

UNIVERSITY BENEFITS COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

November 5, 2020 – 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Via Teams

Present: Therese Arado; Terry Borg; Liz Guess; Sabrina Hammond; Chad McEvoy; Beth McGowan; Emerson Sebastiao

Absent: Varsie Geisler and Phillip Torgerson

- I. Call to order – Meeting Called to Order
- II. Agenda Additions/Approval – Motion for agenda and additions carried.
- III. Approval of Minutes – No October minutes
- IV. Constituent Reports
 - a. Annuitants Association – No report
 - b. SPS – No report, brief mention of a climate survey about employment and personnel issues that did not actually concern benefits.
 - c. Operating Staff – No report
 - d. Faculty – No report
 - e. Provost's Office – Noted administrative closure days over the holidays.
 - f. Human Resources – Report below:
 1. NM planned to end relationship with HealthLink as of 11/1. This came up unexpectedly to many participants. HR responded by speaking with NM and extending employee healthcare benefits until June 30, 2020. A question was raised about whether this extension of NW benefits applied to annuitants as well. Liz indicated this applies to annuitants enrolled in HealthLink.
 2. Any employee receiving a W2 across campus is eligible to participate in payroll deduction for 403 (b) plans.
 3. Families First benefit is being used and will probably be extended beyond the December 31, 2020 deadline. This is a COVID benefit, not part of FMLA or regular sick leave, but it can prolong the extended illness benefit. FF allows two weeks paid sick time. Extended illness is 25 days for self; 25 days for family available per year. These are non-accumulating benefits.
 4. An advertisement mailing about legal assistance from CMS arrived in mailboxes. CMS usually only provides information about our benefits. People were confused about whether this is part of an employee benefit. It is not, but NIU will provide payroll deduction for this.
- V. Old Business – No old business

VI. New Business --Definition of Benefits and Committee Role (see attached document)

The discussion turned on how the Committee should define “benefits” and therefore its charge. To address this, Terry Borg consulted the University Bylaws concerning the Committee (8.2.2.1) and led our discussion. It was noted that the annuitants, although they hold a standing seat on the committee and their benefits are often discussed in Committee, are not present in the by-laws. Many believed that they should be added to by-laws, but it was pointed out by McEvoy that this could cause a conflict of interest, with current employees deciding about former employee benefits. It was decided that the matter should be investigated.

Another question was whether the Committee should have a narrow or expanded understanding of the term benefits. Obvious benefits include:

Benefits available to employees include:

- [Health insurance](#)
- [Dental insurance](#)
- [Vision insurance](#)
- [Long term disability insurance](#)
- [Life insurance](#)
- [Flexible spending accounts](#)

Other benefits include:

- [Retirement](#)
- [Tuition waivers](#)
- [Discounts and services](#)
- Library access

Eligible employees earn paid time off, including:

- [Sick leave](#) and [vacation leave](#)
- [Seven legal holidays](#) per calendar year
- NIU-designated [floating holidays and administrative closures](#)

The question was whether services provided by NIU (listed below) should also be included within the definition of benefits:

- Parking
- Accessibility services
- Advocacy services & Counseling
- NIU Alert text messaging
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Campus Dining Services
- Child Development & Family Center (child care)
- Counseling Resources: Magellan Health Services
- FitWell
- Gender and Sexuality Resource Center
- DoIT- software access; network access; Annuitant access
- Wellness and Ergonomics Laboratory
- Performing Arts and Athletic Events – employee reduced pricing

- Flu shots

Of particular concern was the issue of library access and email access upon retirement.

There was no conclusion to the discussion about the definition of benefits when meeting ended. Was decided to return to this discussion in the December meeting.

- VII. Announcements – No announcements
- VIII. Adjournment – Meeting was adjourned.