UNIVERSITY BENEFITS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting of October 24, 2013, Altgeld Hall 203

Members Present: Therese Arado, Cliff Bottigliero, Deborah Haliczer, Brian May, Sue Mini, Gina Shannon, George Slotsve, Sherilynn Spear; Jim Lockard, guest.

I. Haliczer called the meeting to order at 12:01. Shannon moved approval of the agenda; Spear seconded (unanimous).

Shannon moved approval of the minutes of the September 5, 2013 meeting (Spear seconded; unanimous).

II. Old Business:

A. Insurance and Benefits report. Minor annoyances– for example, slow reimbursements– are being reported. There is little else that is new to report. One thing coming up: the dependent-audit. This is new. Proof of dependency will begin to be required starting in January. Some concerns were reported with regard to the measures and methods.

The motion was made that HR be asked to take steps to prepare recipients for this change; above all, recipients must be advised of its importance (“don’t delete the e-mail message!”). Arado moved; Spear seconded (unanimous).

B. Pension Issues (including concerns raised at Faculty Senate). It was reported that, according to Bob Pritchard, it was his opinion that it will be no earlier than January of 2014 before any legislative action is undertaken with regard to pension reform. Thus we may expect further confusion and delay among individuals now undertaking retirement planning.

C. Annuitants Association report (including retiree health insurance), #1: as Spear reported, great concern has been voiced regarding the matter of changes in retiree health insurance (changes whereby over 21,000 Medicare-primary retirees, annuitants, and others currently enrolled in CIP and SEGHP must move to a state-sponsored Medicare Advantage program, of which just four Medicare Advantage Plans have been awarded contracts). The chief worry is over so-called “lost retirees,” retirees who have moved out of state or who do not have e-mail accounts or who are simply not paying attention. The concern is that the new, off-season (that is, not in May or thereabouts; rather, 11/12-12/13) benefits-choice period will be ignored and folks will risk losing coverage; in this period, unlike most previous choice periods, benefits-recipients must “do something” (make a choice) and will not be assigned a default choice, as they have usually been in the past, should they fail to choose.

DeKalb-area Illinois State Representative Bob Pritchard may be coming 11/18 to co-host a forum devoted to retiree health insurance issues. Should we, the UBC, offer to co-sponsor this forum? Spear moved, and Mini seconded motion to co-sponsor this forum. Unanimous vote.

Annuitants Association report (including retiree health insurance), #2: as Slotsve reported, the NIU Faculty Senate has recently (just three weeks ago) begun drafting a “Resolution on Pensions” that it will send along to the Illinois Council of Faculty Senate Presidents in hopes that this body will adopt the resolution as its own at its 11/20 meeting and send it along to state legislators. Our question: do we, the UBC, give this plan – which includes this document, of course -- our support and our blessing? Motion to bless the doc (slightly edited and amended) and the plan (May); seconded, Shannon. Passed (six in favor; Haliczer and Mini abstained).

D. Other benefit updates? There was none.
E. Rehiring of retirees, update: so far, so good, which is itself a good thing, given that there has been much rehiring. The verdict so far is that as long as these rehires, many of whom are retired professors, teach just one course per semester, we should have no problems.

F. Morale and workloads.

1. “Unintended consequences” letter. Briefly debated was the question of -- now that we have the letter re such consequences completed and ready to send -- whether indeed we ought to send it. Mini moved to send; Arado seconded (unanimous).

2. Parking letter: should it be sent? Shannon moved to table this letter; Bottiglier seconded (unanimous).

III. New Business:

A. Salaries and increments: many have noted a general sense that they are both insufficient. Some union members have not gotten raises for a disproportionately-extended period of time.

B. Dual Career issues. UBC members were furnished with the “meeting notes” pertaining to the 10/21/13 meeting of the PCSW Research Subcommittee. A brief discussion ensued, devoted largely to the question of how a policy friendly to dual-career families might serve as a recruiting tool.

C. Affordable Care Act. Discussion was tabled.

D. SPS contract issues (from SPS Council). The question arose, what to do about employees who regularly must accept odd contract terms (for example, a 9+1+1+1, or 10+2 contract that prevents employees from accruing paid vacation leave). The Workplace Issues Committee has requested that the UBC investigate -- is this a real problem affecting a significant number of employees, and, if so, what may be done to ensure that these employees be treated more fairly? Bottiglier moved that we do just that; Slotsve seconded (passed; Haliczer abstained).

IV. Our next meeting? After consideration a date was fixed (11/21/13), the time and site to be determined.

Meeting adjourned, 1:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Brian May, Co-Secretary

Addendum:
Haliczer conducted an email survey vote by UBC members on whether to support a Forum on Pension Reform, scheduled on November 20, planned by the three employee councils. The vote was split by members, and the tie was broken by Haliczer, who voted in favor of supporting the forum.