



# HR Messenger

## From the desk of the Associate Vice President

You, the employees of the University of St. Thomas, are an integral part of this institution. Where would it be without you? The university can fill classrooms with amazing students and equip offices and labs with the latest technology. It can build wonderful new buildings and renovate old ones. It can stock the physical and electronic shelves of libraries and bookstores with texts on most topics. Get the picture? Without you, the students couldn't learn. Without you, the most basic or complex administrative services wouldn't be available to meet the ever-changing needs of the campus community. Without you, the wonderful buildings would be lifeless and cold.

You might ask, "What is this all about?" It's about the HR Messenger, a new newsletter that I take great pride in introducing on behalf of the HR staff. We hope it shows in some small way how important you are to the university. We want you to be informed of your rights and to reap all the special benefits that are available to you as a vital part of St. Thomas. You also should be the first to know about new HR programs, policies, and procedures.

This newsletter will be published quarterly. Future editions will be distributed electronically. Please be sure to give us your feedback. Tell us what makes you happy and complain if you have an issue. Our doors are always open.

Stop by Room 217, Aquinas Hall; call (651) 962-6510; or e-mail us at [employment@stthomas.edu](mailto:employment@stthomas.edu).

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### HR Spotlight

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Benefits Section  
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## The Leadership Academy is dedicated to making St. Thomas a great place to work

*Created exclusively for you, The Leadership Academy will offer an array of professional development opportunities to meet the needs of all employee groups.*

The Department of Human Resources announces The Leadership Academy, its new professional development program for faculty and staff that is dedicated to making the University of St. Thomas a great place to work and a place where people can do great work.

The Leadership Academy is designed and offered exclusively for employees at St. Thomas to support the needs of individuals and departments, both from a personal and a professional perspective.

The academy will offer this support through an array of professional development opportunities organized into several series that are customized to meet the needs of different employee groups, including:

- Faculty
- Managers
- Support staff
- Employees working with technology
- Sessions open to all

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These professional development opportunities are designed to assist you in fulfilling your current roles at UST as you continue to learn new skills for the future. The Leadership Academy will encourage excellence and foster growth and development at all levels at St. Thomas because learning is a lifelong commitment and a door to future greatness.

Our first calendar of offerings for the spring semester is available online at [www.hr.stthomas.edu/leadership/index.jsp](http://www.hr.stthomas.edu/leadership/index.jsp). Printed catalogs also are available in individual department offices and in the Human Resources Department, Room 217, Aquinas Hall. A registration form is included in the catalogs for anyone who is unable to register online.

Please remember to seek supervisor approval before registering for sessions. Participation may be limited for some sessions so you are encouraged to check the listings and register early. We reserve the right to cancel or re-schedule individual sessions due to low registration.

We invite and encourage your input in order to make The Leadership Academy a program that truly meets your needs as a UST employee.

You may reach us at [ldrshp\\_acad@stthomas.edu](mailto:ldrshp_acad@stthomas.edu) or call (651) 962-6510 with any questions or comments.

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## **Blue Cross Blue Shield announces fast affordable Minute Clinic**

*This group of clinics offers an alternative to urgent care that is covered by your normal BCBS benefit package.*

There are never enough hours in the day to take care of everything, but we can make things a little easier for you. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota has established a group of clinics that are an alternative to your regular clinic or urgent care facility, with hours that should fit everyone's schedule.

Minute Clinic is a fast affordable way to get common ailments diagnosed and treated in one day, without much waiting. Minute Clinic boasts that its patients are normally in and out within 15 minutes, no appointment needed, and it can be found in convenient locations. The clinics are located in Target and Cub Foods stores around the metro area.

Since Minute Clinic is a Blue Cross Blue Shield Network Provider, your normal office benefits apply.

Minute Clinic's nurse practitioners and physician assistants are qualified to evaluate, diagnose and prescribe for your symptoms. The clinic can diagnose and treat the following common ailments: strep throat, ear infection, ringworm, styes, mononucleosis, seasonal allergies, sinus infection, bladder infection, pink eye, deer tick bite, poison ivy, cold sores and impetigo.

Minute Clinic also can test for: cholesterol (fast 10-12 hours), blood pressure, pregnancy and for HbA1c, and give vaccines for tetanus, hepatitis B, the flu and MMR (adults). If you show symptoms of something that the nurse practitioners and physician assistants cannot diagnose, they will refer you to the proper health care facility.

For more information and locations near you, visit the Minute Clinic Web site at [www.minuteclinic.com](http://www.minuteclinic.com).

## How does UST's benefit package stack up?

*When compared with local colleges, universities and businesses, St. Thomas is lookin' good.*

Do you ever wonder how the St. Thomas benefit package compares to the benefits offered at other Twin Cities colleges, universities and local businesses? The Benefits Team constantly monitors neighboring benefits packages by using published surveys. When a comparison is done, St. Thomas comes out very well! In almost every category, the University of St. Thomas package is at least "above average" in value to the others and in many cases we are offering our employees "superior" programs. A few examples are listed below.

### Costs for medical plans

- For single coverage in each ACTC institution's primary plan, premiums ranged from a high of \$106.37 bi-weekly to a low of \$32.95, with St. Thomas at \$70.64 (less flex dollars = \$28.97).
- For family coverage in the primary plans, premiums ranged from a high of \$511.78 to a low of \$273.69, with St. Thomas at \$212.82 (less flex dollars = \$171.15).
- In the alternative plans being offered, single coverage ranged from \$102.49 to \$7.82, with St. Thomas at \$46.20 (less flex dollars = \$4.53).
- For family coverage in the alternative plans, premiums ranged from \$375.64 to \$195.69, with St. Thomas at \$155.16 (less flex dollars = \$113.49).

A comparison of dental programs provides similar results to the medical-plan comparison.

### How about other benefits?

- Retirement-plan contributions in ACTC schools ranged from 5 percent to 12 percent but, to receive those contributions, employees are required to contribute between 3 percent and 5 percent; the St. Thomas contribution is 10.4 percent with no employee contribution required.
- Employer flexible credits — St. Thomas is the only institution that offers employees these extra dollars (\$1,000 per year) to offset employee out-of-pocket premium costs, which is received in cash if the employee elects coverage somewhere other than St. Thomas.
- Holidays — The number of holidays and floating personal days each ACTC institution offers ranged from nine to 13, with St. Thomas at 13.

There are a number of additional benefits that each ACTC institution offers to its employees, but St. Thomas is the only one that offers them all. These include voluntary life insurance for the employee, spouse and/or dependent children, health and dependent care spending accounts, travel assistance program, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Wellness Center and Healthy U, athletic facilities, telecommuting, flextime, job share, financial-planning education, employee service awards, subsidized bus passes and tuition remission.

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## St. Thomas must reclassify some exempt jobs to comply with new regulations.

*Fair Labor Standards Act changed to protect overtime rights – what does this mean for you?*

Approximately 45 UST employees' jobs will be reclassified from exempt (salaried) to nonexempt (hourly) effective April 3, 2005. This reclassification is a direct result of revisions made by the U.S. Department of Labor to the Fair Labor Standards Act in 2004.

Administrators and staff in the Human Resources Department are working hard to help St. Thomas employees who will be affected by this change to reap full benefits from a situation

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that on the surface could be misperceived. We also will be available to answer questions and provide a smooth transition. We emphasize the fact that this change in the law has nothing to do with job titles or quality of work, but rather on meeting new criteria for nonexempt and exempt status.

Under the DOL's new FairPay rules, workers earning less than \$23,660 per year or \$455 per week are guaranteed overtime pay at time and one-half the regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 hours in a workweek. Only hourly (nonexempt) employees are paid overtime, so exempt employees earning less than the amounts listed above automatically will be reclassified to nonexempt under the law.

Exempt employees who are paid on a salaried basis (not qualifying for overtime) and make more than \$23,660 per year or \$455 per week also must meet other criteria that are listed in detail on the DOL Web site at

[http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/fairpay/fs17a\\_overview.htm](http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/fairpay/fs17a_overview.htm).

Here is a brief overview of that criteria:

- Executive – One whose primary duty is managing a department or subdivision. This person supervises two or more employees and takes care of hiring, promotion and firing.
- Administrative employee – One who performs office work related to the management operations of the employer or the employer's customers. This person must use discretion and independent judgment.
- Professional – One whose work requires advanced knowledge in a field of science or learning. This knowledge customarily is acquired by a prolonged course of specialized instruction.

See the DOL Web site for more in-depth coverage of these categories and additional criteria for employees who work in computer technology, for creative (artistic) professionals, for administrators in an educational establishment and for highly compensated employees.

St. Thomas must abide by the law or face substantial fines and ongoing audits by the DOL. Human Resources has asked department heads and supervisors to update job profiles. If your job is affected, you will receive written notice from HR. There will be no change in your pay grade or pay rate. All earned but unused vacation leave days will be converted to Personal Leave Time (PLT) on an hour-to-hour basis. PLT includes sick leave, vacation and floating holidays.

Here is an accrual schedule of PLT for hourly employees:

Length of Service	Accrual (Per hour worked)	Weeks Per Year	Hours Per Year
3 months - 4 years	.068	3.5 weeks	141.44
4-12 years	.090	4.7 weeks	187.20
12 years and over	.109	5.7 weeks	226.72

Nonexempt employees with four or more years of service will get an additional 27.20 hours of PLT per year than they were getting under exempt status; nonexempt employees with 12 or more years of service will get an additional 26.72 hours.

If you work on an approved flexible schedule and are among the employees who will change from exempt to nonexempt, you may continue working hours that are best for you as long as you do not exceed 40 hours in a week. All overtime must be pre-authorized by your supervisor. Also, talk to your supervisor or the Payroll Department about completing your timesheet and meeting timesheet deadlines. You will need to complete a time card for hours worked starting on Sunday, April 3, 2005.

Your last exempt paycheck will be dated April 1 and then you will be on the hourly employee pay cycle. As a result of this change, your next paycheck would be issued Friday, April 29.

Rather than waiting a month between paychecks, you may choose one of the following options:

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- A. Get a payroll advance of 40-hours' pay on April 15, and then that advance amount will be deducted from your paycheck on April 29.
- B. Get a payroll advance of 80-hours' pay on April 15, and then that 80 hours will be divided and deducted sequentially from the next five paychecks: April 29, May 13 and 27, June 10 and 24.
- C. Request a short-term loan from the university that you will repay over the remaining 18 paychecks of the 2005 tax year.

Regardless of which option you choose, you must sign a Repayment Agreement (promissory note) specific to the option you select. The Repayment Agreement must be signed and submitted to the Payroll Department no later than Friday, April 1, 2005.

For more information, visit the UST FLSA Study Web site at <http://www.hr.stthomas.edu> (click on the Fair Labor Standards Act link found under "Compensation") or the U.S. Department of Labor Web site at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/fairpay/main.htm>.

If you have questions, contact Pete Ronza, compensation and benefits manager, at [ppronza@stthomas.edu](mailto:ppronza@stthomas.edu).

## **New employee orientation is now a snap!**

*If you are responsible for hiring in your department, you'll want to keep this information handy.*

Over the past two years, we have been working to increase the effectiveness of our orientation program.

Our goals have been to:

- Provide information to new employees within an appropriate time frame
- Make sure that the time spent in orientation is effective and informative

We started this improvement process by surveying new hires about the information they received at St. Thomas and the time frame in which they felt this information should be delivered. The first improvement was made in the area of benefits. For example, 86 percent of new employees responded that they wanted their benefits information on or before their first day of work.

Based on the survey data, we created a packet and video explaining the benefits and related forms that new employees can pick up in Human Resources at the same time the appropriate new-hire paperwork is completed. With this process, new employees can receive their benefits information as soon as UST's employment offer is accepted.

Recently, additional changes have been made to the orientation process in accordance with the goals and survey data listed above.

### **Technology training**

The survey data showed that another 86 percent of new employees felt that information on the phone and computer systems also should be provided on or before their first day of work.

In response to this issue, members of the Information Resources and Technologies staff have worked hard to implement online training programs for both the phone and computer systems. These online training programs allow new employees to access information about the systems in whatever time frame is effective for them, whether it's their first day or their first month of employment.

You will find the online training programs on the Information Resources and Technologies Web site at <http://www.stthomas.edu/irt/training/orientation/index.htm>.

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### **New Employee Reference Guide**

The survey data also showed a number of other resources and services that new employees needed on or before their first day of work, such as information related to payroll, parking and ID cards. Therefore, we have created a packet of information called the New Employee Reference Guide that provides basic information about the campus and some of the services provided at the university.

Here are the topics included in the guide:

- Human Resources contact information (HR partners)
- Public Safety and Parking Services
- Campus maps (both Minneapolis and St. Paul)
- ID cards and Express Accounts
- Food Service locations
- Payroll schedules (both exempt and non-exempt)
- Holiday schedule
- Service Center
- Technology resources
- UST's policy on responsible use of computing resources

A process for distributing these information packets to hiring managers is being developed so that the packets can be given to new employees on their first day of work.

### **Orientation**

With all these changes, we also have changed the structure of the orientation day. Since technology training is available online and basic information is available on the new employee's first day, there is no longer a need to provide hands-on training during orientation. This reduces the amount of time in orientation from seven hours to four hours.

Orientation now is offered once a month: from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month in Murray-Herrick Campus Center.

### **Have a new employee?**

There are two critical tasks to complete when you hire a new employee:

1. Ask your new employee to come to Human Resources prior to their first day of work to complete new-hire paperwork. New employees are anxious to learn about and sign up for their benefits, which they can do as soon as they fill out the appropriate paperwork.
2. Also, the new-hire paperwork is needed, in conjunction with the new-hire Web page (found on the Human Resources Web site: <http://www.hr.stthomas.edu/index.jsp>, click on "Forms" and log in), to create an e-mail account. It takes 72 hours to create an e-mail account. If a new employee waits until their first day to complete their paperwork, an account won't be available until her or his third or fourth day of work. In addition, the Web page will start the orientation registration process. When a Web page is submitted, an HR assistant will register your new employee for orientation and send you an e-mail confirming the new employee's orientation date and agenda.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the orientation process, please feel free to contact Kristen Ireland, at (651) 962-6903.

## Starting to plan for life after work?

*You may be able to ease into retirement on a reduced work schedule or choose a monetary allowance according to your age plus years of university service.*

The University of St. Thomas is offering a window of opportunity, April 1, 2005, through March 31, 2006, for qualifying staff to choose the phased retirement or monetary retirement option that is designed to help soften some of the financial hardships that may result from retiring early.

Voluntary, early retirement is open to staff who meet the following three requirements: are age 55 or older on the date of application; who have a combined age and years of full-time service at UST equal to or greater than 70 (e.g., age 55 plus 15 years of service = 70); and who have completed at least 10 years of continuous full-time service with the university. Excluded from the early retirement program are faculty (including adjunct faculty), staff covered by a labor contract, administrators with yearly faculty contracts, and temporary employees.

A request for early retirement must be initiated voluntarily by an eligible staff member in writing and approved by the appropriate dean, program director, or vice president, as well as the Associate Vice President for Human Resources. Approval is subject to budgetary constraints and final endorsement must be given by the appropriate executive vice president, who may find it necessary to limit the number of staff participating based on the needs of the university.

Staff who meet the criteria are encouraged to announce their retirement early in exchange for either phased retirement or the monetary retirement allowance. Following is a brief overview of the two options.

### Phased retirement

A phased-retirement agreement allows staff to phase into retirement by working a reduced schedule while earning wages to alleviate financial concerns.

A work schedule that is acceptable to both the staff member and the department or division must be arranged either directly or via a stepped or gradually declining schedule with the stipulation that during the phasing period, a staff member may hold no greater than a 75 percent appointment. While other arrangements may be negotiated, a work schedule of less than one-half may render the staff member ineligible for certain university employee benefits. Salary and any salary-dependent benefits are prorated to reflect the decreased work schedule.

The official retirement date for the retiring employee typically is not more than two years after the start of the phased-retirement agreement. Full retirement is required at the end of the phasing period. Once the phased-retirement period is initiated, the staff member may not return to a full-time appointment.

### Monetary retirement incentive

A monetary retirement incentive is a salary-continuation agreement that provides pay at the retiring staff member's annual salary rate on the date of retirement. Specifically, it provides for a certain number of weeks of pay for years of full-time continuous service up to a maximum of 26 weeks of pay. Thus, the size of the monetary incentive will vary, depending on length of service.

Eligible staff must submit a completed application to the Human Resources Department between April 1, 2005 and Oct. 1, 2005. Retirement must occur on or before March 31, 2006. If you get your application in before Oct. 1, 2005, but it is declined, you may reapply during the period from April 1, 2006, through Oct. 31, 2006. Retirement must occur on or before March 31, 2007. No candidates will be considered after Oct. 1, 2005, unless his or her initial application was declined.

Retirement allowance payments will be made on a biweekly pay period basis beginning the first pay period after the staff member's retirement date. All university employee benefits, except those mandated by statute, cease at the time of retirement.

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A staff member who elects the monetary retirement option may not subsequently participate in the phased retirement option. Similarly, if a staff member chooses phased retirement, he or she is precluded from participating in the monetary option.

The university will base its decision to approve or deny a voluntary retirement request on whether or not its financial condition and normal business processes will be substantially weakened by the approval. However, the University reserves the right to amend or terminate this program at any time with or without notice.

For more information and to get complete instructions about the voluntary, early retirement options, you may contact Pete Ronza at (651) 962-6521 (ppronza@stthomas.edu) or Edna Comedy at (651) 962-6511 (ercomedy@stthomas.edu). The HR Department is located in Room 217, Aquinas Hall.



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