

Employee Benefits Committee Monthly Meeting

April 21, 2020

Attendees:

- Margaret Radcliffe, Chair
- Jennifer Earley, Staff Senate
- Richard Ashley, Staff Senate
- Marie Bliss, ex officio
- LaTawnya Burleson, Staff Senate
- Samuel Doak, Faculty Senate
- Patricia Donovan, Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs (CSPA) Representative
- Sara Leftwich, ex officio
- Leisa Shelor, ex officio
- Sue Teel, Staff Senate
- Amanda Hill

Opening:

The regular meeting of the Employee Benefits Committee was called to order at 1:03 p.m. on Wednesday, April 21, 2020, by Chairperson Margaret Radcliffe. Committee member Eric Smith was absent.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held March 18, 2020, were unanimously approved as distributed via email and are available on the EBC SharePoint site.

Leave Recommendations

The committee reviewed charts created by the leave benefits evaluation group. Rick noted that Virginia Tech does seem to be a couple of days short on leave compared to other universities. Margaret stated that the focus is on staff leave since faculty leave appears sufficient (including the optional 26-week sick leave plan). She asked if a recommendation should be made regarding university staff leave. Pat agreed that a recommendation could be made and that it is evident on the first chart that staff leave falls short particularly in early years of service. Rick also agreed that a recommendation should be made.

Regarding the format and content of the charts, Rick suggests clarifying the meaning of the horizontal black bar that shows VT leave across the other universities and including a link to view the charts in the recommendation documentation. Margaret stated her plans were to write a letter to President Sands and copy the chairpersons of CSPA and CFA to make the recommendation and would include the charts, and Rick agreed that the chart graphics should be included in the letter. Sam mentioned the possibility of creating more distinct graphs separating the number of years more clearly, and Margaret noted that headings and formatting can easily be edited. Pat mentioned that she thinks including the progression of leave over the years in one graphic is useful, and Leisa and Sara agreed. Rick agreed that there were some edits to be made, including making the vertical line separating the three segments bold, putting staff 2-year, 6-year, and 17-year in bold, spelling out the word "year" rather than using an abbreviation, and clearly identifying what

the horizontal line is meant to show. Margaret stated she can even add the meaning of the horizontal line to the key and asked if the third chart would be the best to use in the recommendation letter. Marie and Rick stated that all three charts are needed to show the big picture, and Marie suggested changing "funeral leave" to "bereavement" in the charts. Margaret will define in the letter what is shown in each chart. Rick suggested adding something to the letter to address why the three increments chosen were 2, 6, and 17 years. Margaret stated those increments were chosen because those points showed where incremental increases were given across the peer institutions. Pat confirmed that was correct and that it also reflects different stages of a career (early to late).

A motion was made for Margaret to make the requested edits to the slides, draft a recommendation letter including all three slides, and circulate to the group for the next meeting. Rick moved to proceed, LaTawnya seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Tuition Assistance Recommendations

The committee reviewed a summary of tuition benefits for peer institutions. Margaret noted that there did not seem to be any reciprocity agreements among the universities such as those discussed by the committee earlier in the year. She suggested the possibility of cherry-picking the report to see what kinds of improvements could be made. Leisa mentioned that Virginia Tech covers up to six credit hours per semester or twelve per credit year at 100% for employees. Rick asked if spouses, dependents, or both could be made eligible for those benefits as he not enthusiastic about reciprocity agreements since they are rather random benefits that are dependent on space or other factors. He also noted that other universities in the state, like James Madison, are hours away which makes reciprocity agreements less desirable. Pat stated that the report contained good information and it would be worth taking a stab at making some sort of recommendation. Leisa also mentioned accelerated programs for employees offered by Virginia Tech, and Margaret stated that may not be a bad thing to include as some universities exclude those types of programs. Pat asked if those sorts of details are readily available on institution's websites, and Margaret answered that some have very minimal information. She suggested adding a disclaimer that the information may not be complete. Rick stated that it looks as though this project will expand into next year even though Margaret will likely not be chairperson. Margaret says it would likely be beneficial to raise the issue now then pass it on to think about next year as it may gain traction over time. Margaret mentioned the previously discussed possibility of supporting fundraising for the employee/dependent scholarship and has reached out to Robin McCoy for more information about the awards. LaTawnya shared that the scholarship will now be open to transfer students. Rick suggested mentioning this to University Development so that they can possibly seek donors who may be interested in funding programs like the scholarship fund.

Next Meeting

If you cannot attend the May 13, 2020, meeting, please let Margaret know when she circulates the draft recommendation letter via email.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 1:43 p.m. by Chairperson Margaret Radcliffe. The next general meeting will be at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, 2020.