

# **Employee Benefits Committee Meeting Minutes**

**October 30, 2014**

**10:30 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Present:** Sue Teel, Amanda Grose Cannoy, Yohna Chambers, Angela King, Jack Davis, Becky Morris, Monica Mathena, Tami Watson, Patricia Rodgers, Donna Raines, Brad Klein, Ashley Mauchley

## **Call to Order – Patricia Rodgers, Chair**

Patricia Rodgers called the meeting to order at 10:35 am. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves.

## **Aflac (Supplemental Insurance) Bid Status- Angela King**

James Madison University has sent the supplemental insurance plans out to bid. They have received 11 proposals so far. Last year, the Benefits Committee decided that pursuing supplemental insurance for employees would be beneficial. Virginia Tech is currently planning on piggybacking JMU's contract. There are multiple policies out for bid including, hospitalization, accidents, cancer, etc. There is no existing benefit like this at this time at Virginia Tech. The advantage is that employees could purchase this insurance for a lower group rate. In addition, the plan is portable. Communication regarding the Open Enrollment process for this benefit will be determined at a later date. Depending on timing, it may coincide with the health benefits Open Enrollment or another Open Enrollment will be held. Legal Resources was successful with its own Open Enrollment.

## **Minnesota Life Insurance Update- Monica Mathena**

At the last meeting, there was a question regarding Qualifying Mid-Year Events and Life Insurance. Monica Mathena updated the committee regarding the policy.

Under present guidelines, an employee must be enrolled in Optional Life in order to insure their family dependents (spouse, child). Additionally, the employee and the family must be at the same Option level.

If the employee has Optional insurance, he/she merely completes Section 3 of the VRS 39a document- Request for Change. Newborn children after 14 days are automatically covered at the same Option as the employee. No evidence of insurability is required.

If the employee does not have Optional insurance, he/she must enroll first in order to cover a newborn child. As a late entrant, the employee will need to provide evidence of insurability and be approved in order to become insured. There are no provisions in the VRS plan that allows for enrollment without evidence of insurability beyond the first 31 days of initial eligibility.

### **Tuition Waivers and Tuition Reimbursement- Yohna Chambers**

There is a concern that employees are unaware of the policies regarding tuition waivers and reimbursements. The issue is how to communicate these policies to employees and how to ensure that more people begin using this benefit. There are a variety of reasons why people are not utilizing this benefit including supervisor approval and the ability to get into Virginia Tech. Policy 4800 regarding Tuition Waivers and Reimbursement can be found on the HR Website.

Some supervisors do not appear to be on board to assist employees with professional development. Yohna suggested that employees ask their supervisors why they are not approving a course to understand the reasoning behind their decision. If there are further concerns, employees should discuss with the employee relations team regarding their situation. Other committees, such as Faculty Senate, are also concerned with potential disparities regarding professional development and other benefits amongst various employee groups. It was suggested that some supervisors do not understand the program and that communications regarding what the policies are for professional development and available employee benefits may be helpful.

There is a bucket of money set aside so that if an individual would like to attend classes at Virginia Tech, they will be able to do so. This was set up so that supervisors wouldn't need to deny people from taking classes based on budgetary concerns. There is not a "bucket" of funds for employees to attend another institution at this time. A question about scheduling work hours and the policy regarding flex work was brought up. Depending on an individual's position, some are able to create a flex work options agreement and some must use annual leave. It is the department's decision on how to handle this.

The ability for individuals to get into Virginia Tech for classes was a point of concern. Some employees are unable to attend classes due to this barrier. Employees are able to apply for Tuition Reimbursement if they attend another institution. In the past, employees have been reimbursed for credit costs according to what each credit costs at Virginia Tech. It is also possible to take classes without being accepted to the university as a non-degree seeking student. Specific admissions requirements were not known.

In the past, Virginia Tech had partnered with New River Community College to offer classes. However, these classes are no longer available. The Benefits Committee

decided that pursuing a way for people to go to class that can't get into Virginia Tech was an important topic. Specifically, partnering with other schools was deemed very important. Representatives from the Benefits Committee will be contacting Travis Hunley in the Budget office regarding this.

Human Resources is currently looking into finding the areas that are not participating in the tuition reimbursement or waiver program to find if there is any disparate impact on any group of employees.

### **FMLA- Yohna Chambers**

Virginia Tech is in full compliance with the administration, retention of documents, eligibility and communication of FMLA. Hud Mclanahan from the legal department has reviewed all current documents and determined that all are in compliance.

A concern regarding the 10 day paid family leave policy at Virginia Tech has been raised. A meeting has been scheduled for the week of November 3rd to discuss how Virginia Tech's policy compares to other institutions. There is a large number of policies regarding leave and improvements will be made where possible.

### **Communications- Becky Morris**

The issue of whether people are aware of their benefits and how these benefits are communicated was discussed. It was explained that during Open Enrollment, information is distributed through the VT News and blue sheets. During other times of the year, the benefits group has UOPD Classes and Retirement Planning Sessions where benefits are discussed. Participation has been low in these sessions. Employees are also welcome to come in to Human Resources to discuss their benefits or check Facebook or Twitter.

There has been a problem with the blue sheets not being distributed to employees who do not have access to email. Yohna will try to work with supervisors to ensure that blue sheets are provided to these employees.

The retirement planning sessions tend to have a low amount of participation from employees. The goal in the future is to provide general benefits updates so that more employees attend these sessions.

It was suggested that HR Partners or Business Managers be sent all benefits related material to forward on to their groups. The idea is that more individuals will look at email received from an HR Partner or Business Manager.

Angela King stated that the benefits team is willing to set up informational sessions and personalized trainings for any group that is interested. Becky has met with dining and custodial groups in the past and has done as many face to face meetings as possible.

At the September 25th meeting, concerns were raised regarding flexible spending accounts and communication of this benefit. Becky Morris explained that unless an individual has a qualifying mid-year event, flexible spending accounts cannot be changed.

The vendors, such as TIAA-CREF and Fidelity communication information regarding investments and other retirement information. They have started offering classes and the goal is to eventually offer more.

### **Insurance**

A question regarding whether any Virginia Tech employees or spouses will be losing insurance was asked. A recent news article stated that 250,000 state employees will be losing insurance because it does not meet the affordable health care act standards. This issue does not affect Virginia Tech. At present, Virginia Tech's health insurance is in compliance.

### **Benefits for Administrators vs Staff**

The question of whether administrators get the same benefits as other employees was asked. All employees are offered the same benefits package.

### **Other**

All benefits related questions to be discussed at the Employee Benefits Committee Meetings should be directed to Patricia Rodgers.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am.