

Benefits Committee Meeting Minutes

September 29, 2015, 9:30-11 am OHR 220

Attending: Jason Freeman (chair), Stella Richardson (Secretary), Raquel Lieberman (vice chair), Wayne Book (retiree rep), Brandon Conkle (OHR), Michael Elliott, Leslie Hall (Staff Council Representative), Tommy Little (Staff Council Rep.), Michelle Powell (executive board liason), Doug Britton (GTRI)

Absent: Decker Onken (Student Representative; VP of Finance for SGA)

ADMINISTRATIVE

The minutes from the August 25th meeting were approved.

UPDATES

Open enrollment planning

Open enrollment will be in early November. The benefits fair will be held on November 4th.

The defined contribution pricing will be in year 2 of a 3-year transition in 2016, it will fully take effect in 2017. The employer contribution will be the same across all medical plans, with the POS plan as a baseline. Employees will choose plans based on their needs. The USG subsidy will be the same (i.e. no longer a fixed percentage of the total premium for the plan, but a baseline amount for all plans). High level communications are currently taking place in HR sessions.

The Supreme Court ruling on same sex marriages means that domestic partnerships will lose benefits (dental / vision only). Domestic partners of Georgia Tech employees will become eligible to go on COBRA beginning January 1 (since these are voluntary plans, premiums will not increase only because of moving to COBRA; they will pay 2016 rates). Georgia Tech is currently considering dropping domestic partner coverage from the student health plan as well. The USG will send individual letters out regarding the change in domestic partner benefits. They should come out just prior to open enrollment. Current coverage is effective through the end of the year. Same-sex spouses are now eligible for the same coverage options as opposite-sex spouses, via the same process at OHR.

For retirees, the switch to a private exchange for health coverage is effective in 2016. Meetings with Aon are currently being set up for retirees. If retirees opt out they and their dependents can never opt back in the program.

The USG is considering allowing the use of sick leave for maternity and paternity leave for a healthy birth. People who have accrued a large amount of sick leave will be in a

better position than those who are within a couple of years of employment. Michelle asked if it might be possible to apply for donated leave to cover maternity/paternity leave. Brandon stated that this year Georgia Tech still has the ability to change the donated sick leave policy to include this type of leave. However, the USG is potentially taking over the administering of donated sick leave beginning next year. One issue is that many of the institutions in the USG have their own policies for shared sick leave, unique to each school. Georgia Tech will still have an institution level committee but it will have to operate within the USG guidelines. For example, Georgia Tech doesn't require employees to donate to the pool in order to be eligible to apply for it. However, the USG proposal may change that and require that only those who donate be eligible to apply.

The committee expressed overall dissatisfaction with the USG taking over the administration of donated sick leave and the restrictions around eligibility for applying. There was a question about how the committee could best voice this dissatisfaction and make a position statement. Brandon stated that the policy is currently in draft, which he has seen, and they are allowed to make comments. He will note our comments and take them back to the USG. He also suggested that we invite Karin Elliot from the USG Total Rewards office to come to a meeting to discuss our concerns. There was also a discussion about how the committee could influence these decisions. Mark Braunstein, the GT representative on the USG total rewards steering committee, will attend our next meeting, and the committee expressed interest in making him an ex-officio member of this committee. Jason stated that the USG Total Rewards Steering Committee is not a decision-making body. But they do have direct interaction with the decision makers. Michael suggested that we could get broader exposure by drafting an action item to the faculty senate to raise these issues. The committee agreed that maternity leave in particular would be a good issue to take to the faculty senate.

Disability Insurance for 9-month contract faculty

There was some discussion about disability insurance for 9 month faculty. Jason stated that the premiums only get deducted during the months that 9-month faculty get paid and questions whether one would be covered during summer months when they are not in a pay status. He also asked if those who receive grant funding to cover summer salary over that period could be covered. Brandon was able to answer some of the questions about coverage but in some cases, it remains unclear when the waiting period on coverage would begin if the waiting period included time during the summer. This presents particular problems for STD and maternity leave because STD may not cover 9 month faculty with summer births.

STD and LTD also do not cover salary beyond base salary, e.g. faculty summer salaries from grants. Brandon, in cooperation with Michelle, agreed to explore whether such supplementary plans might be possible to offer.

Under the One USG policy, 9-month faculty will be given the option to spread premium payments by spreading pay out over the summer. The committee questioned, though, whether spreading the paychecks out would be compatible with faculty receiving summer

salary. The committee was also concerned about the significant legal liability incurred by GT and the USG given that most faculty are expected to continue to work for the Institute even in summer months when they may not receive a paycheck.

Maternity Leave

There was a lengthy discussion about the inconsistencies in how maternal leave is handled for faculty at Georgia Tech. Raquel gave some examples of inconsistencies within her unit. There is no universal way to handle maternity leave on campus; everything is anecdotal and ad hoc and inconsistent across units. There are particular questions and inconsistencies related to leave and PIs on sponsored research projects.

OHR is developing a standardized guide and process to try to address some inconsistencies, particularly with using disability and FMLA. Michelle noted recent changes to federal policy that enable PIs to remain PIs on a grant for 90 days if still engaged in the research but on leave. Brandon noted that UGA and GT have been trying to get maternity / paternity leave to happen but USG has prevented this from moving forward to date. The committee noted that the lack of maternity leave as a benefit is adversely affecting faculty recruitment.

The committee discussed the best step forward and reached consensus that we should advocate strongly for a paid maternity leave program, separate from sick leave or FMLA or STD or any other approach. The committee will do some data gathering: looking at the recent report from the family friendly task force, comparing GT to peer institutions, and gathering data from deans and school chairs on specific recruitment and retention issues related to the lack of maternity leave. The committee will also invite Susan Cozzens to a future meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella Richardson