

Faculty Welfare Committee

Annual Report, 2005-2006

21 April 2006

Committee Members: Alice Ammerman (Public Health), Chair (2005); Kaja Finkler (Anthropology) (2007); Sharon James (Classics) (2006); Laura Linnan (Public Health) (2006); Douglas MacLean (Philosophy) (2007); Diana McDuffee (Health Affairs Library) (2007); Tim McMillan (African and African-American Studies) (2006); Stephen May (Communication Studies) (2006); Jill Moore (Government) (2006); Fred Mueller (Exercise and Sports Science) (2007); Sam Weir (Family Medicine) (2006). Peter Reinhardt (Environment, Health and Safety) (ex officio)

Charge and Composition: The Faculty Welfare Committee is appointed by the chair of the faculty. The committee monitors and works toward the improvement of faculty working conditions, including salaries and benefits.

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The committee was reconstituted last year at the request of the Chair of the Faculty to allow considered focus on issues relating to health benefits and wellness.

The committee also raised a variety of other concerns including salary inequities, parking, child care, the impact of resource scarcity, and general work overload. The committee agreed to continue its work in subcommittees with the following focus:

- (1) State Health Plan and UNC System Pilot: providing feedback on proposed plan as it evolves and input is needed; as appropriate, strategizing regarding approaches for communicating with UNC-CH faculty and staff and legislators; if approved, work on further communication strategies to assist faculty and staff to understand their options and benefits.
- (2) Health Campus/Wellness/On-Site Health Care Services: cataloguing and reviewing existing and prior programs on campus; determining major needs and gaps; coordinating with Employee Forum; working with administration and State Health Plan as appropriate; considering approaches to evaluation.
- (3) Other Issues: child care; parking; coping with resource scarcity; salary inequity; work overload.

Several members of the Faculty Welfare Committee remain involved with ongoing discussions and work of the UNC Improved Health Care Steering Committee whose initial charge was to propose a UNC System State Health Plan Pilot to test an alternative approach to health care and wellness benefits. As this pilot proposal was not passed by the legislature, the committee continues to consider health benefit issues relevant to the 16 campuses and make recommendations to the State Health Plan as to how the needs of UNC System faculty and staff can be better served.

Members of the Faculty Welfare Health Campus/Wellness/On-Site Health Care Services Committee have recently secured funding from the Provost's Office for the following proposal. The proposal sponsors are meeting to develop a plan for constituting the Steering Committee and hiring the staff position:

Worksite Wellness Assessment and Planning Coordinator for UNC-Chapel Hill

Rationale:

Healthcare costs are skyrocketing and represent a significant financial burden on employers. In addition to the high cost of chronic illnesses, evidence suggests that workers in poor health may be less productive and experience a lower quality of life. The most recent national worksite health promotion survey revealed that more than 80% of all employers with at least 50 employees offered worksite wellness programs (ODPHP, 1999). Many private and public employers have instituted comprehensive worksite wellness programs to reverse these trends and have demonstrated a favorable return on investment.

UNC-Chapel Hill has no coordinated worksite wellness initiative, yet this was a priority identified by The Chancellor's Task Force for a Better Workplace. While a number of programs and potential services exist, they currently reach very few people (and likely the most healthy) and are not comprehensive in terms of the variety of health promotion/disease prevention needs. Given the five Health Affairs schools and extensive expertise in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science as well as active research in the area of health promotion, including research specific to worksite health promotion, UNC-Chapel Hill is extremely well positioned to develop, implement and evaluate a model worksite wellness program. In addition to these internal resources and expertise, the State Health Plan (in collaboration with the Department of Public Health) is developing training and limited resource materials to initiate Worksite Wellness Committees across the UNC system and in other worksites employing state employees. The time is right to take advantage of these opportunities, as well as the expertise of our faculty and staff, to work in an interdisciplinary manner to develop a comprehensive worksite health promotion program that will benefit all employees.

The science of health promotion and disease prevention is moving in a more "upstream" direction, addressing organizational as well as individual behavior change. This focus on organizational, environmental, and policy change rather than strictly individual level knowledge, attitude, and behavior change programs, creates a work environment that is supportive of health and safety. There is evidence that upstream interventions make it easier for individuals to make informed and intelligent lifestyle decisions when they are provided access to healthier food and physical activity options; and are working in a safe environment.

Proposal:

We propose that the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost appoint a University Steering Committee for Worker Health, Safety and Wellness, as well as provide funding for a full time temporary research associate who will work with the committee to conduct a thorough assessment of the health and wellness needs of UNC-Chapel Hill employees, the resources available to support employee wellness, and other university or employer models that should be considered. In addition, the research associate will coordinate efforts between UNC faculty and staff and the State Health Plan's recently launched Worksite Wellness Committee efforts.

Guided by the committee, this individual will produce a report recommending the best course of action for the university to address health, safety and wellness needs of its employees, and consider developing

a model comprehensive worksite wellness program as defined by Healthy People 2010 objectives*. Enhancing the health and safety of UNC-Chapel Hill's employees is likely to enhance productivity, address rising health care costs and improve the quality of work life of the entire UNC-Chapel Hill workforce. It is expected the proposed approach would leverage the intellectual capital from the five Health Affairs schools and the College of Arts and Science as well as build on existing evidence-based wellness efforts. The assessment and strategic planning process are expected to require approximately twelve months.

We propose that this research associate be located within the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention under supervision of the Director, Dr. Alice Ammerman, however, it is imperative that this individual interface effectively with all academic and administrative units and resources within the University that could play a role in UNC-Chapel Hill worksite wellness. The assessment and reporting process will be conducted with no preconceived notion of where a formal wellness office or unit might ultimately be based within campus.

*"comprehensive" as defined by the 2010 Health Objectives includes 5 key elements: 1) Health education, which focuses on skill development and lifestyle behavior change along with information dissemination and awareness building, preferably tailored to employees' interests and needs; 2) Supportive social and physical environments, including an organization's expectations regarding healthy behaviors, and implementation of policies that promote health and reduce risk of disease; 3) Integration of the worksite program into your organization's structure; 4) Linkage to related programs like employee assistance programs (EAPs) and programs to help employees balance work and family; and 5) Worksite screening programs, ideally linked to medical care to ensure follow-up and appropriate treatment as necessary

Proposal sponsors:

Alice Ammerman: Director, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
Laurie Charest, Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources
Kevin Guskiewicz, Chair, Exercise and Sports Science
Pete Reinhardt, Director of Employee Health and Safety

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Ammerman, Chair