

**Human Resources Committee, University Council**  
**Proposal for Implementation of Full Domestic Partner Benefits**  
**August, 2012**  
**(Proposal originally developed by GLOBES Executive Committee)**

**Proposal**

We strongly reiterate our commitment to full equality of benefits for all UGA employees, as has been affirmed by University Council in formal resolutions passed in 2002, 2005, and 2007 (and recently reaffirmed by the USG Faculty Council in February 2012).

To that end, we call upon administrators at the University of Georgia to develop and fully fund a benefits package for eligible employees with domestic partners that matches the benefits and premiums that are currently being granted to employees with spouses. This benefits program should become effective as soon as possible, but no later than January 1, 2014.

We maintain that if state funds currently cannot be used to fund the program, discretionary funds or other revenue sources should be used. Many other public universities across the country have developed similar programs without using state funds.

The benefits program will consist of two broad classes of benefits: (1) health insurance, wherein the University will provide a financial benefit equal to the combined state and institutional contribution that spouses and dependents of employees currently receive, and (2) voluntary benefits that include but are not limited to dental, supplemental life insurance, and accidental death & dismemberment insurance; these benefits (as well as vision benefits) are currently offered to domestic partners of employees at Georgia State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Kennesaw State University, Georgia Perimeter College, and Georgia Health Sciences University.

## **Brief History and Justification**

### **1. Brief timeline of previous efforts to achieve benefits equality at UGA**

#### **September 2002:**

University Council approved a resolution to request the Board of Regents address the issue of benefits for domestic partners. (No action was taken by the Board)

#### **April 2005:**

University Council approved Domestic Partnership Soft Benefits at UGA. (This essentially provides a dependent UGA card to qualifying domestic partners, which allows access to certain campus resources such as the library and the Ramsey Center. Importantly, this proposal included a mechanism for defining what constitutes a domestic partnership, including a formal application process).

#### **October 2007:**

University Council approved a proposal that reaffirmed its commitment to domestic partner benefits for University System employees and reiterated its request from 2002 that the Board of Regents add an employer-funded tier for domestic partners to the present insurance providers for the University System of Georgia. (No action was taken by the Board)

#### **February 25, 2012:**

At the USG Faculty Council meeting at Savannah State University, the following resolution was passed:

##### **Domestic Partners, as amended**

In the interest of equity and in order to attract and retain all of the best qualified faculty and staff, the USGFC recommends that university system benefits be extended to domestic partners.

(As of this date, no action has been taken by the Board)

### **2. Examples of public universities that provide a health insurance benefit without using state funds**

On a national level, more public and private universities are realizing that in order to remain competitive for the top talent, they need to stay current with their benefits packages. Following are some *recent* case study examples of how public state universities across the country have found creative solutions to offer a health insurance benefit to domestic partners without using state funds.

#### **2a. University of Florida**

In 2006, the University of Florida began using a combination of federal contracts, grants and discretionary funds from the University of Florida Foundation to pay for their domestic partnership benefit program. *No state funds are used.*

## **2b. University of Arizona**

When the state cut health benefits for domestic partners in 2009, UA President Robert Shelton said university officials should come up with a way to help them buy separate coverage. They did. The University of Arizona is now offering special medical, dental- and vision insurance plans for employees with domestic partners. The plans *don't use any state money* but have similar premiums. (Arizona Daily Star, 6/4/10)

## **2c. University of Wyoming**

In 2011, the University of Wyoming began providing a new benefit to employees with qualifying domestic partners and legal dependents who were not eligible for coverage through another employer-paid health insurance plan. The benefit provides an allowance to assist in paying for health insurance for partners and dependents. The allowance is equivalent in dollar amount to the state's contributions to the Wyoming employees' group insurance plan for spouses and dependents. The benefit is available to qualifying opposite- and same-sex domestic partners. The vouchers are paid for with revenue from UW's external research funding, most of which comes from the federal government. *No state funds are used.*

**These examples do not constitute an exhaustive list, but rather illustrate how the issue can be addressed when there is institutional commitment.**

## **3. Examples of voluntary health benefits already being provided at public universities in the University System of Georgia**

While it has long been disputed whether medical benefits can be provided to domestic partners at USG institutions, in reality, five other colleges and universities are already doing so, and have been for nearly 12 years.

Of the 35 colleges and universities of the University System of Georgia, five extend voluntary health benefits such as vision, dental, and optional additional life insurance to domestic partners of employees who are benefits-eligible. Each of these benefits is 100% funded by employee contributions.

The five institutions, including three research universities, are as follows:

- **Georgia State University**
  - Benefits began in 2001
    - Metlife Dental Plan
    - United HealthCare Vision (SPECTERA)
    - Metlife Voluntary Life Insurance Plan
- **Georgia Institute of Technology**
  - Benefits began in 2003
    - Humana CompBenefits Access dental plan
    - Humana CompBenefits Preferred Provider dental plan
    - United Healthcare Vision
    - Unum Supplemental Spouse/Dependent Life and AD&D Insurance
- **Kennesaw State University**
  - Benefits began in 2008
    - AD&D: Chubb
    - Dental: Assurant Denticare and MetLife Dental
    - Vision: Compbenefits
- **Georgia Perimeter College**
  - Benefits began in 2010
    - Delta Dental
    - EyeMed Vision Care
    - UNUM Critical Illness
    - Prudential Long Term Care
- **Georgia Health Sciences University**
  - Benefits began in 2010
    - Delta Dental
    - Hartford Life & Accident Insurance

#### **4. Summary of Domestic Partner benefits at our peer and aspirational institutions**

##### **UGA ASPIRATIONAL PEER INSTITUTIONS**

(List from the Office of Institutional Research)

Nine out of twelve of UGA's aspirational peer institutions offer the same employee benefits to domestic partners as granted to spouses(✓). Two other institutions offer soft or limited domestic partner benefits (\*). Only one institution does not offer domestic partner benefits of any kind (☒).

- ✓University of California - Berkeley
- ✓University of California - Los Angeles
- ✓University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign
- ✓University of Michigan - Ann Arbor
- ✓University of Minnesota
- \*Univ. of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

- \*University of Texas - Austin
- ☒University of Virginia
- ✓University of Washington
- ✓University of Wisconsin - Madison
- ✓Pennsylvania State University
- ✓Cornell University

## **UGA COMPARATOR PEER INSTITUTIONS**

(List from the Office of Institutional Research)

Nine out of twelve of UGA's comparator peer institutions offer the same employee benefits to domestic partners as granted to spouses(✓). One institutions offer soft or limited domestic partner benefits (\*). Two institutions do not offer domestic partner benefits of any kind (☒).

- |                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ✓ Iowa State University          | ✓ University of California - Davis  |
| ☒ Louisiana State University     | ✓ University of Florida             |
| ✓ Michigan State University      | ✓ University of Iowa                |
| *North Carolina State University | ✓ University of Kentucky            |
| ✓ Ohio State University          | ✓ Univ. of Maryland - College Park  |
| ✓ University of Arizona          | ☒ University of Missouri - Columbia |

In summary, these benefits are commonplace at our peer and aspirational institutions. UGA faculty and staff have long been advocating for them. Other USG institutions are already providing some voluntary medical benefits to domestic partners, and have been doing so for years. Importantly, other public state universities have found mechanisms to fund actual health insurance benefits (or the financial equivalent) without using state funds. We are confident that UGA can find a way to accomplish this important goal and achieve greater equity for all UGA employees.