

Report of the Benefits Committee (December 7, 2006)

The Benefits Committee met November 28<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Members in attendance were: Mary Anne Akers (chair), Mark Brown, Adrian Childs, Janice Hume, Cathy Jones, Tom Koballa, Sarajane Love, Susan Quinlan, Patricia Yager. Chris Cuomo, Director, Institute for Women's Studies, attended as a guest.

The agenda items discussed were the following:

1. University ByLaws Changes: The committee proposed to remove all reference to faculty concerns or issues since we will be addressing issues that impact staff as well. The proposed changes are:

Section B.1., delete the word "faculty" in the first two references, and

Section B.2., delete the phrase "of faculty concern."

Members discussed whether the duty listed in Section B.2 ("To review and recommend policies on matters of faculty concern related to gender and equity issues") should be deleted entirely, since it relates to salary rather than benefits, and perhaps transferred to the Faculty Affairs Committee. Members decided against asking for that change in the bylaws.

2. Gender Equity Study: The Committee discussed undertaking a new UGA gender equities study that would include not only tenure-stream faculty, but also non-tenure-stream faculty and staff. Prior studies were done in the early 1990s, and in 2002, with differing results. The Committee agreed to form an interdisciplinary subcommittee, to be headed by Sarajane Love. The subcommittee could include, among others, Susan Quinlan, who was involved in the earlier studies, a member of the Faculty Affairs Committee and one or more statisticians. Subcommittee members would also examine the data on salary compression already being compiled for University Council. Benefits Committee members noted the need to move slowly, and to consider carefully how to design and report the study. Particular care should be taken, the committee agreed, to try to avoid any misrepresentations in the press regarding the study.

Chris Cuomo, Director of the Institute for Women's Studies, attended the meeting to inform members of a letter to be published in the next issue of "Columns," the university newsletter, expressing concern and criticism about how a previous issue of "Columns" reported the American Association of University Professors gender equity study. Cuomo noted that about 100 people signed the letter, which criticized the "self-congratulatory tone" of the coverage, and noted "UGA fails to practice gender pay equity." She said this letter "took on a life of its own," reflecting a groundswell of concern. The committee discussed the possibility of resurrecting a Women's Faculty Caucus to represent women's needs on campus.

3. New Parental Leave: Patricia Yager reported on efforts to

explore New Parent Leave options. She distributed a copy of Arizona State University's Parental Leave Policy, and said that it has been used as a model in other places. She said she has asked to meet with the University's Office of Human Resources, but has not heard back from that office. The Committee asked Yager to gather information about what new parents at UGA are doing now to get leave, and about similar policies at peer and aspirational institutions. Adrian Childs noted that while the Arizona State policy is elegant, it leaves important questions unanswered -- namely who is responsible for funding such leave. Yager said she will gather information and write the first draft of a policy by January, so that the Committee might be able to introduce a proposal to Council in March.

4. Educational and Professional Leave: Akers reported that the subcommittee looking at Educational and Professional Leave at UGA is still gathering information. At least four units within UGA have written policies that are accessible. She suggested the Committee put forth a proposal in Spring 2007 to standardize the procedures for faculty members to attain research leave.

5. ORP: Mark Brown said he has contacted the Office of Human Resources regarding the status of the university's response to announced cuts in the Optional Retirement Plan. He said he will continue trying to get a response, and noted frustration that the office doesn't seem to be maintaining its commitment to addressing this issue.

6. Other: Akers relayed a request she received from a faculty member who asked that faculty be given academic regalia. The Committee noted that the University every semester asks that faculty participate in commencement and other ceremonies requiring regalia. One suggestion: Each college or unit purchases a handful of robes in varying sizes for sharing.