



# THE BRIDGE: Connecting Civil Service and You

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**The DSCS Mission:**  
To provide human resource services and programs that enable state government to attract, develop and retain a productive and diverse workforce that excels in delivering quality services to the citizens of Louisiana.

### Question of the Quarter

Have a question about Civil Service? Let us know! This publication is intended to provide for increased communication between the Department of State Civil Service and all stakeholders within our system. E-mail your questions to us, and we'll do our best to respond promptly. Some questions will be chosen for publication as part of this feature! Participants will remain anonymous if requested. Please note that not all questions will be published and that only fact-based questions will receive a response.

[Ask your question](#)

### STAYING CONNECTED

*From the Desk of Shannon S. Templet, DSCS Director*



This issue of *The Bridge* offers resources relevant to current issues facing all of us involved in state service. As budget dollars become even more valuable, heightened performance management can benefit employees, management and Louisiana's taxpayers. Inside this issue, you will find information stressing the overarching benefits of a sound performance

management system, which includes improving service delivery and enhancing the professional growth experience for employees, as well as an article that provides information and resources designed to ease the layoff process for employees, agencies and human resources offices. Also, see the information below to submit nominations for our new State Employee Spotlight feature. Thanks to all of you for participating in this effort to connect you with the human resources activities of our state!

### State Employee Spotlight: Call for submissions *The Bridge seeks to feature top workers*

From nursing to engineering and much more, each day state employees provide a variety of services to the public. Through the Employee Spotlight feature, *The Bridge* asks for your help in recognizing stand out employees. Anyone is welcome to nominate a subordinate, supervisor, manager, co-worker, etc. HR offices are also encouraged to submit nominations, which may include an agency's employee of the year, month, etc. This month's [Web exclusives page](#) features a submission from [LSU Interim Hospital](#).

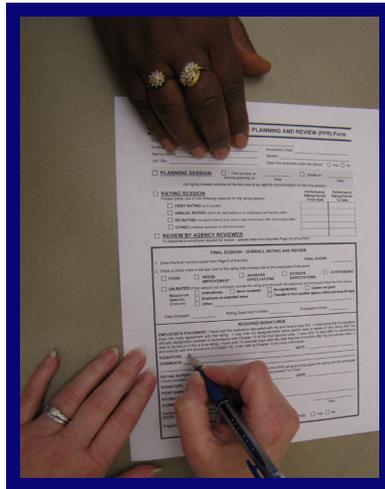
*The Bridge* will feature as many employees as possible. Submissions should be e-mailed to [Amber.Gorham@la.gov](mailto:Amber.Gorham@la.gov) and should include the name, job title, and contact information for the nominator and the nominee, as well as a brief narrative detailing the nominee's excellence, dedication and/or accomplishments. There is no deadline for nominations. Nominations will be collected throughout the year, with employees featured as space allows.

*The Bridge* is produced quarterly by a committee of [Civil Service staff members](#).

## More Than a Merit: Effective Use of the Performance Management System

By John DiCarlo  
Training Consultant

While a sound performance management system is an integral element in determining employee rewards aimed at ensuring the retention of valued staff, performance management systems also serve a broader purpose of providing continuous improvement to the services an entity provides.



*Although PPR documents are typically signed annually, year-round communication positively impacts the agency, employee and supervisor.*

The Performance Management System utilized in Louisiana state government is the Performance Planning and Review system (PPR). The PPR system used was implemented on July 1, 1997, to increase the two-way communication between employees and their supervisors. It is through effective employee-supervisor communication that employees, supervisors, and the overall organization stand to improve. Thus, from a supervisory perspective, the proper implementation of the performance management system is paramount to success.

Ensuring the professional growth and development of employees is one of the most important aspects of any supervisor's job. This requires consistent observation of employee performance, maintaining documentation on all employees, and regularly providing feedback to employees regarding performance. By identifying areas of weakness and recognizing areas of strength, a supervisor gives employees an opportunity to grow and develop. The main focus of the PPR system is to help the employees succeed, not to fail. Supervisors should ultimately want all of their employees to succeed. If employees succeed, the supervisor succeeds and conversely, if employees fail, the supervisor fails.

A supervisor should view the PPR as a road map providing the employee with a path to career success. When attaining an employee under his or her supervision, a supervisor should consider that as "Point A" on the employee's career success path. It is the supervisor's job to get employees to their professional development destination, which is "Point B" on their career success map. This is achieved by consistent communication

taking place between employees and supervisors. If a supervisor is implementing the PPR process properly, there should be no surprises on a PPR rating for an employee. The employee should have been made aware all year long of his or her strengths and/or weaknesses. Supervisors should involve employees in the PPR process by keeping an open forum for communication to take place.

Effective use of the PPR system also involves writing good expectations during the planning process. For new employees, expectations can be generic and should include elements of the employee's job description, agency goals and objectives, and expected performance outcomes from the employee. For current employees, expectations should be more specific and should include elements of the employee's strengths and/or weaknesses that the employee has exhibited. A good method to use in developing expectations for current employees is to use the [SMART](#) Method. SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timed.

During the rating phase of PPR, supervisors should remember to rate consistently based on the documentation that has been maintained on the employee all throughout the rating period, both good and bad. Basing the ratings on the documentation maintained will help to keep any personal biases out of the rating process.

Having employees master all aspects of the PPR process will create more effective supervisors and will assist Louisiana in having a developed workforce that can provide quality services to the citizens of Louisiana.

*John DiCarlo serves as a trainer within the Department of State Civil Service and is currently serving as the elected President of the Louisiana Association for Training and Organizational Development (LATOD).*

## Informational Resources Available for Employees, HR Offices Facing Layoffs

By Burgundy Cummings  
Program Assistance Supervisor

In the midst of the state's current financial crisis, layoffs have occurred more now than ever in recent history. Implementation of a layoff is never a simple matter. Decisions that adversely affect the livelihood of valued employees are not easy. These decisions are made by the Appointing Authority of the affected agency. Once those decisions are made, the process is straightforward. The agency submits a layoff plan to

the Department of State Civil Service (DSCS) for approval prior to the effective date and in keeping with established notice requirements and time frames. DSCS can advise and assist agencies at any step in the process, but early consultation can help to ensure a smooth transition and limit legal liability should the results of the layoff be challenged.

The DSCS Web site contains a wealth of information on layoff resources for human resource professionals, as well as resources for classified state employees that will be or have been laid off. Employees facing or involved in layoffs can now directly access a great deal of information on the DSCS Web site. The information can be found in a document titled "[Layoff Information for State Employees](#)" and contains input from the Assistance and Staffing Divisions at DSCS, Louisiana State Employees Retirement System, Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana, Office of Group Benefits, Deferred Compensation and the Louisiana Workforce Commission Rapid Response Unit. This is not intended to be a substitute for personal guidance from human resource professionals, but it is an excellent source of information for employees as well as agencies. This information is also located in the [layoff issues section of the HR Handbook](#), and is linked directly to our home page in the "[For State Employees](#)" portal.

In addition to these resources for laid off classified state employees, agency Human Resource staff and administrators are reminded that the Assistance Division at DSCS provides individualized consulting services to agencies anticipating layoffs, including evaluating available options, customizing layoff plans to meet specific agency needs, developing plan documents, drafting notices to employees and providing guidance for meetings with employees. The revisions to the layoff rules enacted in June 2009 provide many options for agencies facing layoffs. Additionally, the [HR Handbook](#) has recently been updated with more job aids and templates to assist agencies in planning for layoffs. Agencies anticipating layoffs or the use of layoff avoidance measures are encouraged to contact the DSCS Program Assistance Division at (225)342-8274 to schedule a meeting to discuss their agency's individual needs.

*Burgundy Cummings currently supervises the Data Integrity Unit in the Program Assistance Division and holds the Professional in Human Resources certification from the Society for Human Resources Management.*

## Test Your Supervisory Potential - Tool offers employees insight into career options

By **Max Reichert**  
Staffing Assistant Administrator

Are you a state employee not currently in a supervisory position but interested in developing knowledge and skills in this area? If so, you should take advantage of the [Supervisory Potential Assessment Tool](#) accessible through the State Employees portal of the Civil Service Web site. Results identify areas of strength and weakness providing employees with information concerning supervisory skill areas in which he or she excels as well as those skill areas in which he or she needs additional development.

This tool is a self-assessment and is designed to assist users with opportunities for growth and development. The results

of this assessment do not need to be shared with a supervisor or agency personnel unless the employee chooses to do so. The results from the assessment will not affect job classifications or pay grades. It is to the advantage of the employee taking this assessment to answer each question as honestly as possible in order to gain productive results in assessing individual supervisory potential.

Although this assessment typically takes about two hours, users can use as much time as needed to complete it. Participants receive results immediately after completing the on-line assessment. The results page refers users to a site to obtain additional information on improving skills in each area of the assessment.



*Civil Service also offers classes designed to enhance supervisory and professional skills. DSCS employee Eizabeth Montalbano collaborates with participants during one of her courses.*

*Max Reichert is currently serving as an Assistant Division Administrator in Staffing over a section responsible for statewide workforce planning, auditing, training and assisting assigned agencies with hiring in the LA Careers system, and developing and validating civil service selection procedures.*

## HR Director Spotlight – Mary Ginn, Department of Natural Resources

By Janelle Haynsworth  
Compensation Consultant

In this issue of *The Bridge*, we are introducing a new feature that will provide state human resources directors the opportunity to share some of their insights and experiences with *Bridge* readers. Although many state employees are on the front lines serving the public, human resources professionals can be found behind the scenes utilizing Civil Service Rules to implement strategies for recruiting, motivating, maintaining, and rewarding state employees in a fair and consistent manner. Human resources directors are being challenged in these uncertain fiscal times to create a strategy that will balance the goals of agency management with the interests of state employees. In this article, Mary Ginn, human resources director for the Department of Natural Resources, discusses this concern and other insights from the field of HR.

Mary has built her life on doing the right things for the right reasons. As a result, she has been commended for excellence in both professional and personal circles. Some of her most notable accomplishments include the Superior Merit Award and Pinnacle Award from the Society of Human Resources Management while serving as President of the Greater Baton Rouge Chapter, the Golden Heart Award from the Humane Society of Louisiana for her role in animal protection while serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of State Parks in the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, and the 2009 Dunbar Award. The Dunbar Award is the highest honor a classified state employee can receive for providing service to the citizens of Louisiana. Click [here](#) to read more about Mary's career in her Dunbar Award biography.



Mary Ginn, HR Director,  
Dept. of Natural Resources

We were able to ask Mary a few questions that we thought would be both interesting and beneficial to *Bridge* readers. If you would like to submit a question for a future Human Resources Director feature, click [here](#).

**Q: In the Dunbar bio, it was stated that your personal motto has been, “Do the right things for the right reasons.” How have these words been beneficial to your career?**

A: I have worked for political appointees and elected officials the entirety of my career. I have never been asked to do anything that was illegal or unethical – most likely because they have all been very good, hardworking people with good morals and integrity. I believe that when you try to do the right things for the right reasons, others see that and respond accordingly. Credibility comes as a result when your actions are consistent. Opportunities have come as a result of a reputation built on integrity.

**Q: What are the key criteria that you focus on when developing a strategic HR vision for your Department?**

A: An effective HR mission statement is one that is closely aligned with the organization's mission and can help the HR office move from a historically administrative role to a more value-added strategic role. HR Directors must earn a seat at the table with executive leadership. This is critical to the success of your program.

**Q: What piece of advice would you give to other HR Directors during these challenging economic times?**

A: Do not be afraid to make hard choices and make sure your voice is heard by executive management. Remember that employees are scared and we need to go the extra mile to show appreciation. Make sure that your leadership understands how critical it is to communicate frequently to allay fears. We will all be challenged to retain our best talent and our future success depends on it.

*Janelle Haynsworth is a graduate from the E.J. Ourso College of Business at LSU with a degree in Human Resource Management. She has attained the World at Work Certified Salary Analyst designation, and has served as a compensation consultant to various state agencies in the Department of State Civil Service since August 2007.*

Read more from Mary Ginn on our [Web exclusives page](#).