

Benefits Committee  
December 9, 2014, 9:30-11 am  
OHR 220

Minutes

**Attending:** Jason Freeman (Chair), Stella Richardson (Secretary), Wayne Book, Doug Britton, Brandon Conkle (HR), Amy Herron, Debra Lee, Tommy Little, David Millard, Scott Morris (HR) Michelle Powell

**Absent:** Michael Elliott, Jefferson Losse

**Administrative:**

- Minutes from the November 11, 2014 meeting were approved without changes.

**UPDATES**

**JCCS**

Brandon and Scott provided a thorough overview of the Human Resources Total Rewards program. This program consists of the compensation/pay practices here at Georgia Tech. The purpose of the program is to provide a “unique employee value proposition” to help attract, retain and engage talent. It also works towards employee reward and engagement.

Brandon gave the committee the brief history of the Job Classification & Compensation System (JCCS). It began in 2011 and applies only to staff positions (not faculty). Compensation ranges were adjusted in 2012. The goal of JCCS was to reduce job titles across campus for consistency. With hindsight, it is now clear that there was too much generalization in job titles in some cases and not enough in others.

Georgia Tech targets the median of each pay group. General industry is the competitive market for staff. Depending on the position, it could be the metro Atlanta region or national. Those jobs for which academia is the market are compared to our 20 peer institutions. A point of discussion was whether more institutions should be added to the peer group for market studies. According to Brandon, to get a larger sample size we could compare Georgia Tech to all institutions with budgets between 1.5 and 2.5 billion dollars. That would increase the peer group to 45.

Brandon stated that salary surveys are never perfect because reporting is never perfect. Salary studies done by professional organizations are incorporated but are not relied on exclusively. Matches are done using reporting structure and job descriptions as well as job title. When HR reviews issues and exceptions they look at equity across the institute. There is a fundamental clash in priorities regarding compensation, i.e., equity across the institute verses the immediate needs of hiring managers.

Currently compensation comparisons are of baseline salaries. They are thinking about targeting a higher baseline to account for lost opportunity of benefits/variable compensation. Brandon noted that institution turnover is very low right now and the time to fill positions is relatively short, so there is the question of why we would want to make major changes to this structure. Maybe we just need to make a better case for non-compensation aspects of jobs in recruitment and retention. There was a concern voiced about whether or not low turnover is indicative of what we've done at Georgia Tech or of a bad economy. If the latter, retention may soon become a much larger challenge.

There was some discussion about promotions. There is a 10-15% rule for promotion increases because the employee usually has to acquire experience in the new role. They have to make comparisons to an outside hire who already has experience. Of course there are always exceptions. Scott stated that a promotion should not be a reward for past performance but an incentive to take on more responsibility. His office is responsible for deciding if a new title needs to be created because an existing one has become obsolete or is out of line with responsibilities. Once a new title is created it becomes available across the institute.

There was a question about how the base salary gets increased. Brandon noted that over the last 4-5 years, Georgia Tech has given around \$35 million in increases. He also stated that the lack of regular merit increases causes fundamental problems. An example is when a department increases an employee's salary to retain him/her when merit increases have been frozen. Usually that employee ends up leaving anyway within a year or so. To preserve the integrity of the system and promote growth in employees, managers should redesign jobs instead of trying to give promotions for staff to perform the same job they are already doing.

### **Open Enrollment**

Enrollment was slow during the first part of the final week but increased the last two days. There was a 95% participation rate, which is good. Brandon acknowledged the challenges presented by not overlapping open enrollment with employee spouses' timelines so that families could make more informed decisions. There is no perfect solution for this. Human Resources tries to get information out as early as possible but other employers do not always get out information as early.

BCBS HMO lost 200 participants. Kaiser gained 150 new members. Most of the other participants went into comprehensive care. USG perks and lifestyle benefits had about 2000 enrollees.

### **Parking**

Dave Millard reported on a recent meeting of the Parking & Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) that Dave and Jason both attended. The committee demonstrated active involvement in decisions about rate increases, with careful thought to the campus master plan and future needs. While there was overall satisfaction with the role that committee plays in discussing the rate increases that have concerned members of the benefits committee, there was also some concern that PTAC is an ad hoc committee that, unlike formal Institute committees, has no clear process for electing or appointment members or terms for those members; does not publish its membership, meeting agendas, or minutes; and is not a part of any faculty, staff, or student governance structure. Tommy and Jason will discuss this with Lance Lunsway and Paul Strouts at an upcoming meeting to see what steps might make sense to make the PTAC and its operation more visible to the campus.

### **Child care expenses during travel**

Michelle reiterated the state of Georgia stance on temporary child care expenses incurred during travel. Under the new uniform circular, these expenses can be paid for travel on federally sponsored projects, but only if the institution allows them to be covered under travel funded by other sources as well. OSP asked the state to make this change but the request was denied. The committee underscored the fact that the state likely does not understand the details of this policy and its implications (since it largely

affects the research universities in the system) and that it is a particularly important issue to advocate for given the recent work of the family-friendly task force. Scott recommended that the committee put forward an action item for consideration by the Faculty Senate, and Michelle offered to draft the text of this action item for consideration at the January meeting.