

Classified and Wage Employee Recognition Award Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of the recognition award is to:

- encourage excellence in university service;
- recognize and reward individual achievements and contributions; and
- recognize and reward team achievements or contributions.

When you recognize employees effectively, you reinforce the actions and behaviors you most want to see those employees repeat. Recognizing employee accomplishments and efforts is just one tool available to managers in engaging, developing, and retaining good employees. These guidelines provide details on formal award options and informal ways to provide recognition.

Formal recognition awards are intended to encourage and reward the accomplishments and contributions of employees in ways separate from the performance appraisal process, the Employee Suggestion Program (ESP), or any other university-sponsored recognition program. Rather than recognizing overall performance, recognition awards acknowledge one or more specific instances of exemplary performance. They reward employees who demonstrate behaviors and values of the organization (customer service, teamwork, problem-solving, safety, productivity, etc.) and contribute to the goals and objectives of the organization or department. Receipt of a recognition award in this program does not preclude the same employee from receiving honorary recognition or an increase based on performance (when authorized by the Governor and General Assembly) when criteria for such recognition are otherwise met.

Recognition awards should not be used in place of paying overtime or compensatory time, and they are not meant to replace other traditional methods of recognition, but rather to increase supervisors' options in rewarding and reinforcing employee excellence. The formal awards also are not intended to recognize the length of an employee's service or to be used as a "holiday or birthday bonus." There are cost-free methods for recognizing those kinds of events (see section entitled "Additional No/Low-Cost Recognition Ideas").

Non-monetary (non-cash) awards are not permitted, regardless of source of funds. Non-monetary awards include any non-refundable gift (e.g., tangible gift items, such as prints, season tickets, gift baskets, etc.) or gift certificate.

Recognition Awards

Monetary and leave awards can be given, as described below, for various levels of accomplishments or contributions. Eligible employees include all classified employees with current performance evaluation ratings of "Fair Performer" or better and no active written notices; wage (hourly or student) employees are eligible as described below.

Total recognition awards of all types covered by these guidelines **cannot exceed** \$2,000 in a fiscal year and/or five days of leave per calendar year per classified employee or \$1,000 per fiscal year per each wage employee.

- Where **monetary (cash) awards** are permitted, any university fund source may be used to pay for a recognition award. Sponsored research (ledger 5) funds may be used as a source for payment if the payment is directly related to work on a grant or contract and the sponsor allows recognition payments. Lump-sum payments are normally included in a single check with regular pay. Supplemental tax rates apply. However, the employee also has the option of putting the lump-sum payment into an account with the VCU Tax-Deferred Annuity (TDA) program or the Commonwealth of Virginia's Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP).
- **Recognition leave (REC)** can be granted as described below for classified employees, separately or in combination with monetary awards; wage employees are not eligible for leave or paid time off. Recognition leave expires within 12 months of the date it is awarded. Any active unused recognition leave is paid to the employee upon separation or transfer to another state agency and is subject to income tax withholding.

Spot Award for Day-to-Day Excellence

Spot Awards recognize excellent work on a project, task or activity including outstanding support of day-to-day assigned business activities. They are intended to acknowledge and demonstrate immediate and spontaneous appreciation for the contributions of individuals. Spot awards are small to moderate in value. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Outstanding handling of an emergent customer service issue;
- Exceptional response to an emergency or urgent situation;
- Identifying an immediate process/system error or safety hazard;
- Resolving a pay issue or other immediate need quickly;
- Project completion of a regularly assigned project before the deadline or under budget;
- Repeated recognition by customers for excellent service; and
- Proposal of a new or modified work practice, training or educational achievements, etc.

Spot Awards can be given in amounts **up to** \$500 (classified and wage) and/or four hours of recognition leave (classified only) for each occurrence.

Because Spot Awards are intended as more immediate forms of recognition, they can be processed each pay period, following the same deadlines as used for PAFs. They require only supervisor and Dean/Department Head approval; HR approval is not required. The award form is available on the forms section of the VCU Human Resources website.

Outstanding Achievement Award

The Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes sustained outstanding achievement and/or outstanding contribution above and beyond day-to-day job requirements. This award is moderate in value. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Solving a complex or long-standing problem or creating a better solution for a work problem;
- Handling an unusually heavy workload, such as when co-workers are absent or when vacant positions are not filled immediately;
- Completion of a major project before the deadline or under budget; and
- Proposal of a new or modified work practice with impact beyond the assigned work area, etc.

Outstanding Achievement Awards can be given in amounts **up to** \$1,000 (classified and wage) and/or three days of recognition leave (classified only) for each occurrence. These awards are processed the 10th of each month *if received in HR by the first day of the month that the payment is to be made*, and

they require approval from the supervisor, dean/department head and HR. The award form is available on the forms section of the VCU Human Resources website.

Extraordinary Achievement Award

The Extraordinary Achievement Award recognizes major and extraordinary achievement and/or extraordinary contribution requiring maximum effort that significantly impacts operations and is not likely to repeat itself. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- A high-profile, one-time accomplishment that is beyond the regular scope of the job and results in recognition of improvement from peers, managers and staff;
- Developing and implementing strategies to resolve a significant work unit crisis;
- Providing extraordinary service beyond regular work duties that saves time and money;
- A one-time, outstanding effort that benefits the work unit or the university;
- Completing a major project before the deadline and under extraordinary time pressure or under budget; and
- Providing extraordinary workplace assistance that saves time and money.

Extraordinary Achievement Awards can be given in amounts **up to** \$2,000 per fiscal year and/or five days of recognition leave (REC) per calendar year for each person. (Wage employees are **not** eligible for Extraordinary Achievement Awards.) These awards are processed the 10th of each month *if received in HR by the first day of the month that the payment is to be made*, and they require approval from the supervisor, vice president (or designee) and HR. The award form is available on the forms section of the VCU Human Resources website.

Other Forms of Employee Recognition

Other forms of recognition (monetary and non-monetary) not covered by the provisions of these guidelines include, but may not be limited to the following:

- Service Awards for VCU and the VCU Health System
- State Employee Suggestion Program (ESP)
- Retiree recognition
- Departmental or holiday recognitions that are open to all employees
- Events for volunteers for activities, such as the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC)
- President's Awards for Staff and Administrative and Professional Faculty
- Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment (PACME)
- Finance and Administration Division Customer Service Awards
- Provost and Academic Affairs Division Customer Service Awards
- Dorris Douglas Budd Award (DDB)

The monetary value of these awards, if any, is not included in the \$2,000 per-fiscal-year monetary award cap. However, many of these other forms of university recognition will result in taxable income to the employee. Contact the VCU Controller's Office (828-0388) or Payroll Office (828-0740) about the inclusion or exclusion of any payment or gift as taxable income and the tax withholding implications (approximately 38.4%).

Additional No/Low-Cost Recognition Ideas

- Say "thank you" for a job well done or present a certificate or handwritten thank-you card that can be displayed in the work area.
- Recognize faculty and staff colleagues who help each other, a customer or coworker by completing a quick and easy online recognition form on the HR website. Words of appreciation will be posted for recipients and others in the VCU community.

- Send an email “thank you” to the employee with a copy to the team.
- Post a “thank you” on department bulletin board, newsletter or web site.
- Suggest a personal “thank you” from senior management.
- Invite the senior manager to attend a staff meeting when recognizing employees for their achievements.
- Include the employee in a special project or target him/her for a premium assignment.
- Provide more opportunities for specialized training and professional development.
- Assign a mentor from an area in which the employee is interested in learning.
- Periodically remind employees of the importance of their job and how their efforts relate to the mission of the university and their department/unit/area.
- Encourage the use of “flex time” (work days outside of the normal 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule) or telecommuting, where appropriate.
- Encourage employees to participate in service projects and social activities; i.e., Heart Walk, charity golf tournaments, food drives; after-work concerts, basketball games or other activities.
- Provide time for a breakfast or lunch with staff bringing in prepared food.
- Celebrate staff birthdays or special events (i.e., weddings, births, adoptions) with a card, cake, or other recognition.
- Plan department events outside of work time, such as a picnic or dinner at a local restaurant, where staff pay their share of the costs.