

NEWS & INFORMATION

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Staff Appreciation Day is May 20

On May 20, Virginia Tech will celebrate the hard work and dedication of nearly 3,500 staff members. Staff Appreciation Day will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Rector Field House. All staff and non-student wage employees are invited to participate.

This year's event will offer a wide range of activities to include campus tours, bingo, stress-relieving massages, team competitions, and more.

Supervisors are encouraged to allow all staff employees to attend for a minimum of several hours to participate in the activities and should refer to the memorandum to all faculty from President Timothy D. Sands.

For more information, contact the President's Office at 540-231-7111.

Open Enrollment deadline is May 22

This year's open enrollment for health benefits and flexible spending accounts will take place from May 1 – 22. Changes in health insurance coverage, effective July 1 must be made during that time. In order to participate in a flexible spending account beginning July 1, employees must re-enroll during open enrollment.

Learn more about key changes to the state benefits for the 2015-16 plan year including the change in health insurance premiums at www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/insurance/open_enrollment/key_changes/index.html.

A series of informational meetings have been scheduled at a number of Virginia Tech locations to give employees the change to talk with a human resources professional about the plan changes. Employees do not need to use leave to attend any meeting held during the workday.

For more information contact the Human Resources Service Center at 540-231-9331.

Premium rewards requirements released for 2015-16 plan year

Employees will continue to have the option to reduce their monthly health insurance premiums by participating in the Premium Rewards Program for the 2015-16 plan year.

Premium rewards for the upcoming plan year beginning July 1 will be available to employees or retirees and their covered spouses enrolled in an eligible health plan on or before July 1, 2015. Learn more at www.hr.vt.edu.

Payroll deduction now available for bookstore purchases

Virginia Tech and Virginia Tech Services, Inc. have partnered to offer eligible employees the opportunity to purchase new unopened technology products (computers, printers, accessories, extended warranty, etc.) from the University Bookstore and Hokie Centric via payroll deduction.

To be eligible, employees must be full-time or part-time and salaried.

To make a purchase, employees should visit either the on-campus University Bookstore or the Hokie Centric store located at North End Center and fill out the payroll deduction form. The form will then be sent to the Department of Human Resources to confirm that the individual is an eligible employee. The process is expected to take about three business days before the purchase can be completed.

A 10 percent down payment is required and employees will have the option to spread the purchase price out over up to 24 pay periods, depending on the total sales price.

For more information contact the Human Resources Service Center at 540-231-9331.

Carnegie Mellon's Thanassis Rikakis named executive vice president and provost

Thanassis Rikakis, vice provost for design, arts and technology at Carnegie Mellon University, will become Virginia Tech's executive vice president and provost, effective Aug. 16.

"I am thrilled to welcome Dr. Rikakis to the Virginia Tech community," said President Timothy D. Sands. "His interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to teaching and research, and his passion to couple emerging technologies with the performing arts and humanities resonated deeply with those whom he met throughout the interview process. His accomplished record as an innovator, scholar, researcher, and administrator will be a tremendous asset to us as we work to strengthen our role as a global leader in higher education."

Rikakis will also become a tenured professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics in the College of Engineering and hold a joint appointment as a music professor in the School of Performing Arts in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

Rikakis arrived at Carnegie Mellon in 2012, and coordinated the development of the Integrative Design, Arts and Technology Network (IDeATe), which engages more than 70 faculty from 15 different university departments and units.

Those collaborations resulted in eight new university-wide undergraduate concentrations on creative industry themes served by 35 new interdisciplinary, collaborative studio courses and an expansive making facility housed in the university's central library.

IDeATe also launched the Emerging Media Master's program, a collaborative degree offered through the School of Computer Science, the College of Fine Arts, and the College of Engineering that features semester- or year-long residency opportunities in New York and Silicon Valley.

In addition, the Carnegie Mellon University Integrative Media Program (IMP) at Steiner Studios in New York City was launched. The IMP is part of the NYC Applied Science Initiative. Rikakis also supervised the CMU Entertainment

Technology Center (ETC).

Rikakis is currently a full professor in the School of Design and the School of Music and holds a courtesy appointment in the Biomedical Engineering Department.

His research and creative work focus on interactive neurorehabilitation, experiential media, interdisciplinary education, and computer music. His research outcomes range from peer reviewed publications, to novel software and hardware, original multimedia works and music compositions.

A member of the Arizona State University faculty from 2001 to 2012, Rikakis was named the founding director of the university's School of Arts, Media, and Engineering in 2003.

In that capacity, he led the development of the school's vision, research, and education models; the creation of joint graduate and undergraduate curricula with 12 units at the university; and the establishment of a transdisciplinary bachelor of arts degree program in Digital Culture and a doctoral degree program in Media Arts and Sciences.

During the nearly 10 years he served as founding director, Rikakis hired 12 interdisciplinary faculty, and 10 administrative and technical staff, and the school had enrolled 300 undergraduate and 50 graduate students.

He also held a faculty appointment at Columbia University, from 1995 to 2001, where he served as associate director of the Computer Music Center.

Rikakis received his doctor of musical arts degree in music composition and a master of arts degree in music composition from Columbia University. He received his bachelor of arts degree in music composition from Ithaca College.

He is married to Aisling Kelliher, who will also join the faculty as a tenured associate professor of computer science in the College of Engineering with joint appointments in the School of Visual Arts and the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology.

Kelliher creates and studies interactive media systems for enhancing reflection, learning and communication. Her work is grounded within the fields of human-computer-interaction, multimedia, and interaction design. She received a Ph.D. in media, arts and sciences from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab. The couple has one child.

In February, Senior Vice President and Provost Mark McNamee announced his plan to step down this year. With the successful conclusion of the provost search, he has decided to announce his intention to retire on Oct. 1.

Employees recognized for providing outstanding customer service

More than a dozen employees were recently honored by Virginia Tech's Division of Administrative Services for their customer service to the university community.

"These employees really went above and beyond in helping their co-workers and other members of the Virginia Tech community," said Sherwood Wilson, vice president for administration. "They provided outstanding customer service and truly embody the university motto *Ut Prosim* (That I may serve)."

Award recipients, who were nominated by their peers, co-workers, or supervisors, include:

-- **Renae Criner**, accounts receivable/customer service supervisor, Facilities Services, was recognized for saving her customers money by identifying unused telephone and data ports and ensuring they were properly disconnected. She provides such excellent customer service that she has even been seen crawling around on the floor of an office, map in one hand, looking for a port number.

-- **Catherine Kropff**, director of Hokie Wellness, Human Resources, was recognized for her efforts to revitalize the employee wellness program. She and her team have developed new programs to meet employee needs and have significantly increased participation. She co-leads the Healthy Hokies task force, actively serves on campus committees related to childcare, and facilitates a number of other programs and services.

-- **Michaela Liles**, business services specialist, Facilities Services, was recognized for her consistent performance in processing business transactions and ensuring prompt payment during a period of change and increased activity. She is known by internal and external customers alike for her pleasant demeanor and her ability to process a large number of transactions with a high rate of accuracy.

-- **Heidi McCoy**, deputy chief facilities officer, Facilities Services, was recognized for simultaneously serving in two demanding roles in the division. Her nominator noted that McCoy worked long hours as both interim deputy chief facilities officer and chief of staff for the vice president for administration all while hiring new staff, providing training and helping to resolve some significant issues.

-- **Larue Ann Owens**, equality and access program specialist, Human Resources, was recognized for her efforts to help the university meet its goal of providing Title IX training to all employees. To help ensure the success of this ambitious effort, she manually entered data for approximately 4,000 employees and responded to concerned phone calls and emails.

-- **Sydney Price**, accounts payable supervisor, Facilities Services, was recognized for going the extra mile to help her coworkers. In addition to her regular duties processing purchase orders, Price routinely assisted her coworkers with travel vouchers. Her nominator stated, "Sydney's knowledge of the rules helps ensure travelers are reimbursed without delay."

-- **Kathy Sanders**, project manager, Business Services, was recognized for voluntarily going above and beyond her normal duties by providing support to numerous position search efforts. She performed administrative tasks and was the primary contact for applicants. In addition, Sanders served as a member of both Business Services and Administrative Services award committees.

-- **Luke Watson**, computer user support technician, Business Services, was recognized for providing excellent customer services while providing IT support. His nominator noted that Watson explains technology in a way a layperson can understand and finds creative solutions to complicated problems.

-- **Janis Wilfore**, administrative assistant, Emergency Management, was recognized for her willingness to help others whenever needed including taking on additional duties and assisting in areas that are not her normal responsibility. She has staffed information booths during Gobblerfest and other events and has often worked late to finish projects.

-- **The Power Plant team** – Timmy Allen, Richard Hale Jr., Brian Higginbotham, Kevin Martin, and Stanley Williams were recognized for their efforts to make emergency repairs to the power plant. The team was called in after hours on two different dates, in extreme temperatures with wind chills well below zero, to fix a critical part that allowed the plant to provide much needed heat to university buildings.

Virginia Tech News is published weekly during fall and spring semester and bimonthly during the summer sessions, by the Department of Human Resources and the Office of University Relations as a service to university employees who do not have computer access on campus. For more information, or to discuss submission of items call 540-231-7643.