

Employee Benefits Committee Monthly Meeting

May 13, 2020

Attendees

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

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Employee Benefits Committee was called to order at 2:03 p.m. on May 13, 2020, by Margaret Radcliffe, Employee Benefits Committee Chair. Members Samuel Doak, Eric Smith, and Sue Teel (with notice) were absent.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held April 21, 2020, were approved as distributed via email.

Recommendations from Employee Benefits Committee

The charts comparing leave benefits were displayed and no changes were required or requested. Margaret then shared the draft letter to Bryan Garey detailing the committee's recommendations. The letter was distributed for review to committee members via email prior to the meeting.

At Margaret's request, LaTawnya revised the last paragraph to bring attention to the tuition issue rather than explicitly suggesting fundraising as an option, and the committee agreed that was the best course of action. Minor edits were made to language in other sections of the letter. Sara asked if Margaret would make the final letter available to the committee, and Margaret confirmed she will copy committee members.

Margaret reviewed the intended recipient list for input, and the list was approved following discussion. Sara suggested adding Jack Finney, LaTawnya suggested adding Tammie Smith (staff senate president), and Rick suggested adding the incoming faculty senate president. With those additions and the minor edits to the document, Margaret called for a motion to accept the letter as amended. LaTawnya made the motion, Rick seconded, and the motion was passed.

Long-term disability premiums for elderly faculty in Optional Retirement Plan

Rick shared an email with the committee prior to the meetings regarding long-term disability premiums required by the Optional Retirement Plan. Rick shared his concerns about this mandatory program in which ORP members automatically contribute a percentage of their salaries, which could be several hundred dollars per year, that as currently structured pays no benefits for

faculty aged 70 and older. Essentially, employees could be paying for a benefit they are ineligible to receive.

Rick asked if this policy could be renegotiated or amended so that employees past the age of eligibility can opt-out of paying this percentage. Leisa stated she will discuss this issue further with the Standard representative.

Recommendations to Employee Benefits Committee for next year

Margaret shared that it would be helpful to leave list of items to pursue for next year's committee and asked if the committee believed faculty leave benefits should be included. Pat agreed that it should, especially since the data has already been collected and can be used to further analyze different types of leave disparities and opportunities. Margaret also suggested adding enhanced tuition benefits to the list, and LaTawnya agreed that tuition is another issue worthy of the committee's attention next year.

Expressions of thanks

Margaret asked the committee to join her in thanking Amanda Hill for her administrative support of the committee's work over the course of the year and thanked committee members for their contributions and assistance.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:27 p.m. by Chairperson Margaret Radcliffe.



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May 14, 2020

Bryan Garey
Vice President for Human Resources
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Dear Bryan:

Last fall the Employee Benefits Committee (EBC) identified leave benefits and tuition assistance for employees, their spouses, and their dependents as areas of concern. We set ourselves the goal of determining whether the benefits offered by Virginia Tech were competitive with peer institutions, giving VT an advantage in recruiting and retaining Faculty and Staff.

Leave Benefits

Over the course of the academic year, the EBC collected information on leave benefits from the following nine institutions and compared them to the leave benefits provided by Virginia Tech:

- Clemson
- North Carolina State University
- Penn State University
- University of Maryland
- Purdue
- University of Florida
- University of Texas
- University of Missouri
- University of Pittsburgh

In many cases, direct comparison of specific leave types was not possible because of inconsistencies between institutions (for example, one university simply uses Paid Time Off, rather than designating holiday, annual, sick, etc., separately). While senior faculty and staff at Virginia Tech are grandfathered into older leave options, for comparison purposes, only the current leave options offered by Virginia Tech were considered.

A comparison of Virginia Tech's Faculty leave benefits with the other institutions showed that, taking into account the 26-week Faculty sick leave option, VT's leave benefits for faculty appear to be consistent with those offered by other universities. A comparison of leave benefits for Staff, however, revealed that in the early years of employment Virginia Tech's leave package falls short of that offered by other institutions.

We have provided three charts comparing VT's Staff leave benefits with other institutions at 2, 6 and 17 years of service. Taking into account increases in leave benefits tied to years of service at different institutions, these intervals allowed us to capture snapshots at early, mid, and late career.

- The first chart compares Staff Personal Sick Leave across institutions. Virginia Tech is notably the lowest at 2 years and 6 years of service, and ties Purdue for last place at 17 years of service.
- The second chart compares Staff's Personal Sick Leave plus Family Personal Leave. At 2 years of service Virginia Tech's benefit is consistent with four universities; however, four other institutions provide more, with at least one (University of Maryland) offering 50% more. Only one university (Purdue) offers less. At 6 years of service, VT moves into the top five and at 17 years is tied for third.
- The final chart compares a total of Staff Personal Sick, Family Personal, and Bereavement Leave. When these three categories are considered, Virginia Tech ties with North Carolina State for the lowest at 2 years of service and is next to lowest at 6 years of service. At 17 years of service, VT is squarely in the middle, with three other institutions offering less leave, three others offering the same amount, and three offering more.

We believe Virginia Tech's consistently low levels of leave for Staff when compared with other universities provide a clear opportunity for improvement. We realize that Virginia Tech is not able to modify leave benefits packages for Classified Staff, which are established by the Commonwealth's Department of Human Resource Management, and that a substantial number of senior Staff remain in this employment category. The leave benefits discussed in this letter, however, are those offered to new and recent hires, all of whom are University Staff. The university has the option of offering a different benefits package to these employees at its discretion. The Employee Benefits Committee recommends that university administration consider offering improved leave benefits for entry level through mid-career staff and, if leave benefits for University Staff are increased, offers Classified Staff the option of changing employee types.

Tuition Assistance Benefits

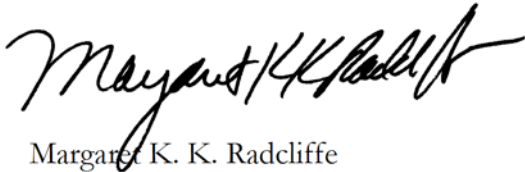
The Employee Benefits Committee also collected information on tuition benefits offered to employees, their spouse, and their dependents for the same universities used in the leave benefits comparison. Unfortunately, the tuition benefits vary widely between institutions and are not easily summarized or compared. The one area where Virginia Tech falls very short, however, is in tuition waivers or scholarships for spouses and dependents.

The only tuition assistance available to spouses and dependents of Virginia Tech employees is the Employees' Spouse and Dependent Scholarship. This is limited to incoming Virginia Tech students for their first year. In former years, only freshmen qualified to receive it, but it has now been extended to transfer students. Funded from gifts to the Virginia Tech Foundation designated for this purpose, awards are limited based on the funds available each year. Since 2000 the number of scholarships has varied from a low of 2 (\$500 each) in 2000 to 20 (\$550 each) in 2018. The lowest total awarded was \$1,000 in 2000 and the highest was \$13,392 in 2015. Over the years, individual scholarships have averaged \$657.

Knowing the cost of tuition, fees, and other expenses to attend Virginia Tech, it is obvious that we have only provided token support to the spouses and dependents of our employees. The Employee Benefits Committee recommends that Virginia Tech make support for these scholarships a current and continuing priority so that the program can be extended to multiple years at higher dollar amounts.

Thank you for taking these recommendations into consideration. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me.

Sincerely,

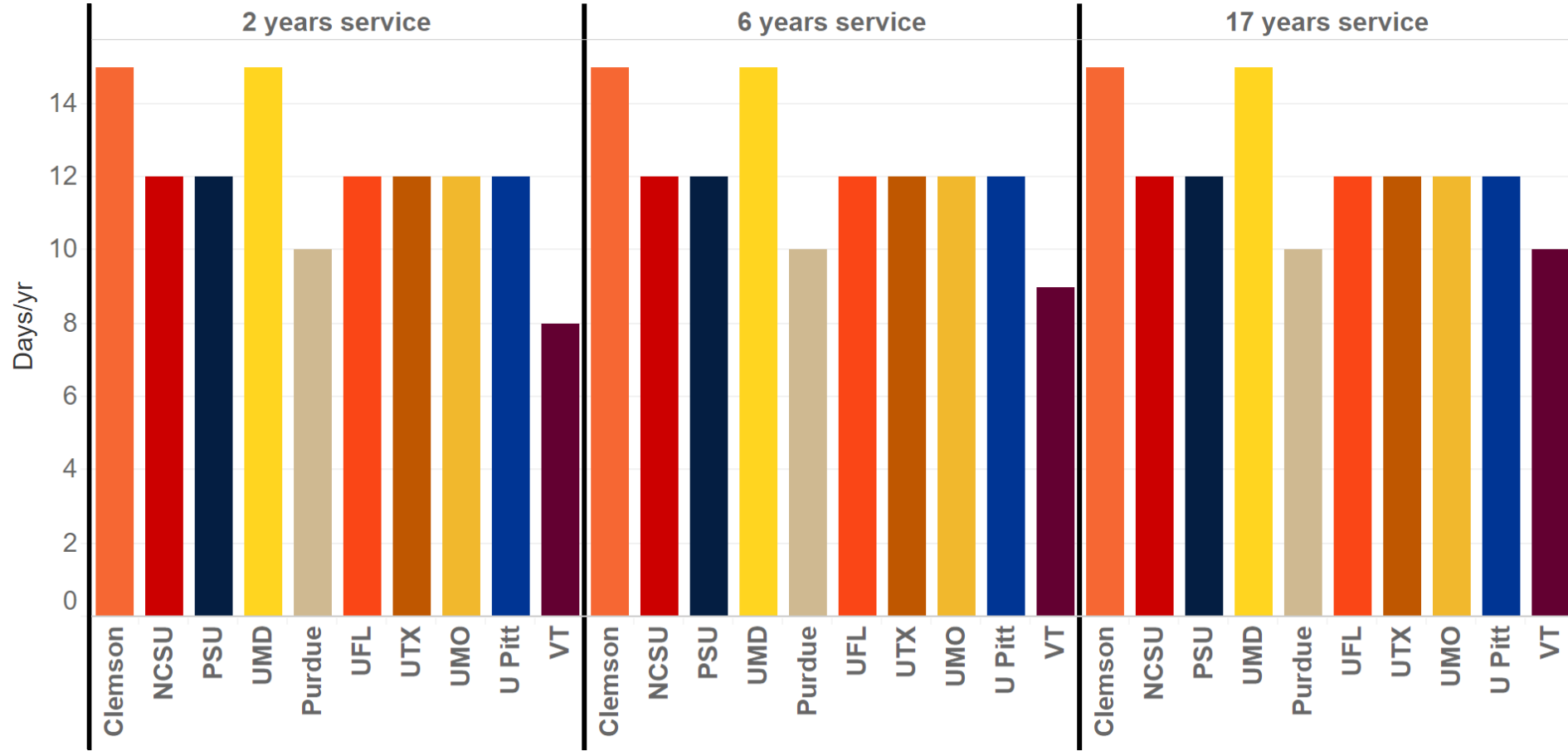


Margaret K. K. Radcliffe
Assistant Director for Operations, VCCER
Chair, Employee Benefits Committee, 2019-2020
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Cc: Marie Bliss, Assistant Vice President, Human Resources Administration
Deseria Creighton-Barney, President, VT Alumni Association
Greg Fansler, Chair, Commission on AP Faculty Affairs
Jack Finney, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
Eric Kaufman, Incoming President, Faculty Senate
Bob Hicok, Chair, Commission on Faculty Affairs
Robin McCoy, Executive Director of Finance and Operations, Human Resources
Charlie Phlegar, Vice President for Advancement
Tammie Smith, President, Staff Senate
Sue Teel, Executive Assistant, VP-Human Resources
Serena Young, Chair, Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs

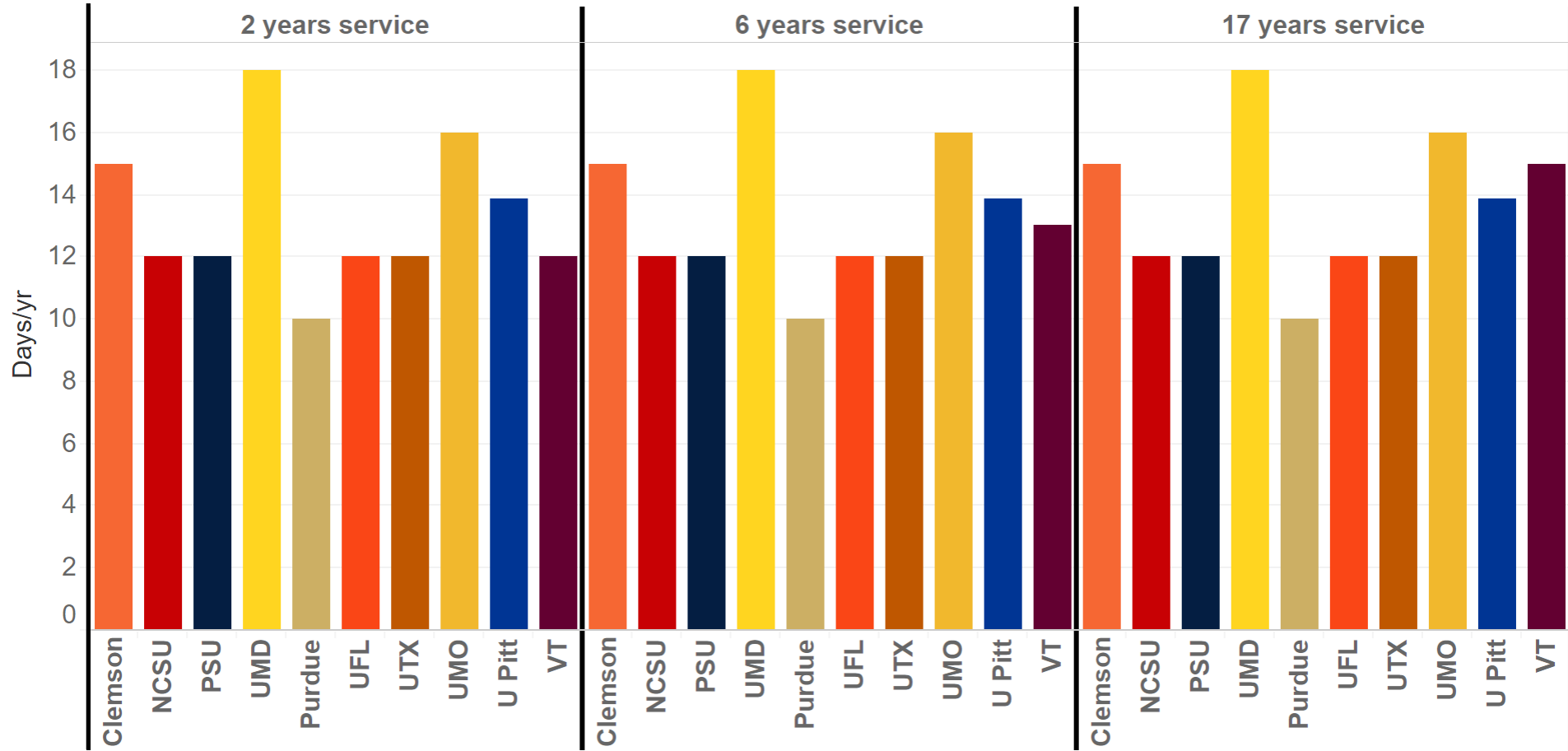
VT + peer institutions staff employees

Personal sick leave



VT + peer institutions staff employees

Personal and Family personal leave



VT + peer institutions staff employees

Personal sick, Family personal and Bereavement leave

