

## UNIVERSITY BENEFITS COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes

December 3, 2020 – 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

#### Via Teams

**Present:** Therese Arado; Terry Borg; Varsie Geisler; Liz Guess; Sabrina Hammond; Chad McEvoy; Beth McGowan; Dan Pedersen; Emerson Sebastiao; and Phillip Torgerson

**Absent:**

- I. Call to order – Meeting Called to Order
- II. Agenda Additions/Approval – Motion for agenda and additions carried.
- III. Approval of Minutes – November minutes approved with two amendments, will be noted that Terry Borg led discussion regarding definition of benefits; Attendees should be listed alphabetically.
- IV. Constituent Reports
  - a. Annuitants Association – Sabrina Hammond reported:
    - i. The Association has established a legal defense fund to protect SURS benefits given failure to pass the Fair Tax.
    - ii. The Association also established a Scholarship fund for NIU students.
  - b. SPS – No report, but Terry Borg announced general support the inclusion of annuitants.
  - c. Operating Staff and Civil Service
    - i. No report from Dan Pedersen
    - ii. Varsie Geisler notes that folks are waiting for Adobe pro availability to sign forms from home.
  - d. Faculty – Emerson Sebastiao notes that faculty want COVID testing, vaccinations, and EAP to be included as benefits.
  - e. Provost's Office – Voluntary retirement and XX
    - i. DO IT revisiting life cycle of access to various computer systems: Email? One Drive? Sharepoint? Anywhere print? Multiple platforms all under consideration for retiree access.
    - ii. Sabrina Hammond ask whether use of these platforms be made available according to retirees according to activity levels? Can be quite expensive and include issues of bandwidth, security, and privacy.
  - f. Human Resources – Liz Guess
    - i. Early retirement outcome from last offer: about 75 staff; between 20- 30 faculty took offer of early retirement.

- ii. Is another early retirement being proposed? Probably not.
- iii. 403 b limits same as last year
- iv. Prudential long-term disability insurance rate change is effective Dec 1. Employees may opt in or out for this throughout the year. Underwriting necessary.
- v. Family First benefit set to expire Dec 31. Until Congress act and President act, no more information is available. We have no idea what new federal admin will do.

V. Old Business – Definition of Benefits and Committee Role

Clear definition fits with President’s approach to streamline things and clarify our charge. In addition to COVID testing and vaccine, is there anything else people want?

EAP – broad area of well-being need to be included in our charge.

The Committee felt that it is important to let NIU Community know that NIU employees have access to many benefits. While some cost us something, that cost is well under marketplace price. Terry reinforced that we have a good benefit package and are lucky to have it.

A desire was expressed for the expansion of tuition waiver beyond children and individual, to include spouses.

Chad McEvoy responded that State policy is involved as there are financial repercussions across the state. It was noted that tuition remission for faculty is more restrictive than for staff, but also noted that tuition remission for children is in wide use by faculty.

There was brief discussion that the state might consider the Minnesota system’s tuition remission program that uses two metrics of eligibility – longevity of employee vs use of education benefit.

It was noted that tuition discounts are considered a right not a benefit.

This led to a discussion about things that are not truly benefits but discounted services. There was a sense that if we don’t include these perqs and discounted services, like Parking, within a definition of benefits, there will be no formal avenue for employee advocacy regarding them. Both Therese and Terry were in favor of expanded definition of benefits.

Committee Members were enjoined to please talk with constituents about an expanded vs narrow def of benefits.

Also noted was the reality that NIU employee benefits are of three types: a.) NIU Employee benefit controlled by University; b.) NIU as IL State Employee benefit, like Health Care; and c.) NIU employee perquisites such as parking.

- VI. New Business – No new business
- VII. Announcements – Next meeting Feb; Best wishes
- VIII. Adjournment – Meeting was adjourned.