

UIC Human Resources

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Managing Human Capital and Focusing on Cost

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While it is necessary to focus on cost cutting measures during this financial crisis, it is of equal importance to manage Human Capital through one of the most challenging times many of us may remember. College and unit budgets are being cut, operating income is being squeezed and one of the largest line-items (perhaps the largest line-item) is labor. What can be done? This is a question being asked across private and public sector organizations, including private and public universities.

As stewards of UIC's continued growth, it is necessary to consider the current issues from a strategic perspective focusing on the end-goal of moving UIC forward. With the end-goal in mind, it becomes clear that human capital must be a central component of any strategy created to manage through the economic downturn and beyond. A focus on human capital is crucial to remain competitive in the higher education arena, and to be positioned well for the eventual economic recovery.

Addressing short and long-term operation and Human Capital concerns during a recession is challenging at best. There are a multitude of articles, books and messages, about the topic to help with the decision-making process- where are cuts necessary, what operations can be streamlined, what resources are required?

Sifting through the literature, as well as the messages being delivered about appropriate strategies to adopt in an effort to manage operations during a financial crisis can become an added stressor. In an effort to make the task of identifying relevant articles and points to consider as you are faced with making difficult decisions, a link to a research article by Patrick Callan, President of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education is provided below. The article, *Coping with Recession and Public Policy, Economic Downturn and Higher Education* addresses issues ranging from enrollment growth to human capital concerns.

Coping with Recession and Public Policy, Economic Downturn and Higher Education Article:
<http://connect.educause.edu/Library/Abstract/CopingwithRecessionPublic/41266>

Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008

On September 11, 2008, President Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. The new law, went into effect January 1, 2009. The bill passed the Senate unanimously and the House by a vote of 402 to 17. The law is intended to expand the scope of the Americans with Disabilities Act

of 1990 (ADA), a law which quickly lost its original potency from court rulings that restricted its protection measures for people with disabilities.

The ADAAA reverses two important U.S. Supreme Court decisions that had severely limited the definition of a “disability” under the ADA and covers more people than the ADA through several key provisions. One key provision of the ADAAA is a broadened, more inclusive scope of “regarded as disabled,” which now covers most impairments but not those that are minor or transitory (having an actual or expected duration of six months or less); this provision also stipulates that impairments are to be evaluated without the use of “mitigating measures” (e.g., medications, prosthetics, corrective surgery, hearing aids, and mobility devices) when determining whether an individual is substantially limited in a major life activity (the only exceptions are eyeglasses and contact lenses).

Another key provision is that while the actual definition of “disability” does not change, forthcoming guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on the “substantially limits” clause is expected to effectively change the current definition of “disability.”

While the ADA came to focus more on who was protected under a narrowly interpreted definition of “disability,” the ADAAA shifts gears to focus on whether or not employers are complying with lawful obligations. ***Employers are expected to be proactive and initiate the issue of reasonable accommodation through an interactive process with employees.*** When faced with litigation over disability issues that arise after January 1, employers in most cases will no longer be able to argue over the applicability of the ADA and technicalities over a narrowly-constricted definition of disability; instead, ***an employer will have to show that it began an interactive process with an employee and provided reasonable accommodations when necessary.***

While the new ADAAA places a significant burden on employers to proactively engage employees and provide them with reasonable accommodations, employees still have some important responsibilities. For example, if an employee refuses to engage in the interactive process with his or her employer regarding reasonable accommodations, an ADA claim can be legitimately denied; and refusal by an employee to provide necessary and verified medical information will still remain a solid defense by an employer to any claim.

The most important thing to remember for all managers and department heads on UIC’s campus is that under this new law, employers must engage in the interactive process once the employee discloses a medical condition. The Office for Access and Equity (OAE) advises all employees on giving careful consideration to all requests for reasonable accommodation and to consult with OAE before denying an accommodation. Please refer to the Employee Accommodation Policy and Request for Reasonable Accommodation Based on Medical Condition Form for more detailed information on the UIC policy. Please call OAE with any questions regarding the new ADAAA and its provisions in addition to the application of the university employee accommodation policy.

Caryn A. Bills, Interim Associate Chancellor

HR Network Update

The HR Network is continuing to develop. Campus HR has hosted several meetings with “Group One” of the HR Network and the second meeting of “Group Two” will take place in early May.

Thank you to those who provided suggestions and feedback concerning the progression of these groups. We intend to move away from referring to these groups as “Groups 1, 2, and 3” and will finalize new names soon. Upcoming meetings are listed below.

If you have any questions or suggestions in the mean time, please contact Cassandra Staudacher at cks@uic.edu.

Group One: Tuesday April 7, 2009; 3:00-4:30; Room 201D Human Resources Building

Group Two: Tuesday May 12, 2009; 10:00-12:00; Room 613 Student Center East

HR Front End Update

As we last reported in a HR Newsflash, the Front End has gone live for Central HR users within Campus HR and Faculty HR. In addition, the Colleges of LAS and Pharmacy are working with us in performing certain transactions for their respective Units. We continue to work with the Project Team in refining the functioning and performance of the system. In addition, we have worked with the Project Team regarding the Front End training. Training is delivered through both on-line and classroom training programs:

Online Training:

1. HR Front End Foundations – Provides an overview of Banner concepts and terminology. This course will be especially useful for those who have had limited to no exposure to Banner HR.
2. HR Front End Overview and Navigations – Provides an overall summary of Front End processes and how to navigate in this system. (This training is a requirement to get into classroom training.)

Classroom training: In the classroom training, users will be provided training and practice on how to perform transactions and utilize functionality of the Front End:

Transactions:

1. New Hire and Rehire
2. Add a Job
3. End a Job
4. Reappointment
5. Separation
6. Employee Record Change

7. Historical Job Change
8. Position Creation/Maintenance
9. Employee Group/Class Change

Functionality:

1. Routing transactions
2. Attaching documents
3. Mailbox management

It is expected that training dates will be announced in early April, with the actual training classes beginning in late April. Approximately 2-3 weeks before your scheduled training, you will be asked to enroll in a training class and be given a link to the online courses.

Some points you should keep in mind.

1. Training will require a full two day commitment of classroom training.
2. Security access will only be granted once an individual has completed all the required training.
3. All documents, required for the transaction, must be imaged with the Front End transaction for the transaction to be applied by Central HR. The respective documents by transaction type will be made available with the classroom training.
4. We are contacting the Colleges/Units now to discuss possible training dates and the groups to be trained.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jack McEnery (jmcenery@uic.edu) ext. 63581.

Job Descriptions: Why are they Important

Hooray, let's hear it for writing job descriptions!

OK, we understand that this is not one of your most exciting responsibilities, but let's face it. Job descriptions (or PAPES, a type of job description used at UIC for Academic Professionals) are important and if done properly set the framework for everything that gets done in an organization.

As Human Resources continues developing new technologies and employing new human capital programs (e.g. compensation, succession planning, training and development) we need a solid understanding of the work that is performed by our employees. Appropriately defining and documenting jobs (i.e. the job description) helps accomplish this goal.

It *is* possible to write effective job descriptions that create value for both the employer and employee. In fact, you can learn the details of how to do this from the "How to Write Effective Job Descriptions" guide on the UIC Human Resources website <http://www.uic.edu/depts/hr/compensation/index.shtml> or contact a member of the HR Compensation Team for assistance (comp@uic.edu).

Job descriptions, while not a panacea to all of an organization's ills, are important management tools that can have both positive and negative impacts. Our challenge is in creating well developed descriptions that enhance the positive aspects while minimizing the negative, some of which are described below.

Positives (*not exhaustive*):

Job descriptions help management improve the organization. In fact, they're the building blocks of the organization's structure. Analysis of descriptions reveals whether all responsibilities are adequately covered and where reallocation might be indicated.

Job descriptions show where the employee fits in. The job description makes sure the people you employ are aligned with your goals, vision, and mission. They must be able to visualize their place in the whole.

Job descriptions set clear expectations. The job description is the first place to look when employees aren't doing what you want them to, says Heathfield, quoting Ferdinand Fournies (*Why Don't Employees Do What They're Supposed to Do and What to Do About It*). The first step in getting people to do what you want them to is to make sure that people know your expectations—and that starts with the job description.

Job descriptions help you cover your legal bases. For example, in regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you'll want to make certain that the description of physical requirements is accurate, and you'll want to split off the essential functions of the job from those less so. That offers a fair shake to people with disabilities if they can do the essentials (with reasonable accommodation) even if they can't do the rest.

Job descriptions tell candidates what you are looking for. This helps you in the selection process, and it also helps, says Heathfield, when you are addressing questions from those who are not selected.

Job descriptions provide the basis for compensation decisions. In fact, comparing descriptions is the basis for job evaluation, grading, and pricing.

HR.BLR.com May282008

Negatives (*not exhaustive*):

Job descriptions become dated *fast*! It's a rapid-paced, ever-changing work environment these days, and outdated job descriptions are time bombs ready to explode the reality of what now needs doing back into what was needed in the past. Review descriptions regularly as part of your performance appraisal system, Heathfield recommends.

Job descriptions can encourage "that's not my job" thinking. They need enough flexibility that people can think "outside the box," says Heathfield. They need to allow for cross-training. While it's not

necessary to list every task expected of an individual, the essential duties (those that absolutely must be done) must be included and labeled as such.

Poorly written job descriptions may be used as evidence against you. For example, if the job duties are written in an extreme manner (i.e. either too specifically in an attempt to detail every single task that might possibly occur – which is impossible – so that the omission of something causes problems or too broadly, not including enough specificity to accurately portray the duties).

Adapted HR.BLR.com May292008

As with most things, there are both benefits and drawbacks related to this process. However, it is worth noting again that a well developed job description is an effective management tool for understanding and leading the UIC workforce. You are not alone because we are here to educate and to assist you. If you have any questions about how to write good job descriptions or need assistance in doing so, contact the UICHR Compensation Office at 312-355-4330 or comp@uic.edu.

Special Programs Update

The **2009 Employee Recognition Month Calendar** is approved and available online at http://www.uic.edu/depts/hr/Special_Programs/html.

November 2009 Employee Recognition Month - *Celebrating Employees at UIC*

Department recognition programs should be held during Employee Recognition Month. Please try to schedule your department's recognition event during recognition month to acknowledge employees with 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of service.

At the beginning of May, a service memo will be distributed detailing the service policy. The memo will outline employee eligibility as well as exclusions. A service lists will be distributed for verification. Please share the service information with your entire department in order to flush out omissions, errors, changes etc. this will greatly reduce the likelihood of missing a recognition opportunity. This list will be produced from BANNER.

2009 Employee Recognition Award Program ceremony will be held Wednesday, November 4th at the UIC Forum honoring UIC Award of Merit recipients and employees with 25, 30, 35, 40 and 45 years of service. The Award of Merit nominations begin April 1 – July 20, 2009. Criteria for nominees and guidelines for the nomination process can be found on line at http://www.uic.edu/depts/hr/Special_Programs/html.

The **Retirement Planning Conference** will be held May 30th at Student Center West. The seminar is free of charge but registration is required. The seminars will include information on SURS, as well as the University of Illinois Supplemental 403(b) Retirement Plan and the State of Illinois Deferred Compensation (457) Plan. The SURS, 403(b) and 457 representatives will lead the seminar discussions to assist UIC faculty, staff, and families in their retirement planning. Retirement planning can never start too soon. Whether you are planning on retiring in three years or thirty years these sessions will offer information that assists you in preparing for your retirement. Information about the upcoming seminar is online at http://www.uic.edu/depts/hr/Special_Programs/retirement_conf.shtml.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dana Poncher 3-2960, dponcher@uic.edu.

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This newsletter is a bi-monthly publication from UIC HR, Organizational Effectiveness.

Information for this publication related to Human Capital operations in general, or UIC HR specific policies and procedures is received from HR professionals campus-wide.

Please send suggestions, requests to publish articles, and HR policy/procedure updates or reminders to Organizational Effectiveness at OE@uillinois.edu.

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