

# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

## Performance Partnership Program

*A Commitment to Enhance and Foster Positive Performance*

**Open Range  
Employee Information Bulletin**

*February 2008*

## **Table of Contents**

### **I. Introduction**

What is the Performance Partnership Program?  
Who will be subject to this new program?  
What will happen first?  
Why is this program called the Performance Partnership Program?  
How does the Performance Partnership Program differ from our current discipline procedure?  
Why are we implementing a new discipline program?

### **II. Administration of the Performance Partnership Program**

Steps of the Program

- Positive Contact
- Constructive Contact
- Positive Recognition
- Performance Improvement Discussion
- Work Performance Reminder
- Written Reminder
- Decision-Making Leave

Discharge  
Deactivation of Discipline  
Appeals

### **III. Implementation of the Performance Partnership Program**

Transition Issues  
Success Measurement  
The Performance Partnership Program Steering Committee

# I. Introduction

## What is the *Performance Partnership Program*?

It is a positive performance management system that provides a way of solving employee performance, attendance and conduct problems by focusing on adult-to-adult relationships between supervisors and employees. This approach also provides for recognition of the good performance exhibited by the majority of our employees. The goals of the *Performance Partnership Program* are:

- to provide training to supervisors in ways to effectively communicate with employees
- to gain individual commitment to University goals and respect for other employees
- to focus on the problem to be solved consistent with the University's vision and values
- to emphasize personal responsibility for problem-solving with supervisory assistance and encouragement
- to focus on the future, not the past
- to treat employees as adults, not children
- to recognize good performance

## Who will be subject to this new program?

Effective April 1, 2008, open range employees will be covered under the Performance Partnership Program. In addition, employees represented by American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 3700 will be covered at that time. Presently, all employees represented by Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 119, AFSCME Local 698, and International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 399 (Power Plant) are covered.

## What will happen first?

Managers and supervisors are will be thoroughly trained in the *Performance Partnership Program* procedures and materials. Employees will have the opportunity to attend informational meetings to learn how the program works and to ask any questions. Employee Information Meetings are scheduled as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
March 4, 2008	10:30 a.m. - Noon	Beckman Auditorium, SW Corner of Beckman
March 4, 2008	1 – 2:30 p.m.	Beckman Auditorium, SW Corner of Beckman
March 10, 2008	10:30 a.m. - Noon	Beckman Auditorium, SW Corner of Beckman
March 10, 2008	1 – 2:30 p.m.	Beckman Auditorium, SW Corner of Beckman
March 18, 2008	10:30 a.m. - Noon	Beckman Auditorium, SW Corner of Beckman

**PLEASE NOTE: PLEASE NOTE: The Employee Information Meetings require advance registration at <http://t4bppp.theregistrationsystem.com/>. Employees must get prior approval from their supervisor to attend. Metered parking is available in the parking garage located at University and Matthews.**

## Why is this program called the *Performance Partnership Program*?

The University believes that when an individual accepts a job here, he or she enters into a partnership. As such, supervisors must be able to effectively communicate job expectations to their employees and employees must meet those expectations. The *Performance Partnership Program* represents a commitment by the University to enhance and foster communication between supervisors and employees. Through this program, the University will make every effort to appropriately recognize good performance and to work with employees to resolve performance problems in an effort to maintain the partnership.

**How does the *Performance Partnership Program* differ from our current discipline procedure?**

In many ways, there is no difference. The steps of formal discipline in the *Performance Partnership Program* are structured and progressive. The program does not violate the *State Universities Civil Service Statute and Rules* or *Policy and Rules*. All current avenues of appeal for disciplinary action are still in place and available to all employees. Employees still have the right to grieve discipline as provided for in *Policy and Rules*. Discharge may still be appealed to the State Universities Civil Service System Merit Board as provided for in the *State Universities Civil Service Statute and Rules*.

There is one major difference between our current discipline procedure and the *Performance Partnership Program*. Our current performance system makes no provisions for recognizing the great majority of employees who are already self-disciplined. The pilot *Performance Partnership Program* emphasizes recognition of good performance. It is a positive system that eliminates the use of punishment as a means to build discipline. The principal concepts of the pilot program are recognition, removing obstacles, feedback, training, reminders and decision making. When employees encounter problems in meeting the University's performance standards, they are given opportunities to change their behavior and performance. The program encourages effective communication between supervisors and employees, so employees clearly understand job expectations and know just where they stand in meeting those expectations.

**Why are we implementing a new discipline program?**

For those few employees who do not meet performance expectations, the *Performance Partnership Program* helps them take responsibility for their own behavior. It also incorporates our belief that employees should be recognized for their good performance.

The *Performance Partnership Program* focuses on communicating an expectation of change and improvement, in a respectful, non-threatening way. The program recognizes and encourages good performance, corrects performance problems through coaching and counseling, and builds commitment to high work standards and safe work practices.

The University of Illinois strives for quality and excellence, both in the services we provide and in the people who provide them. The University believes that its employees prefer success over failure and want to work in an organization that is positive rather than negative – and it is concerned with the great majority of those employees who perform their jobs well, as well as with the few who do not. For these reasons, the University has committed to a positive approach to performance management to enhance our existing disciplinary procedures and will implement a positive discipline program, the *Performance Partnership Program* beginning April 1, 2008.

As an employee who will be part of this program, we believe it is important that you understand how it will be administered and how it will personally affect you.

**II. Administration of the Performance Partnership Program**

The *Performance Partnership Program* is a system that emphasizes employees' responsibility for their own behavior. Key aspects of this system include recognizing and encouraging good performance, seeking to correct performance problems through coaching and counseling, and building commitment to high work standards, safe work practices, and excellence in the provision of services. When there is a gap between desired and actual performance, the

focus is on communicating an expectation of change and improvement in a respectful, non-threatening way, while maintaining concern for the seriousness of the situation.

When an employee performs well, supervisors are expected to recognize and reinforce the individual's good performance. If an employee has a problem performing up to the level of expectation, corrective action should be taken as soon as the problem is identified. The goal of the program is to correct performance problems at the earliest possible point. It is also intended to build genuine commitment, not just compliance, in a manner that is fair, consistent and equitable for all employees. Each procedural step is a reminder of the expectations for performance. The focus is on individual responsibility, accountability, and decision making, not on punishment.

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*The Performance Partnership Program includes four informal steps to recognize good performance and to provide an opportunity to improve performance before any formal discipline takes place. All of these are non-disciplinary steps and can take place whether or not an employee is under formal discipline.*

*The four informal steps of the Performance Partnership Program and how they will be administered during the pilot program are as follows:*

- **Positive Contact** is a way of recognizing good performance. As a regular part of their jobs, supervisors are encouraged to use the Positive Contact to recognize an employee who is performing at a fully satisfactory level. It can also be used to recognize an employee who has measurably improved performance or has sustained fully acceptable performance.
- **Constructive Contact** is an informal discussion between a supervisor and an employee in which the supervisor may offer suggestions to the employee about ways to do the job faster, easier, safer, etc., or communicate a need to improve performance. The discussion is intended to provide coaching and constructive feedback to an employee on performance expectations. A Constructive Contact may or may not be documented. A Constructive Contact may be used any time a supervisor believes an employee could be performing an element of the job more effectively, needs to improve attendance, or is not following one of the unit's rules or procedures.
- **Positive Recognition** is an acknowledgement by a supervisor to an employee to recognize and give credit to the individual. An informal discussion may or may not take place, but a Positive Recognition will always be documented and communicated to the employee in writing. A Positive Recognition is appropriate to acknowledge sustained improvement or a sustained record of above average performance.
- **Performance Improvement Discussion** is a structured discussion between a supervisor and an employee about the need to improve performance and requires specific pre- and post-discussion documentation. Although a Performance Improvement Discussion is an informal and non-disciplinary step, it spells out the problem and documents the employee's commitment to improve and the action(s) to be taken. The objective of a Performance Improvement Discussion is to help an employee recognize that a problem exists, to mutually explore the reason(s) for the problem and develop an effective solution to it, and to avoid the need for formal disciplinary action. The Performance Improvement Discussion is generally equivalent to the Oral Warning step or the lower level written steps of the current discipline program.

*The focus of the Performance Partnership Program is teamwork and commitment in building and sustaining acceptable performance standards for employees through the informal steps described above. However, in some cases it is necessary to move from the informal to official steps in a progressive effort to bring about desired performance levels. There are three levels of official steps in the Performance Partnership Program, and as with the current discipline system, these steps represent increasingly serious and/or repetitive infractions and employment consequences if unacceptable performance continues.*

*The three official steps of the Performance Partnership Program and how they will be administered during the pilot program are as follows:*

- **Work Performance Reminder** is the first official step of the University's disciplinary procedure. A formal pre-disciplinary meeting is held to discuss a problem that must be solved. During the meeting, the supervisor will inform the employee that he or she is at the formal discipline level. The discussion will be documented by the supervisor and maintained in the employing unit's file.

The employee will receive a memo documenting the meeting. During the meeting, the supervisor will concentrate on gaining the employee's oral agreement that there is a problem and that the employee will meet accepted performance standards. A Work Performance Reminder may or may not be preceded by a Performance Improvement Discussion about the problem. The Work Performance Reminder is generally equivalent to the Written Warning and/or lower levels of suspension under the current discipline program.

- **Written Reminder** is the second official step of the University's formal disciplinary procedure. A Written Reminder is generally used when a supervisor decides that an earlier Work Performance Reminder has been unsuccessful in bringing about desired performance improvement, or when a situation arises that, in and of itself, is so serious as to justify a second step action. A formal pre-disciplinary meeting is held to discuss a problem and the need for immediate correction of that problem. The discussion will be documented and formally communicated to the employee in writing. Copies of the letter to the employee will be maintained in the employee's official personnel file located at Staff Human Resources and will also be sent to Legal Counsel. The Written Reminder is generally equivalent to the higher levels of suspension under the current discipline program.

- **Decision-Making Leave** is the final step in the University's disciplinary procedure. A Decision-Making Leave is generally used when earlier Work Performance Reminders and/or Written Reminders have been unsuccessful in bringing about desired performance improvement, or when a situation arises that, in and of itself, is so serious as to justify a final step action regardless of whether or not any earlier official steps have been taken. A formal pre-disciplinary meeting is held to discuss a problem and is followed by the employee being suspended from work for one day. The one-day suspension provides an opportunity for the employee to solve the immediate problem and make a total commitment to attaining fully acceptable performance. This commitment will be an oral understanding between the employee and the supervisor. To indicate the University's sincere desire that the employee will recognize the seriousness of his or her problem and decide to change behavior and remain with the University, the employee will be paid for the Decision-Making Leave day. The discussion will be documented and formally communicated to the employee in writing. Copies of the documentation will be maintained in the employee's official personnel file located in Staff Human Resources and will also be sent to Legal Counsel, the State Universities Civil Service System and the University Office of Administration and Human Resources. The Decision-Making Leave is generally equivalent to the highest levels of suspension under the current discipline program.

## Discharge

Discharge occurs when an employee is discharged from the University for cause, normally after informal and formal actions have failed to bring about a positive change in an employee's work performance. Discharge is generally used when an on-going disciplinary problem occurs within the active period of a Decision Making Leave or when an employee is involved in a disciplinary offense so serious that continued employment cannot be justified. Any pre-disciplinary meeting and action taken will be documented and copies given to the employee, Legal Counsel, Staff Human Resources, the State Universities Civil Service System and the University Office of Administration and Human Resources.

## Deactivation of Discipline

Unlike the current discipline system, disciplinary action does not remain active indefinitely under the *Performance Partnership Program*. The following illustrates the active period for each of the official steps:

STEP	NUMBER ALLOWED AT ONE TIME	LENGTH OF TIME ACTIVE
Work Performance Reminder	maximum of two	6 months*
Written Reminder	one	12 months*
Decision-Making Leave	one	24 months*
Discharge	not applicable	permanent

\* Provided no other formal corrective action during this time period.

At the end of the active period any related disciplinary documents will not be used to progress any current discipline but will be used for historical information.

## Appeals

The *Performance Partnership Program* is consistent with the *State Universities Civil Service Statute and Rules* and *Policy and Rules*. All current avenues of appeal for disciplinary action are still in place and available to all employees. Employees still have the right to grieve discipline as outlined in *Policy and Rules*. Discharge may still be appealed to the State Universities Civil Service System Merit Board.

## III. Implementation of the Performance Partnership Program

### Transition Issues

One of the most important decisions to be made during the development of the *Performance Partnership Program* was how to transition employees currently under discipline into the new program. A transition plan has been developed to allow most of these employees to move out of the formal discipline steps and offer all employees the opportunity to correct problem performance.

With this transition formula, the majority of employees under some step of the formal discipline program before the April 1, 2008 effective date of the *Performance Partnership Program* will either be under no discipline or in the informal discussion level in the new program. However, a few employees will transition to one of the formal corrective steps of the *Performance Partnership Program* because of the severe level of discipline they are currently under. Any employee who has had discipline in the last two years will meet in private with his or her supervisor to discuss the action to be taken.

The *Performance Partnership Program* will begin April 1, 2008. Based on that date, employees currently under discipline will move into the new program as follows:

Current Program	PPP Program
Oral and Written warnings and suspensions of 1-7 calendar days more than 6 months old  Suspensions of 8-20 calendar days more than 12 months old  Suspensions of 21-30 calendar days more than 24 months old	} All discipline deactivated effective April 1, 2008
Oral Warning (less than 6 months old)	Constructive Contact
Written Warning (less than 6 months old)	Performance Improvement Discussion
Suspension of 1-7 days (less than 6 months old)	Work Performance Reminder (active for 6 months*)
Suspensions of 8-20 days (less than 12 months old)	Written Reminder (active for 12 months*)
Suspensions of 21 or more days (less than 24 months old)	Decision-Making Leave (active for 24 months*)

\*Employee will remain at this step for the listed number of months beginning April 1, 2008, which is the implementation date of the program, provided no other formal corrective action during this period.

One of the principles of the *Performance Partnership Program* is to recognize good performance, and to coach and provide constructive feedback to employees who are not meeting acceptable performance standards so that corrective or formal disciplinary action is not necessary. Further, in order to try to correct the problem, this open communication will continue even if an employee moves to one of the formal discipline steps.

**Success Measurement**

The success of the *Performance Partnership Program* will be measured in several ways. The steering committee has developed an on-going training program for supervisors to ensure they have a complete and accurate understanding of all elements of the *Performance Partnership Program*.

The steering committee will also monitor the informal and formal discipline activity for the period of the program. The committee will not advise, encourage or hinder supervisory actions under the program, but an awareness of how supervisors are administering the program will provide valuable information about program success or identify areas that may be improved upon.

**The Performance Partnership Program Steering Committee**

The *Performance Partnership Program* steering committee consists of campus administrators, managers and supervisors who are committed to the success of the program. If you have questions concerning the program, contact your supervisor or any of the following individuals:

Angela Reggans, Program Coordinator, Staff Human Resources  
Reggie Arnett, University Housing  
Don Block, University Housing  
Melvin Boatner, Facilities and Services  
Debbie Jones, Facilities and Services  
Cynthia Kelly, Library Human Resources  
Randy Kornegay, Facilities and Services  
Connie Maske, McKinley Health Center  
Kip Mecum, Facilities and Services  
Greg Peters, University Housing  
Irma Ryan, Staff Human Resources  
Kathryn Seybert, ACES Human Resources  
Corbin Smith, Staff Human Resources  
Edward Slazinik, Illini Union  
Anna Tsai, Illini Union