Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC) members for 2009-2010 were: Pearl Fernandes (Regional Representative From USC Sumter), Kate Boyd (Libraries), Stephen Sheehi (Arts & Sciences), Varsha Kulkarni (Physics), Christine Whitaker (Medicine), Jihong Liu (Epi/Biostats), Amy Luchak (Education), and Patrick Nolan (ex-officio member as Chair of the Faculty Senate). The Committee was chaired by Kevin Bennett (Medicine).

The 2010-2011 Committee focused on several key issues; salary equity, preventive health care, and health and fitness options.

Salary Equity

The committee continued to work from the previous year regarding the salary study, in partnership with the Provost’s office. The committee met several times with Christine Curtis (Vice Provost) and other representatives to discuss preliminary findings and next steps. The first phase of action was to identify the institutions to draw data from. The next phase was to identify the criteria utilized to compare salaries across the departments and institutions identified. The committee decided that mean, median, and range, by rank, would be appropriate.

In the Spring of 2011, Dr. Curtis returned with the data collected from their efforts. The committee reviewed these data to determine how best to utilize the information. The list of institutions and departments was further delimited, and each committee member was assigned a department for further analysis and data presentation.

We also identified the salary study conducted annually by USC Aiken as a model to follow for future work. The salary study continues, as the work is being finalized and preparations are now being made on how to present the findings to faculty and administration.

Preventive Health

The Committee provided $5,625 to fund faculty influenza vaccinations via the Student Health Center. This would provide 225 vaccinations. This allotment was quickly exhausted, with positive feedback received from many faculty.

The committee was also approached about supporting the cardiovascular screenings provided by the Exercise Science Department, as done the previous year. The Faculty Enrichment Fund, which supports the activities of the committee, was not being replenished as quickly as years past, so the committee sought to explore alternative options for the screenings. These options included pre-screening applicants to get more at-risk faculty screened or requiring a co-payment by participants. We discussed these options with the Exercise Science Department, who did not respond. Therefore, we did not provide support for these screenings this year.
We also explored the possibility of offering on-site screening for faculty, which would include lipids tests, body fat analysis, and blood pressure screenings, similar to what is offered by the School of Medicine on an annual basis. We then found that the Student Health Center offered these services on a weekly basis. Thus, we invited a speaker from the Campus Wellness office to discuss what services they provided. We then discussed alternative means of dissemination, to ensure those faculties were aware of these options.

Health and Fitness

The committee also worked to provide alternative health and fitness options for Faculty and staff during the year, due to the reduction in hours at the Blatt PE Center. Beginning August 1, 2010, the Blatt PE Center began a reduced operating schedule, reducing its morning and evening hours, as well as closing on the weekend. There was concern that the reduced hours were not communicated adequately, but we found the communication was as comprehensive as could be given their short notice of the reduction.

The Chair met with Dennis Pruitt, Vice President of Student Affairs, to discuss what options may be available for faculty and staff to utilize other facilities on campus (such as the Strom PE Center). Mr. Pruitt stated the barriers to opening the Strom PE center to free faculty use, even during limited times. We also discussed the issue with Jerry Brewer (Associated VP Fro Student Life) and Herbert Camp (Director of Campus recreation) to discuss options. There was a commonly held belief within these administrative divisions that the reduced access was not a significant issue, and that little should be done about it.

We discussed the issue with the Provost, Dr. Amiridis, and reminded him of the charge he gave us to find low or no-cost options to improve Faculty welfare and satisfaction. We stated our belief that increased access to fitness facilities, to replace what was lost, would be an ideal way to fulfill this question. With the help of the Provost, the Strom PE Center decided to offer a reduced Faculty membership fee, effectively reducing the fee by 50%. This is a temporary reduction, to be revisited in July 2011.

Other issues

We also discussed with Mr. Brewer and Mr. Pruitt the possibility of the Strom PE Center offering a summer family membership for the pool area. This was not accepted as a feasible idea.

The committee also began examining the camp’s safety/notification, and its effectiveness.

Varsha Kulkarni has been elected as chair.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Bennett, Chair
School of Medicine