



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

BLINN COLLEGE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

This employee handbook is presented to communicate important information to the Blinn College employee and is not intended as a written or oral contract of any kind. This handbook is subject to change without notice as laws, policies and procedures change.

Information in this handbook is designed for all full-time employees. The faculty also has a handbook that is prepared by the Office of Academic Affairs. Matters in that handbook are designed to assist faculty members in their work efforts.

The contents of this handbook are taken from adopted policies in the Blinn College Board Policy Manual, the Blinn College Administrative Policy Manual, official benefits material, and Blinn College payroll and personnel practices. It does not attempt to address every conceivable employee question at the College. Any employee who has a question about this information or any other policy or procedure should contact the Human Resource Office.

Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Statement

Blinn College affirms its policy of Equal Employment Opportunity to all staff members, recruitment resources, and officials of affiliated bodies with the College.

Recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, lay off, termination, rate of pay and other forms of compensation shall be administered without regard to sex, race, color, gender, marital status, religion, age, national origin, disability or veteran's status.

It is the college's policy (Title VI Affirmative Action Plan, July 1, 1990) to provide Equal Employment Opportunity in full compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended, the Rehabilitation Act of 1974 (Section 503, 504), the Vietnam Era Veterans Assistance Act of 1974, Texas Statutes 6252-14-V.A.T.S. and 6252-16-V.A.T.S., and Executive Orders 11246 and 11758 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. The college shall investigate all allegations of such harassment and shall take appropriate disciplinary action against employees, officials, vendors, and contractors found to engage in such unlawful behavior.

Safety

Each employee should be mindful of his own and his fellow employee's health and safety at all times. Safety procedures and awareness should be an important part of the daily operation of each employee.

Those who are negligent with regard to safety procedures can be disciplined or terminated for failure to comply. (See Blinn College Health and Safety Manual.)

Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace

Employees shall not unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, use, or be under the influence of a controlled substance, as defined in state or federal law during working hours while at school or at school-related events outside of usual working hours. An employee need not be legally intoxicated to be considered "under the influence" of a controlled substance.

The Americans with Disabilities Act does not protect an employee who drinks on the job and is unable to perform essential functions as a result of alcohol consumption nor does it afford protection to a current user of illegal drugs.

Each employee will be given a copy of the college's statement regarding a drug-free and alcohol-free workplace. (See Health and Safety Manual.)

Smoke-Free Environment

No smoking is allowed in college buildings and facilities except for the following: outdoor areas and exterior areas of buildings that are not part of any conditioned/return air space of any building.

Personnel Information

Changes in income tax withholding allowances should be brought to the attention of the Human Resources Office using form W-4. Employees can make changes to personal information such as address, telephone number, and emergency contact using Employee On-line or by completing the appropriate form. The employee is responsible for giving accurate information.

Verification of Employment Eligibility (I-9 Form)

Upon initial employment, all employees are required to attest that they are lawfully eligible to work in the United States. Employees are further required to supply to the employer documents proving this eligibility. These documents are used in completion of the I-9 Form promulgated by the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service.

State Nepotism Law (Relation to Trustee)

No person shall be employed who is related to a member of the Board of Trustees by blood (consanguinity) within the third degree -- parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister, brother, great grandparent, great grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew --, or by marriage (affinity) within the second degree -- parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister, brother.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions exist to outline the essential duties and responsibilities and qualifications for the job and should be used in the selection, training, and evaluating of personnel. Other reasonably related duties can also be expected of employees not specifically detailed in the description. Accommodations may be required according to the Americans with Disabilities Act for less essential duties. The employer has the right to change job descriptions as business necessities require.

Pay Plan

The college establishes three pay schedules: hourly employee; classified employee; and faculty/professional. These schedules are maintained in the Personnel Administration Manual and are adjusted to reflect Board approved increases. Increases may or may not become part of the wage base beyond the affected fiscal year.

Overtime

Overtime compensation will be paid when authorized to classified and hourly employees who qualify according to the Fair Labor Standards Act. The overtime compensation may or may not occur during the same pay period when earned, but must occur within 12 months of being earned. It is the supervisor's prerogative whether to grant monetary compensation or compensated time depending upon the business necessity.

All overtime is compensated at a rate of 1.5 times the rate of overtime hours worked. Use the OVERTIME REPORT form when recording overtime worked. Hourly employees who fill out time sheets will record this information on those documents.

Jury Duty

All regular full-time employees (contract, classified and hourly) shall be granted leave with pay when called to serve on any jury or when required to appear as a witness for any governmental entity. The employee may retain any pay earned for jury duty.

When an employee is required to appear in a private lawsuit, unrelated to his or her college duties, as either a plaintiff or a defendant, the employee must use personal or vacation leave or lose pay for the time absent from his or her job.

When an employee appears as a paid expert witness in any private lawsuit he or she shall lose pay for the time absent from his or her job.

The employee must turn in a copy of the summons or subpoena ordering the service by the court or appropriate authority.

Labor Organizations

No person shall be denied college employment by reason of membership or non-membership in a labor organization; however, no college official shall enter into a collective bargaining contract with a labor organization or recognize a labor organization as a bargaining unit. Neither shall a public employee engage in strikes or organized work stoppages, according to Texas law. An employee who participates in a strike shall forfeit all re-employment rights and other rights.

Religious Holy Days

The district shall not discriminate against an employee who is absent from work for the observance of a religious holy day and who gives proper notice of that absence. Absence (other than sick, vacation, or personal) is customarily penalized, the penalty for absence due to observance of a religious holy day is forfeiture of one day's pay equivalent for each day of absence. "Proper notice" and "religious holy days" are defined in board policy.

Military Leave

Short term and long term military leaves are allowable as defined in board policy.

Work Breaks

All regular full-time employees are allowed, with supervisor approval, to take a 20 minute break from their job in approximately the middle of each half shift. Work breaks are not an entitlement, but a privilege authorized by Blinn College as approved by the supervisor. Break time is not cumulative.

Student workers and part time workers are eligible for a break only if they work a continuous shift of at least four hours.

Education Policy

College employees must take courses on the employee's own time unless other arrangements are approved by the College President. Blinn College grants a \$75.00 book voucher per course, per semester, for courses taken at Blinn College. This voucher extends to the employee, to the employee's spouse and to the employee's children. The voucher is only valid at the Blinn College Campus Bookstores. The employee is responsible for any charge in excess of \$75.00 per course with a maximum of \$375.00 per semester. The voucher is good only for books; no supplies or consumables may be purchased on this voucher. If the full amount of the voucher is not used, the difference is NOT redeemable for cash or merchandise. At the end of the semester, students may keep or sell their books back to the bookstore.

Parking

Parking on campuses is allowed with appropriate parking stickers displayed on vehicles. Numbered parking spaces are specifically assigned. Please remove parking stickers from vehicles you will no longer own.

Travel and Expense Reimbursement

All business or college-related travel must be pre-approved on a TRIP TICKET. Give estimates and details of expenses, i.e., hotel, transportation, and registration fees. Contact the purchasing office for procedures on arranging approved airplane travel. This procedure, entitled "Airline-Ticket Purchasing Procedure," is located in the Blinn College Administrative Policy Manual. Reimbursement for authorized travel expenses is obtained through a completed TRAVEL EXPENSE FORM with receipts attached. See Blinn College Administrative Policy Manual for "Travel Reimbursement."

Standards of Conduct

The following standards of conduct shall apply to all employees of the college:

1. No employee shall accept or solicit any gift, favor, or service that might reasonably tend to influence the employee in the discharge of official duties or that the employee knows or should know is being offered with the intent to influence official conduct.
2. No employee shall accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity that the employee might reasonably expect would require or induce the disclosure of confidential information acquired by reason of the official position.
3. No employee shall accept other employment or compensation that could reasonably be expected to impair the employee's independence of judgment in the performance of official duties.
4. No employee shall accept other employment or compensation that could reasonably be expected to create a substantial conflict between the employee's private interest and the public interest.

5. No employee shall intentionally or knowingly solicit, accept, or agree to accept any benefit for having exercised the employee's official powers or performed official duties in favor of another.

Employee Conference

Employees are hired to succeed and success many times depends upon communication. The Employee Conference form is designed to facilitate communication. Its purposes are for commendation, counseling, employee complaints, disciplinary action, termination, or other.

The conference can be a positive statement initiated by either employee or supervisor, or it may be a progressive discipline statement initiated by the supervisor. If counseling does not result in success, the employee may be further disciplined or terminated, according to the actions stated in the progressive discipline.

The employee and supervisor are asked to sign this form to show that communication has taken place. If the employee refuses to sign, a third party will be asked to witness that the information was presented to the employee.

Employee Complaints

Blinn College Board Policy (**DGBA**) provides a timely and orderly process for the resolution of employee complaints. The Board intends that, whenever feasible, complaints be resolved at the lowest possible administrative level. (See Employee Conference.)

The definition of a complaint is specific allegations of unlawful discrimination in employment or an individual employee's wages, hours, or conditions of work. The complaint must establish the individual harm suffered.

Employee complaints should follow the procedure established in the Board policy.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Worker's Compensation Insurance

Blinn College is a subscriber to the Texas Worker's Compensation Act and is self-insured at no expense to the employee. Benefits include provisions for medicines, medical care, hospitalization and surgery necessary for recovery from injuries sustained during the course and scope of employment and compensation for time lost from employment due to disabling injuries.

Injuries must be properly reported to supervisors and worker's compensation administrators.

Retirement Plans

All eligible employees are required to participate in the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) of Texas. Faculty members and certain non-classified staff who have full-time appointments may elect to join the Optional Retirement Program (ORP) in lieu of TRS. Employees enrolled in TRS contribute 6.4% of their salary and the state contributes an amount equal to 6.644% of their salary. If

employees terminate employment before satisfying the requirements of retirement, they may apply for a refund of their contributions. TRS provides three basic benefits: survivor and death benefits, disability benefits, and retirement benefits. Service benefits vest with the member after five years of participation.

Under ORP, employees contribute an amount equal to 6.65% of their salary and the state and college contributes an amount equal to 6.4% of their salary. Contributions may be deposited with an approved insurance, annuity, or regulated investment company as designated by the participant. The choice of investment company and investment plan or plans is the responsibility of the participating employee. Contributions are used to produce benefits based on the performance of the investment selected. Benefits vest after one year and one day of participation.

An eligible member may exercise the option to participate in the ORP only once. Election to participate in the ORP must be made before the 91st day after becoming eligible. An eligible member who fails to elect the ORP during the 90-day period shall remain in the Teacher Retirement System for the remainder of employment in Texas public higher education.

Social Security

All employees of Blinn College participate in the Federal Social Security program. The total FICA percentage is 7.65%. Old Age and Survivors Disability Insurance (OASDI) is 6.2%, and the Medicare Hospital Insurance (HI) tax is 1.45%. Blinn College matches these payroll deductions. Student workers are exempt from Social Security and Medicare taxes.

Pro-Rating Sick Leave, Vacation Leave, and Personal Leave

Sick leave and vacation leave will be pro-rated for incomplete accrual periods. In some cases this may affect the final paycheck for a terminating employee. Some restrictions may also apply to personal leave if the employee starts working late in the benefit year.

Absences and Sick Leave

Sick leave provides paid time off for illness or injury, including physical disability due to childbirth, when the medical condition of the employee prevents the performance of the employee's regularly assigned duties. Sick leave may also be used in cases of illness or injury of the employee's spouse, children, grandchildren, grandparents, mother, father, mother-in-law, or father-in-law.

Full-time employees earn eight hours of sick leave per month of contract or anticipated employment up to a maximum of 600 hours. New employees will receive credit for sick leave purposes for their first month of employment only if they come to work the first working day of that month.

Sick leave ceases upon termination of employment. No compensation or time off is provided for unused sick leave.

Catastrophic Injury and Illness Fund

Effective October 01, 2007, all regular full-time benefits eligible employees who have been employed for at least one year are eligible to apply for the Catastrophic Injury and Illness Fund. Catastrophic Injury or Illness is defined as a medical diagnosis or surgery in the Federal Registry

List of Diagnosis-Related Groups which rates an Outlier threshold of 29 or greater and so severe that it results in total disability of at least 20 work days for eligible employees or thirty calendar days for immediate family members. Eligible employees who have exhausted all sick, personal and vacation leave can apply for benefits from the Catastrophic Injury or Illness Fund. The application will be reviewed by appointed committee members and submitted for approval. Approved applications will receive funding to continue sick leave pay. For each Catastrophic Injury or Illness, eligible employees may withdraw up to one-third of the total amount of money in the Catastrophic Injury or Illness fund or 50 working days, whichever is less.

Full Guidelines for Catastrophic Injury or Illness Fund can be found in the Administrative Policy Manual. Application form can be found on the Human Resources website.

Please contact the Human Resources office with questions.

Vacation for Twelve Month, Salaried Employees

Only 12-month salaried employees are entitled to paid vacation.

Vacation days are earned at a rate of 8 hours for each complete month worked for a total of 96 hours per year. Eligible employees are credited with the total annual vacation at the beginning of each fiscal year (September 1).

Example: An employee earning vacation at a rate of 8 hours per month will receive 96 hours in September for the upcoming year. The initial/beginning vacation balance for employees hired during the middle of a fiscal year is pro-rated based on the month rate for the number of months remaining in the fiscal year.

New employees will receive credit for vacation purposes for their first month of employment only if they come to work the first working day of that month. Otherwise, for calculations of vacation hours, the first working day of the next month will be used. An employee who terminates will receive credit for the final month of employment if the last day worked is on or after the 15th of the month.

Vacation time is not earned during absences without pay.

Before any vacation can actually be taken, a **Combination Leave Request and Absence Report** form must be completed by the employee and approved **in advance** by the employee's supervisor. The form is forwarded to the Human Resources Office. Employees may take vacation hours prior to actually having earned them, subject to approval of their supervisor. However, they do so with the understanding that if they terminate prior to the end of the fiscal year, unearned vacation time taken will be deducted from his or her last paycheck.

Upon resignation or termination, paid vacation time will be computed on a pro-rata basis if at least ninety days service has been completed.

Carry Over Days

Employees may carry over 48 hours of accrued, but unused, vacation from one fiscal year to the next (September 01 thru August 31). Employees are credited with 96 vacation hours each fiscal year, plus 48 carry over hours equaling a maximum of 144 eligible vacation hours per fiscal year.

Any accrual of vacation in excess of the 48 hours allowed shall be lost at the end of the fiscal year (August 31) and will not be paid by the college. Carry over days are considered to be time off days and are not paid by the college.

Holidays

Holidays for the upcoming school year will be announced in memo each summer. Salaried employees will receive pay for those holidays if employed immediately prior to and immediately following the holiday and in accordance with applicable contracts.

Personal Leave

All full-time salaried employees may be granted up to 16 hours of personal leave with pay beginning with each fiscal year (September 1) for the purpose of conducting necessary personal business which cannot be transacted before or after school hours or on the weekend.

Personal business may be defined as, but not limited to, legal or business proceedings, funerals of family and friends, illness within the immediate family, and personal illness and pregnancy in the absence of accrued sick leave. Personal leave is not intended to increase vacation or holiday time and each employee is expected to exercise professional judgment in applying for this leave. It is granted at the discretion of the college and must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor and the appropriate vice president.

Unused personal leave may not be carried over from year-to-year. No compensation or time off is provided for unused personal leave.

Funeral Leave

All regular full-time employees may use up to three days of available sick leave per occurrence when there is a death in the immediate family. Employees are to notify their immediate supervisor or vice president as soon as possible of said leave. Approval by the college president required for the use of additional sick leave for funerals in excess of the three days. Immediate family is defined to include spouse, parents, children, brothers, and sisters, grandparents, grandchildren, step-parents, step-children and mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law.

Family and Medical Leave Act

Blinn College will provide as much as 12 weeks of unpaid leave after childbirth or adoption or to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent, or in case of an employee's own serious illness or if a child, spouse, or parent is called to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves. In situations where an employee must care for a covered service member who sustained serious injury or illness, up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave will be provided. Employees will return to the same or comparable job. Employees must have worked at least one year and have at least 1250 hours of service during the previous 12-month period. A doctor's certification must be obtained as well as reasonable intermittent statements. The employer may require a second medical opinion and may deduct all paid leave from this time. Thirty day's notice for foreseeable leaves must be given. The effective date of this law is January 16, 2009.

Insurance

Full-time higher education employees are eligible for the Employees Group Benefits Program (GBP). Your enrollment and that of any eligible dependents in health insurance will become effective on the first of the month following a 90 day waiting period. Optional coverage will begin with the initial period of eligibility. The initial period of eligibility is the first 31 calendar days of employment. During this period employees have the opportunity to enroll themselves and eligible dependents in the following optional coverage: dental, optional term life with AD&D (employee only), dependent term life with AD&D, voluntary AD&D, and disability income (employee only). HealthSelect is the health care program available to all eligible employees. Those employees who live in an area of a qualified Health Maintenance Organization may qualify for participation in that HMO.

After the initial period of eligibility, enrollment restrictions may apply. Double coverage is not permitted either as a dependent or as an employee. The benefits coordinator will provide details on coverage and costs.

Tax Saver Spending Accounts (Tex Flex, or Reimbursement Account)

Two separate spending accounts, health care and dependent day care, are available to eligible employees. Participants may contribute up to an IRS approved maximum to either or both of these spending accounts on a tax-free basis. Actual out-of-pocket unreimbursed health care and dependent day care expenses can then be reimbursed to participants from the tax-free money in their own individual spending accounts. Contributions made to an individual's spending account must be used for services rendered during the plan year or they will be forfeited. These accounts must be re-established each year the employee wishes to participate.

Tax Deferred Plans

Eligible employees may purchase tax deferred plans with a portion of their salary. The employee's contributions are deposited with an approved company of the employee's selection and are not taxed currently as income to the employee.