



Tax Changes for 2011

It was all over the news... would the tax cuts that have been in place for the last two years be continued? Would the employee social security tax percentage be lowered? Will the end of the Making Work Pay credit affect my taxes?

You may see changes in your take home pay. The social security tax has been lowered by 2%. This is the FICA SS item under the Deduction section of your paycheck stub. The tax tables for 2011 are very similar to those that were in place last year. The tax brackets have been broadened just slightly; however, the \$400 single/\$800 married reduction in withholding (Making Work Pay credit) expired. So your federal tax may be higher. Keep in mind that any changes you have made to your healthcare benefits, reimbursement accounts or contributions to your pension accounts have an effect on your tax burden. The more pre-tax dollars you have, the less your federal and state tax will be.

W-4 Exemptions

Have you had a major change in your life? Did

you get married, divorced, have a baby, graduate a student from college? Did you or your spouse/partner take on a second job or lose a job or retire? Many major life changes have an effect on your overall tax outlook. You may need to increase or decrease your exemptions. The W-4 forms are available under the FORMS heading on the Human Resources web site or you can get a form at the Payroll Office at 220 College Street.

Earned Income Credit

You may be eligible for the Earned Income Credit. Be sure to read the instructions in your 1040 Tax Booklet when completing your taxes to see if you are eligible.

W-2 Form on Garnet Gateway

If you have access to a computer and a printer, you can print your W2 on line at the Garnet Gateway. There is now a screen called Electronic W-2 Consent under the Tax Information Section of the Employee Menu. If you have not given us consent to prepare your W2 electronically, check the box and SUBMIT. You will now be able to print

your W2. These forms are now available. Be sure to print out several copies – one for the feds, one for the state and one for your records.

If you chose to wait for a printed copy from the Payroll Office, you will not receive your W2 until the beginning of February. W2's will be mailed on January 31, 2011.

Understanding Your W2

Every year we field the question "Why doesn't the information on my last check of the year match my W2?" Your paycheck reflects the total amount of wages that you earned and the deductions that were made. Your W2 is a tax document. The W2 tells the government how much of your earnings were subject to tax. If you have pre-tax dollars – this includes healthcare and dependent care reimbursement accounts, your contributions to medical and dental premiums as well as your voluntary contributions to pension accounts – your earnings in Box 1 will be your "true gross" less the pre-tax dollars.

This is basic information; please contact your tax adviser if you have specific tax questions.

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Snow Blowing Safety

Big snowfalls can mean hauling out the snow blower; remember to be careful! Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that snow blower accidents caused more than 4,100 emergency department visits and 970 amputations in 2009.

To keep from becoming one of the above statistics the Bates Environmental Health and Safety staff recommends following the listed safety tips when operating a snow blower:

- Read your owner's manual thoroughly and understand all of the recommended safety procedures before turning on your snow thrower.
- Add fuel to the tank outdoors before starting the machine; don't add gasoline to a running or hot engine. Always keep the gasoline can capped, and store gasoline out of the house and away from ignition sources.
- Never leave your unit running in an enclosed area. At least five people have died over the last twenty years of carbon monoxide poisoning because someone left their blower running in a closed space such as a garage.
- The snow can sometimes hide objects that might clog the chute or otherwise cause damage. You should clear the area of doormats, sleds, boards, wires and other debris before the first snowfall.
- Be careful never to throw snow towards people or cars, and never allow anyone in front of your snow thrower.
- If you have to repair your machine, remove an object, or unclog built up snow from the auger blades or chute, always turn the snow thrower off and wait for all moving parts to come to a complete stop. Disconnect the spark plug wire, or for electrics, disconnect the cord.
- Never put your hands inside the auger or chute -- use a stick to unclog the snow thrower.
- Dress properly for the job. Be sure to wear adequate winter garments and footwear that will improve footing on slippery surfaces. Avoid any loose fitting clothing that could get caught in moving parts.
- Never operate the snow thrower without good visibility or light. Always be sure of your footing and keep a firm hold on the handles. Walk -- never run.
- If your machine is old, contact the manufacturer and see if a dead man safety switch can be installed. If not, it may be time to buy a new snow blower.

Next month: tips for the snow shovelers out there!

It Makes You Think

One of every 3 American children born after 2000 will develop **diabetes** by age 50.

Performance Development Timeline Reminder

Mid-Year Review
November '10—March '11

Year-End Review
April '11—July '11



Happy New Year!

Dates of Interest in January

6th	Bi-weekly pay date
13th	Monthly pay date
20th	Bi-weekly pay date

Bates College 403(b) Retirement Plan

Are You Saving Enough to Retire?

Human Resources reminds all employees of the opportunity to make salary deferral contributions under the Bates College 403(b) Retirement Plan (the "403(b) Retirement Plan"). To learn more about the eligibility provisions of the 403(b) retirement Plan, please see the Summary Plan Description at <http://www.bates.edu/PreBuilt/hr/hr-bates-college-403b-spd.pdf>.

The maximum amount of con-

tributions that you can make to the 403(b) Retirement Plan in 2011 remains unchanged from 2010. You may contribute a maximum of \$16,500 during 2011 and if you are over age 50 you can contribute an additional catch-up contribution of \$5,500.

For many of us the maximum contribution may be out of reach—how can you find out if you are saving enough to meet your retirement goals? Our

record keeper, TIAA-CREF, has many planning tools available on their Web site www.tiaa-cref.org. You will find a retirement goal evaluator at <https://www3.tiaa-cref.org/reteval/RetServlet>. You may also speak with a TIAA-CREF Representative at their telephone counseling center 1-800-842-2776 Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 10:00 pm EST and Saturday from 9:00 am – 6:00 pm.

Using the Body Mass Index (BMI)

The first step in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is determining your current weight status: Are you underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese ?

A good measure for this is the Body Mass Index (BMI), a standardized method used by many health professionals to evaluate weight and body fat. BMI is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared. It gives you an indication of whether you are at risk of health problems that are related to being overweight or obese. If your BMI is 25 or higher, you are at risk for a number of serious health problems, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, pregnancy-related disorders, and osteoarthritis.

Calculating Your BMI

1. Find your weight in kilograms: multiply your weight in pounds by 0.45.

For example:

If your weight is 130 pounds:
 $130 \times 0.45 = 58.5$. Your weight in kilograms is 58.5.

2. Find your height in meters: multiply your height in inches by 0.0254.

For example:

If your height is 5'6", that is 66 inches:
 $66 \times 0.0254 = 1.6764$. Your height in meters is 1.6764.

3. Square the number: multiply it by itself: $1.6764 \times 1.6764 = 2.81$

For the example above, the BMI is: 58.97 divided by $2.81 = 20.98$

BMI values are interpreted as follows:

18.4 or less = underweight
 18.5 to 24.9 = normal weight
 25 to 29.9 = overweight
 30 and over = obese

Although this is a reliable method, it is not foolproof. Because muscle tissue weighs more than fat tissue, heavily muscled people may fall into the obese range when they are not obese.

Just remember, the sooner you begin working toward your ideal weight, the sooner you can reap the healthful benefits!

Class of 1997 Scholarship

Applications are being accepted for the Class of 1997 Scholarship, an annual award that provides financial assistance for college tuition and other educational expenses or projects. The scholarship is for children of hourly-paid staff members in Dining Services, Physical Plant, Administrative and Academic Services. For more information, contact Alicia Richard at arichard@bates.edu or 786-6336.

Quick Tips for Choosing Tax Preparation Software

Tax preparation software can be a useful tool to make tax time easier. But it may not be for everyone. Before you purchase tax preparation software, you may want to consider which software is the best fit for you, your computer, and your financial situation.

Benefits of using tax preparation software

Tax preparation software can have many benefits:

- It saves time and money.
- It ensures accuracy.
- It helps record-keeping for the future.

Choosing the right software

All brands of tax preparation software have advantages and disadvantages. Before you buy software, software reviewers recommend considering the following:

- The complexity of your tax return. Generally speaking, the more complex your return, the more advanced version of the software you will need.
- Your computer compatibility. Before you buy any software, make sure your computer has the necessary system requirements.
- The software's help functions. When choosing software, find out if the company offers live customer support, a toll-free number, or e-mail assistance.
- State-specific software. If you are filing a state tax return, you may need to pay extra for a version of the software that includes it.

Resources

Find out more information by looking at the web sites of these three popular tax preparation software companies:

lar tax preparation software companies:

Tax Act

<http://www.taxact.com>

Intuit TurboTax

<http://www.turbotax.com>

H&R Block Tax Cut

<http://www.taxcut.com>

This and information on other topics are available from our Employee Assistance Program Provider and can be found online at:

www.lifebalance.net

Username:

bates

Password:

bwell

New Staff

Joseph Castonguay, *Custodian*, Physical Plant

Toni Day, *Academic Administrative Assistant*, Dean of the Faculty

Shareen Gustin, *Asst to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty*

David Stair, *Painter*, Physical Plant