

Minutes of the Senate Budget Committee Meeting

Held on October 3, 2014

3.00 – 4.30 PM

Sterne Room, Commerce Club

Members Present: Rackliffe, Dadzie, Francis, Walker, Butler, Wilmoth, Kiage, Ronski, Zhan, Duhaime, Felt, Bondarenko, Sevcik, Gallagher, Swygart-Hobaugh, Rehder, Venet, Brattian, Clark, Greene, and Thachenkary (Recorder)

Guests: Beth Jones, Robert Elmore, and Gail Imoukhuede

The Chair invited Associate Vice President Beth Jones, assisted by Director Robert Elmore, to present GSU's 2015 Benefits Plans. Copies of their presentation slides were distributed to Committee.

Open enrollment will be from November 3 – 14, 2014. All 31 institutions of USG will offer the same benefits plans in 2015. Employees, if non-smokers, must "opt out" of tobacco use surcharge (default setting) by active declaration. The new surcharge is \$75.00 per month. Spouses and all dependents over the age of 18 must also certify tobacco usage. The System will also monitor spousal coverage to make sure spouses do not qualify for coverage elsewhere through their employers.

Plan premiums, deductibles, copays, and out of pocket maximums will all increase. Premiums for the "comprehensive care plan" will see a decrease. Most importantly, the System will be transitioning (in 3 years) to a "defined contribution"-pricing model. Each employee will receive a set dollar amount towards his/her total premium costs. Employees will be responsible for paying the balance.

Effective July 1, 2015, USG will become the *secondary* payer for Medicare-eligible retirees. From January 1 to March 31, 2015 a third party vendor will assist 900+ retirees, who do not have Medicare Part B, with their enrollment. USG will pay any fees/penalties associated with their "late" enrollment.

Starting January 2015, Graduate Research Assistants will be offered health insurance through the Affordable Health Care Act. A new feature in 2015 will be "USG Perks," a shopping program for electronics, travel, entertainment, and clothing. CVS/Caremark will be the System's new pharmacy vendor.

Upon conclusion of their presentation, the Committee expressed its thanks with a round of applause to our Benefits Personnel.

Professor Vincent Rehder then took the floor to report on his Sub-Committee Recommendations on Graduate Student Fees. Details of their analysis were distributed. The main recommendation is to ask that GSU offer the "same package fee waiver" as offered by the University of Georgia. This would reduce the financial burden on GSU

students who are “taking only internship, directed study, thesis, practicum or dissertation study.” The sub-committee estimates it would cost GSU about \$173,398 per semester to offer the UGA-like waiver at GSU to those meeting the same UGA criteria of less than six credit hours per semester. There was some discussion about the impact on Fine Arts graduate students. (The MFA is considered a terminal degree.) The Chair asked Rehder to investigate this matter further and incorporate any changes, if needed, which would apply to MFA students?

There was broad sentiment to send the sub-committee report as a Motion to the full Senate to consider at its next meeting. A motion to that effect was made, seconded, and passed by the Committee.

There being no further business to consider, the meeting was adjourned.