

Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs

Resolution Number: 2007-08B

**Approval of
the New Human Resources Policies for University Staff**

Approved by the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs:	April 01, 2008
First reading by University Council:	April 21, 2008
Second reading by University Council	May 5, 2008
Approved by University Council:	(Date)
Approved by the President:	(Date)
Approved by the Board of Visitors	(Date)
Effective Date:	(Date)

WHEREAS, the higher education restructuring act provided level 3 institutions with an opportunity to develop a new human resources system for university staff, the designation of non-faculty employees hired on or after July 1, 2006; and

WHEREAS, the Management Agreement between the university and the Commonwealth authorizes the President to adopt and implement human resources systems for university employees that are consistent with the Management Agreement, and any other human resources policies adopted by the Department of Human Resource Management or the Board of Visitors for university personnel; and

WHEREAS, the university's 2006-2012 Strategic Plan Update includes implementation of consistent and effective performance evaluation processes for staff.

WHEREAS, the University established a process that provided for broad input from staff employees and their supervisors in the design of the new human resources system; and the recommended policies address the most significant findings from these efforts; and

WHEREAS, with the approval of these policies effective October 1, 2008, the University will commence the 90 day enrollment period during which classified staff may elect to participate in and be governed by the human resources programs established for university staff; and the new Human Resources System for university staff will be implemented on January 1, 2009.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the proposed human resources policies for university staff be implemented January 1, 2009, as described in this resolution be recommended for approval.

The current human resources policies for classified staff will be adopted for University Staff, except for the changes described in the resolution.

The layoff policy will be revised to provide preferential employment opportunities and recall opportunities to vacancies in the same pay band and career group for eligible university staff.

A performance management policy will include the following components: four levels of performance for university staff, using the following ratings: model performance, strong performance, developing performance, and unacceptable performance; opportunities for employees to provide self-assessments as part of their evaluation. Human Resources will evaluate the feasibility of conducting interim evaluations and a process to allow employees to periodically provide confidential feedback about their immediate supervisors.

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Resolution for Approval of Human Resources Policies for University Staff

Background

The following recommendations represent the first phase of the higher education restructuring policy redesign efforts. Consideration of new policies or enhancements to current policies will continue over the next several years. Whereas separate resolutions addressing the continuation of the salary and job classification structures, changes in compensation and merit pay policy, and expanded definition for Administrative and Professional faculty have been submitted for Board approval, this resolution describes the application of other personnel policies to university staff, with minor revisions, and where applicable, for classified employees.

Continuation of Existing Human Resources Policies, as Amended, for University Staff

Previously, the Board affirmed that existing personnel policies would continue to be in place for university staff until such time that a new Human Resources System was adopted. The Employee Advisory Committee reviewed the state and university personnel policies and recommends that the existing policies continue to apply to classified and university staff employees, except where noted below. Policies which will continue to be applied to both types of employees include, but are not limited to: employment and promotion, probationary periods, standards of conduct, authorized closings, holidays, outside employment, special term appointments, temporary workforce reductions, and background checks. The policies governing paid and unpaid leaves will also remain the same.

The University will not require that classified employees, who transfer to Virginia Tech as university staff, serve new probationary periods if they have successfully completed the probationary period at their former agency. The university will establish a reciprocal agreement with the State's Department of Human Resources Management that university staff who have successfully completed a probationary period will not be required to serve a new probationary period when they transfer to a classified position at another state agency.

At any time, however, the University may choose to adopt new human resources policies or amend these policies for university staff, with the exception of the state's grievance procedure, and the retirement, workers compensation, and health insurance plans, which will continue to apply to both classified and university staff employees.

Layoff Policy

It is recommended that the major provisions of the layoff policy remain the same for both classified and university staff employees. Those elements that will be administered consistently for both groups include, but are not limited to: establishment of seniority date (i.e., continuous salaried service state hire date); order of layoff; exclusion of layoff

benefits for part-time, restricted or term appointments unless immediately preceding position was regular (no break in service); and placement and preferential employment benefits. The University will recognize the preferential employment rights of eligible laid off employees from other state agencies, and will establish a reciprocal agreement with the state's Department of Human Resources that university staff hired on or after July 1, 2006 will be afforded preferential employment benefits at other state agencies.

The current state policy provides that eligible employees who were not placed in another university position and are in a leave-without-pay layoff status, or who were placed in a position with a lower pay band or salary, are eligible for recall to a position in the same role title for a maximum period of 12 months from date of layoff or demotion in lieu of layoff. It is recommended that the recall rights for university staff be extended to include positions in the same pay band and career group, which will expand the recall opportunities in some situations.

Performance Management

The management agreement between the University and the Commonwealth stipulates that the performance planning and evaluation process shall establish and communicate performance expectations, help develop productive working relationships, allow employees to present their views concerning performance, and clarify how superlative or inadequate performance will be addressed. Various options regarding performance management were evaluated. The analysis included a careful review of current practices, a detailed review of the results of the Restructuring survey, focus group feedback, as well as the information obtained from a study of best practices by peer institutions (SCHEV) and discussions with external consultants. The recommendations address the need to provide more accurate differentiation in the rating scales, simplify the performance management and planning process, improve communication and feedback between employees and supervisors, and extend the provisions of certain policies governing classified staff to university staff. Where permitted by state policy, the performance management process for classified employees will include the same provisions to provide a consistent approach and reduce administrative complexity.

The following is a summary of the proposals. While some of the elements are administrative, they are described below to provide the context for significant process improvements.

- The staff performance planning and evaluation process will be simplified and automated.
- Levels of performance will be differentiated by a 4-point rating scale, which will replace the current 3-point scale and will be used for university Staff. The new ratings are "model performance, strong performance, developing performance, and unacceptable performance." This distinction supports the proposed merit pay program [addressed in a separate resolution] and can be used in the in-band adjustment process where performance is a consideration.
- The focus of the performance evaluation process will continue to assess both what the employee accomplishes in relation to his/her position description and how individual employees accomplish their duties.
- Communication and feedback between employees and supervisors will be strengthened by use of self-assessments as part of their evaluation process.

Submitted for the Board's review and approval is a separate resolution providing new compensation and merit pay policies for university staff.

Essential Elements for Success

Effective, accessible, and on-going training for managers and supervisors was a compelling theme arising from the focus groups (both staff and faculty supervisors), survey responses, and discussions with the Staff Senate and the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs. This was particularly critical for performance management and compensation programs.

The overall simplification of processes and forms, supported by technology, helpful guides, templates, and examples, has also been recommended as an essential element for successful implementation of these programs.

Communications and Implementation

As part of its Management Agreement, at least every two years the University will give employees who have elected to remain State classified employees the opportunity to join the University's Human Resources system. At that same time, the University will provide each classified employee with a comparison of the University Human Resources System with the State system. On the effective date (October 1, 2008) of the new Human Resources system, the university will provide a 90 day enrollment period for classified staff.