

12/15/2022

## Employee Benefits Committee Meeting

LaTawnya Burlison, Christine Smith, Andrew Dolbin-MacNab, Lauren Pollard, Nitra Eastby, Leisa Shelor, Matt Holt (Guest Speaker) – Department Head, Agriculture and applied Economics

Dr Holt - co-chair of the Affordability and Accessibility Commission – which is a presidential initiative.

### Affordability and Accessibility Commission

- Steering committee consists of leaders across campus
- 2 working groups
  - Finance - How will initiatives be funded
  - Student Experience (?)
- Commission tasked with how to provide the fullest possible financial support to a group of Pell eligible. Implemented Presidential Scholars program to aid some of the neediest students.

L. Shelor explained the mission of the EBC and asked Holt if an initiative of the Affordability and Accessibility Commission (AAC) was tuition assistance for employee dependents/spouses.

Holt indicated no and shared that the President wants to overcome challenges faced by educational institutions and stay true to the land grant mission. The debt from student loans has a significant impact on the economy and higher ed is under scrutiny. VT has improved movement to aid underserved students significantly in the last 5 years

Some other AAC members are: Elizabeth Hooper - AVP Government & Community Relations (legislation), Amy Sebring – EVP & COO, Tim Hodge - AVP Budget & Financial Planning, Sharon Kurek – Executive Director Audit, Risk and Compliance, Jeff Earley – Vice Provost for Academic Resource Management

Holt asked if the committee has had a conversation with Elizabeth Hooper, committee decided this is likely not the best next step. Suggested that the staff and faculty senates collaborate to present tuition assistance for dependents of employees to the BOV, Package as a benefit that would aid in attracting the best talent to VT. Determined socializing among different parties/areas within the university in order to increase awareness and gauge support was required before going to the BOV

Some considerations for EBC

- What is the best possible avenue for getting traction/support
- What does VT have to do to be competitive to attract the best talent?

Committee acknowledged that tuition benefit for employee dependents will take time, persistence, support and budget.

Discussion regarding whether legislative changes would be required. A Dolbin-MacNab shared findings from legislative review – Change in 2013 allowed public universities to extend tuition benefit to employee dependents; however general funds are not an allowable funding source.

Suggested benchmarking – options: peer institutions in VA, some of the top research institutions in the US, land grant institutions

Christine Smith mentioned issues about medical services/coverage issues

- University healthcare plans not covering fertility
- Many pediatric dental practices in the area no longer accepting Delta Dental

Leisa Shelor shared the plan to reach out to administrators of the Commonwealth health care benefits to elevate these issues to ensure awareness and to ask if there are any options to negotiate coverage for fertility treatment.

LaTawnya asked members to come to the January meeting with areas of recommended focus.