, performance standards and goals that will be used to assess the employee's performance. Planning should take place at the beginning of the

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performance-assessment period or when a new employee is hired. For this current performance-assessment period, training on the new system and process took place during July and early November; therefore, performance standards and goals should be identified and discussed by the end of November. For the following years, the planning element should be completed by the end of August.

Q: What should I do next?

A: Throughout the performance assessment period, supervisors should monitor (second element) the progress of their employees toward achieving their goals and performance standards and provide development opportunities (third element) as the need arises.

The second element, which is monitoring, requires supervisors to measure performance and provide employees timely and ongoing feedback. Supervisors should conduct informal progress reviews with employees comparing their performance against the established goals and standards. Doing so provides the opportunity to make mid-course corrections, such as modifying any standards that appear unrealistic or problematic. Also, through monitoring, unacceptable performance can be identified at any time during the assessment period and assistance provided the employee to address the deficiencies rather than waiting until the annual performance assessment takes place.

The third element, which is developing, identifies and addresses developmental needs of an employee. The objective is to raise the employee's level of performance through training, giving him or her additional assignments or higher levels of responsibilities that introduce new skills. Providing employees with training and developmental opportunities encourages good performance, strengthens job-related skills and competencies, and helps employees keep up with changes in the workplace, such as the introduction of new technology.

Q: What forms need to be completed at the end of the assessment period? And what is the timeframe in which these forms need to be completed and submitted?

A: The fourth element in the process is assessing the employee's performance. The final performance assessment should be completed at the end of the performance-assessment period in May and June.

The term "assessing" means evaluating the employee's performance against the set of pre-established goals and standards developed at the beginning of the assessment period and included in the employee's Performance Plan. Using these measurements, the supervisor assigns a performance rating based on the university's five-tiered rating system.

At the end of the assessment period, managers and supervisors should schedule meetings with employees, providing the employees with at least two weeks notice of the performance-assessment meeting.

In preparation for the meeting, you should provide the employee with the following documents:

- The performance plan (which was created at the beginning of the assessment period, although it may have been changed based on continuing conversations with the employee throughout the year);
- The job profile; and
- The self-assessment form (which should be completed by the employee at this time and submitted back to the manager or supervisor).

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When the employee has completed the self-assessment form, the manager or supervisor reviews the form in conjunction with the performance plan, job profile and any other documents in the manager's file that illustrate achievements or concerns. This review is done prior to the performance-assessment meeting.

An important point to remember is that managers should complete the performance assessment form after holding the performance-assessment meeting with the employee. When the performance-assessment form is complete, the employee should have adequate time to review, comment on and sign it. Once the form is signed by the employee and the manager, the manager submits the form to his or her supervisor or the appropriate member of the Academic and Administrative Leadership (AAL) for his or her signature. The manager maintains a copy for his or her files and provides a copy to the employee prior to submitting the original form to Human Resources for inclusion in the personnel file.

Q: How does the pay-for-performance plan tie to the performance assessment?

A: Rewarding is the fifth and final element of performance assessment. Rewarding recognizes employees for their performance and contributions toward helping the unit achieve its objectives or mission. One basic principle of an effective performance-management system is that all behavior is controlled by its consequences, formal and informal, positive and negative. Recognition and acknowledgement is an ongoing, natural part of the day-to-day interaction between the supervisor and employee. At the end of the performance-management cycle, the salary increase, which is the reward, is determined solely by the employee's overall performance rating. The increases will be delivered in September.

What is St. Thomas doing to prepare people for the new Performance Assessment and Management Policy and process?

Two additional training sessions will be offered. Leadership Academy courses will hone your skills and a host of resources are available with a click of your mouse.

The new performance assessment system is both a change and a shift in the university's culture. Changes like this can spark feelings of excitement and anxiety but, either way, they can be challenging. Recognizing this challenge, the university has and will continue to implement resources to help staff become familiar and comfortable with the new performance assessment system.

Training sessions

During the months of July through early November, the Human Resources Department trained more than 500 staff and department chairpersons on the new performance assessment policy and process in 25 training sessions.

Overall, the feedback about the training sessions was positive. For example,

- 93 percent of respondents said the session addressed current and real issues;
- 83 percent of respondents felt the session provided information, approaches, techniques and skills they could use in their current jobs;
- 77 percent of respondents said the session would make them more effective in their current role; and,
- 84 percent of respondents said they were given tools that will make integrating this new information into their position easier.

The Leadership Academy also offers training sessions that focus on the skills required when managing employees. For example, in November, the Leadership Academy is offering a two-part session called Coaching Employees - A Critical Skill in a Manager's Toolkit. This session provides managers insight into the coaching process, which is an essential component in managing employees. For more information about training and development opportunities, please visit the Leadership Academy Web site at www.stthomas.edu/hr/leadership/default.html. Click on "Training Online." You will need to log on, click on "Calendar," and then scroll down to the "Management Series."

Resources

In addition to training sessions, the university has designed a number of resources to assist in the performance-assessment process.

These resources include:

- A Guidebook detailing each step of the process;
- Checklists and steps for the process and planning the meetings;
- Sample forms to assist in performance planning;
- Examples of commonly used job standards; and,
- Examples of how to describe employee performance.

To obtain a copy of any of these resources, please visit the Human Resources Department Web site, Manager Toolkit Web page at: www.stthomas.edu/hr/mgrtoolkit/default.html.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your Human Resources Partner at 2-6510.

Who to call? HR Partners are aligned with specific academic and administrative units

Summary: Find out who your HR Partner is so that help is just a phone call, e-mail or visit away.

The HR Partners provide professional support and advice to faculty, staff and administration on human resources-related matters including: recruitment, staffing, workforce planning, employee relations, conflict resolution, compensation, organization development, diversity management, career and professional development, and performance management.

Each HR Partner is aligned with a specific academic or administrative unit. There have been some recent changes in HR Partner alignment. Please make note of any changes in your area.

Here is the list of HR Partners and the academic or administrative unit with which they work (you also can see the list on the Human Resources Web site):

Terry Snyder (651) 962-6493,
trsnyder1@stthomas.edu

- Division of Academic Affairs
 - Office of the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer
 - Academic Counseling
 - Center for Catholic Studies
 - Center for Senior Citizens' Education
 - College of Arts and Sciences
 - Faculty Grants
 - Graduate School of Professional Psychology
 - International Education
 - Registrar's Office
 - School of Engineering
 - School of Social Work

- Institutional Advancement
 - Development
 - University and Government Relations

- Enrollment Services
 - Admissions
 - Financial Aid

- Office for Mission
 - Campus Ministry
 - Institutional Research and Planning
 - Office of Institutional Diversity

Kristen Ireland (651) 962-6903,
klireland@stthomas.edu

St. Paul Seminary and School of Divinity

- Office of Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer
 - Institutional Advancement
 - Alumni Association
 - Constituent Relations

- Division of Student Affairs
 - Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
 - Office of the Dean of Students

- Athletics
- Box Office and Expeditions
- Campus Life
- Campus Living
- Career Services
- Child Development Center
- International Student Services
- Life-Work Center
- Multicultural Student Services
- Personal Counseling
- Student Health Services

- Division of Finance and Administration
 - Auxiliary Services (Food Service, Public Safety, Service Center, Bookstore)
 - Business Office
 - Controller's Office
 - Gainey Conference Center
 - Minneapolis Services
 - Physical Plant
 - Procurement Services
 - Rome Campus
 - Treasury and Investment Office

Human Resources Department

Julie Schwalbach (651) 962-6515,
jaschwalbach@stthomas.edu

- Division of Academic Affairs
 - College of Business
 - School of Education
 - School of Law
 - Graduate Programs in Software
 - The Murray Institute

- Division of Information Resources and Technologies
 - Office of the Vice President for Information Resources and Technologies
 - Client Services
 - Information Technology
 - Network and Telecom Services
 - UST Libraries
 - Web and Media Services

Break down stress; count your blessings

While too much stress can break you down, your built-in adaptation responses can make you stronger.

Engineers will tell you that every material has a “stress point,” the limit of force that material can withstand without risk of permanent damage. Push any material past its stress point, and it will break or become structurally weakened in a way that makes its future performance unreliable. You need to know the stress point of any material you use and avoid subjecting it to any force beyond that point.

Stress works much the same way in your life and in your body, but it is not so simple a concept. First, there are more forms of stress with which to contend: physical, mental and emotional. Second, your personal breaking points in all of these areas are not nearly as clear or predictable as the breaking point of a piece of metal or wood. Third, because you are a living organism, not an inert material, you have dynamic responses to stress: While too much stress can break you down, your built-in adaptation response to stress also can make you stronger.

Mental-emotional stress works a bit differently. It too can have a powerful physical effect, but that effect is rarely positive. The stress you feel when you are pressed for time or money, when you are worried about a relationship or pressured by your job – these forms of stress generally manifest as anxiety. You might experience anxiety as a jittery feeling, as tightness in the chest, neck or shoulders, or as a gnawing in the pit of your stomach. These are all cues that your body is experiencing some level of fight-or-flight response.

The net effect is the release of cortisol and other hormones that essentially break down your body in an effort to provide you with an emergency supply of energy and strength. In an emergency, these hormones come in handy, but over time, these same hormones can cause imbalances that utterly undermine your long-term health. The more consistently you are stressed out, the more consistently your body is going to break itself down.

It is a good idea to seek out certain types of stress challenges and to avoid others – but how? It is important for every person to spend time each day managing stress and putting things in perspective. It is important to consider whether the stress response you are having is really merited by the situation at hand.

When you feel your anxiety levels rising, remember that fight-or-flight response you are feeling was developed over millions of years for purposes of emergency survival in the wild. In the context of your daily modern life, it is unlikely to do you very much good. It is also important for you to assess your stress issues in the context of people in the world who are hungry or lacking shelter. Many of your worries will seem far less immediate and daunting, and perhaps less deserving of the massive anxiety you afford them.

Step back from your own stress for a moment. Take a deep breath and count your blessings. Release your worries, or simply accept them for what they are. There is virtually no life challenge that is not better handled from a place of hope, gratitude and positive belief – just one more reason not to let stress get the best of you.