University Benefits Committee

September 1, 2011

Attendees: Terry Borg, Virginia Cassidy, Dennis Davito, Samantha Fisher, Deborah Haliczer, Michael Kolb, Pamela Rosenberg, Gina Shannon, Simon Song, Sherry Spear.

I. Deborah Haliczer called the meeting to order. Committee members were introduced and the agenda was approved.

II. The May 5, 2011 minutes were approved.

III. Deborah Haliczcer was re-elected as Chair. Pamela Rosenberg and Terry Borg were elected as Co-Secretaries.

IV. Meeting dates were discussed. Decided to leave on Thursday’s at 10:00. Also decided to set up an orientation meeting for new members with Dennis Davito, Deborah Haliczer, and Pamela Rosenberg to introduce them to the committee and familiarize them with what we have done for the past few years.

V. A. Insurance Update: Benefits Choice and Current Status
There will no longer be two benefits choice windows. All plans have been approved through June 30, 2012. From October 10-28, there will a second special enrollment period to address health carrier changes. This coincides with the fall veto session.

1. The 403(b) Vendor Fair will be held on September 23, 2011, from 10:30 to 1:30. ING and American Century will be gone after September 1, 2011. It was asked that any committee member bring any unauthorized 403(b) companies advertisements to HRS attention.

2. There are currently only nine people involved in having payroll deductions taken for MetLife so HR would like to reduce the administrative resources this takes by having MetLife bill them directly. A motion was approved for the discontinuance of the MetLife contract arrangement. Therefore, no further payroll deductions will occur for people with this benefit. A comment was made on this: As the University loses qualified personnel, we cannot continue to keep small vendors as it is not cost-effective. Staffing is an issue for HR, as it is all across campus. This is a good thing to let the campus community know.

3. AFLAC would like us to offer their plans at NIU. We have already discussed this opportunity in Benefits Committee, and it was decided that we would not like to offer any additional benefits at the current time. A motion was approved to reiterate the Benefits Committee’s past position on the AFLAC issue. There does not appear to be strong interest in offering new benefit programs at this time.

B. Pension Update

Money Purchase actuarial factors will be changes on July 2, 2012. This will reduce the total annuity a person will receive and/or the total over contribution. This means that
the total needed to reach the 80% maximum will be increased. The last date that a person can retire is July 1, 2012 in order to have the prior actuarial factors used in their calculation (i.e., last day worked would be June 30, 2012).

There are no updates on the COLA. A percentage of the pension contribution from the State goes to the fund the COLA, and this is part of the State constitution, so it cannot be changed.

C. Annuitants Update

There is great concern over the cost of insurance for retirees. There are many different ideas floating around about how to charge retirees for insurance, i.e. sliding scale based on service, money received, etc., but none have been approved. Additionally, no information is available on how this would affect survivors and their insurance premiums.

One of the main concerns this year is to increase membership. The Committee would like to put an article in NIU Today to encourage retirees and current employees to become members of the Annuitants Association so we have a larger lobbying block. All were asked to mention joining to their Councils and constituents. A selling point to retirees is that if you sign up, you get to keep your NIU email address. It was suggested that the Benefits Committee have a regular column in NIU Today. Debbie will talk to Kathy Buettner about this.

D. Civil Unions/Domestic Partner Benefits

All documents were updated to include the new civil union language. No new domestic partner can enroll in the State Health Insurance plans.

E. Status of Dependent Tuition Waivers

Legislative tuition waivers have been discontinued. There is no news about the Dependent Tuition Waivers going away.

F. Temporary Supportive Professional Staff Proposal

A document about changing how Temporary Supportive Professional Staff accrue benefits was circulated and members were asked to review and discuss at the next meeting.

G. Status of Proposal on Vacation Accruals

No update.
IV.  A. Pre-Retirement Seminar will be held at NIU on October 19 from 8-4:30. There is no agenda for this meeting yet because SSA cannot come due to budget issues. People may then have more time with SURS and Steve Cunningham.

SURS counselors will be at NIU on October 18, 19, and 20, and employees can have an appointment with them if they are within four years of retirement. All information concerning this event will be sent via campus mail so those without email will receive the information.

An additional workshop called How to Retire will be offered on October 28. It will discuss procedures on how to do the process, how soon, information on pension differences, how to resign, and when. Employees can then also ask questions.

If need be, there will be question and answers session if there are updates from the legislative sessions.

B. Members were asked to send Deborah Haliczer their priorities for the coming year.

C. We would like to increase the membership for the NIU Annuitants Association so we can use the numbers for lobbying efforts. We would like to talk to all the Councils and encourage membership among retirees and current employees.

D. In the spring there will be more opportunities to discuss questions about pension and retirement changes. During the fall semester there will be more on-campus information sharing and campus question and answer sessions.

Departments need to encourage staff to warn their colleagues of their intent to retire so that searches and planning can take place, and so departments can plan for sick and vacation payouts.

E. Review the annual report and send Deborah Haliczer additions and corrections. She will send out an email for our approval so she can submit the report.

F. Review Benefits Survey

V. The next meeting will be held on October 27 from 10-11:30 in Altgeld 212. The following meeting will be on December 8 from 10-11:30 in Altgeld 212.

Meeting adjourned.