

**FACULTY WELFARE COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT
2006-2007**

Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC) members for 2006-2007 were: Beth Bilderback (Libraries), Joan Donohue (Moore School of Business), Darris Hassell (Spanish, Regional Campus Representative from USC Lancaster), Zaryab Iqbal (Political Science), Don Jordan (Center for Science Education), Tim Mousseau (Biological Sciences), Abdullah Sakarcan (The School of Medicine), and Gene Reeder (ex-officio member as Chair of the Faculty Senate). The Committee was chaired by Marja Warehime (Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures).

At its first meeting, the FWC voted to continue the previous year's work, focusing on three benefits of particular interest to faculty:

- preventive health care
- tuition aid for faculty children
- parental leave policy

As the Committee devoted most of its attention to this agenda, the report will first address progress on the agenda and then discuss issues brought to the Committee in the course of the year.

Preventive Care

Building on last year's work, the committee hoped to send representatives to meet with our liaison to the State Budget and Control Board, Mr. Robin Tester. With this meeting in mind, the Committee asked faculty to convey concerns about our health benefits. The responses we received all related to the BCBS State Plan which insures the majority of faculty on all USC campuses. The issues that emerged concerned difficulties in getting coverage equivalent to what is available in SC while traveling abroad and issues related to drug coverage. One faculty member cited the inability to obtain coverage for a prescription drug that was not on the list of preferred drugs even when the doctor certified the patient was allergic to the preferred drug. The committee would like to thank those who took the time to contribute this information—it was helpful in pinpointing problem areas.

Unfortunately, the Committee was not able to schedule a meeting with Mr. Tester as planned. Despite communications from the College of Charleston, whose Faculty Welfare Committee intended to join USC, Clemson, and USC-Aiken in exploring the issue of preventive care, preventive care remains an area in which the Committee has not made significant progress this year. This is certainly in part because State Health Insurance Program staff, as insurance professionals, determine the nature of the state health plans, and the university communities within the state (despite their unique needs) are only one part of their client base.

The Committee feels that it is important for faculty to continue to press for better preventive care; that is, for annual physicals, including an annual gynecological examination for women, colonoscopies, as well as other preventive measures known to

be cost effective. However, it is clear that a committee, including representatives from the School of Medicine and the School of Public Health, in addition to members of the Administration, would be able to speak with a stronger voice in advocating such benefits. The Faculty Welfare Committee welcomes the arrival of Vice Provost for Faculty Development, Dr. Christine Curtis, who joined the Administration in February. The Committee hopes to work with her, perhaps to try to organize such a committee, but also to continue to lobby for change.

Tuition Aid for Faculty Children

Last year the Committee began to investigate the concern that available tuition aid for faculty (primarily Life Scholarships and Palmetto Fellowships) had not kept pace with increasing tuition costs. Thus putting faculty at a disadvantage in sending their children to USC and leading both prospective and current faculty to consider other institutions that offered this benefit. The Committee conducted a formal survey in the Spring of 2006, which led to the conclusion that faculty considered tuition relief an important benefit both in attracting and retaining excellent faculty. This was also a conclusion of a report drafted by the Faculty Welfare and Development Committee of Coastal Carolina University in November of 2006, which noted that “although the dependent children and spouse tuition benefit is not abundant in South Carolina, the majority of academic institutions in the United States do provide this benefit to faculty. In a study conducted by the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1999), 67% of academic institutions provided tuition remission for a faculty member’s spouse and dependant children.”¹ The FWC recognizes that a very high percentage of incoming freshmen at USC benefit from Life Scholarships, however these scholarships no longer fully cover the increasing expenses of a college education in the state, and current benefits are threatened by decreasing lottery profits. Moreover, the existence of the benefit itself is viewed as one measure of the faculty’s value to the university. The FWC believes that this benefit would bring rewards far greater than the actual cost of the benefit. Accordingly, the Chair of the Committee addressed the Board of Trustees Liaison Committee on November 16, 2006 and asked that trustees consider the possibility of tuition waivers for USC faculty children who meet USC admission requirements. This proposal is still under consideration.

Parental leave

In last year’s report the Committee recommended that the University develop a policy on parental leave, noting that the current situation was a patchwork of negotiations between individual faculty members and their Chairs and Deans. The default benefit was assured by the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows a maximum of 12 weeks of leave, and must be taken as Sick Leave or Leave Without Pay. This has led

¹ Preliminary Research Findings on Implementing a Spousal and Dependand’s Tuition Benefit for Faculty at Coastal Carolina University. Presented to Provost DeCenzo by the Faculty Welfare and Development Committee. (11/19/06)

some younger faculty women to exhaust their sick leave in order to continue their health insurance and other benefits, while others were able to negotiate more liberal benefits. Believing that the lack of a policy on parental leave is detrimental to both hiring and retention, the FWC sponsored a brown bag luncheon in order to gather information about faculty experiences concerning the use of Sick Leave for maternity leave. The Committee also asked attendees what they would consider an ideal leave policy. The FWC is grateful to our Vice President for Human Resources, Jane Jameson; Jeff Cargile, Director, Human Resource Programs & Services; Vice Provost for Faculty Development, Christine Curtis; and Elise Ahyi, Assistant Provost for Policy, for attending the meeting.

One of the first issues to emerge was the difficulty of obtaining information about maternity and paternal leave, in part perhaps because they are not addressed as separate issues in any policy manuals online, but are treated as forms of Sick Leave. Faculty attending the meeting described situations in which Chairs could not locate information and did not know that the tenure clock could be stopped during maternity leave. In fact, under current South Carolina law, there is no provision for Maternity or Parental Leave. The faculty member is only eligible for Sick Leave. Many attendees found this shortsighted. Others noted the necessity to distinguish further between maternity leave, which was a medical issue, and parental leave, which did not necessarily involve medical issues.

There was a general consensus among attendees that a faculty friendly policy would involve:

- a semester's leave from teaching (without loss of sick leave) with full pay and benefits
- stoppage of the tenure clock (which is possible under current policy, but only if requested in writing)

Subsequently, Vice Provost Curtis has been involved in drafting a series of family-friendly policies, notably a "Modified Duties Semester for Faculty" under which a faculty member could request up to a semester of modified duties for a variety of different family situations, one of which would be the birth or adoption of a child. The policy allows the primary caregiver, typically the mother, one semester of modified duties. The primary caregiver is released from onsite duties during that semester. The secondary caregiver, typically the father, receives one semester of modified duties but is not necessarily released from onsite duties. The secondary caregiver's modified duties are tailored to the person's needs. The tenure clock extension policy has been revised to be much more comprehensive and also offer a paternal extension. This report will not attempt to sum up all of the elements of the new policies as they are now online at:

www.sc.edu/policies/indxtabl.html#ACAF

The FWC would like to acknowledge the very great value and importance of these changes, which represent a significant effort to create a more supportive work environment. The creation of such policies is a major effort to place USC among the number of peer institutions that have established (as of May 2007) parental leave policies:

NC State
The University of Colorado
The University of Indiana

The University of Minnesota
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
The University of Rhode Island
The University of Virginia
The University of Washington
Virginia Tech

Survey of Faculty Concerns

As part of its effort to focus on issues of greatest importance to faculty, the FWC conducted an online survey to identify the top five concerns to faculty. This went out to all campuses during the Spring of 2007. The Committee owes great thanks to Yvonne Dudley in the Faculty Senate Office for her work in collecting and reporting the data. As the FWC sent out an email reporting on the survey results, which are summarized briefly here.

The top five concerns of faculty in order of importance are:

- 1. Salary** (including salary compression issues).
- 2. Human Resources/Benefits:** tuition aid, parental leave, desire for improved drug and dental insurance benefits as well as the very low state contribution to retirement (which is even lower for ORP).
- 3. Work environment:** problems caused by deferred maintenance, lack of space, lack of cleanliness of buildings and restrooms, accessibility.
- 4. Administrative and managerial concerns** including the lack of communication between Deans and Chairs, Faculty and Chairs, Administration and Deans, autocratic administrative styles, red tape and few opportunities for exchanges and faculty interaction
- 5. Additional funding concerns:** non-competitive stipends for Graduate Assistants, the lack of sufficient research support and the need for institutional support for research in the Humanities and Social Sciences where there are fewer available grants.

Other issues:

The most significant of these issues is the effect of state policy on meal reimbursement for faculty traveling on University business. The current maximum reimbursement is \$32 a day within the US. As a result, USC faculty are being asked to do the equivalent of pay their own expenses when traveling for the University. One possible solution might be to allow individuals traveling on federal grants to use federal per diem rates. While the committee investigated this issue, discovering that if faculty traveled on Educational Foundation monies they could get full reimbursement, the only other solution proposed was that an effort was underway to obtain an exception from state policies. The FWC feels this is a problem that deserves further attention.

FWC member Joan Donohue drafted a letter to Jane Jameson, VP of Human Resources, asking that the University consider the adoption of Roth-style supplemental retirement accounts. Joan attached an article from *The Wall Street Journal* (Weds. September 6, 2006), which indicated that Roth-style 403b plans tend to be more advantageous than traditional 403 and 401K plans in most circumstances. After contacting eight peer

southeastern universities, we found that seven out of the eight offer (or will offer at the end of 2007) Roth-style accounts to their employees. The FWC needs to continue to work with Human Resources to facilitate adoption of Roth-style retirement plans at USC.

Respectfully submitted,
Marja Warehime, Chair
Languages, Literatures, and Cultures