

Faculty Benefits Committee Meeting Minutes
February 18, 2014

Present: Jason Freeman (Chair), Doug Britton, Wayne Brook, Brandon Conkle, Michael Elliott, Amy Herron, Tommy Little, Lionel London, Stella Richardson, Nazia Zakir

Absent: Debra Lee, Dave Millard, Scott Morris

Administration: The minutes from the 1.21.14 meeting were approved.

Committee charter, title, and survey: The updated charter language was reviewed and discussed. The general faculty designation was removed in preparation for the removal of this designation at the Institute.

After some discussion, the committee consensus was to keep one committee after the removal of the General Faculty designation with equal representation from faculty and staff, instead of having two separate committees. The proposed name for this committee is the “Benefits Committee” instead of the “Faculty Benefits Committee.” This is not a change in scope of the committee’s activities or its representation, but rather a more accurate description of the committee’s current membership and scope of activities. Jason will meet with the staff council (which will be created by the executive board) to explain rationale and make sure there is broader consensus about this beyond this committee’s membership.

- **Student update**—Lionel updated the committee on his discussions with SGA regarding the role of students and student benefits on the committee. The committee wanted to make sure that students were represented but did not want to step on SGA’s authority in any way. The SGA is not very interested in creating its own benefits committee but does have a Health Advisory Committee. The Faculty Benefits Committee supports having the option to keep a student member to ensure that they have a voice for benefits concerns other than those currently covered by the student health services committee. Lionel stated that students hope to have an avenue to gather information that could be beneficial to see if any further action could be taken. The charter was revised to include students and student benefits in the scope of potential committee activities, and to make the student member be appointed by the SGA Health Advisory Committee to ensure closer coordination between this committee and the SGA.

After further discussion the charter was updated and the committee voted unanimously to approve the revisions. The revised charter is attached, and Jason is reviewing it with Ron Bohlander.

FSA IRS rule change regarding the \$500 carryover: Brandon updated the committee on the progress of this change being instituted by the Board of Regents. It is currently being negotiated but there are two major issues. Currently, all funds are made available to account holders on January 1st each year and deducted from paychecks monthly. That money is not recovered when employees leave before the end of the year. US Bank uses forfeited (unused) money at the end of the calendar year to cover those losses and other administrative fees. The \$500 carryover rule would likely reduce end-of-year forfeitures and another model would need to cover these

expenses. The BOR is actively working on this issue and OHR is in regular touch with them about it.

“Hot Button” Issues

- **Buy-in option for ORP->TRS conversion.**— Brandon updated the committee on the proposed buy-in option from ORP to TRS (House Bill 516). It would allow a one-time opportunity to opt-in to the TRS. If this option is selected, the employee would assume the burden of the cost. A key provision is that the switch into TRS would not create any unfunded liability to the TRS. Future OSP members could opt out by their sixth year of service with the USG. The bill was previously passed by the House but is currently on the table for another vote to reconsider the previous action. The question was asked if the TRS would return money that was kept from the GT contribution if one who had switched from TRS before vesting and then wanted to opt in again. Brandon will find out. Brandon also stated that there is discussion about increasing the GT contribution to ORP by one percent. Another question was asked about whether there will be a calculator tool available for people to use if the bill passes to give the option to switch from ORP to TRS. Brandon will find out.

Jason will be in touch with Dene Sheheane at GT’s office of government relations to express the committee’s support of this bill and see if there are opportunities for the committee to help his office advocate on behalf of it.

- **Staff evaluation / review process:** This topic will be added to the next meeting agenda.
- **Parking rates:** Jason wrote to the parking committee but has had no response thus far. He will follow up again.
- **Salary increases:** This topic will be added to the next meeting agenda.

Jason is continuing to work with Scott Morris to get him actively involved in the committee in a manner similar to his predecessors at OHR.

Prepared by Stella Richardson

Proposed Revised Charter: Benefits Committee

Members

The Benefits committee shall consist of:

- Four (4) members of the Academic and Research Faculty elected by that body;
- The Institute's Chief HR Officer
- Four (4) staff members [to be arranged via staff council via process tbd]
- One (1) retired faculty member, appointed by the Executive Board; and
- One (1) Student appointed by the SGA Student Health Advisory Committee.

The Chair shall be elected annually by the committee from among the members. The Secretary shall be appointed by the Chair from among the other members.

Duties

The Committee shall:

- Assess, solicit feedback, and originate recommendations, relative to faculty, staff, student, and retiree benefits, including but not limited to Institute and Board of Regents policy, plans, and procedures on such matters as insurance, retirement, sick leave, death benefits, and vacations; wage scales, working conditions, and other matters of a similar nature; and non-academic, research, and housing facilities that benefit faculty, staff, students, and retirees.
- Deliver recommendations to the Office of Human Resources, the Executive Board, the Faculty Senate, the Staff Council, and the Board of Regents.