



# RAMifications in the workplace...

Human Resource Bulletin

Policies and Procedures 2009/10

This eleventh policies and procedures newsletter highlights important federal and state laws and/or policies related to your employment with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the role we all play in complying with various rules and regulations during our employment. **You are part of VCU's frontline in the ethical and accurate conduct of business.**

The newsletter and past years' issues also are posted at [www.hr.vcu.edu/communications/](http://www.hr.vcu.edu/communications/).

## Ten Reasons Why VCU is a Great Place to Work

There are dozens of reasons we came to work here ... and have stayed and thrived. Especially in tough times, we need to recognize our resources and our combined strengths.

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- 1.** Opportunities to work with the best students, a world-class faculty, and high-quality staff.
- 2.** Opportunities to work in diverse, vibrant, urban settings in the heart of historic Richmond.
- 3.** Access to excellent benefits including health care, tuition waiver, and savings plans such as tax-deferred annuities.
- 4.** Flexible work schedules and services to help achieve a work/life balance.
- 5.** Opportunities to be recognized for service or quality work through programs such as the Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment, Distinguished Faculty Awards, the VCU PRIDE Campaign, Dorris Douglas Budd Award, Watstein-Burnside LGBT award, and annual Service Awards.
- 6.** Access to artistic, intellectual, and athletic events.
- 7.** Opportunities to work in state-of-the-art and award-winning facilities, many of which are using “green” or sustainable technology.
- 8.** Ability to learn about other cultures on campus and abroad through the VCUQatar School of Arts and other international academic partnerships.
- 9.** Opportunities to give back to the community through volunteering and charity fund drives.
- 10.** Access to top-notch doctors, nurses, and researchers in the VCU Medical Center.

## Don't Just Survive – Thrive!

Problems at home, work worries, and a difficult economy can all add up to some stressful times. Take control of your health and well-being by utilizing some of the many resources available to you as a VCU employee. “We are fortunate to work at VCU with so many people, services, and groups willing to help out in good times and bad,” notes Debbie Fitzgerald, Work/Life Resources Coordinator. For more information and resources, visit the [VCU Families: Coping with the Economy](#) website.

**Stay healthy** – [CommonHealth@VCU](#) provides health and wellness services to help you get healthy and keep fit, including screening information and more. Need help losing those extra pounds that are dragging you down? Try [Weight Watchers at Work](#). Employees who participate in or are eligible for state benefits can be reimbursed at 50% for the cost of Weight Watchers sessions.



**Get active** – Faculty and staff have access to on-campus intramural sports, fitness programs, outdoor adventure trips, and special sporting events through the Recreational Sports program. Memberships are available to VCU faculty, staff, alumni and select contract staff at reasonable rates and payroll deduction is available. Visit the [website](#) for more information. Discounted memberships to area health clubs are also available through CommonHealth (see above). Can't join a gym? Try walking at lunch. Did you know that two laps around Monroe Park equals approximately one mile? Roundtrip between campuses is approximately four miles.

**Practice financial fitness** – take advantage of the many financial fitness learning opportunities through [Work/Life Resources](#) or the [Virginia Credit Union](#). Save for your future by participating in the tax-deferred annuity program. For as little \$10 per pay period, eligible employees can also receive a cash match – free money!

**Get professional help if needed** – employees and their covered family members can access an employee assistance program (EAP) through the state health care plans. Visit the [website](#) to determine which EAP is covered by your health plan.

**Help others** – volunteering can help you keep your own problems in perspective and take your mind off your own stress. Eligible faculty and staff can use up to 16 hours of community service leave each leave year to provide volunteer services through eligible non-profit organizations within or outside their communities. Find out about volunteer opportunities by visiting [www.community.vcu.edu/solutions/](http://www.community.vcu.edu/solutions/).



## Ethics During Difficult Times

During tough economic times, the [VCU Code of Ethics](#) still serves as the foundation of our workplace values. Although we continue to do more with less, resist the urge to take short cuts. “Brighter days are ahead; don't erode the foundation or your own values during the tough times,” noted Richard Bunce, Executive Director of Assurance Services. Continue to do business correctly and report any concerns to your manager or through the VCU Helpline.



It's safe, secure and totally confidential.

To report any concern or for more information, visit [VCUHelpline.com](http://VCUHelpline.com) or call 1-(888) 242-6022.

## Revised Human Resource Guidelines

Please note that the *Guidelines for Separating Faculty and Staff* have been revised effective September of 2009. We have updated the checklist with the input of VCU's Office of Research, which is using this and other ways to promote better University-wide compliance in finalizing research activities for departing principal investigators, research staff, and those who receive extramural funding.

The guidelines can be accessed on-line from the HR [policies website](#) or the VCU [Administrative Toolkit](#).

## Threat Assessment Training Online

VCU is committed to providing faculty, staff, and students with an environment that is safe, secure, and free from threats, intimidation, and violence. In addition to the *Threat Assessment and Violence Prevention Policy*, the University Safety Committee, and the procedures for identifying and reporting dangerous behaviors, there is now an additional training resource available through Blackboard.

To learn more about how to identify a potential threat and how to respond, log on to <https://blackboard.vcu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp> and search using the key words "threat" or "violence."

## Nonresident Alien Student Workers

Students pursuing an academic program who are on F-1 and J-1 visa status are eligible to work on campus up to 20 hours per week during fall and spring semesters and up to 40 hours per week during winter and summer breaks. These hours include graduate assistantships.

**Working more than the allotted hours is considered unauthorized work** and can jeopardize the student's visa and, depending on the severity of the situation, could result in deportation of the individual. It is the responsibility of the student and employing department to stay within the allotted work hours. Department timekeepers can help monitor hours worked by using the PHATIME form in Banner.



### P-Card Reminders

To protect yourself and VCU resources, strictly follow Procurement rules related to P-cards. Keep logs, reconcile the card activity, and make sure your appropriate authorized approver reviews and signs off on your documentation in a timely manner. Visit the [Procurement website](#) for more information.

## Are Your Health Care Dependents in Compliance?

This year, the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management is conducting a health care audit of existing dependent coverage. In addition, all new employees with health care coverage will be expected to provide proof of dependent eligibility when they sign up for coverage.

If you have dependents on your health care plan, you should have received at your home address a request to complete an affidavit of eligibility. **If you have not received information about the audit, you should immediately call** the Commonwealth's Dependent Eligibility Verification Audit Unit toll-free at 1-866-641-5651 and enter employer ID code 8513 at the prompt to verify your correct home address and request a duplicate audit package.

Failure to remove ineligible dependents can result in loss of health care coverage for a period of three years. Protect this valuable benefit and remove ineligible dependents in a timely manner. You do not have to wait for open enrollment – you can change coverage due to a “life event.”

### Dependent Eligibility Criteria

**Spouse** - The marriage must be recognized as legal in the Commonwealth of Virginia. **Note: Ex-spouses are not eligible, even with a court order.**

**Natural or Adopted Child** - A son or daughter may be covered to the end of the year in which s/he turns age 23,\* regardless of student status, if the child:

- lives at home or is away at school;
- is not married; **and**
- receives more than one-half of his/her support from the employee.

In cases where the natural (or adoptive) parents are living apart, the child may live with the other parent but must receive more than one-half of his/her support from either parent or a combination from both parents.

**Stepchild** - Unmarried stepson or stepdaughter may be covered to the end of the year in which s/he turns age 23,\* regardless of student status, if:

- s/he is living with the employee in a parent-child relationship;
- the principal place of residence is with the employee;
- s/he is a member of the employee's household; **and**
- s/he receives over one-half of his/her support from the employee.

**Other Female or Male Child** - An unmarried, minor child in which a court has ordered the employee to assume sole permanent custody may be covered until the end of the year in which s/he turns age 23.\* If joint custody, it must be with the employee and the employee's legal spouse and:

- the principal place of residence is with the employee;
- the child is a member of the employee's household; **and**
- s/he receives over one-half of his/her support from the employee.

**Other Female or Male Child Exception** - If the employee (or employee's spouse) shares custody with a minor child who is the parent of an “other female or male child,” then that “other child” may also be covered if:

- the other child,
- the minor child\*\* (who is the parent), **and**
- the employee's spouse (if applicable) all live in the same household as the employee.

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\*When approved as an adult dependent who is incapacitated due to a physical or mental health condition, the child may be covered beyond the age of 23.

\*\*The minor child must meet all of the eligibility requirements for a dependent child.

## Personnel Administrators – Helping Managers Stay Compliant

Ever wonder how a manager learns to comply with all of the federal and state employment laws, and related University rules and regulations? Fortunately, you can help ensure compliance by relying on your departmental Personnel Administrator (PA).

*The Personnel Administrator Certification Program (right) is one of the ways HR helps prepare PAs to help you!*

### PAC

The [Personnel Administrator Certification Program](#) (PAC) provides training on job-related policies and procedures, helps create growth opportunities as knowledge and experience increase, ensures knowledge to comply with HR-related regulations, and allows recipients to contribute to their department and VCU.

PAs are some of the key liaisons for Human Resources. Through them, we can keep hiring managers, faculty, and staff informed about changes to employment-related policies and procedures. In addition to frequent email updates called Instant HRs, we also offer periodic training sessions through our HR Partners training series.

Your PA is trained to know the rules and to provide you with lawful guidance. And, if your PA confronts unusual situations, s/he has HR experts to turn to for answers.

***What's at stake with non-compliance? Why should you care about employment laws and regulations?*** Besides helping to ensure high productivity and good workplace morale, compliance reduces the risk of financial consequences. Below are some of the “dollars-and-cents” realities of non-compliance:

- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) penalties for failing to pay required overtime:
  - \$ Fines up to \$1,000 per offense per employee plus damages for unpaid wages for the past 2 -3 years.
- I-9 Form and Immigration Reform Control Act (IRCA) penalties can include:
  - \$ Civil fines of \$100 to \$10,000 per violation for record-keeping and employment violations.
  - \$ Back pay/front pay and attorney fees for discriminatory actions.
  - \$ Imposition of criminal penalties for repeated violations.
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) penalties for failing to comply with the law:
  - \$ Litigation and case-by-case monetary awards.
- Discrimination or Sexual Harassment (Title VII, Title IV, Americans with Disabilities Act, etc.) penalties include:
  - \$ Litigation and case-by-case monetary awards.

Support your PA. Encourage him/her to sign up for the [PA Certification program](#) today!

## Information Security Ten Best Practices

Use these best practices published by [VCU Technology Services](#) to protect your data!

1. **Protect your personal information.** To minimize your risk of identity theft, don't share your personal information unless you know how it will be used and protected. Use discretion when sharing information on social media sites like Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. Your birth date, address, and other personal information can be used for identity theft.
2. **Protect your passwords.** Create easy-to-remember, hard-to-guess passwords and never share them with other people. Don't use the same password everywhere. And if you write down your password, keep it in a secure location.
3. **Protect your computer.** Implement a login password to access your computer. If you leave your computer unattended, lock it or log off – don't rely on your computer to lock on its own. Never leave your laptop unattended in a public place. If leaving your laptop in a vehicle, hide it.
4. **Protect your paper documents.** Limit printing of sensitive data. Lock sensitive documents in a drawer or cabinet. Shred sensitive documents that are no longer needed.
5. **Back up your important files.** Back up your important files to external media and store the data in a safe place, preferably offsite. Update your back-up files periodically and be sure to test their restoration periodically as well.
6. **Don't open untrusted files and don't install untrusted software.** Only download and install reputable software from authoritative sources. Don't open email attachments if you don't recognize the sender or you weren't expecting an attachment.
7. **Keep your operating system and software current.** Configure your operating system to install security patches automatically. Check the websites of other installed software periodically for security patches and updates.
8. **Use antivirus, antispyware, and firewall software.** Use antivirus software to protect you and your computer against viruses. Use antispyware software to protect against spyware. Use a firewall to protect against intruders and attacks. Since threats are always changing, keep your antivirus, antispyware, and firewall software current.
9. **Don't store unencrypted sensitive data on portable storage media.** Laptops and portable storage media like USB flash drives are convenient, but are easily lost. Use encryption software to render sensitive data unreadable by an unauthorized person.
10. **Report data breaches and missing computers and data storage devices.** Immediately report data breaches and lost or stolen computers and data storage devices (including, but not limited to, USB flash drives and CDs). If VCU devices or data are involved or if a loss occurs on a VCU campus, notify [VCU Information Security](#). Otherwise, contact local law enforcement.

Want to file your taxes early and get a jump on your refund? Even if you aren't expecting a refund, you'll be able to get your documentation together more quickly using the eW2. And if you misplace your W-2, it's always conveniently accessible on-line. Print as many copies as you like ... whenever you like!



### Signing up is easy:

1. Log on to the [myVCU portal](#).
2. Click on eServices/VCU Self Service under General Resources.
3. Click on the Employee tab, then Tax Forms/Electronic W-2 Statement and follow the instructions.

(NOTE: Consent remains in effect until revoked by the employee.)

Remember to log on again in January (when the eW2 becomes available) to print your W-2 form, because you won't get one in the mail.

Questions? Call Payroll at (804) 828-0740.

## Leave and Other Employment Reminders

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### VCU's 2009 Winter Closing (December 19, 2009 through January 3, 2010)

This year's [winter closing](#) requires 24 additional hours (8 hours each on December 21, 22, and 23) for which eligible faculty and staff must take leave (with or without pay) to cover the time away from work. VCU resumes normal business operations on Monday, January 4, 2010. ***To ensure continuity of pay and leave accrual, be sure you have saved enough leave (annual, personal/family, overtime, compensatory, recognition, or holiday) to cover the three additional days.***

### Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) Eligibility

The leave year for [FMLA](#) begins January 10. Employees who are on approved FMLA before and after January 10 will require a new FMLA designation form.

### Public Health Emergency Leave

In the event that the State Health Commissioner declares a Communicable Disease of Public Health, such as the H1N1 flu pandemic, eligible faculty and classified staff will have access to Public Health Emergency Leave, which provides up to 80 hours of paid leave per year to attend to the medical needs of themselves and immediate family members.

Until such a declaration is made, the following conditions apply:

- Offices will remain open and faculty and staff are expected to report to work as usual.
- Supervisors or department heads should notify their employees as to whether they are **designated** as required to work their scheduled shifts.
- It is important to take care of yourself during this time. If you are ill, you must use leave and attend to your medical needs in order to minimize infecting others.

### Telecommuting

VCU's Telecommuting policy requires that all classified employees who are telecommuting have a [written agreement](#) in place and that a copy is sent to Human Resources to comply with state data collection requirements.

The ability to telecommute is a management decision and based on the position's suitability for offsite work as well as other factors. As noted in the [policy](#), "Offsite work carries with it additional responsibilities for the University and its employees to demonstrate that work duties are properly performed and legal requirements for compensation and safety are met." Use of telecommuting as a substitute for child or adult care is a violation of state and University policy.

### Certifying Officers

Certifying Officers (CO) are key internal controls for the timekeeping process. An important part of CO responsibilities is to compare the original timekeeping documentation (approved leave requests, Lotus Notes leave summaries, approved hourly timesheets) to the Banner Leave Balance Summary and Revised Wage Hours Worked YTD reports each pay period. Signed copies of reconciliations and accompanying documentation are then maintained in department timekeeping files for five years, and they must be available for audit review upon request.

Don't have a CO in your department? Work with the department head and PA in your area to identify the correct individual(s) for this role. Then use the remedy ticket process at <https://supportcenter.vcu.edu> to request the CO designation for identified personnel.