



# Staff Tracks

Online at: <http://fp.arizona.edu/sac>

February 2005

## Setting the Record Straight on "References"

By Cathy Nicholson, Director, Institutional Relations & HR-IT

"You can't give references; it's just not allowed to give more information than dates of employment." "Why bother calling for references? People won't tell you anything anyway." These two myths of employment references – that you can't give them and you can't get them – set us up for irresponsible hiring decisions. If you're a supervisor or hiring authority, it's time we set the record straight for you and debunk some of the myths and misinformation that have been passed around for years.

### Giving References

The hesitation to provide references stems from the fear that providing any information at all will lead to lawsuits alleging defamation, libel or retaliation. In fact, it is **not unlawful** for you to provide to another employer information concerning a person's education, training, experience, qualifications and job performance to be used for the purpose of evaluating the person for employment. You are protected by the law when you provide information that is a) job related,

b) based upon credible evidence (a demonstrable record, such as attendance records) and c) made without malice. It's also important to know that you're required to send a copy of any written communication regarding employment to the employee's last known address. (Please see A.R.S. 23-1361 for more information.) Another good idea: ask for a release, signed by the former employee, that gives the employee's consent for you to respond to reference inquiries. Bottom line: tell the truth.

### Getting References

While it's true some employers have a "no comment" policy, there are often ways to get around their reluctance. We recommend you obtain a signed release from applicants whose references you will be checking. The current UA on-line application (available via Career Track) requires applicants to sign a release you can copy and provide to references. The new Pre-Employment Screening Policy, scheduled for implementation in February, 2005, actually *requires* that hiring

authorities conduct an appropriate level of screening, including checking employment history, when filling a vacant position. Forms associated with the screening process, and the policy, will be made available on the HR web site on the Recruitment and Hiring page. Beyond that, here are some things you can do to get useful information from a reference:

1. Describe the position you are filling, including typical duties and necessary skills. Then ask for a description of the job the applicant performed for the reference. Even reluctant references will generally provide you with a position description.
2. Verify factual matters, such as start and end dates, and job title.
3. Attempt to acquire objective yet qualitative information concerning prior job performance. Often, past performance is the best indicator of how an applicant will perform in the future.

Take your time and do it right - it's your *duty* to know who you're hiring!

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Denise Allyn is Manager, Administration and Finance in the department of Political Science. She first worked at UA in the late 70s and enjoyed it so much she returned in 1984. Denise has received the University of Arizona Award of Excellence in 1988 and 1994 and won the SBS Staff Award of Excellence in 1994. One thing no one would guess about her is that she is a twin! Denise has 4 cats, 1 dog, and loves photography, reading, hiking and her 6 grandchildren. According to Denise, "the U of A is a great employer and there are wonderful people working here." Denise is certainly one of those great people.

Check out Upcoming events at <http://fp.arizona.edu/sac/upcomingevents.html>

## The University of Arizona Ombudsperson Committee

The university has a unique committee of volunteers available for informal, neutral, confidential problem resolution. The university provides ongoing training to the ombuds to help them hone their skills and always be ready to listen and help.

Ombuds can listen without being judgmental; provide information and referrals; facilitate communication; help callers develop options for resolving workplace problems or conflicts; offer a neutral perspective; prevent negative conflict through early intervention  
Ombuds can not advocate for the individual, nor for the University; assist parties already engaged in a formal grievance process or legal process, or parties already represented by legal counsel; keep records; testify at formal legal proceedings

If the Ombuds determines an issue is something within the scope of their duties, he or she will be available to help the caller clarify the situation and identify their own needs, and brainstorm possible solutions to create the desired outcome. The committee is available to help any member of the campus community, including employees, students, parents and vendors. The goal is to assist with problems informally, at the earliest stages, before they escalate. For more information, visit <http://ombuds.arizona.edu>.



## THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA,

Staff Advisory Council

Tel: (520) 621-9947

Website: <http://fp.arizona.edu/sac/>

## Emily Krauz Staff Scholarship

Emily Krauz was a member of the classified staff at the University of Arizona who never had the opportunity to take classes. When she died, Emily left an endowment to fund classified staff members who wanted to take classes to further their careers at the University. You are invited and encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to further your University career.

*Examples of furthering your University career:* A Facilities Management worker taking a series of classes in elevator maintenance and repair; a cook at the Student Union working toward a degree which might move the cook into a management position; a member of the classified staff with limited English skills taking classes to refine written and oral English skills. *Examples that do not constitute furthering your University career:* working as an administrative assistant and working on a degree in Elementary Education because you have always wanted to teach; taking Real Estate classes.

The Emily Krauz scholarship is awarded twice a year. Monetary awards are made on a reimbursement basis. Winners submit original receipts for tuition and books and receive a check to reimburse for those expenses. Gas, child care, computers and meals are not eligible for reimbursement at this time. Check out the deadlines and apply online at <http://fp.arizona.edu/sac/>.

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## SAC'S "FUN"RAISER

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SAC will hold its first Bake Sale to raise money to benefit the Staff Advisory Council, including the Emily Krauz Scholarship fund and the University Awards of Excellence. The sale will be held on Friday, April 1, 2005 (time and location to be announced). You can help support the Staff Advisory Council by stopping by on April 1 and buying some goodies or by donating money or baked goods for the sale. Please contact Kathy Bell for more information [kkbell@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:kkbell@ag.arizona.edu).

