



HR Newsletter
June 2009
 Auburn University Human Resources
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Changes to Background Check Inquiries Allow HR to Pass Savings to Hiring Departments

Like all of you, Human Resources has been involved in looking for ways to tighten our belts and reduce costs. In addition to looking at our own internal operations, we are also very sensitive to those expenses that we pass on to our hiring departments.

A little over a year ago we added an inquiry to our standard background checks for Federal Criminal Histories. These criminal record searches are conducted district by district to look for any records involving fraud, embezzlement, and white-collar crimes. In our desire to leave no stone unturned to ensure that you knew who you were hiring, we began including these inquiries on all of our background checks. Of course, as a result our average cost per inquiry was increased - by about \$30.

This past month we engaged in discussions with our background screening company (Verified Credentials) regarding cost-cutting measures, and one of the recommendations they made was to only conduct the Federal Criminal Histories on our upper-level administrative positions. Therefore, beginning in March we established the practice of only conducting these checks on our jobs in salary grades 34 and above.

Additionally, we were advised that the State of Alabama's criminal records database is one of the best in the country. As a result, Verified suggested that we consider requesting a Statewide Criminal Database report from the State of Alabama rather than ordering the County Criminal History on each Alabama county in which the applicant has lived, worked, or attended school. While the county-by-county checks are generally considered the most accurate and we will continue to request these for all locations outside of our state, Verified is confident that the University will still be meeting its due diligence requirements with the statewide inquiry based upon the stellar progress our state has made in this area.



As a result of these adjustments, we are happy to report a significant decrease in our average cost per inquiry for the first month. Our average cost per inquiry for the month of February was \$89.31; our average cost per inquiry for the month of March was **\$31.27**. Of course, there are many variables involved in the actual cost of any specific background check - number of locations checked, alternate names, etc. Naturally, if we are hiring for a key administrative position and the selected candidate has never been to Alabama then their background check cost is not going to be affected by these changes. But for the majority of our background checks we hope that this will mean significantly less cost being charged back to your departmental accounts.

The Employment Unit will continue to look for other ways to more efficiently utilize the University's dollars while ensuring that we are meeting our obligations to the campus community. If you have any questions about the University's background checking process, contact Angela Erlanson at erlanah@auburn.edu or call 4-4145.

Summer Schedule Registration

Don't forget that registration for HRD's Summer Schedule is currently ongoing. View the [schedule](#) online or register in [A-Train](#). New courses this Summer include The Introduction to PowerPoint 2007, Savings and Investment Basics, and Budget Bailout. Contact Pamela Rogers (844-7939 or pk0001@auburn.edu) with questions.

Supervisor's Toolkit: AU Nepotism Policy



As summer approaches a number of high school and college students begin seeking employment through TES or student employment. From time to time we run into issues where a family member is in the supervisory chain of command and does not realize that TES and student employees are subject to the same nepotism policy as our Administrative/Professional and University Staff employees.

This month's **Supervisor's Toolkit** features a primer on the University's Nepotism policy. [Click here](#).

Taking Control of Asthma and COPD

When left uncontrolled, asthma and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; most commonly bronchitis or emphysema) can reduce a person's ability to do even the most common of daily activities. In the Human Resources Development (HRD) seminar "Breathing Easier: Taking Control of Asthma and COPD," presented on June 16, 2009, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the HRD Training Facility, Pamela Stamm--Associate Professor, Pharmacy Practice--will explain how participants can counter these lung problems by learning the causes and triggers of asthma and COPD, ways to reduce attacks, and the necessity of appropriate medication delivery and timing. To register, go to [A-Train](#) or contact [Pamela Rogers](#) (844-7363).

Employee Recognition Program Set for June 3rd

This year's Employee Recognition Program to honor employees achieving milestones in years of service, and for winning the Spirit of Excellence Award, is scheduled for **Wednesday, June 3, 2009** from **2:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m.** at the Auburn University **Student Center Ballroom** on the third floor. A total of 348 dedicated employees will be recognized for five, 10, 20, 30 and 40 years of service to the university. Additionally, the 48 monthly Spirit of Excellence Award winners will be recognized. From among this distinguished group of 48, the four employees selected as **employees of the year** will be announced. Those four will each receive a **\$500 cash award** made possible by a \$2,000 donation from the Office of Development. A reception for all those honored will be held immediately following the recognition program. Faculty and staff members are also invited to attend the reception.



Here are some photos from last year's [Recognition Program](#).

Limited Term Appointments

The majority of the positions posted by Human Resources are continuing term appointments. This means there is an on-going need for someone to perform those job duties, and the funding for those positions comes in whole or in part from non-restricted funds. The other type of appointment which can be utilized only when certain conditions are met is a limited term appointment.

Limited term appointments are for a specified period of time, generally governed by the duration of specific projects, contracts, grants, or limited salary dollars available. Appointments are frequently for one or more years in duration (not to exceed five), can be extended pending approved funding, and carry the same employee benefits packages, expectations of

satisfactory performance, and access to due process as continuing term appointments. The salary referral process and the benefits package are no different for limited term positions than they are for continuing term positions, so there is really no difference in the cost to the department upon hire.

Before a position can be posted as limited term, the department must justify to Human Resources that the situation fits into the established criteria. Otherwise, the position will be posted as continuing term. If a position is approved for a limited term appointment, all recruitment advertisements must clearly state the terms of the appointment. As you might conclude, our applicant pools for limited term positions tend to be quite a bit smaller than for our continuing term positions.

You might ask, "Why would I want to post a job as limited term if it is going to result in fewer applicants?" Keep in mind that we need to be as forthcoming regarding our conditions of employment as we can be. If you have a position which is truly limited term and you cannot guarantee employment past a certain date, then we have an obligation to inform candidates up front of that contingency. There are also additional notifications required for hiring on limited term appointments, such as a very specifically worded offer letter and subsequent written notifications if the employment is going to be extended beyond the initial limited term time period. If continuing dollars become available, a department can change an appointment from limited to continuing by notifying the employee of this in writing, with a copy to Human Resources. Conversely, appointments can be changed from continuing to limited term; however, this would require review by Human Resources to ensure that established criteria have been met.

Employees on continuing term appointments fall under the University's layoff provisions. If for some reason a continuing term position needs to be eliminated, written approval must be obtained by the Provost or a Vice President and the employee must be provided at a minimum two weeks written notice prior to being placed in leave without pay (of course, Human Resources encourages that as much advance notice be given as is possible). Then the employee receives assistance from Human Resources for a period of six months after the last date in pay status in seeking other employment on campus; however, during this six month period the department still must continue to fund the benefits for the employee.

By being forthcoming up front about the terms of employment for limited term, approval to eliminate the position is only required at the departmental level. Written notification still must be given to the employee at least two weeks in advance (with copy to HR), but once the funds are no longer available the employee may be terminated on that date.

For more information about limited term appointments, please contact Angela Erlandson at erlanah@auburn.edu

Moving? Want to Continue Your Career in Higher Ed?

The Department of Human Resources routinely receives position announcements from other colleges and universities. These are maintained in notebooks in the lobby of our department in the basement of Langdon Hall. Please feel free to come by to review these during our lobby hours of 7:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m, Monday through Friday.

Your Newsletter Subscription

Subscribers to the HR Newsletter receive a brief email alert message, and a pointer to this newsletter on the web, whenever the newsletter is updated. You can read the newsletter without subscribing, of course -- just visit http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/hrnews.htm.

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The Office of Human Resources is open Monday through Friday, 7:45 am to 4:45 pm Central Time (except holidays)

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