

R&D highlights

WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION QUARTERLY

January–April 2014

COMPLIANCE CORNER

What Not to Ask in an Interview: The last quarterly gave seven questions that cannot be asked during an interview in the event that you serve on a selection committee or are conducting an interview as a supervisor. This quarter, we are giving additional questions that are off limits.

The following questions could result in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act:

1. Do you suffer from an illness or disability?
2. Asking an applicant to mark yes to any conditions or illnesses on a checklist that he or she had or been treated for.
3. Have you been hospitalized and for what?
4. Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist?
5. Have you had a major illness recently?
6. How many days of work did you miss last year because of illness?
7. Do you have any disabilities or impairments that might affect your job performance?
8. Are you taking any prescription drugs?
9. Have you ever been treated for drug addiction or alcoholism?

The following questions are to be avoided when interviewing a female applicant:

1. Do you plan to get married?
2. Do you intend to start a family?
3. What are your daycare plans?
4. Are you comfortable supervising men?
5. What would you do if your husband were transferred to another location?
6. Do you think you could perform the duties as well as a man?
7. Are you likely to take time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act?

Finally, if a job candidate reveals information that you are not allowed to ask, do not pursue the topic further. The excuse that the candidate brought it up will not fly in court. The best course of action would be to change the subject right away.

(The HR Specialist, January 2014)

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PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

WVSU EXTENSION SERVICE: 4-H Family GROWTH Program Planting the Seeds of Change

WVSU Extension Service's 4-H Family GROWTH Program is teaching youth in the Kanawha Valley the value of planting, tending and repeating the benefits of gardening.

Funded by a U.S.D.A. 1890 Capacity Building Program grant, the 4-H Family GROWTH Program implements agricultural education projects at the Dunbar Primary and Mary C. Snow West Side Elementary schools in Charleston. Weekly in-class sessions involve instruction about science, nature, gardening and ecology using books, props, pictures and media.

Each interaction is treated like a building block that starts with the tiniest aspects of nature. Lessons consist of learning about insects, types of dirt, worms, seed-spreading mammals, importance of wetlands, and migration/hibernation, as well as life cycles, water conservation, nocturnal animals, bird populations and pollinators. Following these lessons, the program focus leads outdoors to the school gardens.

“By educating the youth on these subjects, we are helping them understand how to define balance in nature and better comprehend that without this ‘web of life,’ there would be no gardening, food or clean water,” said Extension Agent Shelley Whittington.

The idea for the program developed from and utilizes the Junior Master Gardener program curriculum, developed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to teach young people gardening basics through experimentation, reading and activities.

The feedback from participants has led to

enthusiasm and eagerness to learn more. Teachers have informed Whittington that the discussions from each program interaction continue long after the coordinator leaves and that they have often added more activities to coincide with their classroom plans.

The project has provided teachers with resources, supplies and training to which they otherwise would never have access. Each school is being stocked with themed science center boxes containing books, hands-on activities, models, curriculum, bonus activities, puppets, replicas, art materials and supplies.

AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH STATION: Pepper Research Develops Value-Added Crops

Genomics research at WVSU is developing value-added crops that are adapted to local conditions, helping to meet an increasing demand for vegetables containing high contents of health-promoting compounds.

Drs. Padma Nimmakayala, Umesh Reddy and Gerald Hankins are leading projects using modern DNA technologies to identify and pyramid the genes controlling synthesis of various health-related compounds, such as capsaicin and other phenolics, carotenoids and ascorbic acid, into American pepper cultivars by marker assisted selection (MAS) to develop lines with high levels of antioxidants.

“Peppers are an important constituent of many foods, adding flavor, color, vitamin C and pungency, and are therefore indispensable to the United States and world food industries,” said Nimmakalaya.

Pepper fruits are a rich source of metabolites with potential health-promoting properties, for example

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Employee Identities are at Risk:

The first step in protecting oneself from identity theft and improving company information security is to understand how thieves can steal vital information. Here are some of the common techniques thieves are using today, and they range from the old-school to state-of-the-art techniques:

- **Dumpster Diving:** This method is the oldest and most effective. Thieves search the trash for documents that contain information and gain access to important numbers.
- **Shoulder Surfing:** The prevalence of cameras and recorders on mobile phones makes it easy for thieves to position themselves within sight or earshot of a financial transaction and record your information to commit future fraud.
- **Postal Fraud:** Using a postal change of address form, thieves can redirect mail. They may even scout for unlocked or unattended mailboxes and steal sensitive mail right from a person's front door or office.
- **P2P File Sharing:** Music sharing sites and other peer to peer networks can give thieves access to vital sensitive information. Anything stored on the same hard drive as the shared library can inadvertently go public with every connection.
- **Phishing and Online Shopping:** Impersonating businesses via email or websites enables identity thieves to acquire personal information. An email from a bank or an online storefront may or may not be legitimate.
- **Skimmer Swiping:** Personal information can be stolen when a debit or credit card is used merely for a legitimate transaction and was swiped a second time using an ATM or handheld skimmer.

BUSINESS AND FINANCE NOTES & UPDATES

- Please inform the Office of Research and Public Service of any new staff members. Provide the employee's name, title, office location, office number and email address. Send information to Lisa Williamson at lwilliamson@wvstateu.edu.
- Business and Finance will be sending out Fixed Assets and Inventory information reports to each department head soon. Please update those reports, provide any missing information or changes and return to Business and Finance. Based on the information provided, a physical check by a Business and Finance staff member will be conducted in June or July, and possibly by the Corporation's outside auditor during the annual audit. Your cooperation is appreciated.
- IRS tax issues and Worker and Unemployment Compensation concerns have made it a priority in correctly identifying the classification for an Independent Contractor. It is the employer's responsibility to determine if the individual performing the service is classified as an employee or as an independent contractor. If IRS auditors were to audit the Corporation and it was determined that an Independent Contractor should have been classified as an employee, the Corporation would be responsible for the individual's tax liability, the Corporation's tax liability that was not paid due to the misclassification, and a hefty penalty.

What is the difference between an Independent Contractor and an Employee?

An Independent Contractor operates a business with employees. The Independent Contractor maintains a separate business checking account and keeps business records. He or she advertises their services, invoices for work completed and has more than one client. An Employee works for only one employer, received training or instructions on how to perform duties, and is supervised to ensure that duties are performed.

How can employers determine whether an individual is an Employee or Independent Contractor?

The IRS auditors look at the degree of control that a company has over the individual performing the service. The IRS has three "tests" it uses to make the determination: Behavioral, Financial and Relationship.

- **Behavioral:** If a business give instructions about when, where and how to work, then the individual is an employee. The more detailed the instructions, the more control the business has over the worker, and therefore less independent contractor he or she becomes. If an evaluation system is in place to measure how the work is performed, then the factors would point to an employee. Finally if the business provides the worker with training on how to do the job, then the worker is classified as an employee.
- **Financial:** An independent contractor makes a significant investment to complete the work he or she is performing, and are more likely to have unreimbursed expenses than employees. As a result, the independent contractor has the opportunity to make a profit or loss. An Independent Contractor is usually paid by a flat fee for the job, and invoices for payment at certain benchmarks of a project or at the completion of work. He or she is free to seek out business opportunities in the market.
- **Relationship:** If there is an expectation that the relationship between the business and individual is ongoing year after year, or on a continuous, indefinite basis, then an employer/employee relationship exists. Also, if the worker performs a service that is a key aspect of the business and the business cannot do without this service, then he or she is an employee.

It is important to note, that written contracts between an individual and businesses hold little bearing on IRS determinations. Written contracts cannot override the law or government regulations. When considering hiring an independent contractor through the Corporation, all parts of the contractual packets must be completed correctly, including the Independent Contractor determination form.

Also, when hiring an independent contractor, please refrain from hiring West Virginia State University employees. If a State employee is the only option, then the employee must have a signed approval from their supervisor and Vice President stating that the work being performed for the Corporation will not interfere with his or her duties. In conducting evaluation of programs, please consider outside, non-WVSU sources to ensure an impartial view.

WELCOME

The WVSU R&D Corp. would like to welcome the following individuals:

- **Raymond Moeller**, Nicholas County Extension Agent
- **Kaysha Moreno**, HOUSE Program Coordinator
- **Stacy Ford**, Summers County Extension Agent
- **Allison Meadows**, Assistant to the Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics
- **Jennifer Totten**, 4-H PLANTERS Extension Agent

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

Belated Birthdays

January:

Garvey Price, Karen Thomas, Dr. Padmavathi Nimmakayala, Brunetta Gamble-Dillard

February:

Neville “Buzz” Moberley, Megan Sheets, Shannon Skiles, Susan Perdue

March:

Robin Turner, Christopher Postalwait, William “Mike” Ferrell, Paul Henderson, Tiffany Plear, Dr. Barbara Liedl, Eric Jackson

Upcoming Birthdays

May:

Dr. Jose Ulises Toledo

June:

Thangasamy Saminathan, Dayan Perera, Carla Boggess, Venkata Gopinath Vajja, Derrien Williams, Adam Hodges, Detria Waller, Dharmesh Patel, Sandra Moss

TRIVIA TIDBITS

What does a candidate’s choice of color say about their personality?

An individual makes an impression on another within seven seconds of their first meeting. That first impression is often made merely by the individual’s choice of clothing. The choice of color that a candidate wears during an interview can tell a lot to about his or her personality. In a recent survey of employers by CareerBuilder, employers pointed to key color correlations:

- Black: leadership
- Blue: team player
- Gray: logical/analytical
- White: organized
- Brown: dependable
- Red: power
- Green, yellow, orange and purple: creative

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PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT continued from page 1

carotenoids (provitamin A), ascorbic acid (vitamin C), tocopherols (vitamin E), flavonoids and capsaicinoids.

Nimmakayala, Reddy and Hankins jointly published two articles earlier this year about their pepper genomic research in the leading scientific journals “PLOS ONE” and “Molecular Genetics and Genomics.” Graduate students Aldo Almeida, Lakshmi Abburi and Lavanya Abburi participated in the published research, along with Research Associates Robert Cantrell and Gopinath Vajja.

POLICY ALERT

The WVSU R&D Corporation prohibits any driver from using their electronic communication devices without handheld features while operating State or Corporation vehicles. It is a state law (Senate Bill No. 211). Any person that violates this state law will be liable if a ticket is issued and/or if an accident occurs. Thank you for your cooperation in this important matter.

Individuals traveling on Title III funds must submit their travel authorization on the R&D’s (Title III) Request for Travel form. Please do not use the Land-Grant Travel Approval Form. This form is for Research and Development’s Land-Grant employees who are traveling on Land-Grant funds. Submitting the incorrect form will result in the delay in approving travel and can result in the denial of travel. Title III travelers are responsible for his or her own travel arrangements. Please contact the Budget Office for the correct form to submit and any other questions concerning travel.

REDUCE YOUR STRESS

11 WAYS TO REDUCE JOB STRESS

Job related stress is everywhere. Everyone has it in almost every job, and some more than others. While there is no simple method to completely eliminate stress, there are some small steps to ease it.

1. Write everything down.
2. Give yourself a small margin of extra time for everything you do.
3. Don’t have unrealistic standards.
4. Have a “Plan B.”
5. At the end of each day, organize your desk. Put the most important job on top, so that it can be your first priority to focus on the next morning.
6. Don’t carry a full briefcase with unneeded materials.
7. Focus on using the resources you have available, instead of complaining about what you don’t have.
8. Take on your toughest task within the first 10 minutes of your work day
9. Give yourself deadlines, and stick to them.
10. Set realistic goals for each day
11. Question the purpose of meetings. Find an alternative way to distribute information.

(HR Weekly, February 10, 2014)

“Energy and persistence conquer all things.” Benjamin Franklin