UNIVERSITY BENEFITS COMMITTEE

MINUTES: September 2, 2010

Members Present: Sonya Armstrong, Virginia Cassidy, Abby Chemers, Dennis Davito, Kay Forest, Ray Foster, Deborah Haliczer, Pam Rosenberg, Simon Song

Guests: Sara Clayton

The meeting was called to order at 10 am by Deborah Haliczer. The minutes and agenda were approved. The committee unanimously elected Deborah Haliczer to be the Chair. Abby Chemers was elected as secretary. Abby asked for a back up and Kay Forest indicated she would fill in as needed when she is present.

Deborah reported that two members, Terry Borg and Amy Levin have meeting conflicts with UBC standard meeting time. Others have occasional conflicts with Thursday meetings. A long discussion ensued to find a time and when committee members might be available and the benefits/disadvantages of changing the time. The group agreed to meet on Tuesday, October 19 at 8:30 AM for just the next meeting. Members are to bring their calendars to see if another time slot might work. Meetings will be scheduled for the entire year.

Old Business:

A. Benefits/Insurance Survey update
Deborah reported that Jeff Hecht’s office (College of Education) agreed to implement the survey for the UBC via Survey Monkey by October 1. Terry and Deborah will meet with Jeff’s staff. The survey is in draft mode as additional changes have been received since our last review. The revised survey will be emailed to committee members. Please reply all if there are any issues with the revision. On September 9, if members have not replied to the revised document, it will be assumed that the revisions were fine.

Kay noted that it is in the Annuitants best interests to respond to the survey. Therefore, the cover letter will also be sent to Kay for review. Deborah said annuitants can come to campus to get help with filling out the electronic survey at HRS, the Employee Assistance Office, (HSC 701), or the HR Service Center at Swen Parson, which has a computer lab available. Or they can reply with a paper copy. Kay will insert the cover letter in the NIUAA Newsletter.

B. Talking Points status
CIGNA sent a letter to HRS to distribute to employees with talking points prior to our talking points letter being distributed. Steve Cunningham is considering merging both documents. Discussion ensued and it was recommended that our document be distributed to employees and the CIGNA letter be posted on the HRS website. The UBC document could reference the CIGNA memo.

Abby made a motion for a UBC website and Kay seconded it. The vote was unanimous. The ability to have current information on the web site current is important.

Deborah will email members a copy of the CIGNA letter. Abby will rewrite the bullet point on comparing the cost of timely pension payments versus the cost of providing employees with full social security as there concern was raised on that point.
C. Pension Update
Dennis reported that a number of new retirees were given incorrect estimates by SURS prior to retiring. These calculations were caused by a change in the application of the formula for calculating the last four years average. The formula itself was not changed, but the way it applies to 12 month and 9 month employees changed due to a JCAR ruling. The JCAR is the state committee that determines how rules are to be interpreted by State agencies.

Marlene Bryant and Dennis Davito learned of the discrepancy from recent retirees and determined that the application of this formula had changed. They informed Steve Cunningham. Steven immediately opened communication with the other universities and took the issue to SURS. Steve will be meeting again with SURS on this soon and a positive outcome is anticipated.

D. Annuitants Update
Kay reported about the SUAA meeting that took place in July. There was a profound feeling of despair at the meeting due to the condition of the state budget. SUAA is trying to figure out the appropriate action to take. SUAA wants to protect lower income annuitants if/when pensions are taxed and/or healthcare premiums are implemented. It was recognized that no one in Springfield has a plan on how to fix the budget deficit.

The next meeting is September 14 in Chicago. A number of NIUAA representatives will attend.

E. Insurance concerns and issues
Deborah indicated that she and Dennis will host a Question and Answer session on benefits in November.

The Pharmacy list for FY11 is still being developed. The Insurance Office will follow up with CMS on September 15.

F. UBC and HR will co-host a “MyCIGNA.com” workshop on December 1 at noon at the Blackhawk Annex. Pam Rosenberg will be the primary speaker.

G. Domestic Partner benefits
Steve Cunningham made a presentation to the NIU Board of Trustee Legislative, External Affairs and Audit Committee on NIU’s domestic partner benefits compared to other Illinois public universities and other MAC universities. NIU’s benefits were similar to the other schools except that three schools extended tuition waivers to domestic partners dependents. The majority of the schools did not. There are still a number of people who ask for opposite sex domestic partner benefits.

H. Lactation policy and locations
The President’s Commission on the Status of Women is pushing for Awareness Training on our Lactation policy. Revisions to the Fair Labor Standards Act influence our policies and will result in some changes. There are a variety of locations available on campus. Most problems occur for students. HRS will be putting more information on its website.

New Business
A. SUAA Meeting in Chicago

Operating Staff Council recommended Pam Rosenberg to be a member of the SURS Member Adversary Committee. Pam has been officially appointed by NIU as the SURSMac representative. Accordingly, Pam will be attending the SUAA meeting in Chicago along with others from campus.

B. Vacation accrual proposal from Administrative Professional Advisory Council

A proposal was handed out to each member. The proposal aims at parity among all NIU employee groups regarding the maximum vacation accrual that is allowed at retirement. Exempt Civil Service and SPS can accrue up to 56 days while Hourly Civil Service can accumulate 50 days. Given the lack of time left, it was decided that the proposal will be discussed at the next meeting. This proposal was endorsed by Operating Staff Council and the APAC would like the UBC endorsement too.

C. New Benefit Program Proposals

Deborah announced more information will be coming regarding additional insurance plans that will be made available to employees via payroll deduction.

   a. AFLAC
   b. Allstate
   c. Others

D. UBC Annual Report 2009-2010

The committee voted to approve and issue the Annual Report.

E. Committee Priorities for 2010 – 2011

   a. Insurance survey results distributed in a timely manner
   b. APAC vacation evaluation
   c. New Benefits?
   d. Domestic Partner benefits
   e. Web site to keep people informed
   f. Lactation Policy Awareness
   g. MyCIGNA web site demonstration

Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted by Abby Chemers, Secretary