



**USU FACULTY FORUM
MINUTES
November 3, 2008**

Mike Parent called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. The Faculty Forum is held in lieu of the November Faculty Senate meeting. All members of faculty are encouraged to attend. The meeting was broadcast to the Regional Campuses and was also made available through BREEZE allowing comments to be collected and addressed. The agenda included reports regarding: Medicare supplement insurance; 2007 forum issues; care giving proposal.

Medicare Supplement Plan – BrandE Faupell (see handout attached)

A few years ago members of the faculty became concerned with the burden of finding Medicare supplemental insurance and felt it was an issue the University should address. BrandE Faupell reported on the progress and completion of the process of finding a supplemental insurance carrier. A summary of the USU Medicare Advantage Plan was made available to those in attendance and is attached. As employees or retired employees become Medicare eligible, this plan will help pay for insurance costs. The cost of this group plan is 30-40% less than purchasing a supplemental plan on your own. The company the University has chosen is EMIA (Educators Mutual Insurance Association). This plan is a private fee for service, there are no networks. You may see any doctor or hospital as long as they agree to accept EMIA. To date they have had 100% acceptance. Open enrollment for all Medicare plans is November 15 – December 31 of each year and we will follow that same time frame. The plan goes into effect January 1, 2009. There are three options, low, medium and high cost, ranging in price from \$10/month, \$42/month, and \$95/month and they all include a drug plans. There is no age banding or residential requirement as long as you reside in the United States. As long as you are retired from Utah State University and age 65 or older, you will be eligible to purchase the plan, as will be your spouse or domestic partner. Sign up open-houses will be held December 2, 3 & 5. Notices will be sent to employees and retirees.

The University is also putting into place, this spring, a retiree health savings plan. Money can be saved while employed with some tax advantage for healthcare costs after retirement.

Last Year’s Faculty Forum Issues – Mike Parent

- **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design of Green Buildings.** The Faculty Senate passed a two part resolution:

“There is a compelling case of imminent climate change and a resulting movement towards a new paradigm for the use of energy and other natural resources. Utah State university has an opportunity to provide leadership in these key early years of the 21st Century, by both changing our consumption of natural resources and creating new academic programs integrating key knowledge and issues that will define the future.

Therefore, we strongly encourage USU to take the following actions:

Reduce future energy consumption and the associated financial resources, by requiring that all new USU buildings be designed and constructed to meet at the minimum LEED – silver certification.

Encourage and support the faculty to design new academic programs that will integrate knowledge and ideas that connect climate change to energy, natural resources, sustainability, economics, and various cultural and social issues.”

President Albrecht was a charter signatory to the American College and University Presidents Climate Initiative.

Provost Coward could not attend the Forum but shared information with Mike Parent that he asked to be passed along to the faculty.

- **Integration of Regional Campuses into USU (see Power Point Presentation attached).** It was discussed in the last Faculty Forum that a greater effort needed to be made to include regional campus faculty as part of the USU faculty. Facilitating faculty interaction is another key issue. Efforts are being made in both of these areas such as broadcasting the Faculty Forum to the regional campuses. Several workshops have taken place with respect to regional campus and Logan campus faculty.
- **Salary Inversion and Compression (see Power Point Presentation attached).** The Department Heads retreat included a discussion of salary inversion and compression. In late August a plan was put into place at the Provost’s level with the Deans that recognized it would take several years to fully address this issue. There are two ways to try and find funding. One is to be based on enrollment increases that would result in an increase in tuitions received by the university that had not been previously allocated to other university programs. A second is, assuming that we would have the same kind of salary increases that we had in the past year or two where there was an opportunity to provide merit increases, that a percentage of the merit funds would be set aside for equity issues of compression and inversion. Then over a period of approximately three years, it is felt, that the inversion and compression issues could be resolved. Obviously, today we need to see what plays out in the form of legislative appropriations this year. However, it is unsure how this will move forward due to the current budget constraints.

Care Giving Proposal – Ronda Callister (see handout attached)

Last year the Faculty Development and Equity Committee was formed and the twelve members of the committee surveyed their colleagues as to their concerns. The number one concern expressed was the lack of quality licensed infant child care. A Care Giving Policy was designed to address that issue and also be a tool for recruitment and retention of faculty. The policy allows tenured and tenure track faculty to have a semester relief of teaching when a child is born or adopted. The cost of the policy will come from three sources. First there will be a 10% reduction in the faculty member salary during the semester that they have the leave. If there is sick or annual leave available it may partially offset the cost. The remainder of the cost will be funded 70% by central administration and 30% by the department. The proposal has been approved by the Faculty Development and Equity Committee and reviewed and approved by the Benefits and Faculty Welfare Committee. Human Resources and the Provost have also reviewed the policy. Originally the policy contained very broad language to include accident or serious illness of family members; however, this made it difficult to estimate how much the policy would be used and therefore estimate the cost to the University. By narrowing it to childbirth or adoption it was possible to arrive at accurate usage figures. The estimated cost to the Central Administration would be approximately \$34,000 annually. As part of the \$200 million annual salary budget, this is something that we can afford to do to help recruit and retain the best faculty.

Questions were raised about the possibility of extending the coverage to elder care coverage. Although it is disappointing to only have the narrow version of the policy go into effect, some felt it is best to implement the policy in this form due to the current budget situation, and revisit it at some point in the future.

A question was asked as to when this might appear on the Faculty Senate agenda. Mike Parent clarified that this is not part of the Code that the Faculty Senate has authority to change. This is part of the Human Resources 300 section of the Code. The policy will actually come to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate by BrandE Faupell. It would then be forwarded to the Faculty Senate as a report by one of the committees or as a new business item. If it is a report from one of the committees, as is standard practice, it will go on the consent agenda. If it is a new business item discussion will take place in the Faculty Senate and many of your points will be raised. Faculty should talk to department heads and deans, because as the proposal goes through the university's executive committee, they will be making their recommendation to the President and then to the Board of Trustees. If approved, it is expected that the policy will be in place by August 2009.

In response to a question and comment about benefits at USU, Mike Parent asked how many faculty members had been here since the 1970's. He wanted to share some "institutional memory" about why Utah State University has one of the better benefit packages, when taking into consideration health care and retirement, of any of the land grant institutions. The data show that we are second and second only to Oregon State University. What data don't show, is that in the 1970's we enjoyed some pretty good economic times. The Faculty Senate voted at that time to take salary increases in the form of benefits and not actual salary. That has done a several things. It has created part of the inversion/compression problem that we have now. It took us from about 40% state contribution and 60% faculty contribution in our retirement contribution to 100% contribution that comes as a benefit. This allowed us to receive these benefits "pre-tax." When someone says that our benefits are better than someone else's and we ought to cut into the benefits as part of some type of reduction associated with budget problems, one needs to remember that these benefits were not benefits that were given to us. These were benefits that we sought to share with ourselves by diverting our salaries into the benefits that we currently receive in order to get more favorable tax treatment.

Forum Topics

- **Faculty Course Evaluations.** Dr. Raul Arreola, a nationally recognized expert on faculty rating systems, was on campus last month. There is much discussion on whether the University should go with a nationally recognized rating instrument or revise our current system.

Comments in favor of moving to a national system were expressed. Other comments focused on the revision of our current form or system. Mike Parent encouraged those in attendance to seek out the elected faculty member from their department to the Faculty Evaluation Committee and communicate their thoughts with them.

Concerns were raised about the regional campuses evaluations and if there is a clear understanding of when the evaluation should be conducted. The code does not state when evaluations should be done.

Several who attended Dr. Arreola's presentation reinforced the distinction between a rating instrument and evaluation.

- **Classroom Etiquette in the Age of Distractions.** There are sections in the student code that cover the expected behavior in the classroom. It is distracting and difficult to teach and learn in a classroom where there are multiple laptop computers in use or students texting. Possible solutions are for the instructor to walk around the room, focus attention on the offender. There

are instances where proximity is not a solution such as the distance education teachers whose courses are being broadcast. Broadcast classes put more demands on the instructor to keep students engaged.

- **Open Forum – The Open forum resulted in the following comments:**

- (1) A concern was brought up that there seems to be a real disconnect between the honor code which says we will handle things with the highest degree of integrity and the increasing legalism seen around campus. For instance, outside the tennis courts there are signs posted saying this is a hazardous area.
- (2) The faculty role statement asserts “I agree to comply with all the elements stated or implied in this role statement.” The concern is over the word implied. The word implied has no limits, where can you go with implied? This statement seems to have been put together by administrators and not the faculty. My concern is that the Faculty Senate needs to have a strong role and stand up for and defend the faculty interest in those areas.
- (3) The role statements are so much more specific, i.e., “now hear this; this is the way you will be judged from this point on.” Having been in a college where you develop your own role statement with the help of some administrative input after you put your best effort on paper, I find that this is a bit demotivating. It is up to the Faculty Senate to figure out how to deal with this disconnect.”
- (4) Another faculty member agreed that things in the role statements may not have come from faculty, but the role statements are only a template and may be changed to more appropriately fit the role of the faculty.
- (5) Another faculty member expressed concerns from the college of HASS on the tenure and promotion process. External reviews are used more than at other times and there does not seem to be consistency. Regional campus faculty may actually have two Deans which can cause confusion in the process.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:16 p.m.