

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Guidelines for Radford University

Purpose

In creating a high-performance workplace, recognition is a motivating factor that provides employees with increased job satisfaction and encouragement to perform their jobs more effectively. Recognition programs are excellent motivators and critical to employee retention. When employees are recognized for their accomplishments – and done so in a manner that is meaningful to them, they feel appreciated for their efforts and feel their work is valuable. Recognition programs that acknowledge employees' contributions to the overall objectives and effective operation of Radford University will promote good employee relations, improve morale, and increase productivity.

Funding

Vice presidents, deans, directors, and department heads will ensure the availability of funds to support reasonable costs incurred by employee recognition programs for their work units. Work units will be defined by vice presidents. Most programs will be department-based and, therefore, department-funded. Departments are encouraged to plan for employee recognition awards in their budget. The expense of presenting awards will be paid from institutional funds and will not be deducted from employee award amounts.

Recognition Approaches

Either an informal or formal approach may be used to recognize individuals or teams who have made significant contributions toward the university's goals, priorities, and successful operations.

Informal Recognition

An informal approach provides recognition at any time, typically by the employee's supervisor. Examples include on-the-spot awards to recognize teamwork, project completion, a new or modified work practice, exemplary effort, employee appreciation, etc.

Formal Recognition

Departments or divisions may want to plan a more formal approach to acknowledge employee accomplishments. Examples include awards for attendance, safety, customer service, productivity, honoring separating employees, outstanding achievements, etc.

Awards

Employees may be recognized with monetary and/or non-monetary awards and recognition leave. An employee may receive the maximum for each type of award. All recognition awards will be documented, reported, and processed with the *Employee Recognition Award* form (*Attachment C*). Obtain approvals and mail form with original signatures to Human Resources. The original record for recognition leave will be maintained in Human Resources. For monetary and non-monetary awards, the original record will be forwarded to Accounting Services.

Monetary and Non-Monetary Awards

Full-time and part-time classified, probationary, and wage employees are eligible for monetary and non-monetary awards. In accordance with state policy (1.20 Employee Recognition Programs), no employee will receive more than \$1,000 in a fiscal year.

The highest levels of monetary awards will be the institutional awards. Lesser monetary awards will be decentralized to divisions and departments so that employees may be recognized in accordance with the values and priorities of their respective work units. Non-monetary awards will be held to a level so as not to result in tax liability for the employee. **NOTE:** In years when the budget does not allow for monetary awards, recognition leave will be substituted.

Monetary awards

- Subject to income taxes so an employee never receives the face value of the award.
- Will not be added to an employee's base pay.
- Up to \$750 for institutional awards.
- Up to \$500 for awards funded by a division or department.
- Will be processed using the PR40.
- Examples of monetary awards are cash, check, and savings bonds.

Non-monetary awards

- Cumulative value will not exceed \$50 per employee in a fiscal year (*de minimus* value making it non-taxable as income to the employee).
- Department heads will be responsible for keeping records to ensure that the cumulative value of awards does not exceed \$50 in a fiscal year. These records will be subject to audit.
- May be purchased through normal purchasing procedures using object code 1417 for employee recognition awards. Copies of the Employee Recognition Award form should be maintained with departmental purchasing records and/or provided to Accounts Payable as required.
- To add non-refundable money to an employee's RU Express account, complete the *Employee Recognition Award* form and send copy to the RU Express Office.
- Examples of non-monetary awards include thank you notes; ***non-refundable*** money deposited to an employee's RU Express account; non-refundable gift certificates; plaques; trophies; certificates; pencils, pens, desk items; cups, mugs; caps, shirts, sweatshirts; and other items such as tools, electronics, radios, sports equipment, and timepieces.

Recognition Leave

Full-time and part-time classified employees are eligible for up to 40 hours of recognition leave in a calendar leave year (January 10 – January 9). Wage employees are not eligible for recognition leave. The value of leave awarded will not be included in the \$1,000 award limit per employee per fiscal year. Awards of recognition leave are decentralized to departments and are typically used as “spot” awards.

- The amount of leave and the reason for awarding leave may be determined by the supervisor but must be approved by the department head.
- The department head will monitor the cumulative hours to ensure that no more than 40 hours are approved.
- The department will immediately send a copy of the *Employee Recognition Award* form to Human Resources when leave is approved.
- Recognition leave lapses within 12 months from the date it is awarded.
- If the employee is unable to use the leave, the rules outlined in State Policy 1.20 will apply.

HOW TO PLAN FOR EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Incentives only work if they are meaningful and if the goals set are realistic, attainable, and measurable. Recognition programs that are evaluated subjectively are tougher to develop because employees may not perceive them to be fair. The key is to set goals and evaluate employee behavior objectively, i.e., improve safety record with a lower number of accidents, improve attendance with fewer days missed. These are objective criteria and can be easily understood by participants.

Here are some guidelines for planning a more structured employee recognition program:

Brainstorm with your staff. Seek their input on goals to work toward and/or ways to make the particular employee recognition program a success.

Make it fair and unbiased. State the program objectives and eligibility for participation; describe process for selecting employees for recognition; state objective criteria upon which award decisions will be made; describe awards and manner of presentation; describe method for informing employees about the program; and estimate expenses.

Set a schedule. Determine the intervals at which progress is going to be measured. For example, if a recognition program is slated to run for three months, announce the rankings every two weeks to keep the program at the front of everyone’s mind.

Give meaningful recognition. Employees will be most inspired if they feel rewards are worth the effort. Consider personalities when thinking of rewards. Think creatively.

SUGGESTED WAYS TO RECOGNIZE EMPLOYEES

“Way To Go!” Cards. Human Resources will make available specially printed thank-you cards on which to write a note and hand out to employees who do exceptional work.

Ten Ways To Say Thank-you. Telling employees “You’re doing a great job” isn’t specific enough. Give praise that is detailed and relevant. Here are ten “openers” that you can use to make your praise specific:

“I’m impressed with...”
“What an effective way to...”
“You got my attention with...”
“You’re right on the mark with...”
“One of the things I enjoy most about you is...”
“We couldn’t have done it without your...”
“You’re doing top quality work on...”
“You can be proud of yourself for...”
“You’ve made my day because of...”
“You really made a difference by...”

Thank-you Bucks. A department may want to make up some fake dollars to recognize and reward employees for a job well done or just to appreciate their hustle that day. Ten bucks could be traded for a \$50 non-refundable deposit (funded by the work unit) to an employee’s RU Express account.

Achievements Box. This is a way to improve morale in your department. When something positive happens, write it down and put it in the box. At the next staff meeting, read each piece of paper to employees to give everyone a lift. Encourage employees to contribute their own positive news to the box by drawing one employee note at random for a small prize.

Weekly Planner. Employees who feel appreciated are much less likely to look for another job. Go through your weekly planner for the next three months. Write the name of a different employee on each week. When that employee’s week comes up, catch him or her “doing something right” – and dish out the praise.

Perfect Attendance Award. Employees with perfect attendance for three months win eight hours of recognition leave or non-refundable money (funded by the work unit) deposited to their RU Express account

Check Out These Books from the HR Department’s Resource Library for Ideas:

- 1001 Ways to Energize Employees by Bob Nelson
- 1001 Ways to Reward Employees by Bob Nelson
- Motivating Today’s Employees by Bob Nelson
- 180 Ways to Walk the Recognition Talk by Eric Harvey