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GW In Touch is published by
The Division of University Human Resources
The George Washington University
2121 Eye Street, Suite 101
Washington, DC 20052

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Opinions expressed here are those of the individuals and do not necessarily reflect official positions of the university.
Dear GW Faculty and Staff,

In June, hundreds of employees gathered on University Yard in Foggy Bottom to celebrate community, diversity, and teamwork during the annual Proud to Be GW Festival. That afternoon, a group of staff members danced in sync to singer Pharrell Williams’ hit song, “Happy” as part of a flash mob.

The Proud to Be GW Festival counts among a host of activities that the university’s more than 11,000 employees can enjoy. This issue of GW In Touch features other programs that create an employee experience that goes beyond the office.

This issue includes information about GW Green Move-Out, a university-wide effort to make the student move-out process more environmentally sustainable. We also highlight the GW Faculty and Staff Run & Walk Club, hour-long, employee-led walking and running sessions around the Foggy Bottom campus, and the GW Parenting Initiative, a program that connects expectant parents with resources they may need at home and in the workplace when caring for their child.

This issue also includes information about professional development, mentorship in the workplace, and conflict resolution. Readers can also learn about UnitedHealthcare’s newest offerings.

We hope that you enjoy reading this publication as much as we have enjoyed preparing it.

Sabrina Ellis
Vice President for University Human Resources

LOOKING BACK

Green Move-Out

This summer, more than 40 GW faculty and staff members collected nearly 20 tons of items students left behind after vacating their residence halls as part of GW Green Move-Out, a university-wide effort to make the move-out process more environmentally sustainable.

“There’s a lot of enthusiasm. Some faculty and staff members participated in multiple Move-Out shifts expecting opportunities to bond with colleagues and to have fun while supporting the university,” said Kris Ferguson, recycling coordinator in Facilities Services. “Having volunteers help to relocate these materials saves the university tens of thousands of dollars in disposal costs.”

Less than a week after the spring semester wrapped up in May, staff members donning white T-shirts with “GW’s Green Move-Out” emblazoned on the front slipped on gloves, canvassed the lobbies of 27 residences on the Foggy Bottom and Mount Vernon campuses, and sorted through more than 40,000 pounds of bedding, bags, shoes, blankets, and packaged food that students left behind in anticipation for summer break.

Once volunteers packaged the materials, Facilities Services donated them to four local nonprofits: Community Recycling, Turning the Page, Capital Area Food Bank, and the Washington Animal Rescue League. Each organization will use the donations to help underserved populations and neglected animals.

“Volunteering at Green Move-Out is one of those experiences that makes working at GW so special,” said John Ralls, special advisor for communications and outreach in the Division of Operations. “I encourage all GW staff that care about sustainability to take just one hour to help with the Move-Out in spring 2015 and inform students that they can put their unwanted items to great use.”

The inaugural GW Green Move-Out initiative kicked off in 2005. Now, this collaborative activity has become a highlight of the university’s endeavors at the end of the academic year.
Walking and Running Meet-ups

More than 60 employees have signed up for the GW Faculty and Staff Run & Walk Club since the program launched in January 2014. Participants of various fitness levels enthusiastically slip on their running shoes and stretch their legs during hour-long walking or running sessions throughout the Foggy Bottom campus. This Colonial Community-sponsored activity offers employees an opportunity to meet their fitness goals while enjoying each other’s company outside of the workplace.

“The GW Faculty and Staff Run & Walk Club is a great way for members of our GW community to not only add some physical activity into their day, but to meet other faculty and staff from across the university,” said Erica Hayton, director of University Human Resources’ Colonial Community. “Having both led and joined a number of lunchtime walks, I have had the opportunity to get to know a number of new colleagues in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, the Division of Student Affairs, the Division of Operations, among colleagues from other departments throughout the university who have joined the club.”

Walkers and runners usually meet on Mondays and Wednesdays at GW’s Anniversary Park, located on F Street between 21st and 22nd Streets. Faculty and staff can also sign up for the informal run/walk group at www.meetup.com/GW-Run-Walk-Club, a website that helps people with similar interests schedule community gatherings.

For more information about the GW Faculty and Staff Run & Walk Club, please visit hr.gwu.edu/runwalk-meet.

Looking Back

Proud to Be GW Festival

In June, faculty and staff members joined senior leadership to celebrate community, diversity, and teamwork at the Proud to Be GW Festival. The Division of University Human Resources hosted the fifth annual gathering at University Yard in Foggy Bottom where enthusiastic attendees enjoyed delicious food, music, and a host of healthy activities. This year, a group of employees joined in a flash mob, dancing in sync to singer Pharrell Williams’ hit song, “Happy”.

The Proud to Be GW Festival kicks off GW’s year-round celebratory schedule of faculty and staff appreciation events, including the GW Celebration of Excellence in October, the Holiday Party in December, and the Career Milestone Awards in March.

On the Cover

Nearly 1,200 employees ate food, danced, and chatted among one another during the Proud to Be GW Festival on University Yard in June 2014. The annual event kicks off a host of employee appreciation programs including the Holiday Party and Career Milestones. / Photo by William Atkins
GW Parenting Initiative

Employees with newborns now have a host of helpful parenting resources as part of the GW Parenting Initiative, a university-wide effort that provides employees and faculty who are new parents with various forms of support that they may need at home and in the workplace while caring for their young child.

The GW Parenting Initiative, formerly known as the Breastfeeding Friendly University Project, will help GW become a national leader in parenting support and research by 2021.

“We have worked diligently to serve the breastfeeding community by opening motherhood rooms for mothers to privately and comfortably breastfeed throughout the campuses, hiring a full-time lactation consultant at the GW University Hospital, and implementing La Leche League of GWU,” said Lori Lerman, executive director of the GW Parenting Initiative.

More than 50 percent of mothers that return to the workplace often struggle to balance their obligations to work and family, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In its recent report, *Strategies to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases: The CDC Guide to Strategies to Support Breastfeeding Mothers and Babies*, the CDC recommended that employers include breastfeeding stations and allow flexible schedules for women who need to breastfeed.

“Our ultimate goal is to make GW a community that people would want to be a part of because our university extends the support they need to be good parents,” said Lerman. “It’s wonderful that GW and our Washington, D.C. community support the GW Parenting Initiative. With such encouragement from the Office of the President and faculty, we are very pleased and look forward to the progression of this essential enterprise.”

For more information about the GW Parenting Initiative, please visit [www.parentinginitiative.gwu.edu](http://www.parentinginitiative.gwu.edu).
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Featuring news and updates relevant to your work and work-life.

The myHealthcare Cost Estimator

Benefits-eligible faculty and staff members can preview their healthcare costs long before their doctor’s visit with UnitedHealthcare’s (UHC) myHealthcare Cost Estimator.

This interactive online tool helps users quickly estimate out-of-pocket payments, co-insurance and deductibles, as well as locate healthcare providers.

For more information about UHC’s myHealthcare Cost Estimator, please visit www.uhc.com.

Health and Wellness Podcasts

United Healthcare’s United At Work is a new health and wellness podcast series that members may listen to. The podcasts are downloadable audio clips of various topics that encourage listeners to be aware of health risks and to take on healthy behaviors such as adopting a Mediterranean diet and increasing physical activity.

For more information about United At Work, please visit www.uhc.com.

Healthcare Beyond the Hospital Room

Treatment doesn’t end at the hospital. Patients that maintain a high quality of care after medical procedures often experience fewer complications and a lower chance of readmission into a hospital.

UnitedHealthcare (UHC) now offers Care Coordination, a program that connects members with nurse case managers to help with preadmission counseling, inpatient care advocacy, discharge planning, disease prevention programs, and information about prescriptions and rehabilitation.

For more information about UHC’s Care Coordination, please visit www.uhc.com.

AHA Gives GW a Platinum Rating

The American Heart Association (AHA) recognized University Human Resources’ (UHR) Colonial Community unit’s commendable efforts to help employees lead healthier lives by naming GW a Platinum-Level Fit-Friendly Worksite.

The AHA awards this designation to employers that promote a wellness culture and successfully implement programs in areas of physical activity and nutrition. This is the third year AHA awarded GW as a fit-friendly worksite and the first time that the university received a platinum rating—the highest award in this category. Congratulations to the Colonial Community team!
In the professional world, there’s no better teacher than experience. Every job provides an opportunity to meet people, acquire a new skill set, and gain the career-related introspection that’s often needed to grow professionally. Below are steps that employees can take today to reach their ultimate career goals:

**DOCUMENT YOUR WORK** – Market your value and contributions to your team and organization with a portfolio of your work. The ideal portfolio shows your professional growth and development and highlights your skills and knowledge.

**ATTAIN NEW SKILL SETS** – Stay abreast of the latest trends, developments, and issues in your career field. These are great opportunities to increase your network and enhance your current set of skills.

**VOLUNTEER FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS** – GW offers a variety of extracurricular and volunteer activities for faculty and staff. You can demonstrate your skills and meet people with whom you would not have crossed paths with otherwise.

**ASK YOUR SUPERVISOR FOR FEEDBACK** – Schedule informal review discussions with your supervisor twice a year in order to track your progress and receive constructive criticism about your performance. These meetings also help build a strong relationship with your manager.

**NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK!** – Build relationships within and outside your current organizational circle. Chat with at least five colleagues in your field about their own career paths. Often times, they can bring career opportunities to your attention or connect you with other helpful people.

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UHR’s Organizational Development & Effectiveness (ODE) unit provides resources that can help faculty and staff learn more about their professional development. For more information, please visit [ode.hr.gwu.edu/develop-your-career](http://ode.hr.gwu.edu/develop-your-career).
When Vernon Williams, director in the Center for Student Engagement (CSE), arrived at GW in 2008, he was eager to absorb as much as he could to help students excel, so he began taking graduate courses in education. Williams’ supervisor at the time, Andrew Goretsky, director of the Graduate, Distance, and Professional Student Experience in CSE, was enthusiastic from the very beginning. “Andrew encouraged me to take advantage of the opportunity to take courses at GW from day one.” Williams said the support continued under his current supervisor, Tim Miller, associate dean of students in CSE.

In fact, the guidance he received from his supervisors, coupled with his own growing interest in higher education, influenced Williams’ decision to pursue a Doctorate of Education from GW’s Graduate School of Education and Human Development. “We sat down and came up with a plan so that I could meet my professional obligations but at the same time I could complete my academic coursework. Without that, I doubt that I would have been as successful while progressing through my academic program.”

According to a national poll by the performance management company Gallup, 60 percent of professionals prefer working in an environment where senior leaders encourage them to reach their greatest potential. By being open-minded and inquiring about future professional and personal goals with their employees, managers learn more about the individual strengths of their team members. Additionally, they have a better understanding of what is going on in their employees’ lives.

“It makes a big difference to not feel like you’re cheating on work when you’re away doing school work,” expressed Williams, “and for me, that made me work even harder to make sure that wasn’t happening.”

Managers may help their staff achieve departmental goals by leading the members of their team towards professional growth in their job. By presenting an opportunity to earnestly talk about needs for improvement or adjustment, managers can prevent any gaps in productivity or other misunderstandings. This type of shared conversation facilitates a stronger manager-employee relationship and may advance achievement of performance goals.

Williams said his relationships with his supervisors were particularly critical when balancing school, work, and personal life. He smiled while he talked about the ways that his supervisors have supported him outside of his job, recalling times they jokingly told him he needed to go to the gym or to leave the office. He says Tim Miller even joined his intramural basketball team. “It’s that kind of thing—to know you have the supervisors in your corner to motivate you and keep you working harder to accomplish both of those goals.”

An optimistic, confident manager-employee relationship creates a sense of community in an organization and effectively contributes to employee team dynamics and productivity.

While managers serve as the primary source of contact for advice needed to get the job done accurately at work, it’s also important that employees seek mentorship and guidance from other experienced coworkers. Williams referenced his mentors, like Darrell Darnell, senior associate vice president in the Office of Safety and Security, who motivated him and encouraged him to keep going. Mentors help their coworkers to identify their best traits and nurture their personal interests. In turn, the mentors themselves hone their own work-related expertise. Together, mentors and mentees work to approach that next desired step in their respective careers.

With the support and encouragement of his supervisors and colleagues, Williams successfully defended his dissertation on social support for injured Division I student-athletes this past year. He will be awarded his Doctorate of Education from GW on August 31, 2014.
Dear UHR,

I was appointed to serve on a committee that updates our office’s standard operating procedures. Even though I’ve enjoyed a collegial relationship with my co-workers, it seems as though they don’t value my input. They often disregard my suggestions during these meetings. As much as I would like to address this issue, I don’t want to create a rift between me and my co-workers. How do you suggest I handle this situation?

As much as we try to avoid uncomfortable situations, such conversations often allow colleagues to clear the air and agree upon solutions to work-related problems. The following is a step-by-step method that employees can take to resolve conflicts in the workplace, courtesy of UHR’s Organizational Development & Effectiveness unit.

1. Address your views with a pleasant disposition; don’t be confrontational in your tone. When speaking to colleagues, emphasize that you’re only presenting your perception of the problem.

2. Actively listen as others provide their perspective of the problem. Seek to understand their goals in the workplace and how your actions affect those of your colleagues.

3. After you listen to your colleague, come to an agreement about the issue that you’re trying to solve. If that’s not possible, continue friendly discussion to understand what each individual sees as the problem.

4. Both parties should have an opportunity to suggest potential solutions and share what they need or what they’re willing to provide in order to end the conflict.

5. The overall goal of both parties should be to agree on a path to move forward regarding their roles and responsibilities in the workplace, and how to relay the solution to others.

6. If you are unable to come to a solution, involve a third party to act as a mediator.

For more information about conflict management, please visit ode.hr.gwu.edu/conflict-management.

IN MEMORIAM

In this issue, we remember faculty and staff members who are no longer with us and whose memory we celebrate. We honor their contributions to the university community. They are as follows:

Hazel Daniel (Retired) – May 04, 2014
Supervisor, Payroll Services
Finance Division
21 Years of Service

C. Thomas Dienes – April 24, 2014
Lyle T. Alverson Professor Emeritus of Law
Law School
35 Years of Service

John Fields (Retired) – April 29, 2014
Custodial Worker
Facilities Department
30 Years of Service

Phyllis Palmer – April 13, 2014
Professor of American Studies
Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
37 Years of Service

Eugene Stone (Retired) – April 02, 2014
Associate Professor of Mathematics
Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
27 Years of Service