

Staff Senate – October 21, 2009

SKH 301

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 by President-Elect Anthony Holden.

Minutes of the September 2009 were approved as written.

Proxies were announced.

New Business: Sandra Parton from Human Resources attended and announced that the Short-Term Disability enrollment from last October had met the minimum percentage for participation. Two hundred employees enrolled, and two hundred forty-seven were required. Sandra also announced that premiums should remain the same based on age and salary. Employees may elect to drop coverage, but re-enrollment is not guaranteed and a medical questionnaire will be required. Employees not currently enrolled may sign up for short term disability during open enrollment beginning in November.

A question was raised regarding the sick leave bank. Sandra said it is still available for those who have contributed, but no new employees may participate. Sandra suggested that employees check on line to see if family members listed as dependents still qualify as dependents.

Human Resources will have a workshop on Wednesday afternoon on November 18 on legal issues such as harassment, discrimination, etc.

November 1 – 30 will be open enrollment for health, dental, and vision insurance plans. Changes in coverage will go into effect on January 1. There is no anticipated cost increase. There is a new smoking cessation program available.

Sandra mentioned the “Michelle’s Law” whereby a college-aged student who drops out of school due to illness has to be covered under health insurance for one year.

Mental health must also be covered, but UAH is opting out of the mental health option since coverage can cause premiums for everyone to increase.

Met Life and VSP (dental and vision providers) may increase premiums nominally. The eye glass frame allowance is increasing from \$120 to \$130 every two years.

BCBS suggested UAH increase premiums 13% based on a two-month spike in claims which later leveled off. Right now there is no anticipated increase in out-of-pocket expense.

Flexible Spending contribution maximum for a year is currently \$3900. IT is working to allow enrollment through Banner.

Sam Shiller who is the regional representative for VALIC Financial Advisors spoke on retirement planning. VALIC provides annuities. There are on-site advisors available for financial planning needs. A match plan will be available in January. Sam said more informational meetings are planned campus wide. A newsletter is scheduled to come out in December and a retirement manager will be on-line in April.

A concern was raised that UAH doesn’t do a good job of standardizing emails if an employee has a name change. It seems that all emails could be forwarded or at least use only one alias per employee.

Jan Perkins noticed that disabled students must cross a large puddle to get to the back entrance of the Business Administration Building when it rains. It was suggested that the drainage be looked into since students with disabilities need the shortest distance between buildings.

Old Business: The smoking policy was approved and if employees or students are caught in violation someone in the building should contact his/her supervisor. A no-smoking policy email went out campus wide. The question was raised if signs were posted at each building.

Drug Policy: Ravi reported that Laurel Long is checking with other universities in the state to see if they have a drug testing policy and if so what the related costs are and who pays. Ravi hopes to have information to present at the next meeting.

The question was raised at the last meeting if there could be a fall only parking decal for students graduating in December, and the answer was that there would be no partial year or pro-rating of parking decals.

Committee Chairs for Staff Senate committees are:

Bylaws Committee: Jamie Clay

Communications Committee: Marty Green

Election Committee: Jan Perkins

Employee Benefits Committee: Ravi Seth

Employee Development Committee: Lisa Strickland

Governmental Relations Committee: Jan Williamson

Policies and Procedures Committee: Erin Reed

Staff Picnic Committee: Vonda Maclin

Swap & Share: Dona Baker

The question was raised whether HPE Instructors are eligible for tuition assistance. The answer was that since they are contract employees and not full-time UAH employees, they are not.

Ray Pinner reported that enrollment revenue for the fall brought in more than one million dollars. A group of consultants will be on campus on November 2 and 3 in the Academic Affairs area. The question was raised if there was a cost to UAH for the consultants. Ray Pinner replied that he thinks the Systems Office is covering the bill.

Anthony Holden reported that Stephen Black met with the Extended Executive Committee and encourages UAH students to be involved in the community. One project supported in the past was Vision First where UAH students checked the vision of two to four year olds, and area optometrists provided care for free.

The question was raised about the new housing policy requiring all freshmen and sophomores to live on campus starting fall 2010. Each student on campus brings about \$50K to the university. Studies have shown that students living and interacting on campus tend to have better grades and retention rates. Certain exemptions apply if a student is over 21, married, has a child living with you, or has a disability.

The Advisory Committee has been dismantled for now per Robin Douglass.

Dona Baker and Anthony Holden are the Staff Senate representatives on the university recycling committee. Currently UAH is not a "Green University" since we don't fit all the criteria.

The question was raised if there was a chili cook-out last summer through Governmental Relations. There was not due to budget constraints.

Committee Reports: Marty Green is updating the Staff Senate web site.

Employee Benefits: Ravi Seth is working on the drug policy information. The question was raised regarding tuition assistance for Professional Development classes offered through Continuing Education. Lisa said that the classes are offered to full time faculty and staff at half price.

The question was raised as to whether it would be possible to offer a staff only option under BCBS. Right now there are only individual and family plans available. The committee offered to ask other universities what benefits they offer.

The question was raised if it would be possible to get some sort of tuition assistance on courses that are work or degree related that are not offered at UAH. Options might be a 50% reduction or let Centers pay for classes taken elsewhere.

Employee Development: Lisa Strickland invited Lynn Bell from HR to talk about the FISH seminar which addresses attitudes in the workplace. The seminar can take from one hour to an entire morning. Lynn will also come to individual areas for the seminar.

HR maintains the Staff Handbook and is looking at revisions.

Governmental Relations: Jan Williamson met with Ray Garner regarding the grass roots campaign to have higher education treated fairly in Montgomery. Jan reported that when items go to committee it would be helpful to have UAH faculty and staff contact the members in their district. The committee is working to gather address and nine-digit zip codes of all UAH faculty and staff to help in these efforts. The new legislature begins January 12, and more concentrated efforts will begin then.

Anthony reported that SGA asked to come to the meeting today to talk about higher education, but they had class.

It was suggested that we prepare early for Higher Ed Day in Montgomery and work with the Faculty Senate and SGA.

The Staff Senate can also help with Voter Registration by showing new voters how to vote and how to apply for an absentee ballot.

Communications: Marty Green is working on the new Staff Senate web design and Andrew Peters seconded Marty's motion that we update the design. Marty reported that it can take from two to six months for the changes to be implemented by the IT staff in the library.

Picnic/Christmas: The Senate approved that we bring a present for the Angel Tree and have a Staff Senate party for the December meeting. Vonda will put something together with the committee. The balcony in the Shelby Center was suggested as a meeting venue.

We need to begin looking now at dates for the university-wide picnic in the spring.

Bylaws: It was suggested that the bylaws be reviewed and see if updates or revisions need to be done.

It was suggested that we send announcements to the communications committee before each meeting in order to streamline.

Mary Beth Walker reported that President Williams was out of town and Mary Beth gave away his tickets to the Friday and Saturday night hockey games.

Announcements: Gail Seemann is the new Disabilities Coordinator.

General Cartwright will be on campus on October 27.

On November 20 the ex-President of India will be at UAH.

Homecoming activities are occurring this week such as building decorations, skate with the Chargers on Thursday evening at 9:00 pm at the Ice Plex, tee shirt exchange in the UC, and the dunk tank to raise money for United Way.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35.