

HR MATTERS

“We don’t just process your paperwork. We’re really here as advocates for the employees, because if your work life is going well, you’re going to be more productive.”

You Take Care of It Because It’s Your Home: Human Resources in Higher Education

By Kimberly Bryant-Smith



Therese Marrocco, Director of Human Resources

“What do you think most people picture first when you say you work in human resources?”

Therese Marrocco looks at her desk crowded with five weeks of work and a welcome-to-the-office houseplant, and starts to chuckle. “Donald Trump: ‘*You’re fired!*’ What about you, what do you picture?”

“Paperwork,” I confess.

Marrocco nods. “That’s what the old personnel departments were like in the 1950s, but modern human resources departments are different. We don’t just process your paperwork. We’re really here as advocates for the employees, because if your work life is going well, you’re going to be more productive.”

Norwalk Community College’s new Director of Human Resources began her career as a research scientist studying infant vision at her alma mater Brooklyn College’s Infant Study Center. Although she eventually left grant-funded research for a steady job with health insurance in Human Resources at Brooklyn College, she credits the analytical focus and collaborative environment of her early career as major influences on her work today. “I’m always thinking about analyzing situations – what does it mean, and what are the trends?” she says. “This big-picture focus helps HR policies and procedures work effectively to promote employee performance, satisfaction, and retention.”

The college workplace suits her analytic approach to human resources, but Marrocco also enjoys working in higher education because of the shared mission to educate students. “Although these skills can be transferred to business, we’re different because we’re a community with a common goal. If I can get people excited about the mission and goals, the whole community benefits.”

“Employees who take courses and alumni employees are a valuable resource for institutions like NCC,” says Marrocco. “It’s a win-win, because they’re already invested in the mission. At Brooklyn College, I bought into the goals right away, because it was my home. You take care of it, because it’s your home.” NCC’s common goals and sense of home are attractive to prospective employees as well. Marrocco plans to make information about college work life and employee benefits easily available on the college website. “When you’re looking for a job, you want to know what kind of environment you’ll be working in,” she says. “I like to give more information, rather than less. We have a lot of good things here at NCC – we just need to package them up and tell people about them.”

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"I'd like to see more recognition programs; we have fantastic staff and faculty who work here and I know there's more we can do to recognize them."

Leaving her old home at Brooklyn College was a tough decision, but Marrocco is excited about working within a coalition of two-year and four-year schools as part of Connecticut's state college system. She and her family are in the process of moving to their home in Easton. Although she missed the most recent New York City half-marathon, she is looking forward to going running on Easton's scenic roads as the days get longer.

What will the future hold for NCC's Human Resources Department? "Of course, we need to do the nuts and bolts of HR and get you paid on time, but that's only the minimum level of service," says Marrocco. "Short-term, I'd like to improve and streamline our processes here and make them less paper-driven. Long-term, I'd love to develop professional development plans for every employee. I'd like to see more recognition programs; we have fantastic staff and faculty who work here and I know there's more we can do to recognize them."

Communication will be a major focus for NCC's Human Resources Department as well, with more newsletters to follow this one. "The newsletter will have information from all the different areas of HR – benefits, payroll, and pertinent information for managers," says Marrocco. "I'd like to do cover stories on employees so we get to know each other better. People tend to work in silos. It happens everywhere, not just at NCC. If we talk to people and get to know them, we can benefit from what they know."



President Levinson

A Message from the President

Welcome to the first edition of *HR Matters*, the newsletter of the Office of Human Resources. I've been hearing from many of the staff at different meetings around campus about the need for more communication and we decided a publication for all employees would be a good way to start.

This issue is chock full of important news for you to read up on. Check the facts about Workers' Compensation and new processes for hiring Educational Assistants and Part-Time Lecturers. Be sure to read the news about the Employee Assistance Program available to all faculty and staff of NCC and the important information about College Savings Plans.

We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions for future issues. Enjoy this inaugural edition!

– David L. Levinson, Ph.D.

Did you know that the State of Connecticut offers a CHET College Savings Program?

By Jean Walden

The State of Connecticut offers the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET), Connecticut's 529 College Savings Plan to help families save for college. CHET is a tax-advantaged, low-cost savings program specifically designed to help families save for future college costs. The funds can be used at accredited colleges and universities across the country, including vocational and technical schools, and some colleges abroad.

Connecticut families can open a CHET account for as little as \$25 and contributions can be automatically deducted from checking or savings accounts, or payroll deducted through participating employers. The CHET program website offers online enrollment and

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describes the range of investment options. A CHET account can be opened by any individual, including a grandparent, family friend, or neighbor.

Three great reasons to consider opening a CHET account:

1. *Connecticut State Tax Deduction* – Up to \$5,000 per taxpayer or \$10,000 for taxpayers filing jointly.
2. *Among the Lowest Fees in the Country* – With CHET, there are no sales charges or start-up or maintenance fees.
3. *A Variety of Investment Options to Help You Save* – CHET offers 11 investment options, which vary in their strategy and degree of risk, allowing you to select an option or combination of options that best fit your higher education saving needs and investment philosophy.

About 529 Plans

A 529 Plan is an education savings plan operated by a state or educational institution designed to help families set aside funds for future college costs. It is named after Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, which created these types of savings plans in 1996.

529 plans can be used to meet costs of qualified colleges *nationwide*. In most plans, your choice of school is not affected by the state your 529 savings plan is from. For example, you can be a Connecticut resident and send your student to college in North Carolina.

Connecticut offers a direct-sold 529 college savings plan without residency restrictions, managed by TIAA-CREF, and an advisor-sold 529 savings program that is open only to Connecticut residents, managed by Hartford Life.

For more information

Please visit the CHET website at www.aboutchet.com for more information, and to view the CHET Disclosure Booklet. You can also view CHET videos, webcast, and TV commercials on the site. Questions can be answered by phone at (888) 799-CHET, Monday through Friday, between 8 am and 11 pm.

Workers' Compensation

By Donna Brooks

What is Workers' Compensation?

Workers' Compensation (WC) is a statutory program designed to provide benefits to Connecticut workers in the event of occupational injury and/or illness. It is a legally imposed "agreement" between employers and their employees.

Employees are compensated for work-related injuries and illnesses without regard to fault. Benefits include medical care, wage replacement, compensation for permanent disability, and vocational training. In return, employers are generally immune from lawsuits by employees seeking damages beyond those provided by the statutory schedule.

Who is eligible for WC Benefits?

All employees on State payroll are eligible for WC benefits in the event of injury/illness in the performance of their on-the-job duties. This includes full-time and part-time employees.

WC Benefit Structure

When an employee is injured on, or becomes ill during the course of their employment, he/she becomes eligible for a number of statutory benefits:

Necessary Medical Treatment – The most immediate concern in cases of occupational injury or illness is the health and physical well-being of the employee. An employee may choose an attending physician AFTER the initial visit with an employer-designated medical practitioner. However, the employee must choose a physician from the list of doctors included in that plan. If the employee chooses a physician outside of that plan, a Workers' Compensation Commissioner may suspend all rights to workers' compensation benefits.

Monetary Benefits – The employee is eligible for wage replacement. Whenever an employee is unable to perform any job, he/she is eligible to receive Temporary Total Disability (TTD) benefits. When an employee suffers a relapse or recurrence of the original injury or illness, he/she may receive benefits for the period of the relapse or recurrence. The value of these benefits is calculated based upon the original date of the injury or illness and the wages earned at that time and at the time of the relapse or recurrence.

Vocational Rehabilitation – The Workers' Compensation commission also provides for vocational rehabilitation for those employees who are injured at, or who become ill from their work, and who cannot return to the work which caused the injury or illness. Such employees may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation from the Workers' Compensation Commission's Rehabilitation Services Unit.

Types of Workers' Compensation Claims

Report Only – An incident that is reported by an employee, but no medical attention is being sought.

Medical Only – An incident that is reported by an employee to the supervisor with corresponding medical treatment, but the injured employee loses no time from work.

Lost Time – An incident that is reported by an employee with corresponding medical treatment, and the injured worker loses time from work.

When an injury happens, what should employees do?

1. Be mindful if there are any witnesses to the incident.
2. Report the injury to Donna Brooks in the Human Resources Office or to Security (be sure to notify your supervisor as well).
3. Complete a DAS WC Claim Reporting packet which includes the following forms:

First Report of Injury (Form 207) – This form is used to record information when phoning in the claim to the Third Party Administrator and reviewing the claim in Core-CT.

Filing Status and Exemption (Form 1A) – This WC Commission form is used to record the injured worker's federal income tax filing status and number of exemptions for the use in establishing the base WC rate.

Concurrent Employment and Third Party Liability (Form WC211) – This form must be completed to identify if the injured worker has any employment other than the State of Connecticut for potential concurrent employment benefits and to identify any third party negligence that caused the injury.

Use of Accrued Leave (Form CO-715) – This form covers an employee’s “irrevocable” election to utilize or not utilize accrued leave which is used to supplement lost wages.

Workers Status Report (Form 208) – This form is completed by the initial care or attending physician to record the injured worker’s diagnosis, course of treatment, and work disposition.

Contracts, Hiring New Staff and Other Fun Stuff

By Ewa Mazur-Kmiciek

Hiring packages are going electronic

Every new employee must complete a hiring package before starting work. Here is the legal disclaimer as to why:

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) requires the college to verify the employment of all employees. In general, employees, including students who want to work on campus, must provide for our examination original (not photocopied) documents which establish both identity and employment eligibility. The back of the Form I-9 lists the documents that have been identified by the Department of Homeland Security as acceptable. These documents must be presented IN PERSON to someone in the Human Resources Office, West Campus, room W118.

The packages are available in the Human Resources office and can be sent out via email upon request. In the not-so-distant future, the packages will be available on the HR website. A new employee can download the forms they need to complete.

Contracts for Part Time Lecturers (PTL) and Educational Assistants (EA)

New rules and new processes: If you plan on hiring an Educational Assistant (EA), come talk with us as soon as possible. EA requests must be sent to the HR office at least two weeks prior to the start date, preferably longer. Employees must have a signed contract before they begin their work assignment – there is no way around this rule. *If HR does not have a signed contract, an employee is not authorized to work.* We will not be able to process a paycheck without work authorization.

The same goes for PTLs. We will be processing contracts prior to the beginning of the semester. The academic division has agreed to send their lists to HR months before the start date. With the exception of a course cancellation or addition, all PTLs should return a signed contract to HR before they begin teaching. A calendar of deadline dates will be provided as the new semester approaches.



“Increasing the level of warmth and friendliness in our interactions with visitors can improve results in both challenging and routine cases.”



Customer Service Webinar

By Kimberly Bryant-Smith

Visiting a departmental office at NCC may not exactly be a trip to a theme park, but on March 6, more than 60 staff and student workers at the Human Resources department’s customer service training webinar learned how to apply the Magic Kingdom’s techniques to daily life.

Disney’s goals are to attract new visitors and give people reasons to come back. Your office and mine may be offering visitors a dish of mints or a few recycled magazines, along with self-improvement via education, instead of costumed characters and roller coasters. All the same, we can use the same strategies that work for Disney to give our visitors a positive impression that benefits the whole college.

If visitors must wait, put them at ease with a speedy acknowledgment of their arrival – within 10 seconds, or when they are 10 feet away – and a warm welcome with eye contact and a smile. This positive first impression sets the tone for the rest of the encounter. Visitors feel better about waiting if they are offered something to read, and even very modest refreshments, whether or not they accept the offer.

The same rules of warmth and courtesy can also improve telephone communication. A few simple techniques have been shown to work well, even though they may feel silly at first. Smile while talking, to create a warmer, friendlier sound. Speak more slowly than you would face-to-face. Give your name, and use the caller’s name. Most importantly, use the same manners you would use with your grandmother.

An effective technique to calm difficult customers is to acknowledge their problem and express empathy with a phrase such as “I realize this must be frustrating” or “I know this must be confusing.” Consciously increasing the level of warmth and friendliness in our interactions with visitors can improve results in both challenging and routine cases.

Webinar attendees reported that the training gave a helpful overview of good customer service and provided some useful techniques. Since not all employees were not able to

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attend the live webinar, a link to the recording is available in the HR Resources section of NCC's internal web portal.

HR Director Therese Marrocco organized the program with the assistance of Events and Campus Relations Coordinator Barbara Smith and Reference Librarian Gunnar Sahlin, in response to a request from the Staff Caucus for more employee training. Look for other training programs in the future, and please feel free to contact us with your suggestions.

Direct Deposit Information

The Payroll Office encourages all employees to enroll in direct deposit. Payroll direct deposit is the process by which your paycheck is electronically deposited to your checking and/or savings account, either in total or by percentage.

Benefits of Direct Deposit

Peace of Mind – No worries about mail delays, weather closings, and lost or stolen checks. Your money is available to you on Thursday, prior to pay check dates.

Convenience – No special trips to pick up and deposit your checks. Payments are automatically deposited to your account, even if you are out of town, suffering from illness, lying on the beach, or searching for your golf ball in the woods.

Flexibility – Deposits can be sent to your checking and/or savings account, in the bank or credit union of your choice.

If you decide to close or change your bank account, you will need to inform the Payroll Office immediately to avoid having your direct deposit rejected by a closed or invalid account. The result is a paper check being produced by the State Comptroller, only after the rejected deposit is returned to the State Comptroller's Office in Hartford. Please contact the Payroll Office within 14 days prior to pay date in order to avoid this situation.

Direct deposit forms can be picked up in the Payroll Office, West Campus, Room 118, any time during the day, or mailed to you at your request. For more information, please contact Hank Moss at x77129, or Mare Christensen at x77061.

Changes to Health Benefits

If you have a life-changing event that requires you to make adjustments to your health benefits, such as marriage, birth or adoption of a child, the death of a spouse, domestic partner or child, or any dependent who has aged out of your plan, you must notify the Human Resources Office within 31 days of the event. You may be asked to provide specific documentation to support a change, such as proof of insurance coverage to support the deletion of a dependent child who has obtained their own insurance.

Part-time Faculty Summer 2013 Payroll Dates

Session 1: 6/28/13, 7/12/13

Session 2: 6/28/13, 7/12/13, 7/26/13, 8/9/13

Session 3: 7/26/13, 8/9/13

Timesheet Submission

Below is a list of the 2013-2014 payroll dates and timesheet due dates to assist employees and supervisors. Timesheets must be received in the payroll office no later than noon on the Friday following the end of each pay period. This includes all Part-time Educational Assistants and Student Workers. It is advised that timesheets be hand-carried to the Payroll Office to insure that everyone gets paid on time.

Reminder to supervisors of student workers

Student worker timesheets must be forwarded to the payroll office directly from the supervisor either with the group of timesheets for the department or via inter-department mail. Students should not be allowed to hand-carry their timesheet to the payroll office. Hand-carried timesheets will not be accepted from the student.

*Remember...
Timesheets must
be received in the
payroll office no
later than noon on
the Friday following
the end of each
pay period.*

2013-2014 Payroll Dates

Payroll Number	Pay Period Start	Pay Period End	Timesheet Submission Date	Paycheck Date
1	06/14/13	06/27/13	06/28/13	07/12/13
2	06/28/13	07/11/13	07/12/13	07/26/13
3	07/12/13	07/25/13	07/26/13	08/09/13
4	07/26/13	08/08/13	08/09/13	08/23/13
5	08/09/13	08/22/13	08/23/13	09/06/13
6	08/23/13	09/05/13	09/06/13	09/20/13
7	09/06/13	09/19/13	09/20/13	10/04/13
8	09/20/13	10/03/13	10/04/13	10/18/13
9	10/04/13	10/17/13	10/18/13	11/01/13
10	10/18/13	10/31/13	11/01/13	11/15/13
11	11/01/13	11/14/13	11/15/13	11/29/13
12	11/15/13	11/28/13	11/29/13	12/13/13
13	11/29/13	12/12/13	12/13/13	12/27/13
14	12/13/13	12/26/13	12/27/13	01/10/14
15	12/27/13	01/09/14	01/10/14	01/24/14
16	01/10/14	01/23/14	01/24/14	02/07/14
17	01/24/14	02/06/14	02/07/14	02/21/14
18	02/07/14	02/20/14	02/21/14	03/07/14
19	02/21/14	03/06/14	03/07/14	03/21/14
20	03/07/14	03/20/14	03/21/14	04/04/14
21	03/21/14	04/03/14	04/04/14	04/18/14
22	04/04/14	04/17/14	04/18/14	05/02/14
23	04/18/14	05/01/14	05/02/14	05/16/14
24	05/02/14	05/15/14	05/16/14	05/30/14
25	05/16/14	05/29/14	05/30/14	06/13/14
26	05/30/14	06/12/14	06/13/14	06/27/14

Free Employee Assistance Program

Did you know that Norwalk Community College affords all of its employees free counseling from Solutions, an innovative work/life service provider? Solutions can assist you with a host of concerns including:

- Budget and debt problems
- Change in the workplace
- Family and parenting concerns
- Bereavement and other losses

To get started, you can call the confidential hotline at (800) 526-3485. The phones are answered 24/7. Solutions offers convenient appointment times to fit your schedule.

New Employees' First Stop: Human Resources, Room W118

We need your help! If you're hiring someone new, send them our way on their first day of work. All new employees need to visit the Human Resources office in person in order to present the original identifying documents required for Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9) and make sure that all other paperwork has been completed so they can get paid on time. Please call Human Resources at x76866 if you have any questions. We look forward to welcoming your new employees to NCC.

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