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Right Flier: Newsletter of the AAUP-WSU Special Edition April 2008

American Association of University Professors-Wright State University

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The Right Flier

Newsletter of the AAUP-WSU

Special Edition, April 2008

Editor, Henry Ruminski

Administrative Assistant, Connie Jacobs

What Did the Administration Know and When Did They Know It?

Rudy Fichtenbaum, Chief Negotiator & Jim Vance, Communication Officer

A Tale of Two Quotes

In our bargaining session with the administration on Friday, April 25, Dr. Matt Filipic, Senior Vice President for Business and Fiscal Affairs, joined the administration's team to talk with us about compensation. Dr. Filipic reported that over the past year, the cost of medical claims per member per month rose by 20%, and likewise that Anthem (the company with which Wright State contracts for health insurance coverage) is asking for a 23.45% rate hike for the coming fiscal year, an increase of more than \$4 million, in comparison to increases averaging about \$1.7 million annually for the past four or five years.

In an effort to better understand the administration's HSA proposal we made an extensive information request on April 8, 2008. On Monday, April 28, 2008 we were given access to three boxes of material containing some of the information we requested. In reviewing that information, we learned that the administration had received a second quote from Anthem about ten days prior; this second quote entailed a substantially smaller rate increase, 19.74%, a savings of \$660,000 in comparison to the first quote.



But on April 25, when Dr. Filipic made his appearance at negotiations, the administration made no mention of this second, significantly lower quote, despite the administration having received it about April 18 – a full week beforehand. That strikes us as, let us say, odd.

What did the administration know about this second rate quote, and when did they know it? Would we have ever been informed about this second quote had it not been for our information request? Will Anthem offer a third quote, one that is lower still? Will the administration tell us about it?

A Healthy Improvement

Also at the April 25 bargaining session, our Negotiating Team outlined an alternative approach to moderating the rise in health care costs. We knew we could improve upon the approach the administration took, whose essential character is to penalize people who are unlucky enough to become injured or ill. Indeed, it was easy to find an innovative plan already in effect at Ohio State. OSU's "Incentive Program" provides medical premium discounts for individuals who complete a confidential Personal Health Assessment, and also monetary payments for those who undertake activities like attending health workshops or fairs, getting an annual physical exam or a flu shot, or monitoring their blood pressure.

In other words, Ohio State is attempting to control medical costs by helping their employees and dependents to improve their health! Our team told the administration that we should do the same here at Wright State.

Now we have good news and bad news. As to the bad, the administration seemed surprised at our proposal, as if they had not heard of this approach before. But beyond their surprise, they did seem receptive to our idea – good!

Imagine *our* surprise when, while digging through the boxes we got in response to our April 8 information request, we saw this very sort of health improvement plan detailed in reports the administration obtained from their current health care consultant (Advanced Benefits Planning, Inc.). In fact, the **first** section in a notebook pertaining to meetings held in August 2007 describes an Anthem “Worksite Wellness Solutions” program with many of the features in Ohio State’s plan. How about that?



Likewise, we obtained a report Dr. Filipic gave to Wright State’s Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, Mr. Allan Boggs. This report, dated March 19, 2008, was attached to a memo dated April 11, 2010 (sic) from Mr. Boggs to three persons, one being the Associate Provost, Dr. Bill Rickert, who serves as the administration’s Chief Negotiator in bargaining with AAUP. The report specifies “best practices” for lowering healthcare expenditures *“without simply reducing benefits and shifting costs to ... employees, while improving health status.”* This quotation, italics and all, comes from the report’s **first** sentence, and the **first** best practice among four the report describes is “Employee Wellness Programs.” How about that?!



What did the administration know about the virtues of health improvement/wellness programs, and when did they know it? Do they even read the reports they pay consultants to provide, or those that they pass to each other? Would they even have mentioned health improvement programs had we not raised the issue ourselves? *Why does it seem that the administration’s focus is on shifting health care costs to Bargaining Unit Faculty rather than reducing those costs by helping us become healthier?*

Sad but True

Now the sad truth is that the administration at Wright State has a long and inglorious history of being a laggard when it comes to benefits for faculty. The administration spends less and we faculty spend more for health insurance compared to other state universities in Ohio, although in our third (current) contract we closed the gap. Wright State was one of the last state universities to offer its faculty vision benefits, 100% coverage for preventive dental care, and 100% coverage for dental sealants for children under the age of 14. Wright State was among the last to offer domestic partner benefits and agreed to do so only after AAUP-WSU began organizing faculty to take action protesting the failure of the University to follow the lead of our sister institutions in offering this benefit.

Sealing the Deal

It took us six years to get the administration to pay for dental sealants, obtaining this benefit only in our third (current) contract. They continually argued that paying for sealants would be too expensive. After finally agreeing to offer this benefit, we found out that the total annual cost for offering this benefit to all employees at the entire University was only \$8,000.

Isn’t it time that the administration started living up to the Mission Statement they crafted for the University? “...Wright State will provide: ...leadership in health, education and human services...” Providing leadership in the Miami Valley starts at home. It starts by addressing the challenges we face with respect to health care with innovative thinking, i.e., “thinking outside of the boxes.” Has the administration spoken to the Deans of the College of Nursing and Health, the Boonshoft School of Medicine, and the School of Professional Psychology to see how we could offer our own wellness plan to employees at Wright State? Isn’t this the type of innovative thinking we should expect from our administration? Let’s put an end to the retrograde approach to employee benefits offered by the administration by telling them we will not accept their HSA proposal.