

DP Meeting Notes from December 15, 2006

Present: *Teri Blain, Joe Bohn, Allan Cook, Joe Cherry, Raymon Cunha, Patrick Finnessy, Jim Hall, Stacey Horn, Rita Hunt, Pat Langley, Jacqueline Leskovec, Jacob Mueller, Steve Rugg, Scott Shippy, Dave Stuart, Patrick Tranmer, Bryan Vogh, Curt Winkle*

The meeting began at 1:10 p.m. An ad-hoc group first met with Lambda Legal Defense Fund attorney Camilla Taylor. With her, we first went over the history of DP Benefits at the U of I and the State of Illinois.

1. Discussed inequities that remain with State Plan
2. Assessed the end-of-year paycheck tax hit

Camilla mentioned three states in which court cases have been won regarding either domestic partnership benefits or “marriage-like” benefits (Montana, Alaska, Oregon) but cautioned us that some inequities are about marriage as defined by the federal government, and not the fault of the state—and that those issues (IRS/taxable benefit) would not be winnable.

There was discussion for the need for the inclusion of the marriage of same-sex couples married in other countries regarding the State or U of I affidavit.

U of I plan was kept for this year but will end as of June 30, 2007. Thus, only the State of Illinois/CMS plan will be offered in the next enrollment period.

We discussed the need to make sure that the language in all U of I policies and procedures is clear and inclusive. Much is left to the interpretation of the supervisor. While some of that may not change, the language can still be updated and Deans, Directors, and Department Heads can still be trained.

Affected Policies:

Parental Leave

FMLA

Bereavement Leave

Adoption Leave (could certificate of adoption serve as ‘domestic partnership’ proof?)

Next discussion was about tax hits—which changed over to survivor benefits and SURS lump sum distributions.

Tax hits—key questions include:

1. Why isn’t this being done via payroll deduction like opposite-sex spousal deductions?
2. Can the U of I offer a “benefit equity” to prevent the tax hit?
3. Research on how else this is being accomplished in Illinois and nationally is necessary.

Regarding SURS and survivor benefits, it was determined that a meeting with SURS is in order as nobody present had enough information on the actual policies.

Following Camilla Taylor's departure, a video conference call continued with UIS and UIUC:

Steve Rugg brought up several items:

1. FMLA Options for Same-Sex Domestic Partners. The U of I will extend these same benefits for up to 12 weeks.
2. Concerns with CMS Domestic Partner Group Insurance Benefits and Approach to Sharing Concerns with CMS

List of concerns includes:

- a. Step children not considered for coverage
 - b. Step children unable to get 1/2 tuition
 - c. Tax hits
 - d. Monthly check writing instead of payroll deduction
3. Termination of the University's Domestic Partner Health Insurance Reimbursement Plan
 4. Use of the Affidavit of Domestic Partnership
 5. Questions and Other Discussion Topics
 - a. Retiree Benefits (same as for opposite sex partners)
 - b. Website Development
 - i. Will link back to campus DP website via PANDA or NESSIE
 - c. Decentralization of UI Human Resources
 - d. Union Issues-GEO re: Insurance for Grad Student DP's—Rugg says not his problem but encouraged us to challenge locally
 - e. Supervisors all across campuses needing to be educated/trained—Rugg says go local
 - f. Domestic Partners Children's Benefits—situation could be changed with Provosts and Board approvals.

The meeting concluded at approximately 4:45 p.m.