

RU-info FOR SMARTIES

STUDENT

COLLEAGUE

HANDBOOK

Compiled by Madiha Abbas
Last revised: 10/4/2004

Dear Student Colleague,

Welcome to Campus Information Services:RU-info. I hope you feel the spirit, energy and excitement that abounds in our office as we provide the critical informational, off-campus and visitor services operations for Rutgers University. Helping make Rutgers more accessible to its community and visitors in the most friendly, well-informed manner possible is our most important mission, and one that I know you will enjoy being a part of. I know that you have participated in an extensive and deliberate hiring process, and you should feel very proud that you have been selected to join our outstanding team.

Since beginning operations as the Student Information and Assistance Center (SIAC) in the winter of 1990, we have grown from a simple telephone information service with 5,700 calls a semester to a multifaceted information, communications, and visitor services operation with millions of contacts each year. Thanks to the dedication, hard work and commitment of all our staff, especially our student colleagues, RU-info has one of the most outstanding reputations at Rutgers University for quality, caring service and attention to detail. RU-info has also been recognized by our peers at colleges and universities across the United States for our superlative programs and services. Most significantly, we are also a proud member of the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association (CIVSA), and I hope during your time with us that you have an opportunity to speak with and interact with members of CIVSA who carry out many similar responsibilities at other institutions of higher learning.

I am pleased to confirm ****OUR**** commitment to student development. I am confident that you will gain valuable skills and knowledge being a part of our team and that you will be able to use them both as a student at Rutgers and in all your future endeavors. Please read carefully the Mission and Goals of RU-info and carefully review our Staff Philosophy, 10 Service Commandments ******AND QUALITY SERVICE MATRIX******. I ask that you make sure that you fully understand their meaning and that you apply them in all your interactions with clients and your fellow colleagues.

Most importantly, I ask you to contribute actively during your time here with us and help us ensure that we have an operation that all of us, and most important, you can be proud of.

I wish you well as you begin this academic year.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Weismantel
University Director
Campus Information Services

Welcome to RU-info! You are now part of an incredible group of students who take pride in Rutgers University and in helping others sort their way through the complexity of our University. It will be through your contributions in providing excellent customer service to our clients that we will continue to offer informational support and guidance, and remain one of the friendliest and most useful offices on campus.

We have much planned for you in terms of training, with this handbook being a major component in your development as an informed and enthusiastic student colleague. We expect you to refer to this handbook should you have questions so please make sure you read this manual thoroughly.

What you do is critically important! If you do not take your job and what you do seriously, no one else will. During the academic, we average approximately 4000 inquiries a day. Of course, this only refers to the front-line telephone component of our operation at the Rutgers Information & Referral Center. We helped thousands of walk-in customers at the Off-Campus Housing Office Service as well as the thousands of virtual visitors who have “stopped in” via the Rutgers homepage or Ask Colonel Henry.

As mentioned in the selection process, we realize that it takes a while to truly grasp your new role as an Information Assistant, Off-Campus Housing Assistant or Information/Technology Analyst. The most important thing is not to get overwhelmed. There will be folks to help you out during every step of the way. This handbook will acquaint you with RU-info and lay the foundation for what you need to know as a student colleague. We have tried to arrange the sections in a logical format; however, as you will soon come to learn, we are always looking for your feedback. We would like to take a hard look at this handbook once a year and make improvements to it, based on your suggestions of course. So, as you are reading this, think of how we can improve it

As an Information Assistant, Off-Campus Housing Assistant, or Information/Technology Analyst, you are an ambassador for Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. You are often the person that a visitor or community member *first* speaks with or meets. You are representing the values of the University and of RU-info, so always remember to be at your best.

So, with all of that in mind, let’s (preview what we would like to) cover in “RU-info for Smarties” . . .

Sincerely,

Dennis O’Brien
Public Relations Specialist for Information and Referral Services
Campus Information Services

OFFICE CONDUCT

Your first responsibility while employed by RU-info is to serve the needs of our inquirers, therefore, proper phone behavior such as using the standard RU-info greeting, being friendly, pleasant and helpful on the phone is expected at all times. Treat others as you yourself would like to be treated. We expect you to be polite, non-judgmental and courteous to our inquirers and to student colleagues as well. There is zero tolerance for language abuse and obscenity at RU-info. If you get into the habit of cursing in the office, it brings down the office morale and prevents you from being friendly and accessible and will result in disciplinary action.

PREPERATION FOR YOUR SHIFT

Information Assistants are expected to be prepared by the start of their scheduled shift, e.g. reviewing staff notes for missed days, reading work-related memos and email. You are expected to log in when your scheduled shift starts and log out upon its termination. For opening and closing shifts, you should follow the supervisor's call for logging in and out.

WORKSPACE

Remember that your workspace is shared space. When you begin your shift, please ensure that you put resources back where you found them after using them, leave the area neater than when you found it and in general be mindful of treating the area with respect. The workspace which we all use is a collective responsibility to maintain. There is nothing more frustrating (to you or your inquirer) than to keep someone waiting because you cannot find something in your desk, like a pen. If we all make a concerted effort to be aware of our surroundings, the responsibility will never fall on the shoulders of one person. You are accessible and credible to the callers when you can find resources you need without a hassle to help the callers.

RU-info INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

There are hundreds of ways you can find the information you need to help customers. Much of this information is right here within the building. If you find that there are informational items that should be included in your desk, your work area, in our databases, SPEAK UP! Maybe we never thought of it! To do the best job you can, you need to use all of the resource tools around you! Of course our greatest resource is our people. Always ask for assistance when you need it. Invariably, someone has dealt with this question before or at least will have a helpful idea. Always remember the importance of the "Callback" system when all else fails. The medley of available resources makes us credible and efficient towards each type of inquirer.

TALLYING

In order to keep track of our caller's inquiries, we need all Information Assistants to tally correctly. This information plays a key role in staffing decisions and hours of operation based on past recorded experiences.

NAMETAGS

Name tags are an important aspect of your role as a student colleague at RU-info. You are required to display your nametag visibly near your front upper torso while on shift. Nametags on a chain of appropriate length are also acceptable. With such a large staff this is an essential requirement for ensuring a secure and safe work environment. Making your nametag visible will allow you to be friendly, personal and accessible.

FEEDBACK/SUGGESTION

New ideas are always welcome, and we encourage staff to contribute both ideas and suggestions freely, either in person to a member of the RU-info management team or through our on-line comment box. Receiving suggestions allows us to enhance and improve our means of fulfilling our mission statement by constantly evolving and adapting to the ever-changing needs of our inquirers. We can always work together to make things better.

STAFF SCHEDULING

The student supervisors along with other members of the RU-info management team are primarily responsible for staff scheduling. Please understand what a large task this is! We must juggle close to one hundred different student class schedules to make one workable master schedule allowing us to give top-notch service to our customers.

Depending on the time of year, RU-info maintains different types of staffing schedules. All student colleagues are required to work 10-12 hours during the Fall and Spring semester, including during the final exam periods so that they can maintain the requisite knowledge as an IA. Please make note of this for your personal planning purposes. Additionally, during your first year of employment, you are required to be available to work during one of three breaks—Winter, Spring, or Summer.

In general, the staff schedule remains static during the academic semester. In other words, our schedule does not change from week to week. If you have a long term scheduling conflict, please contact the Public Relations Specialist for Information and Referral Services immediately to resolve the issue. Please be aware of the operating hours at RU-info. The following is an overview of the various scheduling periods at RU-info:

Fall and Spring Semester: Staff are scheduled according to the student's schedule and needs of the department. Operating hours are Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

During the beginning of the Fall semester, all staff are asked to work as many hours as possible, since it's the busiest time of the year.

Fall and Spring Final Exam Period: All staff **are required** to be available *at a minimum of 10-12 hours* to work during the final exam period.

Winter Break: Staff are encouraged to sign up to work, especially first-year or employment staff. This is not during the period from Christmas to New Year's when the University and RU-info are closed.

Spring Break: Staff are encouraged to sign up to work, especially those within their first-year of employment.

Senior Week/Commencement: Staff are encouraged to sign up to work. Senior Week housing is available for staff who have lived on campus during the academic year.

Summer (Following Commencement and Beyond): Staff are scheduled part-time and full-time during normal operating hours, Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. All staff members interested in working over the summer are required to work the last week of August when our regular evening and weekend hours for the academic year resume. Staff who plan to live on campus for the academic year can return "early" at the end of August and are eligible to move into their on-campus housing then if they are available to work.

UNIVERSITY BREAKS AND SUMMER/WINTER SESSIONS

During breaks, RU-info will be open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday. *In the event of weather or other campus emergencies, the department may have extended hours.* RU-info is closed the week between Christmas and New Year's, also MLK's birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and the Thanksgiving Holiday.

SPECIAL SCHEDULING

Occasionally, RU-info will be open earlier or later for special university or departmental events or emergencies. A special sign-up sheet will be posted to provide for full staffing during such special events and the Emergency Action Plan goes into effect

EMERGENCIES

In the event of a weather emergency or unexpected crisis where classes get cancelled or the University is officially closed, the Emergency Action Plan will go into effect immediately and staff are expected to respond accordingly.

“GIMME A BREAK!”

RU-info can be a very dynamic working environment, which means we need the most energy you can muster! In order to maintain high levels of enthusiasm and focused thinking from all student colleagues, we all need to take some time to step back and regroup.

When student colleagues are scheduled for longer shifts, the following scheduling criteria may be applied:

1. RU-info will recommend to all student colleague staff who work six (6) hours or more to have a scheduled *unpaid* break to total at least one half hour.
2. Whenever possible, RU-info scheduling staff will encourage an additional *unpaid* half hour break for those scheduled for eight hours or more.
3. Please feel comfortable in speaking with your supervisor if you need to get up and get a drink of water or take a five minute break to take a few deep breaths and relax. We would like to make sure you have the right mind-set to respond to our inquirers' needs. A quick break allows you to get back on the right track without sacrificing your friendliness, however, make sure a supervisor know where you are at all times. If for any reason you need more than five minutes, you must receive approval from the supervisor on duty and clock out.
4. The “Relaxation Hub” is the designated break area for all RU-info staff located on the first floor in the back near the conference room. A mini-fridge and microwave are available in the kitchen for staff use. During nice weather, staff are also free to use the tables and chairs located at the “RU-info Café” on the side porch of the Riverstede. Please help us maintain the property by throwing out your trash, cigarette butts, and cleaning all appliances/utensils you used.

MEDICAL LEAVE

In the event of personal sickness or an emergency situation that prevents you from reporting to work, you must call the supervisors' line immediately AND before the start of your shift at 732-932-9342 x 2601 or 2602. If you get a voicemail during regular business hours, make sure you call back and speak to a live person.

All student employees are required to provide a doctor's note for all sick days. However, we do realize that occasionally we all become ill but don't go see a physician, so you are allotted two sick days for which you are not required to provide a doctors note.

Keep in mind that simply calling and leaving a message on the student supervisor's extension ten minutes before you are expected IS NOT sufficient to excuse you from a scheduled shift. There will be a follow-up. It is expected that you, *and not someone* else will call and speak directly to a supervisor. Repeated "sickness" will be looked at very seriously. Obviously, your well being is important to us. There may be a way to work something out, but we need your cooperation!

Other family and funeral emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis between you and the student supervisors and the Public Relations Specialist for Information and Referral Services.

FINDING COVERAGE FOR A PERSONAL DAY

Occasionally there will be those conferences, interviews, and special meetings that come up from time to time that you as a student may need to attend. Should you need to take time off, you are expected to find a student colleague to cover your shift.

Some helpful tips:

1. Identify that you need a substitute for a particular day, **well in advance**. Good planning means more flexibility for you to actually carry out your plans. Putting your intent in writing does make things very clear for the Information Supervisors, but please remember that that does not necessarily mean your planned absence has been "approved." You must take personal responsibility for your shifts by finding a substitute. Consult with the student supervisor on duty to obtain a time-off request sheet.
2. Consult with the student supervisor and the master schedule to identify all available staff members who might be able to substitute or switch hours with you, and send an email to infocolleagues@cis.rutgers.edu for coverage, speak to your colleagues in person as well, and post an IA coverage staff note on the portal. Often, you may be able to find coverage by just spreading the news word of mouth.
3. Be aware of the University's Academic Schedule. Normally, the class schedule changes near Thanksgiving. We will still need you to work all regular shifts. Also, if you are going away for winter or spring break earlier than normal, remember to plan ahead and locate a substitute.
4. The staff directory is also available from the CIS Portal. Take note of those folks who are always ready to serve as "willing subs" or have particularly open class schedules.

5. Finding a substitute means that both you and the replacement student colleague are in agreement as to the actual substitution and you have also notified the student supervisor in writing on a time-off request sheet of the proposed change. If the substitute fails to show up, he or she will be held responsible for the missed shift. Please be sure you both clearly communicate to promote a friendly, personal and efficient environment in the office.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Should a student colleague find it necessary to resign from Campus Information Services, he/she is expected to give the Public Relations Specialist for Information and Referral Services a written letter of resignation with at least two (2) weeks advance notice. Failure to do so may jeopardize future references or possibility of rehire.

You must be currently enrolled as a matriculated student to be employed at RU-info. However, you may request continuation of employment within the department on a temporary basis if you should become un-enrolled or graduate.

RU-info will consider this employment request on a case-by-case basis and permission will typically not exceed one semester.

MONTHLY STAFF MEETINGS

All student colleagues, with respect to their particular job duties and responsibilities, are **required** to attend staff meetings. Staff meeting attendance is paid. Staff meetings provide an opportunity for all staff to come together and exchange information and ideas related to the smooth functioning of the department. During some of the staff meetings, special VIP University guests are invited to attend, so staff is asked to come prepared with lots of questions. Remember that attending staff meetings permits interaction between fellow colleagues and the information presented facilitates your ability to provide the best in service excellence to the Rutgers community.

SUPPLEMENTAL TRAINING AND SEASONAL APPRAISAL

Student colleagues will also be required to participate in on-going service training and refresher courses as needed.

Information Assistants will participate in the semesterly appraisal process as well.

INVOLVEMENT

Pending satisfactory performance, and completion of the probationary period training requirements Information Assistants can become involved in other

aspects of RU-info as long as they remain in good standing. Disciplinary action may result in restricted involvement in the office.

**THE 3 C's
(COLLEAGUE COMPENSATION CHART)**

The following is an overview of the student colleague pay scales per position at RU-info:

<i>Position</i>	<i>Starting Salary</i>	<i>Probation Period and completion of training requirements</i>	<i>New Salary</i>	<i>Satisfactory performance Requirement</i>
Information Assistant	\$6.75	3 Months	\$6.75	\$7.00 (after two semesters)
OCHS Assistant	\$6.75	3 Months	\$6.75	\$7.00 (after two semesters)
*Team Leaders	\$8.00	6 Weeks	\$8.50	\$9.50 (after one full working year)
*Mentor Team			\$1.00 above the new salary	
*Hiring Team			\$1.00 above the new salary	
*Evaluations Committee			\$1.00 above the new salary	
*Student Supervisor	\$8.00	6 Weeks	\$8.50	\$9.50 (after one full working year).

* Represent promotions, you must be a student colleague in good standing in order to be considered for these positions. * For supervisors, mentoring and hiring work is inclusive in your job description and is not compensated beyond the existing salary.

NOTE: RU-info does employ students who receive, as part of their financial aid package, a federal work -study grant. The Student Employment Office, in conjunction with federal guidelines, determines hourly wage on a yearly basis. Federal Work Study students receive salary and upgrades based on the formula determined by the Student Employment Office, but closely matches the chart outlined above.

THE NO-NO's

The following are examples of RU-info student colleague performance characteristics that do not contribute to the mission of our department. Please be sure you are individually aware of these items and that you are prepared to effectively support a collective adherence.

NON WORK-RELATED READING

Your focus and attention must be directed toward the needs of the inquiries contacting our office. If you anticipate a heavy week of exams, etc., make arrangements in advance to secure a substitute for your shifts. There are always numerous press releases to read, Rutgers web sites to peruse, and other special projects that can be assigned to you should you desire a little change of pace on a given day. Remember, responding to our inquirers needs is the number one priority you have while on the job. In reference to the Federal Work Study program, the title of that program does not mean “study while you work,” rather, it is a program providing an opportunity for work on-campus, so as to actually meet the financial obligations of studying at a University. Limited studying and reading (at the approval of the supervisor) can be permitted during the Final Exam period. It is important not to get into the mindset of thinking of the inquirers’ as an interruption of your activity. Only if the inquirer has your undivided attention are you friendly, credible and efficient.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY at RU-info

RU-info provides an invaluable service to the Rutgers community because of the quality and commitment of our staff. Our great services are built upon an extensive technological foundation that helps us deliver accurate information to our clients. The integrity of our computer systems, computer hardware, network, databases, webpages, and records are absolutely critical to what we do.

RU-info staff members are expected and required to protect the confidentiality of records, to preserve the security of our computer systems, to follow the official procedures for using the department's software and computer equipment, and to make no inappropriate use or modification of any computer files, programs, applications, or web documents that belong to RU-info, Rutgers University or any other entity.

Violations will be punishable by suspension of privileges, termination, and possibly University judicial proceedings. These policies apply to all RU-info staff, guests, and external individuals accessing our network or using any of our informational systems.

USE/RESPECT RU-info COMPUTERS

Each computer in our department has been set up to function ideally for its intended purpose and within the larger network environment to find needed informational resources. Any deviation may cause serious problems that you may not even realize. Installing, moving or renaming files may cause hidden program or hardware malfunctions.

In light of these concerns, it is essential that you:

- Not delete any program, file, or folder on an office computer.
- Not rename any program, file, or folder on an office computer.
- Not move/relocate any program, file, or folder on an office computer.
- Not install a new program/application on an office computer.
- Not download any files, applications, images, or utilities from the Internet onto an office computer—especially inappropriate ones.
- Not load or play game software on an office computer
- Not change any of the system, printer, application settings on an office computer

Negligence will result in disciplinary action. Our service depends on the insight and suggestions of our staff. Please speak to the Unit Computing Manager or the Information Technology Analyst if you see items that should be deleted, renamed or moved, or if you come across an application or utility that should be installed in order to further some purpose of our office and provide some benefit to our operation. A crashed or slow computer is frustrating and makes us in-efficient as it keeps our inquirers waiting longer.

E-MAIL

We are pleased at this time to provide you the opportunity to check your email. However, this opportunity is a privilege and must not interfere with your expectations as a RU-info student colleague. Our inquirers should be your top priority, so emailing while on a call or putting a call on hold to finish your email is unacceptable. Excessive personal email use/abuse can be grounds for probation or termination.

INSTANT MESSENGER

Using Instant Messenger on the office computers while on shift takes away from your friendly attitude on the phone with our inquirers. You are not maintaining the inquirer as your first priority if you are busy talking to your friend on AIM; therefore, using this technology while on shift can result in disciplinary action.

USE/RESPECT OF OFFICE EQUIPMENT

The printers, photocopiers, telephones, and fax machines within the department are not to be used for personal use. This equipment is for conducting the business of our department and not to be used for homework, résumés, web site pages or personal business.

Do not use the top of your desk as a substitute for scrap paper, and the inside of your desk is not a big trashcan. By working together we can keep our work environment clean and tidy. Keeping up with computer and desk maintenance will allow you the proper access to informational resources so that you will be credible and efficient with handling inquiries.

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

The use of walkmen, Nintendo, or televisions is not permitted while on duty so that your ability to be accessible and efficient to our callers is not curbed.

COLLECT CALLS

NEVER, under any circumstance, ever accept a collect call at RU-info.

PERSONAL CALLS

Personal telephone calls are not permitted using office telephones. If you need to make a personal call, you must ask the supervisor for a five minute break and use your cell phone in the designated break areas or the use the pay phone near the Graduate School of Education.

Keep in mind that anytime you make or receive a personal call, your fellow colleagues must work harder to make up for the loss of one incoming telephone line, that is one less line for our inquirers to call in on. Should you receive an incoming personal call, please keep it brief (particularly if there are people in queue waiting to speak with an Information Assistant). In general, please conduct your personal business outside of your shift but in case of an emergency, please see the supervisor on duty.

CELL PHONE USAGE

If you do carry a cell phone, you are required to switch it off while you are on shift. It is completely unprofessional for an inquirer to hear a cell phone in the background, hence its ringing makes you a less credible source. It is discourteous to other colleagues and our inquirers if your phone rings while on duty.

Should you need to make a personal call, you can use your cell phone after checking with the supervisor on duty to take five minutes and make the call in the designated break areas.

EXCESSIVE PERSONAL VISITATION

Conversation with friends who stop into the office should be limited so as not to interfere with the assistance to our customers. Please make arrangements to meet your friends before or after your shift, so the callers have your attention and you can be friendly with the inquirers.

SNACKS AND BEVERAGES

Snacks are permitted in the designated break areas only, since it may damage the desk resources reducing your efficiency, and talking with your mouth full of food takes away from your credibility. Please arrange your schedule so that you make time for breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner on your *own* time or during your scheduled break. Uncovered beverages must be kept off of the top of your work area. No liquid should ever be near your keyboard or telephone. Cans, bottles and cups must remain in the drawer of your desk. Please be aware that the office equipment must continue to last us and liquid spillage does not add to its life. Your keyboard or telephone may stop functioning properly due to liquid dripping; hence, you will not be efficient with the inquirers.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

RU-info follows the University Policies on smoking, recycling, harassment and being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs.