

(We wish we could, but).... we can't unring the bell on:

- 1. New hires can only sign up for benefits within 31 days of their employment start date. Otherwise, they will need to wait until the next open enrollment (April) to sign up, and their benefits will be effective the following July 1.***
- 2. Current employees can only change their benefit elections within 31 days of a qualifying life event (birth of a child, spouse loses employment, etc). They, too, will have to wait until the next open enrollment to sign up, and their benefits will be effective the following July 1.***
- 3. Life insurance payouts decrease as you age. Beginning on and after your 70th birthday, your life insurance benefit decreases, starting from 45% of the total amount from age 70 to 75, and decreasing in percentage every 5 years to 10% for age 85 on.***
- 4. Medical spending and dependent care accounts must be spent by September 15 (2.5 months after the end of the July 1 benefit plan year) and claims for reimbursement must be submitted no later than November 30 after the end of the plan year. Any remaining funds are forfeited. See the Benefits web page for more information. (Note for families where both spouses/partners are employed by Rice: while medical spending account maximum is \$5000 per employee per year, dependent care limit is \$5000 per family per year.)***
- 5. Neglecting to change beneficiaries for retirement benefits, 403(b) benefits, life insurance, or AD&D benefits.***

***Benefits run by fiscal year: July 1 – June 30
Benefits open enrollment period is in April for July 1 start
Retirement plan year, and supplemental savings (403b) year
is the calendar year***

Everything I needed to know about leading a department at Rice, I learned in kindergarten

1. If you want a kitten, ask for a pony: *set stretch goals*
2. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should: *emails are discoverable, non-retractable, and often poor substitutes for face to face communication*
3. If you can't say something nice about someone, don't say anything: *properly document both strengths and weaknesses; give people feedback that can be put into action rather than vague platitudes*
4. Everyone gets to play: *pick talent that complements you rather than replicates you—this is one power of diversity*
5. If you finish your paper, you can go to recess: *recognize good performance as it occurs*
6. Take a time out: *nip poor performance in the bud*
7. Don't kick a guy when he's down: *be gracious in termination; and protect yourself from charges of retaliation*
8. Everyone remembers one of their grammar school and high school teachers, usually with gratitude: *leadership is lasting*
9. Don't play with chemicals without adult supervision: *get the right people in the room to make a decision—department, dean, provost. human resources, legal, etc.*
10. Sometimes the nerd gets the prom queen: *expect the most of everyone, and develop everyone*
11. You made the mess, you clean it up: *there are some actions we can't fix (like allowing employees to change benefits more than 31 days after a qualifying event, changing beneficiaries after death, or refusing to approve overtime after it has been worked)—the only control we have is to avoid the situation in the first place.*

My parents didn't raise me to be a department chair.....

OK, now that we're done with this, here's some advice from your colleagues in Human Resources

1. If a staff member wants to talk to you about something, find the time today. Then, don't jump to conclusions, and don't make commitments--you can always get back to them. Consult us in Human Resources if you'd like to talk about the situation, and refer *any* complaints of any type of harassment to Russell Barnes at X 4350 or Colleen Dutton at X 4755.
2. One of your key levers is what you do with vacant positions. Every time there's a vacancy in your department, think about the job you need done now versus the job you'll need done over the next two to five years, and describe a job that takes the future into account. And think about the skills needed – or the potential to be displayed – for that job. We can train people for new challenges. The HR staff is happy to talk this through with you, and it's free. Work with your HR recruiter to get the best results from a hiring opportunity.
3. Remember that performance evaluation sessions are more important to the person being evaluated than to the evaluator. Part of the value is the dedication of time and full attention to the employee. Focus on listening to the person being evaluated, on describing what went well, and what can be improved. Focus on being specific—adults learn from concrete examples. If time doesn't permit a full discussion, find a different time.
4. Benefit eligibility is of major importance to Rice employees. It is also one of the most highly regulated areas of compensation, i.e., under law, Rice is prevented from making exceptions to employee benefit rules and regulations.
 - a. *First*--make sure that your department coordinator/administrator understands benefits eligibility—criteria differ among faculty and staff.
 - b. *Second*-- Life events (new baby, spouse loses employment, etc.) trigger time-limited opportunities for faculty and staff to add children or spouses to health insurance. Employees only have 31 days, and then have to wait for open enrollment, and there's nothing we can do about it. So, make sure someone in your department understands the key aspects of benefits administration, and keeps their eye out for family situations within the department that prompt possible changes in benefits.
5. Sexual harassment, discriminatory actions, unmannerly behavior, and lack of productivity actually happen at Rice. So do random acts of kindness, thank you letters, bonuses, and examples of extraordinary accomplishment. You get a big vote in deciding which camp your department is in. Nominate a deserving staff member for the Distinguished Employee Award—it's not hard to do, and it means a great deal to those rewarded.
6. Do whatever you can to get a new hire—faculty and staff—paid on time and introduced to the job, the department, and Rice. It makes a big difference in how long it takes for the new employee to be productive, and in whether we have the opportunity to work with a committed, engaged employee or one less interested in our success. Your interest, and the all-important paperwork is crucial here—what you do, when everyone signs off,

when the new hire completes the tax forms, etc. Make sure your department coordinator/administrator is on top of it.

7. Make it a habit to do a regular three-month check-in/tune up on a probationary employee or a recently reassigned or promoted employee to make sure all is running smoothly. You do it for your car—wouldn't you do it for your staff member? This effort can nip problems in the bud and also gives one more opportunity for face to face engagement with the staff.
8. Pay attention to two or more instances or an emerging pattern of substandard work performance or inappropriate behavior, and any suggestion of violence. Call us in HR to talk about it. It may be nothing, or it may be something.
9. Non-exempt staff (there are some in your department) are required by law to receive overtime pay for any work over 40 hours during any week. This includes "suffering or permitting overtime." You are responsible, and Rice has no alternatives here. Make sure hours over 40 are recorded on time sheets and paid.
10. Just remember to focus on the behavior and its consequences ("when you cut off a fellow staff member in the middle of her explanation, you are showing that you don't value anyone's opinion but your own and risking losing her support when you will need it when it's your turn to be Project Manager") rather than on the person ("didn't your mother ever teach you any manners; in all my days..."). It is amazingly easier to get the words out. Practice. It really gets easier. Really.
11. Rice offers plenty of training opportunities in-house, and our Training Director can recommend appropriate classes or work with departments on department-wide training initiatives. Take advantage of it. Also, to get the optimal benefit from training, make sure that any employees who attend training give you a report, and suggest how they can best use what they learned. That's where the payoff is.
12. Don't make promises that you can't keep.
13. Catch people doing something right. There are lots of employers in Houston, and our best employees can go lots of places to work. Your job is to make this hard for them to do by showing them in as many ways as you can think how much you value their work. Consult the Rice HR webpage for a few more ideas.
14. It's always messier tomorrow. That's why HR is open today. Call.

Rice University Human Resources

<i>Mary Cronin</i>	<i>X4070</i>	
<i>Elaine Britt</i>	<i>X6074</i>	<i>Benefits</i>
<i>Jana Callan</i>	<i>X6717</i>	<i>Recruitment and Systems</i>
<i>Colleen Dutton</i>	<i>X4755</i>	<i>Employee Relations and Compensation</i>
<i>Marie Wehrung</i>	<i>X6003</i>	<i>Employee Development and Training</i>

May 2008

Nothing is really work -- unless you would rather be doing something else-- J. M. Barrie