

2006-07 Report of UT Senate Faculty Staff Benefits Committee

Committee goals and actions to date Submitted by Nancy Howell 4/30/07

Committee members:

Connie Baskette (Retirement Services)
Grady Bogue (Educational Psychology & Counseling)
Brad Case (Communications)
Alan Chesney (Human Resources)
Karla Edwards (Social Work)
Rod Ellis (Social Work)
Becky Fields, Nursing
Bruce Fisher, Business
Ron Gilmour (Library)
Nancy Howell, Chair (Veterinary Medicine)
Patricia Kerschietter (Chemistry)
Murray Marks, Anthropology
John Mount, Food Science and Technology
Butch Peccolo (Vice President & Treasurer)
Fred Weber (Engineering)
Representative from UT Retirees Association

The Faculty-Staff Benefits Committee reviewed several issues raised by the committee or directed to the chair by others in the UT community included the following.

UT Wellness program

The committee drafted a resolution requesting the University appoint a task force to review implementation of a UT Wellness Program for staff and faculty. Examples of existing programs at other TN universities, the State of TN and other U.S. universities were cited as examples. In addition, several UT Knoxville programs and disciplines were listed as resources for the task force. The resolution requested feedback to the Senate by January 2008. **Progress:** The resolution was passed by the Senate Apr. 2, 2007. The Chancellor's office is currently appointing a committee.

Child care proposal for Cherokee Campus planning

The committee drafted a proposal requesting that a child care facility be included in planning of the new UT Cherokee Campus in Knoxville. Reasons were outline to support the growing need for child care facilities, including the trend toward more female researchers in the academic workforce. The proposal suggests that UT will be at a competitive disadvantage in the future as it recruits faculty researchers and others by not improving the family friendliness of the campus. The Cherokee Campus was viewed as an ideal location to develop a public-private partnership and incorporate a facility in a planned building. **Progress:** The proposal was approved (unanimously) by the Senate Executive Committee Apr. 16, 2007 and will be presented to the full Senate Apr. 30, 2007.

Leave accrument by staff and post doctoral researchers on grant funding

The continuing issue of accumulated leave by staff on soft money was discussed. This is an issue not only for grant administrators who must pay accumulated leave, but for employees who are sometimes required to utilize their accumulated leave before transferring to another grant. This process impacts employees who are not able to accumulate leave as other 12-month employees do. This may potentially impact retirement timing for employees. It is the committee's understanding that the University is seeking a process to improve this situation. **Progress:** The committee plans to include follow-up on this as a goal for 2007-08.

Senate resolution passed in 2005 requesting spousal/partner recruitment and retention process

The Committee proposed a resolution, passed by the Senate in 2005, to encourage the University to establish a Spousal/Partner Recruitment and Retention Program. This proposed program would include a process to address spousal/partner hiring, a designated liaison to assist spouses/partners in locating positions within or outside of the University and a web site to promote the program to individuals considering a position at UT. **Progress:** The committee is not aware of any progress by the University.

Senate resolution passed in 2006 to extend UT-controlled benefits to domestic partners (parallel with spousal benefits)

This resolution, passed by the Senate in 2006, requested that any benefits controlled by the University and offered to spouses should also be offered to partners of employees. A process to implement this was requested. **Progress:** The committee is not aware of any progress by the University.

Benefits descriptions for non-regular faculty (contract, non-tenure track, term, part time)

The committee discussed whether benefits were clearly identified for non-regular faculty. **Progress:** A letter is being drafted by the committee chair to the Executive Director of Human Resources to clarify this.

Cashability of Optional Retirement Funds

Currently, cashability is 50%, determined by state law. **Progress:** A request to review this issue once again resulted in the committee suggesting that no increase of this percentage is currently feasible.

Pregnancy leave for 9-month faculty

Because 9-month faculty do not accrue sick leave or annual leave, a committee discussion took place regarding how this impacts faculty and tenure timetables. **Progress:** This topic may need further discussion to determine whether a disparity exists.

Family-friendly campus

Again, due to changing demographics among employees, a need for options to assist families caring for aging parents and other needs should be addressed by the committee in the near future. Facilities such as the proposed Cherokee Campus Child Care Facility may offer options to address related elder care needs. This will remain on the committee's goal list for next year.

The chair of the Faculty-Staff Benefits Committee would like to thank the members for contributing their time and providing discussion of these issues.