

May 15, 2009

Ms. Jennifer I. Heath  
The University of Texas at Austin  
1301 E. Dean Keeton Street  
Austin, TX 78722

Dear Ms. Heath:

It is my pleasure to inform you that the University of Texas at Austin's *Employee Recognition SITES Awards* submission has been selected to receive APPA's Effective and Innovative Practices Award.

A formal presentation of the award will be made during a reception at the APPA 2009 conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in July. The reception is presently scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, July 8. We trust that a representative from your institution will be available at APPA 2009 for presentation of the award. Online registration for APPA 09 is available on the APPA web site at [www.appa.org](http://www.appa.org). Please contact Betty Farley of APPA at 703-684-1446 or via e-mail at [betty@appa.org](mailto:betty@appa.org) if your institution will not be represented at APPA 09 or in attendance at the reception, in order for us to make other arrangements to deliver your award to your institution.

We would also like to invite you to showcase your submission in the APPA 2009 Hall of Resources. APPA is tentatively holding a complimentary 8' x 10' booth with an 8-foot table on your institution's behalf. We are encouraging all of this year's Effective and Innovative Practices Award recipients to showcase information on their winning entry in the booth. The booth and table are large enough for your institution to accommodate a stand-up display as well as printed information on your winning submittal. Should your institution like to take this opportunity to showcase its winning entry, please contact Betty at APPA by May 30, 2009.

Please let us know of others at your institution who should be informed of this Award. We also plan to announce this prestigious honor in *Facilities Manager* magazine.

Again, congratulations on being selected to receive APPA's Effective and Innovative Practices Award.

Best Wishes,



Kevin Folsom  
Vice President, Professional Affairs and Chair  
Awards and Recognition Committee

cc: Bill Elvey, APPA President  
Polly Pinney, APPA President-Elect  
David Gronquist, CAPP representative to the Professional Affairs Committee  
Michael A. Miller, University of Texas at Austin  
E. Lander Medlin, Executive Vice President  
John Bernhards, Associate Vice President

# 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

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## 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