

Faculty Benefits Committee
November 17, 2016

Attending: Raquel Lieberman (chair), David Brown, Jason Freeman, Darrell Gray, and Wayne Book.

The October minutes were approved pending change on page 4 in summer camps discussion of Birgit Burton to Laurie Buchanan.

1. **Membership Update:**
 - a. **Student:** Raquel has been in touch with SGA, who does not wish to have undergraduate representation on this committee. She is working with SGA to identify a graduate student to serve. There is a potential lead on a student from public policy.
 - b. **Retiree:** Wayne Book's term ends in December. A new retiree representative has been identified in cooperation with Silver Jackets. The appointment must be approved by the executive board at their January meeting.
2. **Active Service Modified Duties:** Tabled until next meeting due to Leslie Sharp's absence.
3. **Child Care:** The external review has been completed by the consultants retained by Rich Steele's office. They are still reviewing the findings internally and have not shared them with this committee yet.
4. **Coordinating with other USG Benefits Committees:** UGA is the only committee that has responded, but they are very interested in collaborating. Issues on their agenda parallel many considered by this committee, and include tuition remission for faculty/staff, health care premiums and deductibles, access to mental health counselors, gender/minority equity in pay and promotions, family friendly policies, FLSA, etc.
5. **Summer Camps:** Darrell met with Barrett Carson and Laurie Buchanan to discuss foundation or corporate sponsorship to subsidize the cost of GT summer camps for children of GT staff. They recommended approaching Steve Swant about using unrestricted funds from the recent capital campaign for this purpose. Virginia Sheppard from the GT Foundation will spearhead this. She is already compiling information from five GT summer camps with the goal of establishing some clear parameters for a financial aid or scholarship program for staff children.
6. **Open Enrollment:** Benedra was absent so there were minimal updates. There were some user interface issues with the system, but these cannot be addressed within the confines of Peoplesoft. There is room to better explain prepaid premiums for summer months for 9-month faculty.
7. **Communication:**
 - a. The committee raised the sick leave pool as an example of difficulties communicating even basic benefits-related information to faculty and staff – a member of the committee tried to send a notice out about the purpose of the pool and pending changes but was rebuffed by campus HR reps and the mailing never went out. The committee noted that, while legal details might prevent units and OHR from offering official guidance and advice on benefits matters,

our committee may be in a position to offer informal information and advice that could be of service to the campus community.

- b. Many programs of benefit to faculty are not communicated effectively; the example of the GT passport fair was raised, in which communications were buried in long e-mails of announcements that few people ever see. Given the amount of activities on campus and the impossibility of promoting them all via high-profile means, the committee wondered whether a custom / intelligent / social-media based system might be able to notify faculty and staff of programs relevant to their interests, as opposed to the current approach which blasts the same messages to all employees on campus.
8. **FLSA:** In the absence of Doug, there were no major updates. The committee is generally concerned, though, about faculty's lack of understanding of the implications of employees switching from salaried to hourly (the example was given of a grants administrator who may no longer have the flexibility to work extra or irregular hours to help get a grant proposal submitted on time). Units need to consider the responsibilities assigned to salaried vs. hourly employees, and faculty need to understand the limits of hourly employees and plan accordingly.
 9. **Retirement:** The committee continued to discuss challenges related to the transition of faculty into retirement:
 - a. Cultural issues: "Retired but working" faculty may be perceived by colleagues as "freeloaders", and in turn the retired-but-working faculty may feel unwelcome and devalued on campus.
 - b. Bureaucratic issues: Retired but working faculty face numerous challenges in access basic GT systems like e-mail and travel / expense reimbursement.
 - c. Financial issues: Faculty tend to receive inadequate guidance at the time of hire on retirement decisions (notably TRS vs. ORP) that may impact them for decades. They similarly tend to receive inadequate advice about key decisions as they begin the transition into retirement. These issues seem to stem from a) the inability of the institute to provide much in the way of financial advice, and b) even for faculty who engage with third-party financial planners, the unfamiliarity of those planners with the unique retirement options at GT (such as TRS). The committee discussed two possible ways to address these issues: a) a document similar to the one created for family leave, but focused on retirement benefits, decisions, and their consequences both at time-of-hire and at retirement; and b) a new GT perk for discounted financial planning with a third-party vendor who would be intimately familiar with GT retirement plans.
 10. **Next Meeting:** There is a time conflict with our next meeting and final exams. Raquel will send out a poll to find an alternate meeting time during exam week.