

APPA Effective and Innovative Practices

Departmental Recognition Award Programs

While educational institutions face challenging financial times, one initiative that can improve morale and help employee retention without incurring big expenses is an employee recognition program.



At The University of Texas at Austin, Facilities Services maintains 18.6 million gross square feet, and supports 439 buildings that encompass 901 acres of campus grounds in the heart of Austin, Texas. We have approximately 50,000 students, with 21,000 faculty and staff. We are one of the largest public universities in the United States with 16 colleges and schools. We work with our sister department, Project Management and Construction Services (PMCS), to support our campus community. Facilities Services and PMCS have a combined workforce of 1,039 of employees.



One of the strategic goals of Facilities Services is to have a highly motivated, well-trained, stable workforce. To achieve this goal, we have implemented two employee recognition programs. The first is the **Employee Recognition SITES award**, and the second is the **“On-the-Spot” Award**. Both recognition programs are endorsed by University management and are recognized throughout the departments as highly regarded honors.

Employee Recognition SITES Award

The Employee Recognition SITES Award is an annual departmental recognition program. It identifies employees who perform services or activities that demonstrate exemplary performance, exhibiting the core values of Facilities Services and PMCS. SITES is the acronym for our shared departmental core values: service, integrity, teamwork, excellence, and stewardship. These are the award criteria:

Service

Nominee consistently focuses on unconditional efforts to best serve our customers.

Integrity

Nominee consistently earns the trust of others through professional conduct that includes honesty, reliability, and competency.

Teamwork

Nominee consistently works together cooperatively in support of our mission. We value each individual and their contributions to the team and treat each other with respect and dignity.

Excellence

Nominee consistently and enthusiastically delivers quality services to our customers while consistently seeking to improve those services through creativity and innovation.

Stewardship

Nominee consistently conducts business in an environmentally, socially, and economically responsible manner that is reflective and protective of the public trust placed in us as stewards of the University's facility-related resources.

The Employee Recognition SITES Award recognizes employees who not only perform their usual job duties, but also go above and beyond regular job functions to achieve one of the core values.

This program began in 2006, has been favorably received throughout the departments, and has been gaining momentum in its three years. During this time, we've received 204 nominations, which represent 19.6% of the Facilities Services and PMCS workforce. Thirty employees have received this award.

How an employee is nominated

The nominator submits in writing an explanation of how the employee exhibited one of the core values, which illustrates why he or she is qualified to receive the award. The nominator must complete the Employee Recognition Nomination Form that is available online or in print and submit the nomination to the Employee Recognition Committee Chairperson or Facilities Services/PMCS Director's Office. (Attachment 1)

Who can be nominated

This program applies to any employee who has been employed by one of the departments for at least 12 continuous months before being nominated for the award. The award is not open to directors, associate/assistant directors, previous year recipients, groups, crews or current members of the Employee Recognition Committee (those who review the nominations). The Employee Recognition Committee is made up of the past year's recipients, as well as delegates from the directors' offices of Facilities Services and PMCS.

Helping employees nominate peers

In the past two years, it was a concern that only those who could write well would be able to nominate a winner. To address this issue, working sessions were set up to help employees' put their thoughts into words on the nomination form. During the work session, a facilitator led the participants through the following questions:

Telling the story:

- Who performed the action?
- What action did the employee perform in relation to the SITES values? Please be as specific as possible.
- Where did the action take place?

- When did the employee perform this action?
- Why is this action worthy of receiving the SITES award? How did the action tie to one of the values?

We witnessed a surge in the number of applications submitted in 2008, up 79% from the previous year. We've found that one-on-one assistance helped employees feel comfortable completing the nomination form and ultimately submitting applications. During the nomination month, employees were told about the program through e-mails, staff meetings, and informational posters.

Example #1 of award winning nomination:

Service and Excellence: José (Luis) Sandoval has the distinction and responsibilities as our only authorized in-house insulator (for both Facilities Services and PMCS) and the only staff journeyman assigned to the Sheet Metal and Insulation Shop. Working closely with supervisor Henry Rostro, Luis provides outstanding support to the campus on a daily basis, from installation of insulation himself and by overseeing open order labor contract personnel, to a myriad of shop responsibilities, including running the shop and two open order labor contract teams when Henry is out. As the department expert on insulation, Luis is routinely contacted for questions by project managers, other shops, and clients regarding insulation requirements. Many times he is more knowledgeable of existing conditions than project managers or clients, and provides improved solutions for both clients and our facility maintainers. For example, during last football season, condensation was leaking into some suites on the east side of the stadium. What started as a small project for a couple suites became a full repair project re-insulating all fan coil units for 52 suites—in the middle of football season—that had to be completed in the 2-week period between successive home games. Luis identified the problem—wrong material installed by a previous contractor, which permitted condensation and premature rusting of the pipes. He very skillfully and confidently led the project with open order labor support. The project was further complicated by several additional challenges, including time-critical coordination/support from other shops, personnel issues within his contract team, and the absence of Henry, who was out for surgery! Despite these challenges and a variety of site condition issues within each suite, Luis skillfully led the project to a timely completion, much to the satisfaction of Intercollegiate Athletics and, unknowingly, the 52 suite owners. Many times Luis completed projects by himself and rarely requested assistance. Major projects over the last year included replacement of one of two main air handlers at Penick-Allison Tennis Center, installation of a specialized HEPA filter at RLM, and a major suite renovation in Colorado Building for UT System. In every project, Luis' performance was superior, including coordination with other shops and with project managers. His rewards were typically accolades and follow-on requests for more work from very satisfied clients, including the second air handler at TTC and multiple projects for Mechanical Distribution. Luis is an exceptional employee, widely respected by our clients and his coworkers. His unselfish and uncompromising commitment to service and excellence everyday truly deserve recognition of the SITES Award.

Example #2 of award winning nomination

Service: Orlando Ramirez' sign knowledge has greatly improved the Sign Shop's customer service. We're now able to install signs we produce which results in shorter project time. He's very knowledgeable with the two new pieces of equipment we have recently purchased. With that knowledge he has helped train others in the shop how to use the equipment, expanding the quality of signage we produce. Not to mention that he also brought his diversity of sign design and format that creates more selection of our signage. For example, clients at SZB were looking for an etch glass look and having done this at previous jobs he was in a good position to deliver the client's desires. With his knowledge of vinyl, he knew of a vinyl called etchmark, which looks very close to etched glass. And till that time we hadn't done full glass installations, so Orlando happily took it upon himself to install the vinyl on the full glass sliding doors which are about 5' x 10' each. And when he was done the client was very pleased with the vinyl as it gave the impression of etched glass. What he did for the client was "customer service a la mode," as he not only met the client's needs, but exceeded them by giving the customer a close similarity to etched glass, but at a cheaper cost. Also the project was done in a timely manner as well as good customer contact and communication in an attentive manner making the client feel significant throughout the entirety of the project. Shortly after the project the Sign Shop received a call from a prospective client who liked the finished project and was inquiring information concerning having their sliding glass doors done in the same fashion of an etched glass look. Not only did Orlando perform excellent customer service but with his knowledge that he brought with him to the Sign Shop he broadened the capabilities of the scope of our work. In what I've seen since Orlando has been here he has improved the operation and the customer service of the Sign Shop to a greater level of excellence. Orlando is deserving of the SITES award.

How winners are selected

The Employee Recognition Committee

- 1) Reviews all Employee Nomination forms
- 2) Creates a selection matrix (scoring 1-5) (Attachment 2)
- 3) Forwards names of finalist(s) (no more than ten nominees) to the assistant director of Administrative and Personnel Services and the directors of Facilities Services and PMCS.
- 4) The assistant director of Administrative and Personnel Services and the directors ensure that the nominee is eligible to receive an award and determine that the nominee's documented specific service or activity reflects truly exemplary performance for recognition.

What's awarded

- Recognition activity with shop or office employees
- Certificate of recognition
- \$500
- 8 hours paid time off
- Recognition group photo plaque, on public display in main lobby
- Recognition on the PMCS and Facilities Services respective Web sites (<http://www.utexas.edu/facilities/SITES/index.html>)
- Personal gift
- SITES award pin

On-the-Spot Recognition Program

Facilities Services and PMCS employees can be honored for their exceptional workplace efforts “on the spot” by their supervisor, manager, or director. This program began in the fall of 2008.

Supervisors, managers, and directors can give a Facilities Services or PMCS employee immediate reward and recognition with an “on-the-spot” card. Employees who receive this card may claim one of five gifts and receive eight hours of leave with pay. (Attachment 3)

Giving and redeeming the award

- 1) The supervisor, manager, or director signs the card and gives it to the employee. The card includes a description of the employee’s exemplary action.
- 2) The employee may select one of five recognition items listed on the tear-off section of the card. He or she takes that section to Central Stores to obtain the selected item.
- 3) Central Stores (our distribution center for parts and supplies) retains the tear-off section of the card for tracking purposes. Employees may keep the remainder of the card and are encouraged to send a copy to Personnel for their employee file.

What’s awarded

Employees have a choice of

- Dominos
- Flash drive
- UT folding chair
- Leatherman multi-tool
- Cooler

Institutional benefit for recognition programs

The two recognition programs benefit the University in a number of ways. The SITES Award is peers nominating peers. We’ve seen recognition of award winners among employees, as winners are announced in a public setting. It’s not a popularity contest, but a program that heralds a group of hardworking employees who have been selected based on input from peers. Of the 30 SITES award winners, only one employee no longer works for the University.

Portability

These recognition programs could be easily adopted by other institutions. The procedures are adaptable, and we would gladly pass along the lessons that we learned along the way.

Management commitment and employee involvement

Our senior management, Vice President of Employee and Campus Services, Dr. Patricia Clubb, endorses both recognition programs. From her endorsement, the message is clear that these are valued programs, and winners are applauded for their efforts to make The University of Texas at Austin a first-class institution.

Documentation, analysis, customer input, and benchmarking

- **SITES program:** A copy of the award letter or certificate is filed in each nominee’s personnel file. After the award is presented, a letter from the directors of Facilities

Services and PMCS is sent to nominees, congratulating them on the nomination. An e-mail is sent to employees of Facilities Services and PMCS noting the winners.

A standard operating procedure ensures consistency year to year. At the conclusion of each year's awards, the selection committee meets to discuss lessons learned.

The Employee Recognition SITES Program was modeled after the Office of Employee and Campus Services (ECS) SLICE award, which recognizes core values of service, leadership, innovation, creativity, and excellence. We use this as our benchmark.

- **On the Spot program:** The on-the-spot" card is tracked through Central Stores, where the employee redeems his or her prize. A copy of the cards is sent to the employee's personnel file to note the employee has been recognized.

Currently, we're planning to benchmark other educational institutions to see what recognition programs they have developed, and to explore any lessons learned.

SITES Award Winners 2006



SITES Award Winners 2007



SITES Award Winners 2008



- Attachment 1: SITES Award Nomination form
- Attachment 2: SITES Selection Matrix
- Attachment 3: “On-the-Spot” Award Card



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Facilities Services

Project Management and Construction Services



SITES Award Employee Recognition Nomination Form
Nomination Period begins June 2, 2008 and ends July 7, 2008

Name of Nominee: _____ Your Name: _____
Nominee's Job Title: _____ Your Phone Number: _____
Nominee's Section /Shop: _____ Your Section/Shop: _____

Please check the box (s) below, that best identify the nominee's area of excellence.

- Service** Nominee consistently focuses on unconditional efforts to best serve our customers.
- Integrity** Nominee consistently earns the trust of others through professional conduct that includes honesty, reliability, and competency.
- Teamwork** Nominee consistently works together cooperatively in support of our mission. We value each individual and their contributions to the team and treat each other with respect and dignity.
- Excellence** Nominee consistently and enthusiastically delivers quality services to our customers while consistently seeking to improve those services through creativity and innovation.
- Stewardship** Nominee consistently conducts business in an environmentally, socially, and economically responsible manner that is reflective and protective of the public trust placed in us as stewards of the University's facility related resources.

Please provide a specific example detailing how this nominee excelled in one or more of the shared core values that you have selected. To ensure acceptance of your nomination please complete this section in the space provided below or attach another sheet. You may also attach any other additional information or supporting documentation such as e-mails, letters, etc. The goal is to provide information that reflects the significance of an exemplary employee.
NOTE: Please refer to the examples.

* Please send completed form to *Employee Recognition Committee* c/o Peggy Duett (mail code: H7055)

Personnel Service Use Only Nominee EID _____

EXAMPLES

- **SERVICE** – Bob Brown has always demonstrated a high level of service and commitment to performing his job duties. His co-workers seek him out for assistance and advice on the job. For instance, while performing a routine PM on AHU-3 HW valve, he noticed an unusual sound coming from a pump. His co-worker didn't notice anything unusual, but Bob's experience in this area made him suspicious. He checked and found a loose coupling which could have loosened and flown across the room at a high velocity. Once again, Bob's extensive knowledge, his determination to make things right, and his commitment to excellent service eliminated a potential hazard.
 - ◆ **assistance** – an act of aiding, helping, or supporting
 - ◆ **helpfulness** – an act of providing useful assistance
 - ◆ **kindness** – a considerate and thoughtful act
 - ◆ **attention** – conscious care or consideration
 - ◆ **mindfulness** – paying close attention to responsibilities
 - ◆ **support** – acts of aid, assistance, or encouragement

- **INTEGRITY** – Sally Brown is the most honest person I've ever known. As her supervisor, I must rely on reports from the crew to keep abreast of occurrences in the field. Recently she found what appeared to be a lost laptop computer in the break room. She wrote a note with her contact information and taped it to the table where the laptop had been laid. She brought it to the office, but I was not available, so she notified UTPD. Before an officer arrived, the laptop owner called and was relieved to find someone had taken such good care of his computer. It contained irreplaceable data from years of his research. She handled the situation perfectly with no direction at all, just because she knew it was the "right thing to do".
 - ◆ **forthrightness** – direct and without evasion; straightforward
 - ◆ **honesty** – truthfulness; without deceit
 - ◆ **straightforwardness** – trueness of course toward a goal
 - ◆ **sincerity** – the quality of being open and truthful; not deceitful or hypocritical
 - ◆ **trustworthiness** – deserving of trust or confidence; dependable; reliable
 - ◆ **reliability** – dependable in achievement, accuracy, honesty

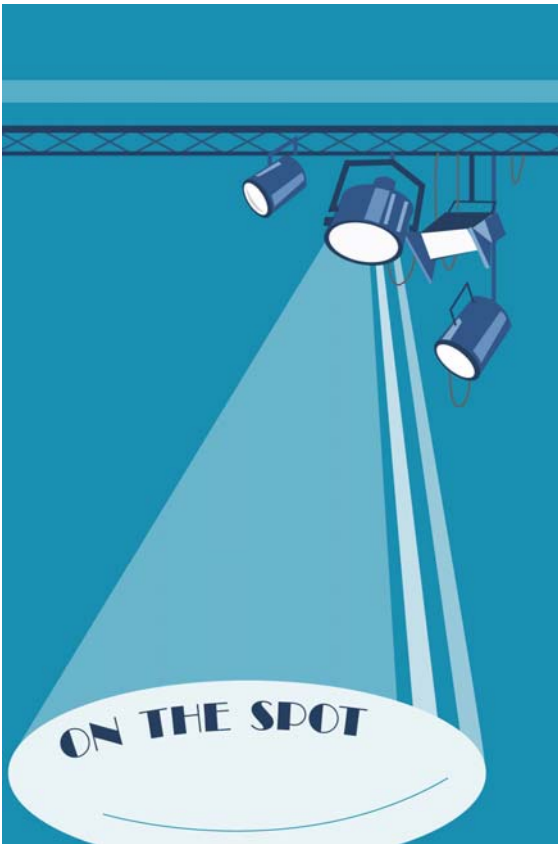
- **TEAMWORK** – Chuck Norris with the Electrical Shop has shown he is part of the overall team rather than just within his shop. Whenever anyone needs help he will offer his services to get the task accomplished. About six months ago we had a fire pump controller fail. This controller provides the power to the fire pump which supplies multiple buildings with fire protection water. This pump had to be fixed immediately per the State Fire Marshal. Chuck was performing work at RLM where the controller is located and saw our guys trying to work on the controller. Chuck asked what was going on. When we told him our troubles he immediately offered his help to our electrician. Since this is a high voltage item, having two licensed electricians working on this made me feel more at ease. Chuck called his supervisor and got the o.k. to help us. It took till 3:00 am to get the controller up and running but Chuck never hesitated and stayed to finish the project. Through teamwork from two different shops, we were able to have fire protection enabled in the buildings before students arrived for classes.
 - ◆ **combined/joint/team effort** – joining of forces and working together for a common purpose
 - ◆ **working/pulling together** – to join efforts at the same time as a team
 - ◆ **collaboration** – working together; united effort.
 - ◆ **cooperation** – working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit
 - ◆ **coordination** – harmonious functioning or interaction
 - ◆ **engagement** – the act of sharing in the activities of a group

- **EXCELLENCE** – Laura Peterson is a consistent high performer with evaluation scores to match. She is able to combine fast decision-making, design abilities, and excellent quality work. Recently, she was assigned to construct a control panel for a new air quality test lab. The lab had an unrealistic two week start-up date. With minimal information, she dug in, ordered parts and began laying out the panel on a piece of cardboard so she could envision the components in place. When the parts arrived, she immersed herself in the project. After one week, all components were in place. The next week, all field connections were completed, then tested. Amazingly, there were no mistakes. The panel was ready to commission two days ahead of schedule. The initial start-up was trouble-free and the lab worked exactly as requested. This is truly a display of excellence. She completed the design, lay-out, 266 inter-connections, testing and start-up all by herself except for 4 hours assistance to pull sensor wires to the field devices. She and has earned the right to be nominated for the SITES award.

- ◆ **greatness** – outstanding significance or importance
- ◆ **quality/high quality** – a degree or grade of high worth
- ◆ **merit** – a quality deserving praise or approval; virtue;demonstrated ability or achievement
- ◆ **superb** – of unusually high quality; excellent
- ◆ **mastery** – great skillfulness and knowledge of some subject or activity
- ◆ **superiority** – of great value; extraordinary

- **STEWARDSHIP** – Jane Doe has been working as a Maintenance Worker at The University of Texas at Austin for about three years. She has worked in several shops since she started. She noticed in her shop some stock items that were no longer being used. She spoke with her supervisor to see if other shops within Facilities Service and PMCS had a need for them. Not only was she able to give the items to other shops but in the communication process she found out there were some items the other shops no longer used and were able to give to her shop. This saved the university time and money and created a networking relationship between shops.

- ◆ **carefulness/taking care** – attentive to potential danger, error, or harm; cautious
watchful, conscientious effort to do something exactly right
- ◆ **cost-effectiveness** – producing the desired result without wasting time or effort or expense; productivity relative to the cost
- ◆ **thriftiness** – careful and diligent use of resources,
- ◆ **time-saving** – reducing the length of time taken to do something
- ◆ **resourcefulness** – ability to deal skillfully and promptly with new situations, difficulties, etc.
- ◆ **productivity** – producing favorable or useful results; effectively achieving specified results



Spotlighting Success!

The “On the Spot” recognition program started on October 1st. Facilities Services and Project Management & Construction Services (PMCS) employees can be honored for their exceptional workplace efforts “on the spot.”

How the Card Works

Supervisor to director levels can give a Facilities Services or PMCS employee immediate reward and recognition with an “On the Spot” card. Employees who receive an “On the Spot” card may claim one of five

gifts and receive eight hours leave with pay.

Here are the steps in giving and redeeming the cards:

- 1) The supervisor, manager or director signs the card and gives it to the employee with a description of the employee’s exemplary action.
- 2) The employee may select one of five recognition items listed on the tear-off section of the card. He or she takes that section to Central Stores to obtain the selected item.
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Employees may keep the remainder of the card, but please send a copy to Personnel for your employee file.

