

Minutes: Faculty Staff Benefits Committee April 12, 2011

1. Members present:

Vera Norwood
C. Randall Truman
Nissane Capps
Karin Retskin
Hans Frederick Barsun
Frances Wilkinson
Carol Bernhard
Sharon Scaltrito
Ex-Officio:
Helen Gonzales
Elaine Phelps
Raqui Martinez
Guests:
Merle Kennedy
Kathy Meadows

Absent:

Harjit Ahluwalia
Richard Goshorn
Christee King
Marsha Baum

1. Minutes of March 8, 2011 approved.
2. Proposed new charge to the committee—Merle Kennedy.

Merle Kennedy presented a draft of a revised committee charge developed by Staff Council representatives. He reported that the proposal was an attempt on the part of Staff Council to streamline efforts of staff and faculty to engage with benefits policies and changes. Currently the Staff Council by-laws do not include specific mention of this committee as the formal body to work on these issues, resulting in some confusion as to where the staff has a voice in benefits decisions. The Staff Council desires to continue to participate on this committee as the most effective body for representing both faculty and staff. Staff Council also wants to formalize reporting back responsibilities from this committee to Staff Council. Randall Truman noted that nothing in the new proposal be read as precluding the Senate or the Staff Council from electing at some future date to move to a structure of separate committees for faculty and staff. Karen Retskin raised the question of the union seats currently listed on the membership, but not included in the revised committee charge. Noting that the union has failed to provide reps over the past several years, Kennedy also stated that nothing in the new language precludes union members being appointed as staff representatives on the committee. Sharon Scaltrito offered to revise the draft in light of the discussion and forward it to Nissane Capps and Vera Norwood to develop a final draft. The draft would be forwarded to the committee for comment, with the aim of getting a proposal to the Senate and Staff Council before the end of academic year.

3. Life Insurance and Long Term Care after retirement.

Carol Bernhard asked if life insurance and long term care continued following retirement. Elaine Phelps noted that long term care continued—the policy transfers from group to individual and the individual pays the entire premium. Life insurance is more complicated. For those over 65 the amount repaid defaults to \$4,000 for the Basic Benefit only. Retirees can buy up to \$6,000 if, when they retired, they were enrolled in Basic + Tier 1. They can buy up to \$10,000 if, when they retired, they were enrolled in Basic + Tier 1 and Tier 2 or higher. For early retirees life insurance operates as it does for active employees. Karen Retskin asked if long term care remained on any budget cut lists. Phelps indicated that HR is not planning any changes for the coming year, but it is still on the list developed by the cost containment committee and will get attention by this committee next year. Phelps went on to note that if long term care was cut employees would be able to continue the coverage at their own cost.

4. Tiered health care?

Sharon Scaltrito raised the question of health care benefits and the possibility of developing more tiers. Specifically, the salary range of \$35,000 and up carries such a wide range of salaries and people at the upper pay scales get a much better benefit than those at the lower. Nissane Capps indicated that this is an important issue but since the health care package for next year is now set, this would be a good issue for the committee to take up early next fall.

5. Committee membership and summer meetings.

The committee has met in the past during the summer as issues warranted; the problem is faculty schedules and achieving a quorum. We agreed that it did not appear a summer meeting would be needed this summer and that, if the new charge to the committee is approved, next year's group consider whether and how to schedule regular summer meetings.

The committee faces a good deal of turnover –including identifying new co-chairs. It will be critical to get the issue of the new charge and membership settled by the Faculty Senate and Staff Council before the beginning of the next academic year. Norwood and Capps will endeavor to get committee closure on this before the end of the term and get the proposed new charge to Staff Council and Faculty Senate leaders.

6. Carry-over business for 2011

In addition to getting the new committee charge approved and in the Staff Council by-laws and Faculty Senate Handbook, the committee needs to look at re-thinking the scheduled meeting time. Tuesday at 3:00 has been especially difficult for faculty this past year; the new leaders of the committee will want to work on finding a more mutually acceptable time. In addition, if faculty schedules preclude a committee member from attending, the faculty Co-Chair needs to alert the faculty leadership and get another faculty member appointed as a replacement.

Specific benefits issues that will carry over include: 1) continued attention to long term care insurance as a desired benefit in the face of budget cuts, and 2) the recommendation that the health care premium tiers need to be expanded.