

UGARA COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Wray Nicholson House Conference Room

Monday, October 12, 2015

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Present: Tommy Altman, Lindsey Copus, Mark Eason, Freda Scott Giles, Sharron Hannon, Travis Jackson, Marcus Jennings, Tom Landrum, Tom Lauth (teleconference), Sherri Stephens, Sharron Thompson. Guests in Attendance: Juan Jarrett, UGA Associate Vice President for Human Resources.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Mark Eason.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the September 10 meeting were approved.

Committee Reports

- Treasurer's Report. The current balance is \$15,183.61. There are two outstanding invoices that have not yet been paid. A brief discussion followed about the nominal expenditures from this account. Those have been for web design and updates at a rate of \$40/hour. The treasurer's fund is in a Foundation account and payments are processed through the Alumni Association Office.

Old Business

- USG Retirees Council Report. In Brahm Verma's absence, Lauth gave a short report on Verma's recent work at the USG Retirees Council. Verma is the appointed chair of the Retirees Council Communications Committee. The committee has prepared an extensive report which will be presented to the Retirees Council at the October 23 meeting, where Lauth will represent Verma. The report underscores and documents the current level of communication between the University system and retirees. Further, the report proposes techniques that might improve communication such as getting accurate mailing lists, communicating through a number of media or technological devices to help bring the USG into the modern era in being able to identify and locate retirees. A major feature of this report is the one mentioned in our last meeting which proposed a University System Retirees Council at the institutional level. The argument being that this would be a part of the improvement in overall communication within the system. As far as Lauth knows, the USG Retirees Council has taken no action that would have an impact on us (UGARA).

No other old business.

New Business

- Update on UGA HR Retiree Health Insurance Information Center and the Retiree Health Enrollment Process.
 1. Information Center. Travis Jackson provided a report on the Center which opened on September 29. Walk-ins initially averaged on a daily basis anywhere from 50-60 with a high of 83 on one day. There have been fewer people over the last few days at the Center. Between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., there are approximately five counselors in the office. No appointments are scheduled, but the longest wait for anyone so far has been 20 minutes and, in most cases, the wait has been five minutes or less. Whenever there has been a large group of people waiting, they have been moved to a larger meeting room and the center has offered a group session. This has provided the retirees the same information they are getting in an individual setting and that has worked well. Eight retirees have been re-hired to work at the center (including Paul Kurtz) and all are doing a wonderful job according to Jackson. Comments and feedback have been very positive. The Center will be open through December 23 and there will likely have a few people there the first few weeks of January to

finish up. There was a discussion as to the type of questions being asked at the Center. Jackson noted that the main question is “What is the same plan that I have at UGA”. Since the Center cannot provide advice about plans, counselors can only help retirees understand what type of plan they currently have. Since the name of the UGA plan has changed over the past five years, that has led to confusion about the type of plan retirees currently have. Counselors can also help retirees prepare for what is needed when they have their phone call with Aon. In particular, counselors can debunk some of the misconceptions that drug prescriptions must be entered online prior to the phone meeting. There have been inquiries about opening a resource center in South Georgia (Tifton or other areas). That is not feasible because of limited staff resources, but HR is looking at doing some type of virtual presentation.

2. Enrollment Process. Jackson informed the Council that when retirees call Aon to actually enroll that the hold time is typically less than 30 seconds. To date, approximately 1,000 of the 19,000 USG retirees have enrolled. Jackson was asked what feedback he was hearing concerning USG retirees’ interaction with their AON representative. He reported the majority of the comments were positive. Counselors are encouraging retirees to go through the phone call and then follow up with questions, if needed, since many questions will be answered in the first phone Aon phone call. Potential plans are typically identified for retirees by Aon, but out-of-state retirees may have limited options for a plan, particularly if the retiree lives in a rural area. Landrum commented that he had his phone call and it was a positive experience. Eason also gave an example of a retiree he and Dot Cofer knew in Colorado who also had a good experience after spending three hours on the phone with an Aon representative. Jackson also commented that there had been some confusion about the current UGA dental plan. Retirees who currently have dental insurance in retirement can keep that plan through the University of Georgia unless a retiree chooses to cancel it and go through the exchange. Jackson was asked about the process for new retirees (individuals who will retire in the future or who will turn 65 after retirement). An “Intent to Retire Folder” is being sent from HR to Aon weekly so it is crucial that employees intending to retire contact UGA HR early (three months out recommended in order to avoid a gap in coverage). For employees already retired, but not yet reached 65, a file has already been sent to AON with retirees 63 years and 11 months and these retirees will be contacted by AON three months out. HR will be working with Aon to identify those who don’t enroll by December 31. Landrum asked a question regarding who maintains records on retirees (addresses, changes, etc.). Currently those address changes are maintained by UGA while some of the smaller institutions have shared services (ADP payroll platform) and don’t maintain those records. Jarrett and Jackson noted that once a USG “Retiree Centralization Project” is implemented, there will be some modification in recordkeeping. UGA will still have responsibility for collection of our retiree information, but it will be in a shared environment in the future and the USG system office will have better capability to get communication to retirees without relying on the institution. Lauth expressed thanks to Jarrett and Jackson for their work on behalf of retirees and asked them to express thanks to Ryan Nesbitt for the financial support and resources toward this effort. Jarrett shared that the system office has heard our concerns and has reached out for input from UGARA and UGA. In addition, USG ensured that an Aon representative was available at our resource center for the initial first few weeks to help train employees.

Suggested Actions Following Special Meeting with Jim Day Group

1. Specific Questions. Lauth stated that only the USG office can answer the specific questions about the retiree healthcare program (questions one and two). Questions three through eight can be answered by Aon and many have now been answered in information sessions. Lauth asked the Council how he should proceed and stated his willingness to include the questions (one and two) in a letter to the Vice Chancellor. Asking these questions would demonstrate to the group that we heard them and would

communicate to the USG Office that these are persistent concerns of retirees. The other questions could be included as FAQ questions in a HR document/web page. Jarrett asked that his office be copied if a letter is sent to the Vice Chancellor so that any future responses could be coordinated to make sure that the same language or verbiage is used in communication with retirees.

2. Link UGARA with academic programs. There was further discussion about the idea of Gerontology Center doing a study on the impact of the insurance change on retirees. While this would be an interesting policy study for the Gerontology Center, how should the Council proceed? Discussion suggested that the director of the Gerontology Center could be contacted to determine interest in conducting a study. Lauth will communicate to the director about a potential study. It would then be up to the Gerontology Center to determine if they have an interest.
3. Other questions.
 - (a) What is the future direction of this organization? That will hinge on what happens at the system level regarding whether there will be institutional counterpart organizations. There is much uncertainty if this will happen.
 - (b) Question regarding organizational lobbying for USG retirees. The Council noted that the Board of Regents retirees make up a small portion of TRS retirees compared to the number of public school teachers. Becoming a lobbying organization would be a very different role for UGARA. Before UGARA could commit to that, more conversations within the UGARA Council are needed. Most agreed, however, that infrastructure required for lobbying is probably beyond what the Council is able to do, but we agreed it is good to think about what our relationship is going to be in the future in regard to the Legislature and the Board of Regents. In the past, we have considered UGARA primarily as a conduit for information. What will the next evolution of UGARA be? Council members agreed that we should think about how we can be an even more effective conduit of information.
- Other New Business: Hannon brought up the topic of posting an electronic version of our UGARA minutes on our website, perhaps starting with this academic year. Since a previous UGARA Council decided against posting minutes, a discussion followed about the pros and cons of proceeding. Overall, there was generally a favorable response from Council members. Since there is no UGARA newsletter, this might be helpful for the people wondering what UGARA does on their behalf. Many organizations such as University Council and Staff Council post their minutes. One consideration was first checking our by-laws to see if the Council could go into an executive session should there be a particular concern or problem from an individual retiree that should not be made public within the minutes. Noting that the Council went into executive session to discuss a matter could then be noted. Although if the Council is subject to Georgia Open Records (which it probably is), then any decision would then need to be made public as well. Lauth will look at the by-laws.
- Considerations of Speaker for New Retirees Reception (May 5, 2016). Hannon proposed asking Pat Allen, a UGA retiree, to be our speaker. All agreed that Allen would be a good choice because he has been involved in the Athens business community, The University of Georgia, and many volunteer activities. Hannon motioned that Allen be asked and Thompson seconded. Motion carried and Lauth agreed to contact Allen to invite him to be a speaker.

Next Meeting: November 9, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Sharron C. Thompson, Secretary