

[In these minutes: Formation of the Interim Health Benefits Advisory Committee, Discussion with President Yudof]

HEALTH PLAN TASK FORCE (HPTF)

MINUTES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2000

10:00 - 12:00

5TH FLOOR BOARD ROOM, MCNAMARA ALUMNI CENTER

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Dick McGehee (Chair), Linda Aaker, Mary Austin, Allan Baumgarten, Avner Ben-Ner, Susan Brorson, Carol Carrier, Dann Chapman, Marjorie Cowmeadow, Amos Deinard, Keith Dunder, Robert Fahnhorst, Bart Finzel, Bev Hall, Christopher Hulla, Ron Kubik, Fred Morrison, Priscilla Pope, Gailon Roen, Anna Sommers, Robert Sonkowsky, Larry Thompson, Gavin Watt.

REGRETS: George Green, David Hamilton, Harlan Smith.

ABSENT: Sue Mauren, Jason Reed.

1. CHAIR'S REPORT

FINAL REPORT OUTCOME

Dick McGehee reported that the Faculty Senate accepted the final report of the task force at their November 16 meeting and the President plans to implement the recommendations. Additionally, the President has appointed an administrative working group, chaired by Dr. Cerra. Other members of the administrative committee include: Richard Pfitzenreuter, Keith Dunder, Fred Morrison, Sandra Gardebring, Carol Carrier, and John Kralewski. The task force should be reassured that Dr. Cerra's appointment as chair does not present any conflict of interest in terms of the University competing for its employees' health care.

At the Faculty Senate meeting, a fifth recommendation was approved to have the HPTF serve as the interim Health Benefits Advisory Committee (HBAC) until a charge can be jointly developed and approved by the Faculty Senate, Civil Service Committee, and Academic Staff Advisory Committee. President Yudof has sent each task force member a letter indicating his approval of this recommendation.

While the task force will continue, Dick McGehee noted that he will be on leave spring semester in Boulder, Colorado. Therefore, the President has asked Professor Fred Morrison to chair the interim HBAC.

Fred Morrison stated that the interim HBAC will need to make sure that the good ideas from the report are actually implemented. Dr. Cerra's group will not make policy. They will serve as a working group to provide information to the HBAC which will then decide what the policy issues should be.

Q: Will Dr. Cerra's committee have any relationship with SEGIP?

A: The HBAC will need to work with SEGIP and DOER to develop different plans. If different plans cannot be developed, then the HBAC would be the group to recommend separation. Dr. Cerra's committee will provide technical assistance to the President and the HBAC. Throughout this process, Chris Hulla and Buck Consultants will remain involved with the HBAC.

Fred Morrison noted that the HBAC will need to stay on top of cost containment efforts by the state and the President since shifting more costs to employees is always a possibility. Areas marked for improvement in the final report, such as CAM and out-of-area coverage, will need to be items that the HBAC continues to push with the administration.

DOMESTIC PARTNERS

Linda Aaker noted that she had heard that the state law was ambiguous in terms of defining domestic partners. This might provide a loophole for providing these benefits versus asking the legislature to change the law. It was suggested that the state attorney general could make a ruling on the ambiguous language, but this did not seem to be the chosen possibility.

Marjorie Cowmeadow noted that her sources said that DOER was rethinking its asking the legislature to revise the law and was instead looking into including this point in the union contracts. While this approach has been tried before, domestic partner benefits has also been pulled from the negotiations in lieu of other proposals. It was suggested that Allan Spear serve as a facilitator during negotiations to make this happen.

THANKS

Dick McGehee then thanked all members for their service on the task force throughout the entire process. He then added special thanks to members who were present from the beginning: Avner Ben-Ner, Amos Deinard, Robert Fahnhorst, Bart Finzel, David Hamilton, Harlan Smith, and Robert Sonkowsky. Two other individuals also joined the task force close to the beginning of the process: Linda Aaker and Carol Carrier.

Task force members then extended great thanks to Dick McGehee for his leadership during the entire process. Dick McGehee was then given a round of applause.

DOER PROPOSAL

Professor McGehee then turned to information distributed by DOER at a recent meeting. While this is not a solid proposal, it shows a modified case system that DOER would be willing to implement. The tiers in this proposal are distinguished by the out-of-pocket costs versus premium levels.

At the meeting, DOER was asked if this proposal would save any money. Since it has not been tried it would be hard to estimate until it is tried. Where it can actually be delivered was also questioned and DOER is looking into the possibility. From the employee's perspective, there would be nothing gained from this proposal.

2. FORMATION OF THE INTERIM HEALTH BENEFITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Professor McGehee noted that the interim HBAC will have two tasks: work with campus groups to approve a charge for a permanent HBAC and continue with the issues outlined in the final report.

Professor Morrison noted that the interim HBAC will have a big job to complete in the next few months since many decisions will need to be made. In terms of the HBAC, the issue of who charges the HBAC, the President or the employees, was raised. Most employees agree that the Faculty Senate, the Civil Service Committee, and the Academic Staff Advisory Committee should jointly charge the HBAC. Union participation should also be encouraged, as it has been during this process.

He did suggest a few changes to the HBAC. The first being that terms are extended to four years so that each member is present during two contract negotiations. The second is more precise legal working in regards to the inclusion of union representatives.

Another priority for the interim HBAC will be to assure that affordable health care options are available to every employee. While doing this, the interim HBAC will need to keep pressing for the issues outlined in the final report and then look at the trade-offs.

Linda Aaker suggested that members go back to their respective employee groups and explain that each group can continue to function separately but that one committee is needed for common interests and benefits to present a unified front to the administration.

It was then suggested that additional representatives from the Civil Service Committee and the Academic Staff Advisory Committee be added to the interim HBAC so that they build up knowledge and can provide continuity to the permanent HBAC.

3. DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT YUDOF

President Yudof joined the task force and expressed his gratefulness that members were willing to continue their service on the HBAC since on-going work is needed on this complex issue. Since Professor McGehee was not appointed for life, President Yudof has asked Professor Morrison to chair the interim HBAC. The new committee will need to work with the state to make changes to the system while the process is still going, work on relations with DOER, and work in cooperation with an administrative committee chaired by Dr. Cerra.

With no further comments, Professor McGehee thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Rebecca Hippert
University Senate