

BENEFITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
MARCH 14, 2002

[In these minutes: Welcome and Introductions, RFP Update, Wellness Program Discussion]

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

PRESENT: Gavin Watt, Vice Chair, Linda Aaker, Pam Wilson, Michelle Lamere, Nancy Wilson, Don Cavalier, Joseph Jameson, Carla Volkman-Lien, Wendy Williamson, George Green, Gailon Roen, Susan Brorson, Amos Deinard, Richard McGehee, Peh Ng, Larry Thompson, Steve Burrows, Barry Melcher

REGRETS: Fred Morrison, Chair, Jody Ebert, Rachel Estroff, Marjorie Cowmeadow

ABSENT: David Johnson, Carol Carrier, Frank Cerra, Theodor Litman, Dann Chapman, Keith Dunder

OTHER(S): Kathy Pouliot, Linda Blake, James Turman

I). Steve Burrows provided members with an update on the RFP process. Life and AD&D proposals were received from Hartford Life, Met Life, Minnesota Life, UnumProvident and MLL Life. The BAC's consultant, Chris Hulla, has conducted a preliminary analysis of the responses and the rates look very good compared to current rates. Remaining proposals for dental and retiree medical are due by March 15th. Subcommittee members will receive copies of the proposals as soon as they can be assembled to allow as much time as possible for members to review them prior to vendor interviews. Interview schedules are listed below:

- Tuesday, March 26 - life insurance
- Wednesday, March 27 - dental insurance
- Thursday, March 28th - retiree medical

II). Continued Discussion of Establishing a Wellness Program: A handout was distributed to members comparing wellness initiatives at other Big 10 Universities. Mr. Watt volunteered to send a list of the links to Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, for distribution. Additional handouts included an article on obesity and student health surveys from Boynton.

The meeting was turned over to Linda Aaker, chair of the Wellness Subcommittee. Ms. Aaker believes that the Wellness Subcommittee is still in phase 1 which is deciding how to design its wellness initiative. In order for the Subcommittee to move forward it is

necessary to decide on the Subcommittee's composition. If the coordinate campuses are to be involved in a meaningful way there needs to be a systematic approach. While Don Cavalier from the Crookston campus is on the Subcommittee there is no representation from Duluth or Morris.

There is a need to focus on setting realistic goals in order to give the Subcommittee some direction. Ms. Aaker referenced a handbook by Dr. Michael O'Donnell titled "How to Design Workplace Health Promotion Programs." Two categories were cited as being helpful in designing a wellness program, 'Management Goals' and 'Health Goals'. Ms. Aaker asked members to participate in a discussion about what goals are important to a wellness initiative. A majority of members believed that the goal should be to implement a wellness program that would focus on the overall health of employees and that such an approach would benefit both the workforce as well as management. Discussion highlights included:

- The University needs to consider stress reduction as part of any wellness program it designs. There is a program headed up by Thomas Fiutak, Director, Conflict and Change Center in the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The Center helps organizations deal with internal conflict and supplies mediators to resolve conflict between faculty, department supervisors and staff.
- A suggestion was made to find out the resources the University currently has and to start at this point when designing a wellness program. Some existing programs include: Employee Assistance Program, Grievance Office, the Supervisor Training Program, Career Development Center, HR Consultants. It is important to make faculty and staff aware of the University's resources. A concern was raised that because the University is so decentralized it will be challenging to disseminate information about a wellness program.
- Invite guests such as Thomas Fiutak, David Johnson, Jim Meland, etc. to a future meeting to get their input on where gaps in service exist at the University.
- Develop a culture of wellness. A wellness program needs to be ingrained in all employees' minds at every level.
- Institute an initiative similar to the 'Beautiful U' initiative that came from the top down. Because successful programs seem to come from the top down, a member suggested that a goal could be for the President to persuade the Deans of the various colleges to promote and rally around this effort and spread the initiative across the University community.
- Ms. Aaker felt the discussion was focusing more on solutions rather than the goals of a wellness program.
- Ms. Aaker provided members with statistics on health issues ranked according to percentage of organizational expenditures: stress, past tobacco use, weight, exercise, tobacco, diabetes, depression and blood pressure.
- A wellness group meets every Monday at the West Bank Office Building (WBOB). Education and communication to WBOB employees has advanced the evolution of this program.
- Measurement of results from an institutional level may be difficult to gauge.

- It was mentioned that Professor Morrison is trying to get a sense of the direction the Wellness Subcommittee is going. As a result, Ms. Aaker is trying to identify where efforts should be focused e.g. a pilot program on a coordinate campus or a system-wide program.
- Mention was made of the Subcommittee conducting a conference call with representatives from Ohio State's wellness program to gain insight on how they established their wellness program. Ohio State could provide information on their successes and also what they would have done differently.
- Ms. Aaker has discussed with Professor Morrison the need for broad representation on the Subcommittee and that she would like the breadth of the Subcommittee to be more inclusive. Committee members were curious about Professor Morrison's hesitancy with regard to this request. Ms. Aaker said budget constraints were one consideration.
- A Committee member asked Ms. Aaker what the full BAC Committee can do to facilitate the Subcommittee's efforts. Ms. Aaker's response was to either have the Committee identify areas they would like to have an impact on or to continue their discussions in order for members to feel comfortable before finalizing their decision. The following suggestions were mentioned: focus on stress, use a public health approach rather than focusing on one item, keep information flowing to employees on wellness issues through good communication, provide healthy lifestyle education.
- Don Cavalier mentioned that the Crookston campus is moving forward with the questionnaire that was distributed at an earlier Wellness Subcommittee meeting. Wellness data will be collected on Crookston's faculty and staff. They hope by the end of April to move forward to promote a more healthy campus climate.
- It was suggested the Committee collect baseline data to determine the issues faced by the University community. In response, it was stated that the Committee already knows what the problems are and, as a result, it should focus its efforts on areas that will have the most impact on the University community. Prevalence of problems should drive the Committee's efforts. It was suggested that the University could assist its population in understanding lifestyle risks. The University could devise a campaign and educate employees on health risks related to obesity, exercise, smoking, etc. If an employee doesn't understand the risk there probably is no motivation to change their behavior. According to the handbook referenced earlier, Ms. Aaker stated there is no correlation between awareness and behavior.
- Steve Burrows from Human Resources put forth the following question to members: Do members prefer to use an established list of prevalence issues or would members prefer customizing the list for the University's population? One member voiced she would like to have the program customized for the University. An objective could be for the University to assist its population in understanding the entire range of lifestyle risks.
- Mr. Burrows admitted trying to help the Committee decide on its focus. Based on the discussions that have taken place, presentations that have been given and independent reading members have done, it needs to decide where it wants to start so it can move forward. Mr. Burrows, based on today's discussion, mentioned

stress reduction as a possible starting point. A member said that rather than focusing on a single item the breadth of its focus should be much broader. Ms. Aaker's hope from today's discussion was to get a sense of what the Committee should look at in order to determine what should be measured in phase 2. Then, once the Committee has collected enough data it would decide what recommendations should be made to the administration.

- Ms. Aaker's sense is that the Committee has a hesitancy to make a commitment without more information.
- A member identified 2 questions before the Committee: a). What the University can do to improve its work environment?; and b). What an individual can do to improve their overall health?
- Ms. Aaker recommended the Committee look at Boynton Health Services' student survey and make sure it asks questions that get at the issues discussed today. Then, the Subcommittee needs to decide what questions it wants to ask and bring these questions back to the full Committee for endorsement. Once the questions are formulated and the data is collected, the Committee can narrow its focus. A survey can help give the Committee direction.
- Mr. Burrows said Human Resources presents to the Board of Regents in May and June. The June 8th meeting is pivotal because the Regents will expect HR to report on how it has done managing benefits, reducing costs and promoting health and wellness. The Committee needs to have an outline for the Board of Regents charting the direction the Committee is taking on its wellness initiative.
- Ms. Aaker's major concern is the Wellness Subcommittee is so small and she has been hesitant to move forward without more representation. The Committee passed a unanimous motion to expand the Subcommittee's membership to include interested parties who are willing to serve. The Committee empowered Ms. Aaker to broaden her Subcommittee structure.
- A suggestion was made to contact Peter Zetterberg, Director, Institutional Research and Reporting, in conjunction with the Office for Measurement Services on how to actually set up and distribute a survey.

Vice chair, Gavin Watt, summarized the "recharge" to the Wellness Subcommittee as follows:

1. The Subcommittee should be constituted with appropriate members to meet its needs.
2. The Subcommittee needs to design a measurement process.
3. The Subcommittee should report back to the full Committee on April 4th because the Office of Human Resources needs to report and update the Board of Regents in May and June on the progress of the wellness initiative being undertaken by the Benefits Advisory Committee. This is a very high profile issue.

III). With no further business, Vice chair, Gavin Watt adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate