

Employee Benefits Committee

January 25, 2017 Meeting

4:00 PM - NEC Room 3600

Attendees: Dwight Viehland, Kirk Wehner, Danette Poole, Brad Klein, Sara Leftwich, Susan Hughes, Rami Dalloul and Patricia Rodgers

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

Dwight Viehland welcomed the members and reviewed the minutes from the last meeting. No corrections. Kirk Wehner made motion to accept as submitted and Sara Leftwich seconded.

Old business:

Dwight Viehland distributed the draft of a memo of support regarding the childcare issues. The memo would be presented to the administration from the committee. The committee reviewed and discussed the need of childcare in the area and this memo will assist in bringing awareness to the administration to address the needs in the New River Valley for students and employees. Before presenting the memo to the administration, the desire to receive an update on the developing plans of expanding the graduate school childcare was requested. Jack Finney will be attending the committee meeting next month and will give an update on what projects are being pursued at this time regarding the ABCs of Learning proposal.

A summary of discussions was handed out regarding the need for improved benefits. The three main areas of need the committee has discussed is retiree pension, retiree healthcare and tuition reimbursement for family members of employees. The committee discussed the order of priority of the items with healthcare and pension designated as equal priority depending the status of what happens in the government this year. Dwight Viehland will include this summary in his end-of-year report to the administration from the committee.

Kirk Wehner discussed a meeting which took place on January 6th with employees from the controller's office and human resources regarding phased retirement. Jack Finney is reviewing the options which include employees interested with the dean's approval for one, two or three years phase out, working at least 50%. It would help those concerned with cost of healthcare for those one, two or three years and transition out more gradually. A new draft is being developed and will be reviewed before presenting to the Board of Visitors either in March or June. Several factors will be taken into consideration including the current state regulation of employees working 75% or more have full benefits as well as the impact of the changes to the Affordable Care Act this year and into the future. Employees currently working 50% to 75% do have the option to enroll in health insurance, however, they pay the full premium. The phased retirement plan currently being developed is only for teaching and research faculty at this time.

Retirement planning issues were discussed in detail. The department of human resources is currently in the process of updating and reinventing their website. The goal is to have the website be more user friendly and provide easier access to information for employees. Kirk Wehner discussed human resources recently meeting with TIAA and Fidelity and the various training opportunities they have available. Human resources will be working with these retirement/investment firms to leverage those opportunities for employee access to retirement planning especially since currently not fully staffed in the benefits area. The suggestion for human resources to do more retirement planning sessions and workshops for employees, possibly presenting to departments on campus and off-campus to meet employee needs.

New business:

Brad Klein and Kirk Wehner discussed the staff holiday leave requirement during the winter break period. Currently, the University is closed the last week of the year, however, staff must use their leave accrual during those days. With the University being more diverse and the increased student attendance/interest during winter session, the closing is being reviewed. Brad and Kirk will research in more detail the history of the closing, the financial cost during that week (is it truly saving money) and the needs of the students and employees during that week. The request was made to keep this topic on the agenda for future meetings and for an update on what was discovered through the research be given at the March meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.

Next meeting scheduled for 4:00 PM on Wednesday, February 22, 2017 in NEC Room 3600