UNIVERSITY BENEFITS COMMITTEE
MINUTES for the meeting of September 4, 2014 (12:00 – 1:45, Altgeld 212)

The meeting was called to order at 12:18
Members present: Brian May, Brian Mackie, Celeste Latham, Liz Guess, Murali Krishnamurthi, Pam Rosenberg, Samantha McCarron, Sherilynn Spear, George Slotsve, John Hulseberg

I. Introduction of new and returning members. Discussed committee mission and purpose
II. Approved Agenda. Approved minutes from 4/10/14 meeting.
III. Election of chair and secretaries
   a. Terry Borg was nominated and elected to serve as chair, pending his acceptance
   b. Brian Mackie and Samantha McCarron volunteered to serve as co-secretaries
IV. Old Business:
      i. Approved Annual Report (with amendment of changing alumni number from 250,000 to 128,000 and 120,000)
   b. Pension Issues (Latham)
      i. Working with SURLS on legislation – a continuance was granted and we are awaiting more information. Faculty and staff are becoming anxious, especially as prospective retirement dates near.
         1. Decision has been made that it is unconstitutional to take insurance deductible out of retirement benefits. Appeal may still be in lower courts, but deductions for insurance have stopped as of September 1st.
      ii. Return to Work – trying to speed up process.
      iii. Definition of “year” has been standardized as of November – no longer is SURLS year vs. academic year. Defined year is now September to August (SURLS year).
      iv. Lengthy discussion regarding volunteering and ability to work under SURLS as a volunteer. Any former employee (retiree or resigned) may work as a volunteer, beginning the next business day after employment is terminated, but must first sign a Volunteer Agreement. Volunteers may not work if there is an expectation of compensation, either before or after completion of volunteer work. If former employee wishes to receive monetary compensation for work (as re-hire), must wait 30 days for a regular termination and 60 days for a retirement.
   c. Annuitants Association Report (Spear & Rosenberg)
      i. Retirees can use Groupwisen email even without paying annuitant association fees. NIU will be converting to Office 365 (Outlook) in the coming months.
         1. A select group of retirees will be eligible to participate in the Beta test for Outlook email access
      ii. Have met once. Sales pitch to recruit new members.
   d. Benefit Updates (Guess)
      i. Dennis Davito has retired. HR is restructuring and is short-staffed. A One-Stop-Shop for HR is in the works.
         1. Benefits Office now reports to Celeste Latham
      ii. Affordable Care Act – HR is coming up with a plan on how to deal with employees working 30 hours/week but are ineligible for state benefits. There is possible legislation in the works to exclude student employees. Deadline for decisions on ACA and how to deal with issue is January 1, 2015.
iii. No date set yet for beginning of Dependent Audit. CMS is trying to find a way to lessen the pools of people to audit, rather than audit every dependent.
e. Salary and Increments: None
f. Morale and Workloads
   i. Departments having a hard time with morale due to lack of increments and higher workloads
   ii. Some faculty feels they were “forced” to retire due to economic situation. This is also contributing to a lower morale.
   iii. Internal reassignment (promotion) is helping with morale, but overall morale is down.
   iv. NIU, departments, and faculty/staff having problems dealing with increased change
   v. Will table continued discussion until next meeting.
g. Dual Career Issues
   i. Tabled until next meeting
h. Other issues: None

V. New Business:
a. Priorities set for new year
   i. Morale
   ii. Pension Issues
   iii. How to communicate to various groups

VI. Upcoming meetings
a. Thursdays, tentatively from 12:00 to 2:00
b. October 16, November 20

Meeting adjourned, 1:45