University Benefits Committee

Minutes: January 31, 2013

Members present: Meredith Ayers, Terry Borg, Cliff Bottiglieri, Dennis Davito, Deborah Haliczer, Brian May, Sue Mini, Pamela Rosenberg, Sherilynn Spear

Guest: Liz Guess

I. The meeting called to order at 10:06 am, Haliczer presiding.

II. Agenda and Minutes

Approve Agenda (moved by Bottiglieri; Mini 2nded; passed by unanimous vote).

Approve minutes from 11/30/12 meeting (Bottiglieri moved; Spear 2nded; passed with one abstention [May]).

III. Old Business

A. Pension Issues (Davito). Our situation is one of “rumors amidst uncertainty.” Nothing significant related to pension reform passed in the last session of the Illinois General Assembly; we await the spring session. Deborah Haliczer mentioned that the University Council has been discussing the pension situation.

B. Annuitants Association Update: a survey has been distributed re “sacrifices we are willing to make.” President Peters has asked the three council presidents, “what would we, what should we, be willing to give up?” The difference of opinion on this issue is large. Spear suggested problems with the survey as an instrument and noted that it needs revising. Davito, reporting on various, recent, and fairly subtle attempts to reduce health care benefits for retirees (the recent failed amendment HJRCA # 49, for example), noted that such attempts are likely to prompt lawsuits.

Liz Guess offered some good news: not too many will be defaulting to Quality Care. It was originally feared that many would, but workshops designed to prevent unwitting abandonment of the HMO alternative have been well attended and folks have switched to new HMO’s pretty readily and happily.

C. Other benefits updates re the following topics: no actions at this time:

1. HMO contracts
2. Benefits Choice?
3. Premiums
4. Retiree health insurance status

D. HB 4996 status. Mini reported that there has been no change in 4996 since the last time we met. Some internal procedures have been refined, but it is still the case that SURS will not tell us who is retiring and who is not. Moreover, SURS does not seem to be planning at some point to begin telling us. It is not required by law to report this information and may indeed be sustaining vagueness regarding its plans as a means of discouraging the hiring of retirees altogether. [Borg arrives: 10:30] Of course, such a state of affairs renders last-minute staffing decisions more difficult, lending to such decisions very serious benefits ramifications. The year ahead promises to be especially problematic, what with many retirements coming, including that of the President, and a new administration taking charge.

E. Operating Staff Council/ APAC proposal for vacation accrual: nothing to report. (Certain proposals are still under consideration at HR.)

F. SPSC proposal in temporary SPS: nothing to report.

G. Morale and Workloads. Anecdotes,

“I’m retiring—I’m done with NIU!”
“It’s now not ‘NIU and me’—it’s ‘NIU or me.’”
“There used to be four in my division—now it’s just I,”

have indicated a certain picture of workplace unhappiness, one best represented by the following proportion: workload/morale = an index of workplace misery. Right now, by all accounts, the number is approaching an historic high.

H. Is there anything to report on the 403b and 457 plans? One thing: 457 is now offering loans.

I. Discussion of tax reporting of benefits costs on w2s: some commentaries on the whys and the wherefores of this new practice (so far it would seem to be a merely an “informational item”).

IV. New Business

A. It was reported that electronic copies of W2s are now available but must be ordered by a certain date or by default paper copies will be mailed.

B. Davito reported that the premium-free-health-insurance-upon-retirement-after-20-years-in-service plan is now gone per state legislation.

V. Possible dates for the next meeting were discussed (3/28/13 at 10:00 am was set).
The meeting was adjourned at 11:50.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian May