

Faculty Benefits Committee Meeting - February 22, 2017

9:30-11:00 AM Petit Institute Bldg., Room 1316

Minutes – Pending Approval

Attendees: Raquel Lieberman (Chair), Doug Britton (Secretary), David Brown (Staff Council Chair), Jason Freeman, Darrell Gray (Staff Council Rep.), Kevin Merkel (OHR Rep.), David Millard (Retiree Rep.), Stella Richardson.

Guests: Rich Steele & Julie Elion (Aux. Services guest)

Administrative: The minutes from the January 25, 2017 meeting were approved unanimously.

Committee Business:

- Raquel Lieberman invited Jim Wallace from OHR to come and meet with the committee – trying to coordinate schedules.
- Raquel Lieberman gave a brief to Kevin Merkel on some of the requests (numbers of faculty on TRS vs ORP) that the committee is waiting on. She also provided a quick overview of the TRS vs ORP review that the committee is looking into.

Continuing Business:

Child Care Centers

- Visitors Rich Steele and Julie Elion (Auxiliary Services) attached to provide an update on the childcare services.
- Rich Steele indicated that there are two learning centers, R. Kirk Landon and the Children's Campus, that are available to the GT community. These are not daycare centers but full learning centers with specific curricula. Daycare program costs average around \$800/month while the GT Learning Centers average \$1400/month, which is more expensive due to the programming and certifications of the center. The combined waitlist is at 70-75 families, which is down from 300 families several years ago. The goal of these centers is to support current faculty, staff, and students, and to help with faculty recruitment and retention. The leadership team at GT felt it was important to bring in some outside eyes to identify strengths and challenges associated with the centers activities, as a lot of the internal surveys tend to be more positive. The external consultants are the same group that setup the Emory childcare program. They did highlight several challenges associated with substitute teachers and the quality of education. Specific steps are underway to address these concerns.
- Raquel Lieberman asked who is considered to be the peer centers when doing comparisons, because if it is just metro local, then average costs could be skewed, given that many faculty/staff live further outside in the suburbs of the city.
- Rich Steele indicated that they look nationally for comparisons. Interestingly enough, he pointed out that the national teacher turnover rate tends to be more at the 50% level, and while he felt that GT centers were less than that, it is still too high. Many teachers are fresh out of training and come in at \$12/hour whereas local schools are closer to \$20/hour, so it is hard to compete.

- David Millard asked if the certification to be a learning center teacher and a local school teacher were the same.
- Rich Steele and Julie Elion replied that while similarities exist, the certifications are not exactly the same. However, learning center teachers can work on their school teaching certifications while working at the learning centers.
- Raquel Lieberman stated that her impression is that the turnover in teachers is not due to people leaving, but rather the result of letting teachers go as a result of tardiness and absenteeism.
- Rich Steele expressed the need to have specific expectations around tardiness and absenteeism, as it is very important to have consistency for accreditation.
- Raquel Lieberman asked about the policies around tardiness and absenteeism and if there was any opportunity to distinguish between habitual offenders and occasional offenders. It is very difficult for parents who are developing relationships with teachers to see the level of turnover, when the teachers appear to be great in the classroom.
- Rich Steele stated that the centers follow a very specific set of policies that includes written notices to teachers and coaching for employees to help address these challenges. In most cases teachers are only let go after multiple offenses that have accrued and been documented. The center leadership can usually tell several months in advance if they will need to plan for a change.
- Raquel Lieberman lamented that it seems like some of the best and nicest teachers are the ones who get fired.
- Rich Steele emphasized that individuals need to be both great teachers and employees to be successful.
- Darrell Gray asked what some of the reasons are for being let go.
- Julie Elion indicated that safety, punctuality, and attendance, are the primary issues that will result in someone being fired.
- Darrell Gray asked if someone is documenting the training/corrective actions that are being implemented and provided.
- Rich Steele and Julie Elion indicated that this was being done, and individuals were being given opportunities to address the challenges through various work plans etc.
- Rich Steele stated that in some very rare cases, they had to let teachers go because the teachers did not follow safety policies/processes. Usually in these cases, the teachers thought they had a better way of doing something, but it was in conflict with the established processes/procedures.
- Raquel Lieberman asked if most of the problems were really around attendance and punctuality.
- Julie Elion said yes, and this could be for a couple of reasons. Often many of the teachers are new to teaching and somewhat young, as it is harder to get older more experienced teachers when the pay is so low. These are some of the lowest paid employees on campus.
- Darrell Gray stated that he thought that the GT centers were paying more than comparable programs in the area. He also asked that if costs to attend are so high, why the employees are paid at such a low rate.
- Rich Steele indicated that other expenses such facilities, curriculum, leadership, food program, etc. are all very costly, particularly in the downtown area. The Children's Campus lost money during the first 3 years of operation.

- Jason Freeman pointed out that other universities in the metro area (Georgia State, Emory) are running childcare centers, but they are not working with Bright Horizons. And while Tech is not making a profit on the GT centers, Bright Horizons is. He asked what is driving the relationship with Bright Horizons, and/or has the administration considered managing the centers internally?
- Rich Steele pointed out that consultants who recently reviewed the Tech programs were the ones who set up the independent Emory center, so they had a natural inclination toward internal operation of the centers, and yet in the GT case, this was not a forthcoming recommendation. He pointed out that the profit margin for Bright Horizons is only 5% after all expenses, and he was not sure if GT could provide the same level of management at that 5% “overhead” rate. He is not convinced that we (GT) could do a better job than what Bright Horizons is doing. He indicated that if they thought there was a way that Tech could manage it directly and do it better, they would consider it. The idea has even been suggested that they partner with the Emory center to share administrative costs, but then the centers would be somewhat remote.
- Darrell Gray asked about subsidy that is provided by GT.
- Rich Steele stated that GT contributes \$200,000 to support the centers. For comparison, he stated that Chick-fil-a, who also uses Bright Horizons, only charges \$50/week to employees.
- Jason Freeman expressed serious concern that a lot of GT staff and students are being priced out of the GT centers. He asked if there had ever been consideration given to differentiating the two GT centers in order to provide one service at a lower price point to make it more accessible.
- Rich Steele reiterated the differentiation between a daycare center and a learning center. He stated that it would be very difficult to eliminate the curriculum component of the learning centers, and that is what would need to happen in order to lower the cost. That said, he indicated that the GT centers are on par with the average rates for learning centers in the region.
- Darrell Gray asked how many slots are open for infants through 3yr olds, and if it might be possible to consider providing an option where the very young children are not part of the educational programming.
- Rich Steele replied that it becomes a space issue, and that currently there are very few vacancies, so the demand doesn’t really exist for changing the current educational programs. He stated that they try to keep the occupancy at around 85%, and indicated that if the centers did have higher vacancy rates that they might consider other options.
- Darrell Gray felt that we need to look at a more holistic way of supporting the entire campus (faculty, staff, and students) and in particular those who cannot afford current offering.
- Rich Steele stated that this would be a very different business model that would most likely need to be considered in addition to the current centers, particularly if the GT community deems it is necessary.
- Rich Steele also expressed concern about potential confusion within the GT community regarding the current learning centers, and faculty, staff, and students comparing them to daycare centers in the region.
- Raquel Lieberman stated that the current centers are definitely out of reach for graduate students and most staff. She expressed concern that the centers are filling with a significant number of non-GT affiliated students, and that as a result the GT faculty, staff and students are being precluded from access to this GT provided service. She feels that given the makeup of the

students, the GT childcare centers don't feel like they are really focused on Georgia Tech employees and students.

- Rich Steele clarified that the non-GT families do pay a higher rate, so they do not benefit from the GT subsidy. He also stated that the goal is to recruit and fill up the centers and meet the demand of the GT community before offering slots to the external community. In addition, the non-GT contracts are year-to-year and they are at risk of being bumped out if a GT affiliated student needs the slot.
- Raquel Lieberman said that information that is being conveyed to new hires is that there is a long waiting list. There does not appear to be any mention that GT families have priority when applying to the centers.
- Rich Steele clarified that the long waiting list also includes non-GT families and that better communication is needed to ensure that GT families (or prospective GT families) understand that they would be put on a high priority wait list to try and keep them from immediately looking elsewhere.
- Julie Elion also mentioned that they are in the process of converting one of the Children's Center classrooms into infant facilities to accommodate the higher demand for this age group.
- Jason Freeman pointed out that for many employees, the centers are out of reach until the students are eligible for the Georgia pre-K program. However, by this time, most families have already found alternative options, or simply do not know that they can apply at this later age and be placed on a higher priority list with a non-infant.
- Rich Steele agreed that the fact that you can come with an older child and get on a priority list is probably not communicated to the GT community as effectively as it should be.
- Raquel Lieberman did think that the past campus communications have worked as evidenced by the classrooms filling up.
- Rich Steele and Julie Elion pointed out that the top three things that came up as a result of the external review were: 1) teacher pay, 2) turnover rates, 3) and use of substitutes. They indicated that on the first item, they are working to submit a request for additional GT Funds to raise teacher pay. They think this will help with both of the first two items. The third item is a little more complicated and directly related to both of the first two items in that turnover requires the use of more substitutes, and it costs more per hour to use subs. Bright Horizons is setting up a training program for substitutes with the goal of trying to keep two subs at each location all the time. They are trying to address the primary issue with substitutes, which is the parents and students lack of familiarity with the substitutes creating concern about who was taking care of the children
- Rich Steele said that these folks would be "center supports" with the idea being that if they were at the centers full time, this would address some of the concerns raised in the external review. He also said that they are asking for an additional \$270,000 to support for teacher pay increases, which would bring wages up to the \$14 - \$15/hr level.
- Jason Freeman asked if external or internal reviews had looked at administrative pay compared to the other centers as well.
- Julie Elion indicated that the external reviewers did look at administrative pay, and felt that it was comparable to other centers in the area.
- Jason Freeman asked if the additional funds being requested are recurring funds or one time funds.

- Rich Steele indicated that the request is for recurring funds.
- Jason Freeman asked what this committee could do to support this request of the Administration.
- Rich Steele indicated that they would appreciate any support the committee and others could provide with the provost's office.
- Raquel Lieberman commented that there is a move afoot on campus to generally support a whole person concept and that as part of there should be a component that also makes it family friendly. She suggested bringing this to the Advance Professors group as well.
- Doug Britton suggested that it would be good for this committee to send a formal letter to the provost specifically supporting this request.
- Darrell Gray added that we should also consider sending it to the EVP operations, Steve Swant, as well.
- Jason Freeman added that Jenifer Herazy could be included in these discussions as well.
- Julie Elion asked that we also be sure to mention the need for more infant space at the centers as well.
- David Millard asked if when making an offer to a new hire, is there any way to assure them that there would be a slot available for them at the centers.
- Rich Steele said practically, this is very difficult to do based on the fluctuation of supply and demand and it is not really simply a case of filling slots. In addition, he expressed concern regarding allowable questions regarding family status during recruitment. He did say that if a new hire needs a spot, they will work very hard to try and find a slot for their children.
- Raquel Lieberman mentioned that other places do not have rolling enrollment, but rather have fixed enrollment periods.
- Jason Freeman added that the challenge with fixed enrollment is that employees may have to reserve (and pay) for slots that they won't need for several months.
- The discussion again turned towards accessibility for staff and students, with several committee members voicing concern that there is not an affordable option for these folks, and as a result they are going elsewhere to meet their needs.
- Jason Freeman suggested that there may be an opportunity to partner with other daycare centers close by that could reserve a certain number of slots for GT employees and students for a reduced rate if GT advertised this option to the campus community.
- Rich Steele suggested another alternative would be to consider a broker that could work with families to find options that fit their specific needs.
- Doug Britton cautioned that you would want to be sure to establish some means of feedback on whomever you recommend as a broker, just to be sure they are doing an acceptable job.
- David Millard mentioned recent experience with a broker in a different healthcare environment that he thought had worked well.
- David Millard asked if there was some administrative or other mandate requiring that these be learning centers instead of daycare centers.
- Rich Steele said there was not, but that any changes would require administrative directions to do so.

- David Brown provided input that several years ago (prior to the Children’s Center) there was a presentation that indicated GT would open a daycare center, but that morphed into another learning center that immediately became too expensive for staff employees.
- Rich Steele suggested that if the committee wanted to raise this idea of an alternative childcare/daycare center option with the administration that they would be happy to consider it.
- Darrell Gray stated that the staff council would definitely be interested in a lower cost option on campus.
- David Brown echoed that sentiment indicating that a lot of staff don’t even consider the current options because of price, so they simply don’t ask/talk about it. Many had to find alternative options managing childcare that create additional hardships such as transportation, support, etc.
- Rich Steele mentioned that there is a health and wellness program on campus, but it has been primarily focused on students. It is however, intended to be an all-campus initiative, so this may be an option for help staff on campus.
- Julie Elion presented the accreditation time-line the Children’s Center, and indicated that the T. Kirk Landon center has already been accredited. At this point they are pursuing a “Quality-Rated” certification at the T. Kirk Landon program.
- Raquel Lieberman thanked Rich and Julie for attending the meeting, and suggested that the faculty benefits committee would be in touch and continue to support these centers and the initiatives to expand and make them more affordable.
- Raquel Lieberman mentioned that she did attend the T. Kirk Landon community board meeting, and it turns out that they only meet 3 times a year. She mentioned that there lots of folks from Home Park and some from GT in attendance. Raquel did ask if there was any real significant difference between the daycare center and learning center designation, or is that somewhat arbitrary.
- Jason Freeman indicated that there is a distinction associated with the level of accreditation, and with just a daycare you will only have to meet minimum state standard, which mean the centers would have more kids in a classroom and different food programs, etc.
- David Millard stated that in the suburbs there is a continuum of services, but it seems that GT is only giving one offering at a somewhat costly level.
- Jason Freeman stated that the continuum of options are available here in the area around Tech, and it could be an option for more of the campus community if we could partner those existing centers.
- Raquel Lieberman felt that there is really a missed opportunity for community building around these centers given more than 50% of the families/students are non-GT.
- Stella Richardson asked if there is a way to request funds from GT or other foundations to subsidizing staff family enrollments at the centers.
- Jason Freeman felt pretty strongly that the GT foundation would not support staff subsidies, because any potential “donor” would ask why they should support this if the administration is not supporting it.
- David Millard emphasized that it is important to have some numbers to demonstrate the need.

- Kevin Merkel mentioned that there are concierge services for new hires that may include childcare options. This would be similar to the broker idea suggested earlier, but would be part of a larger service.

Retirement Transition

- David Millard mentioned that he is looking at how to build a set of recommendations and suggestions (FAQ) around transitioning to retirement. However, there are so many different variables that really come down to individual arrangements with departments/deans.
- Raquel Lieberman and other committee members shared with Kevin Merkel a brief overview of the possible issues with the ORP retirement option. Things like fewer retirements, fewer tenure opportunities, and less recruitment were on the list. They repeated the requests for information on the numbers of faculty on TRS vs ORP to get a better sense of how much of an issue it really could be.
- Kevin – there is a need for ORP for transitional

New Business

There were no new items presented for consideration at the next meeting.

New Action Items

- Contact the Advance Professors to discuss the Childcare support – Raquel Lieberman
- Draft letter of support to Bras & Swant & Cozzens regarding request for recurring funds for teacher pay - Jason Freeman
- Send letter from Staff council to support an additional level of service for Childcare – David Brown and Darrell Gray

Past Action Items

- Obtain numbers on the total faculty on ORP vs TRS - Kevin Merkel/OHR
- Work with Wayne Book on generating a beginning FAQ document - David Millard (In process)
- Invite Jim Wallace retirement guru to upcoming meeting – Raquel Lieberman (In process)
- Invite Rich Steele to discuss Daycare Report – Raquel Lieberman (Completed)
- Send a note regarding summer camps website info to Candice Bovian – Darrell Gray (Completed)
- Send Retired but working document to committee – Leslie Sharp (Completed)

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:09 AM.