

Faculty Benefits Committee Report  
University Council  
April 25, 2006

The FB committee met for the final time on April 7, 2006, with our primary purpose being to summarize our actions over the previous year and lay out an agenda of action items to pursue next year.

We had a productive year this year, seeing through four initiatives to completion: the choice for faculty to choose 10 or 12 paychecks, the creation of an "advisory" board for the ORP program (which is being organized by the new VP for Human Resources, Tom Gausvik), the formal policy for stopping the tenure clock for individuals who experience a "family medical leave" event, and as announced today, the proposal for soft benefits for domestic partners. The following issues involve new updates, and work on them will continue next year.

1. Sabbaticals.

Subcommittee chair Mary Anne Akers has conducted some preliminary research into sabbatical policies at peer and aspirational institutions; her research thus far indicates that all 15 peer institutions offer some form of sabbatical, though they may call it a "scholarly assignment," "research leave," or "developmental leave." All require an application process, and they vary in how widely they are available to faculty throughout the university. All of the policies identified so far offer faculty the choice between one semester off at full pay, or two semesters off at half pay. UGA's available "professional leave" has no option for full pay.

The next step for the committee will be to collect more detailed policies both from these peer institutions, and from within UGA where several colleges have, or are implementing, sabbatical opportunities for faculty. Some colleges also have options for "banking" courses.

2. Staff membership proposal.

We discussed a proposal to modify standing committees of University Council to include staff members. Bob Ratajczak spoke on behalf of the Staff Council in support of the proposal, and answered some questions. Following discussion, widespread support for the proposal to include staff on the "benefits" committee was expressed.

3. Tuition Assistance Program.

We had been requested to investigate the application of the TAP, by which staff members are able to take courses in UGA departments without paying tuition. One UGA employee who works out of a county extension office, and is several hours away from campus, had been taking courses through an online degree program which was covered by TAP, but then the TAP coverage ended.

Our research indicates that some online and distance learning programs are fully funded by tuition, whereas the TAP program deals with tuition waivers only, not real money, and so cannot reimburse such programs for lost tuition. Subcommittee chair Myra Womble is going to work with the registrar's office to clear up any remaining confusion regarding which programs can participate in the TAP program. It may be advisable for the officials who oversee the TAP program to consider some waivers or "scholarships" for UGA employees who are not able to participate in traditional classroom programs.

4. Child care

A subcommittee met with Provost Mace to discuss options for expanding child care availability on campus, and we continue to collect information on that. We will report back to Council when we have obtained specific information on how we might expand child care on campus.