

**Employee Benefits Committee (EBC) Meeting**  
**October 16, 2019 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm**  
**NEC Room 3600**

I. Call to Order: Margaret Radcliffe, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

II. Attendees:

Margaret Radcliffe, Chair  
Marie Bliss, ex officio  
Leisa Shelor, ex officio  
Jennifer Earley, Staff Senate  
Sue Teel, Staff Senate  
Sam Doak, Faculty Senate  
Richard Ashley, Faculty Senate  
Amanda Hill, Administrative Support

LaTawnya Burleson and Sara Leftwich could not attend because of illness.

Vacancies remain for representatives from Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs (CSPA) and Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA). Bob Hicok, chair of CFA, has been unable to find anyone willing to serve in this capacity. Margaret will inform him that he can appoint any faculty member—it does not need to be a member of CFA.

III. Future EBC Meetings:

- a. Jennifer Early will act as Chairperson for the November 20, 2019 meeting if Margaret is unable to attend.
- b. Future meetings of the EBC will be held in NEC Room 3600.

IV. Staff Senate instructions regarding Winter Closing leave issues:

- a. Latawnya Burleson reported to Margaret that she had not received much feedback from the Staff Senate regarding the winter closing. Dani McNeil presented the findings of the Staff survey regarding the Winter Closing to CSPA last spring and is willing to present again to the Staff Senate or to the EBC; however, at this time there does not seem to be a need to do so.
- b. Sue Teel spoke with Tammy Smith (current president of Staff Senate and chair last year of CSPA) and understands that this initiative came from CSPA, rather than from Staff Senate.
- c. Based on the survey results (which were almost evenly divided between leaving the current holiday policy in place vs. shifting the four staff-only holidays to fall between December 26 and December 31), CSPA decided to take no action on this issue.

V. Discussion of May 2017 EBC report to President Sands

Rick Ashley alerted Margaret to the existence of this report and assisted her in obtaining a copy. He suggested it would be useful to review the report when determining the priorities of the EBC for the coming year. Margaret presented an overview of the report's contents, noting what progress she understood had been made on these issues, and suggested it would be valuable for the EBC to produce a similar report in May 2020, which would be archived in the EBC SharePoint

site for future reference after submission. With regard to the four specific topics addressed in the letter:

- a. Improved benefits: Margaret stated that the state legislature passed legislation in the last session to incrementally increase retirement insurance benefits (tied to the rate of increase for pension benefits), but that implementation depends on the actions of the appropriations committees. There was a discussion of the phased retirement benefit now offered to faculty, with some disagreement and confusion as to what the actual benefit consisted of. Margaret suggested it would be useful for the EBC to become familiar with and review the details of the phased retirement program as part of this year's work. Tuition waivers or assistance for spouses/dependents of employees was discussed. Leisa stated that employee waivers are not a financial burden to departments, but reimbursements do depend on departments having the funding to provide the payment. Sue offered that the current Spouse and Dependent Scholarship is a small benefit offered in the student's first year only, and that in the past, there have been efforts to raise money from faculty and staff to raise the amount of the scholarships. Rick mentioned exploring reciprocal agreements with other institutions in the Commonwealth.
  - b. Childcare: There is a university task force working on the childcare initiative. Results of a survey conducted regarding the issue should be available soon. Robert Sebek (former Staff Senate president) will be presenting on this topic to the Board of Visitors in November, and he will provide a copy of his report. Given that significant work is already being done on this issue, the EBC has no plans to address it at this time, but it would be useful to report on childcare at the end of the academic year.
  - c. Flexible Work Options: Margaret commented that flexible work options were not among the issues brought to the attention of EBC members and there was no further discussion of this issue.
  - d. Leave: Margaret commented that leave issues, including wide variations of leave benefit between faculty and staff and winter closing, continue to be mentioned by multiple constituents. CAPFA has asked the EBC to look at recommending that authorized closings be used for the non-holidays December 26-31. AP Faculty receive only the eight faculty holidays and, depending on their years of service, may have less combined annual and family sick leave than staff. Leisa stated that while some aspects of the leave system are mandated by the state, the university does have some autonomy. Additionally, Sue added that there was a push about ten years ago to change categorical leave (annual, personal, etc.) into paid time off (PTO) that could be used for all purposes. Margaret suggested that it would be useful to perform a review of leave benefits across all employee types to discover what inconsistencies exist and recommend possible changes.
- VI. Discussion of issues for EBC to address this year: Margaret summarized the discussions so far and noted that the benefits issues that are mentioned repeatedly fall into three major categories.
- a. Leave (including inconsistencies between employee types, PTO, and authorized closing vs. using leave for the winter closing)
  - b. Improved benefits (corresponding to item #1 in Dwight Viehland's 2017 letter)
  - c. Tuition waiver/benefits for employees, spouses and dependents (particularly exploring the potential to enter into reciprocal agreements with other state institutions and creation/expansion of benefits to family members of employees)

After the chair determined that more than half of the voting members of the EBC were present, those members voted to approve these three areas to be prioritized by the EBC for action this year.

- VII. Member responsibility assignments for the next meeting:
  - a. Margaret made the following assignments to write brief statements of what is included in each of the three issues from item VI, summarizing the discussion for the benefit of those who could not be here and to serve as a starting point for further discussion. These should be submitted to Margaret by early next week (October 21-23).
    - i. Jennifer Earley – Leave
    - ii. Sue Teel – Improved benefits
    - iii. Sam Doaks – Tuition benefits (including reciprocal agreements with other institutions)
  - b. Margaret will compile this information from each responsible party and send to EBC members for review prior to the next meeting
  
- VIII. Margaret adjourned the meeting at 3:03 pm.