

Faculty Benefits Committee Meeting
April 1, 2014

Present: Jason Freeman (Chair), Doug Britton, Wayne Book, Brandon Conkle, Michael Elliott, Amy Herron, Debra Lee, Tommy Little, Lance Lunsway, Stella Richardson

Absent: Dave Millard, Scott Morris, Nazia Zakir

Administration: The minutes from the 2.28.2014 meeting were approved.

Parking: Special guest Lance Lunsway, Senior Director of Parking and Transportation Services, addressed the committee's concerns about increased parking rates: a 5% increase for 2014-2015, 5% for 2015-2016, and 7% for 2016-2017. He began by stating that parking is considered an auxiliary service by the Board of Regents, which means the department has to generate its income. Special events parking generates revenue and saves permit costs. Lance stressed that he is always looking for new revenue streams. Because of campus development, there will be a loss of approximately 2000 surface parking spaces. As these parking spaces are lost, permit fees increase to help finance parking decks that are built to replace the lost spaces.

According to Lance, Georgia Tech parking is the cheapest in the midtown area. He stressed that parking is voluntary, and that there are ways to cut costs such as carpooling or, where possible, switching to second or evening shifts. Smart Park is another option for those who do not drive to campus every day.

Tommy stated that before Lance came to Georgia Tech there was a movement to get off-campus parking lots with shuttle service to and from campus for reduced parking fees. He asked if that could be a viable option to offer now. Lance replied that transportation costs would have to be factored in, which could result in higher permit costs. He said that none of the parking revenue currently supports campus transportation. Eighty-five percent is paid from student fees and the rest comes from a campus fund to cover faculty, staff, and visitor use.

Lance stated that there is a parking and transportation advisory committee (PTAC). The benefits committee was not aware of this committee. PTAC does not have a charter, its membership is secret and by invitation of the director of parking, and its charge is unclear. The benefits committee agreed that PTAC does not serve any real advisory or governance role and that some of these functions need to be handled by a proper governance entity at the Institute.

Tommy asked if transportation for evening facilities staff to the MARTA station could resume. Lance stated that there are no funds to pay for the transportation and would probably not be reinstated unless it was paid for by facilities.

A new committee has been put together to review and find better options for ADA parking. Challenges persist and will continue.

There is a bike-sharing program. Bikes can be loaned out for a semester.

Lance will look into why there is a \$25 charge that is currently being assessed for faculty and staff changing parking locations due to a change in job or promotion on campus. (Note: After

the meeting, Lance updated us to note that his staff will now waive this fee when an employee's office location changes.)

The committee had a lively discussion about parking, with the following general consensus:

- The rise in parking rates has outpaced most any other fee increase on campus and far outpaced inflation. It also exceeds the cost of parking at Emory and GSU. This has affected staff at the low end of the salary spectrum the most but is concerning to all faculty and staff in light of ongoing salary freezes.
- Current policy seems to be to replace every lost space with a new space. Based on Lance's presentation, the committee is not convinced that this strategy is necessary. Georgia Tech has much more parking capacity than similar institutions Lance cited, and, as his own data shows, there are many other parking options in midtown Atlanta, some of which are only incrementally more expensive than GT parking. The committee questions whether restricting parking privileges for first-year students, a policy that was in place until very recently, might address long-term capacity needs and reduce the need to build as many new decks, thus more effectively managing permit cost increases.
- There seems to be limited oversight, transparency, and governance in parking; the fact that the advisory committee on parking has an anonymous membership is just one indication of how problematic the current structure must be. The committee does not see a need for a dedicated standing committee on parking but would like to see parking more directly overseen by an existing committee. Parking does fall within the scope of this committee as a non-academic, non-residential facility of benefit to faculty, staff, and/or students.

Updates:

- The buy in option from ORP to TRS was tabled in the Legislature. It will not be up for review for another 2 years at minimum.
- The committee charter has been submitted. Jason met with Scott Morris and explained that the committee addresses issues beyond medical and voluntary benefits. Scott would like to attend committee meetings beginning in the fall.
- The \$500 carry-over option for FSA will not happen until 2015. The contract with US bank had already been signed when this option became available. USG is trying to add this into the contract for next year.
- Health care—USG is reviewing plan design changes for cost savings. Premiums may be lower but usage fees will probably increase. Other surcharges are being reviewed. There could be an additional fee to cover spouses. They are required to cover children according to the Affordable Care Act but are not required to cover spouses. This is all being studied. This is an opportunity for the committee to get more information on this topic. Jason will follow up directly with Karen Elliot at USG.
- Money was approved for a small salary increase pool of .75%. Each institution is allowed to add to this pool. The increase will be based on merit and will not be across the board. Details are not available yet.

Action item:

The committee would like to write a letter to Dr. Peterson and Steve Swant to address rising costs in health care and parking with stagnant salaries, with specific data showing its impact on faculty and staff across a spectrum of salaries. The letter should document the severity of the situation with acknowledgement of what already has been done to increase lower income salaries. Jason will draft a letter with examples of the impact of rising costs of certain services. The letter will focus on parking and health care.

Submitted by Stella Richardson