UNIVERSITY BENEFITS COMMITTEE

MINUTES: September 6, 2012

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:07. The agenda was approved, and the minutes from the March 29, 2012, meeting were approved without changes. Deborah Haliczer was elected Chair and Pamela Rosenberg and Brian May were elected as co-secretaries.

Old Business:

- Davito reported that benefits will stay in place as they currently are, pending changes that emerge in the benefits bidding process, HMO court case, and AFSCME negotiations at the state level, until June 2013 with emergency extensions. No additional benefits choice periods are likely to be implemented unless changes occur. Bond ratings for the State of Illinois have continued to decline but people are still purchasing them. HR is short on staff. CMS would like to schedule a meeting this fall with benefits managers of universities, which would be Dennis Davito and Liz Guess from NIU.
- There has been no movement in the legislature on any pension reform issues. There will be SURS Individual Retirement Counseling at NIU on October 30 and 31, 2012.
- SURS has opened up an office at the NIU Naperville campus. On November 7 a Retirement Education seminar will be offered there. The committee discussed the need to change the release time for employees email so people can take time off to attend seminars at the Naperville campus. It was moved by Sue Mini to have the committee lobby for a new release time email for travel to Naperville. This motion was seconded by Terry Borg. Motion was approved unanimously. We also need to note that there is a fee for attending any seminar not held at NIU.
- 403B vendors will be coming to campus at various dates during the semester. An email was sent out to employees about these on August 27, 2012.
- The Annuitants Association will be hosting Ralph Martire at NIU on September 19, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. He will discuss the Illinois funding crises. There has been discussion on raising the annual fee, and if it is, it will be across the board. Everyone is encouraged to join the Annuitants Association.
- On the November ballot will be a question on whether or not to amend the Illinois constitution. Some of the proposed changes are considered unconstitutional so if the ability to amend the constitution is passed, it could be detrimental to our pensions and could make it so we can no longer sue for passing unconstitutional legislation. There is a paragraph in the proposed amendment that would allow changes to pension benefits to those already receiving benefits and those who are guaranteed benefits as a provision of employment. The Annuitants
Association will get information out to those affected and educate them on what this could mean for them. Further information will be provided to employees, within the restrictions of communicating about “political issues” at work. Since this issue has to do with benefits, some limited communication will occur.

- AFLAC wants to do a proposal to NIU. SIU is the only state university who has AFLAC as a vendor. It was decided that Davito and Haliczer will hear a presentation from them to see what they have to offer.
- The Committee was asked to follow up with Human Resources on the annual vacation accrual for hourly employees by Andy Small, President of Operating Staff Council. Andy will also be talking to President Peters about the situation.
- There is no noticeable progress on the Temporary SPS issue concerning carry over of vacation and other issues. It has gone to Steve Cunningham, who has designated a staff member to do research on the various issues included in the proposal. Todd Latham, President of SPS Council will meet with Steve for an update on the situation.
- Tuition waivers for dependents are still at risk. The bill to eliminate them did not progress in the legislature. Representative Pritchard did say that it is an employee benefit that cannot be taken away.

New Business:

- House Bill 4996 (HB4996) passed and begins on August 1, 2013. Employers must notify SURS within 60 days upon employing a person receiving a SURS retirement annuity, and shall identify if such annuitant is paid exclusively from federal, grant, or foundation funds (in order to claim an exemption to the payment of employing an affected annuitant). An employee becomes an “Affected Annuitant” on the first day of an academic year following the academic year in which the annuitant first meets both of the following conditions: 1 – Total of 18 paid weeks that occur anytime after August 1, 2013 (which not need be with the same employer or in same academic year) and 2 – Receives compensation during an academic year that is equal to or greater than 40% of the highest annual rate of earnings. This means that controls will have to be put on hires. If someone becomes an affected annuitant, NIU will then have to pay their entire annual SURS annuity. “Week” has not been defined – is it in hours or days? Also, highest annual rate of earnings needs to be defined, as well as academic year – not fiscal year or calendar year. This only affects SURS per the bill, but will test when someone from TERS or SERS is hired.
- Discussion of changes necessary in the Annual Report from 2011-2012 ensued and the document was approved as amended.
- Priorities for 2012-2013 were discussed. The Committee decided to continue the discussion of the Temporary SPS situation, as well as how the loss of positions and people leaving has impacted employees’ morale and has left employees unable to take vacation. Employees are losing vacation because they are maxed out at 56 days and if they are temporary SPS, they are losing those days because their annual contract ends and they haven’t had the time to take the days off. People are also concerned about taking time off as it increases the workload both
before and after vacation. It was asked if we could get a total number of hours spent in total from employee SOEEA reports to have an idea of how much employees are working, and how many are losing vacation.

- The Committee also decided to keep looking at HB4996 and pension issues in the coming year.
- The University Support Expo is on Tuesday, September 11, from 11 to 1 in the Duke Ellington Ballroom.
- Flu Shots will be offered on September 18 from 10-2 and on October 10 from 11-1 in the Duke Ellington Ballroom.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03.
Next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, October 30, 10:00-11:30, Altgeld 212.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Rosenberg, Secretary