

Faculty Benefits Committee Meeting
Monday, October 21, 2013
8:30-10am

Present: Jason Freeman (Chair), Wayne Book, Amy Heron, Lionel London, Dave Millard, Stella Richardson, Nazia Zakir, Brandon Conkl Shalonda Cargill

Absent: Michael Elliott, Doug Britton, Debra Lee, Tommy Little

Administration: Minutes from 09.09.13 were reviewed and approved.

Presentation: Brandon Conkle, Director of Total Rewards in the Office of Human Resources (OHR), delivered an open enrollment presentation covering changes to medical and voluntary benefits, centralization of voluntary benefits with the Board of Regents (BOR), changes as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), employee re-enrollment requirements, and communication plans. The slides for this presentation are attached to these minutes.

Discussion:

The committee discussed communications plans in further detail, especially in light of the new requirement that employees must actively re-enroll during open enrollment (or else will automatically be charged a tobacco surcharge and defaulted into closest possible voluntary benefit plans to their old ones). OHR is mailing a printed guide this week to employees, has a web site online now, is staffing a dedicated call center, is setting up temporary computer labs in facilities and the student center, is hosting its benefits fair (to be held on November 6th) and information sessions, and sponsoring an ipad drawing for those who enroll early.

Benefits for domestic partners were clarified: they will continue for voluntary benefits even with the centralization to BOR . The committee reiterated the importance of finding a way moving forward to offer domestic partner medical coverage, as this has caused problems recruiting faculty in the past. Because it is not a voluntary benefit, though, this issue stands above GT and the BOR and has to be addressed at the legislative level.

Brandon addressed the question of staffing allocation and resources. Darlene Wright (former Director of Benefits) has left Georgia Tech, with Shalonda Cargill assuming her role on an interim basis. The job description for both this position and the director of total rewards are likely to evolve, though, over the coming year, as much of their previous work was related to managing voluntary benefits that are now managed centrally by the BOR . The committee would like continued updates on the scope of these job descriptions.

The meeting concluded with a broader discussion of the role of the committee and the strategic role of benefits at GT in recruiting and retaining faculty and staff. Brandon suggested that OHR's goal should be to identify voluntary benefits (such as the recently added legal and identity theft benefits) that are not offered elsewhere in the USG system to distinguish GT. The committee noted that while it is possible this would affect staff recruitment, it would be unlikely to play any role in faculty recruitment and retention, where the competition is usually not from other USG institutions. Committee members suggested more pressing issues in faculty and staff recruitment and retention, including same sex domestic partner medical coverage, one-time ability to transfer from ORP to TRS, portable tuition benefits, and pay freezes. Brandon stated

that the one-time ORP->TRS option is again in front of the legislature and this time has some support from the BOR. There was also an extended discussion on salary compression with regards to both faculty and staff, and on some limitations of current mechanisms to increase pay grades for staff that are harming retention.

The committee expressed frustration at being excluded by OHR from the discussions with the BOR about the centralization of voluntary benefits, and this led to a broader discussion of the role of the committee, with a consensus around a focus on longer-term and strategic issues over day-to-day operations. The committee will undertake a review of its charter (and also its name) this year to make sure that it is working effectively with OHR and the executive board to serve an important strategic purpose towards faculty and staff recruitment and retention at the Institute.

Prepared by Jason Freeman and Stella Richardson.