

BENEFITS COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 15, 2015

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

- **Call to Order – Tami Watson, Chair**

Meeting called to order by Tami Watson, Chair, at 10:05 a.m.

- **Welcome and Introductions**

Tami Watson welcomed the group to the meeting. All attendees were asked to introduce themselves.

- **Topics for Discussion**

Members were asked to propose topics for the Employee Benefits Committee to discuss for 2015-16. Topics of interest include: developing relationships with community colleges to make obtaining degrees easier for employees, child care, the New Employee Dashboard, FMLA, and retirement. Minutes from last year will be reviewed to determine if there were any outstanding topics of interest to the committee that should continue to be discussed.

- **Update on Proposed Topics**

Yohna Chambers provided an update and background on some of the proposed topics for discussion to ensure the committee had a complete understanding of developments over the past 6 months.

Education

Exploring the possibility of offering employees a tuition break or some other benefit to make affording community college easier was recommended by the committee. Some departments have attempted to establish relationships with little success so far. This is something that the university is working on.

Recently, Policy 4800 has been updated to allow employees to access accelerated programs. In the past, under the waiver program, employees were only allowed 12 credits per year to be waived. Accelerated programs require more than 12 credits per year so employees were paying out of pocket. Now, under the “Future Tuition Credits” program, employees are allowed to participate in accelerated programs as long as they are employed for two years after program completion.

Child Care

Virginia Tech has been attempting to create child care opportunities for employees. There are long waiting lists for accredited child care. The goal is to make sure that everyone who needs child care can access it. Virginia Tech pays Rainbow Riders, a local child care group, for slots in their program. However, the issue is that there are not enough qualified child care workers in the area. A group has also been put together to assist with obtaining training certificates for childcare workers in partnership with Smart Beginnings, a local non-profit dedicated to quality early childhood learning. The city and county are involved in this group as well. Previously, Hal Irvin represented Human Resources on this committee. Since he has left the department, Yohna Chambers or Lisa Wilkes will take his place.

Question from the committee: Will this new program be offering accredited child care?

Answer: The group is still very early in planning stages. This is unknown at this time.

Question from the committee: Has there been a survey sent out to see how many employees need child care?

Answer: Yes, historically this has happened. Recently, DHRM provided the number of dependents for employees who are under age five to assist with numbers.

Recommendation from the committee: Make sure the Hokie Wellness website with child care information is updated frequently.

New Employee Dashboard

The New Employee Dashboard is continuing to develop and evolve.

Recommendation from committee: arrange information into categories and work on better grouping (ex: mandatory training grouped in one area and optional benefits in another). Remove tasks that don't apply to the employee.

Retirement

Comment from the committee: It has been difficult to meet with the TIAA-CREF rep (he is here infrequently or not available when needed). TIAA-CREF provided a survey to one committee member that allowed TIAA-CREF to make changes to their account without first consulting them. This is a concern because he just wanted to see a recommendation, not give this type of authorization.

Angie King will look into the issue and speak with TIAA-CREF

Question from the committee: Are there statistics on utilization for the TIAA-CREF representatives?

Answer: Yes, it is provided each year at the annual planning meeting.

Leave System Update

An update on the leave system was requested. The leave system has been rolled out to half of the population at Virginia Tech and will be fully in use beginning in January. So far, the feedback has been excellent and delayed implementation has proven to be a great decision. Changes to the system have been made as necessary. Eventually, it will be used to request leave as well.

Comment from the committee: All names appear for approval whether employees have submitted leave reports or not. This is making it very confusing for supervisors with multiple direct reports as they do not know who has completed leave and who hasn't.

This should not happen and will be discussed with the leave group.

Hokie Wellness

Hokie Wellness has merged with Student Wellness to create a community-wide wellness community at Virginia Tech. Cathy Kropff, Director of Hokie Wellness, will be the Director for this group.

Comment from the committee: While the students that help with nutrition goals through Hokie Wellness are great, it would be nice to meet with someone who has more experience.

Answer: Cathy Kropff and Amy Epperley of Hokie Wellness are currently working on their Wellness Certifications. In addition, this new group being created will have nutritionists and dietitians on staff. It will be more hands on with wellness coaching for employees and students going forward.

FMLA

Recommendation from the committee: ensure that FMLA is in compliance.

Yohna Chambers has reviewed Virginia Tech's FMLA policy with legal counsel. Both legal counsel and Yohna are very comfortable where Virginia Tech is at as far as compliance. However, she will follow up with legal again to ensure that this is still the case.

ORP Contribution Change in 2010

Comment from the committee: In 2010, the Optional Retirement Plan contribution amount from the university changed from 10.4 percent to 8.5 percent and employees must now contribute 5 percent. Some people did not know that this had happened. People who come to the university are not receiving the same benefits as those who were hired before July 2010. This change was not well known and people who were hired after July 2010 are at a disadvantage compared to their colleagues hired earlier.

The change was well communicated in 2010 and all employees who were affected were worked with individually to ensure that there were no disparities.

- **Standing Meeting Time**

Meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month at 10 am.

- **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.