

Minutes of Faculty and Staff Benefits Advisory Committee Meeting

October 12, 2000

The Birmingham Room – Bryant Conference Center

3:00 p.m.

Voting Members Present: Loranette Collier, Lane Cox, Tina Dorroh, Dr. Chuck Evces, Debra Hill, Dr. Wythe Holt, Donna Keene, Susan Lucas, Eddie James Madison, Dr. Jonathan Noffsinger, Pam Parsons, David Robinson, Dona Sulzmann, Debbie Thrasher, Isabelle Wilson and Dr. Keith Woodbury

Voting Members Absent: Cheryl Ballard, Deborah Hamilton, Judy Hamilton, Dr. Karl Hasik, Sybil Hobson and Dr. George Rable

Non-Voting Members/Guests Present: Sandra Abrams, Cathy Andreen, Dr. Rose Gladney, Janet Griffith, Charlotte Harris, John Kasberg, Steve Miller, Dr. Nancy Rubin

Donna Keene opened the meeting and requested approval of the minutes from the September 6th meeting. The minutes were approved with one exception pertaining to the Rec Center fees to be paid by University faculty and staff. Dr. Keith Woodbury stated that George Brown had made a presentation to the committee regarding the breakdown of fees for faculty, staff and students. He requested that George Brown visit with the committee again and discuss ways the University could assist with the Rec Center fees charged to faculty and staff.

Changing Vesting Period - Dr. Wythe Holt stated that he wished to withdraw his recommendation asking the University to check with the State Retirement System regarding reducing the vesting period from 10 years to 5 years.

Benefits for Domestic Partners – Donna Keene distributed a memo from Sybil Hobson and a petition on this topic. Charlotte Harris presented some current information, facts and figures regarding benefits for domestic partners. She stated there are many colleges and universities – as well as many corporations - who currently offer some benefits to unmarried partners. Questions were asked regarding the increased health insurance costs associated with offering these benefits. She commented that we do not have enough data to determine if rates would be higher with the addition of benefits for domestic partners.

The committee decided to discuss each item of the petition question by question.

They discussed the length of time a couple is together before they are considered to be in a "committed" relationship. They questioned how it could be determined whether or not they are in fact a couple and how long after they dissolve their relationship should the University accept another partner into its health plan. It was determined that if the couple dissolved their relationship, in all probability the partner would not be eligible for COBRA. Committee members were reminded that the Blue Cross Reserve Fund may be in danger and questioned how this additional benefit might affect the fund. One committee member stated that the issue is not financial - but is a moral issue. Another committee member asked if the University's Legal Counsel had been advised of this request. Ms. Harris stated the attorneys had been advised of the proposal and it may be possible for the University to cover domestic partners because we have a self-insured plan. John Kasberg stated PEEHIP is a separate plan and he did not know if they would cover unmarried partners on their plan.

The committee discussed the type of documents needed for acceptable proof of relationships and also discussed the backlash the University could receive from the legislature, potential donors and enrollment of students. The committee agreed that their only role was to simply discuss the facts as presented. There appear to be no city, county, state or federal laws to prohibit allowing our health benefits being offered to domestic partners. Currently, there is not enough data to determine the number of individuals who might be added to our health plan if this proposal was agreed upon.

A vote was taken regarding adding unmarried partners to our health plan with restrictions such as (1) require proof regarding the length of time in the relationship (2) define the waiting period before another partner is added to health insurance plan and (3) clearly define the term "dependents" to keep down fraudulent acts. The vote was 5 in favor of adding domestic partners, 7 against and 3 abstained. The vote was defeated.

Mental Health Benefits – Dr. Wythe Holt asked about the mental health benefits and the changes that were passed last year. Ms. Harris stated that it was too late to make any changes regarding this benefit for 2001. Dr. Holt asked to put this on the agenda for the next meeting.

Dental Plan – Dr. Keith Woodbury asked why the University has only one dental plan. It was noted that there is no particular reason why only one plan has been offered other than it might be difficult to administer two different dental plans.

Birth Control - Donna Keene stated that the committee passed a recommendation on birth control last year and forwarded it to Mr. Wright. Mr. Wright responded that the committee needs to clarify the types of birth control requested to be covered by our health plan. She stated we would discuss this at our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 8th in the Lackey Room in the Bryant Conference Center.

posted 11/2/00