Meeting Synopsis:

1. Call to order
2. FCBR Chair recommendation
3. Charge letter review 2020-2021
4. Review of the minutes from May 18, 2020
5. AAUP letter about benefits issue
6. Good of the Order
7. Adjourn

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 2:31 p.m.

2. FCBR Chair recommendation

Due to the council lacking a current chair, Secretary of the Faculty Mike Townsend and Senate Chair Robin Angotti joined to facilitate the first meeting and recommend a new FCBR chair.

3. Charge letter review 2020-2021

Senate Chair Angotti asked council members to consider volunteering as FCBR Chair and emphasized the importance of this council to take lead on faculty issues.

Council members were asked to consider additional items and discuss edits for the charge letter.

A member noted they previously worked on an issue related to Fidelity to house information regarding the Supplement Retirement Income program contributions. They would like the council to contemplate this as a topic for FCBR to address.

4. Review of the minutes from May 18, 2020

The minutes from May 18, 2020 were approved as written.

5. AAUP letter about benefits issue

Mindy Kornberg (President’s Designee) shared an update with the council regarding an HR issue from summer 2020. UWHR has been working with the healthcare authority (HCA) to discuss issues with Regence – the current UW health insurance provider. Regence hired Evercore to monitor individual
insurance use of physical and occupational therapy. Those insured by Regence were guaranteed only a certain number per Uniform contract. Faculty and staff members have had trouble getting pre-authorized appointments approved. UWHR will have an update in January. UWHR has suggested a better and different resolution by allowing more than 2-4 appointments before requiring pre-authorization. HCA is open to the idea of change and has a good relationship with UWHR.

Currently, UWHR does not require anything from FCBR but they may ask for support from FCBR should future discussions be less productive. Faculty and the UW President are watching this problem closely.

6. Good of the Order

A member asked if UW is providing accommodations for employees transitioning to “work-from-home”. Currently there is no institutional level accommodation. HR has issued local department guidelines while academic personal likely have their own guidelines. Each faculty and staff member should make it known what they need (laptops/monitors/etc.) to their department. A new tele-work policy is in progress.

It was also mentioned that UW may be able to negotiate a reduced fee with local internet providers. UW does have a discount with AT&T/T Mobile/Verizon. UWHR will discuss with leadership about adding local internet providers to this discount program. It was noted that many faculty and staff have children at home which stresses internet access. There is an issue of gift of state funds to pay for internet, but a stipend could be used to aid faculty and staff members. The Ethics office will need to weigh in on this.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Minutes by Alexandra Portillo, xanport@uw.edu, council analyst

Present: Faculty Code Section 21-61 A: Ellen Covey, Pete Johnson, Monika Sobolewska, Jason Wright, Stephan Siegel
Faculty Code Section 21-61 B: Charles Hirschman, Jason Sokoloff
President’s designee: Mindy Kornberg
Guests: Rachel Gatlin, Stefanie Starkovich, Robin Angotti, Mike Townsend

Absent: Faculty Code Section 21-61 A: William Yuh
Faculty Code Section 21-61 B: Desi Evans

Exhibits

Exhibit 1 - FCBR 2020-2021 charge letter
Exhibit 2 - HR Letter - Google Docs
Exhibit 3 - Regence Concerns_email
2020-2021

Stephan Siegel
Chair, Faculty Council on Benefits and Retirement
Dear Professor Siegel:

The Faculty Council on Benefits and Retirement is charged with responsibility “for all matters of policy relating to faculty retirement, insurance and benefits” (Faculty Code, Sec 42-44). Activities historically performed include developing and addressing a prioritized list of benefits, retirement, and insurance-related issues, inquiries, and interests on behalf of UW faculty, especially by way of inviting key administrators and stakeholders to meetings to provide supplementary information as well as to receive council feedback on the topics at-hand.

Our recommendation is that the council identify specific goals that can be accomplished by the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

The Senate office did a background review to help identify goals for your council. This included review of minutes from last year’s meetings, review of discussions at Faculty Senate meetings, and selected outreach for topics. Recommended goals and / or topics for discussion include:

- Review how the Provost initiative on housing assistance for faculty is working and the ways in which this can be strengthened in the years to come
- Provision of fully subsidized U-Pass to UW faculty
- Discuss and monitor unresolved issues on the Voluntary Retirement Incentive termination decision
- Retirement and benefits annual informational letter for Fall 2020
- Discuss the Professional Travel Grant Support program
- Investigate issues related to the Supplemental Retirement Income program contributions

After your first council meeting, we will be available to discuss the goals your council identified. Thereafter, we will post your council’s goals on the Faculty Senate website to communicate the important work you are doing.

Many thanks to you and the members of your council, on behalf of Senate Leadership and the faculty of the University, for all your time and work this coming year. I wish you all the best and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Robin Angotti
Chair, Faculty Senate
To whom it may concern,

We, the undersigned UW employees, are writing to request that UW Human Resources speak out about the inequitable and false processes by which Regence administers the Uniform Medical Plan, specifically with respect to its pre-approval process for services like Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

The Uniform Medical Plan is one of the most popular plans among UW employees, and it is administered by Regence for the Washington State Healthcare Authority. Regence has recently engaged a third party company, EviCore, to run its pre-approval process. This process is now stacked against employees, many of whom have stories of how hard it is to get needed services. Some examples:

“my personal situation is similar to that others have expressed - i have [a severe disability], consistent PT is the only thing that allows me to maintain the function i do have and avoid ... a 6 figure + procedure with substantial risk. I find it infuriating that someone without specific training denies the PT referred by my [expert MD] and then shines me on by indicating that it is to ‘enhance my health care.’”

“Frequently, there are delays in processing and appts. are missed waiting for the approval.”

“[I'm a] PT. Evicore has been a major problem for me in my private ortho outpatient practice and for many other PTs of my acquaintance.”

“I have twice had to request additional physical therapy appointments for a shoulder injury that then turned into a frozen shoulder. I have been successful at getting a very limited number of appointments (2 and 4, respectively) but they had very limited time by which they had to be used and required my physical therapist to appeal twice. This change in the plan is simply an effort at cost-saving on the backs of patient care.”

“I have a back injury and partial tear of my rotator cuff (in March) and I've had to self pay a lot of my treatments. It is infuriating and I am really disappointed that UW is mis-representing what they are offering.”

Providers agree. For example, one PT wrote:

“I am licensed in the state of Washington to establish a plan of care for my patients. If I think they need 8 visits, I have the education and experience to support this. Evicore takes this away from us (me) by instituting arbitrary timelines on when and how much care the patient needs.”
What is problematic about these stories is that Regence advertises more appointments per year in the documentation provided to UW employees than they approve. For example, they advertise 60 PT appointments per year, but even for one faculty member’s child, whose future is at stake (she currently cannot attend full days of 9th grade, missed 8th grade, and with PT her doctors believe she has every chance of recovering), Regence has only been willing to approve about 30 appointments.

In addition, the appeals process itself is very problematic. Multiple stories commented on this. For example, one example one patient family told us:

*Although they are contractually obligated to use an expert-matched physician in the second round of appeal, Regence instead used a pediatrician instead of a pediatric neurologist for our daughter. When I pointed this out, they sent the review to a neurologist (still not an expertise match) who reviewed the case in less than 24 hours and his notes included both ambiguities and falsehoods (that patient had “returned to school” even though she is not yet able to attend full school days) and that “PT is designed to maintain her status” (false, it is designed to advance her capabilities). In addition, they sent letters to our home that arrived after the scheduled case hearing asking for further information, and failed to prepare a casebook in a timely fashion. If a physician were to treat our daughter using the same attention to detail and process that the insurance company uses to deny treatment, they would be open to a medical malpractice suit and losing their licence.*

The provider perspective on this is also troubling:

*The process creates more costs towards healthcare. The time to complete and monitor one Evicore submission is 30-45 minutes. Multiply this by 10 per day and you need one full time person to manage these requests.*

There is strong evidence that this is a systematic problem with Regence. For example, Regence has only 16% of the market share, but **one third** of the appeals that have made it to the state Independent Review Board are from Regence (see below). Further **forty percent** of appeals involving children aged 13-19 that have made it to the state Independent Review Board are from Regence. Regence, in other words, is particularly tough on kids.
Given this documentation of Regence’s misbehavior, we ask that UW HR take the following actions:

- Let the Healthcare Authority know that Regence’s behavior is unacceptable and that UW urges the Healthcare Authority to negotiate a plan that protects the right of state employees to receive the healthcare their plan advertises.
- Request yearly Regence and other insurance companies employees are given the option to choose among release information from the prior year about the total number of pre-approval requests from state employees each company processed, how many were denied but not appealed, how many were denied after a first level appeal, and how many were denied after a second level appeal. This information should be made available to UW employees who are trying to decide which plan to choose as part of the open enrollment process.

If people in power won’t speak out, companies have no need to change their ways. Please help ensure that Regence cannot continue to take advantage of UW employees and Washington State employees in general. We thank you for your immediate attention to this critical matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

1. Jennifer Mankoff, Richard E. Ladner Professor, Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science and Engineering
2. Pamela Robenolt, Director of Learning Resources, Student Athlete Academic Services, Intercollegiate Athletics
3. Alison Crowe, Teaching Professor, Department of Biology
4. Ted S. Gross, Professor, Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine
5. Deb Lehtinen, PT, COMT, Hall Health Physical Therapy
6. Cecilia Aragon, Professor, Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering
7. James Clauss, Professor, Department of Classics
8. Anind Dey, Dean, iSchool
9. Daniel Eisenberg, Department of Anthropology
10. Sharona E. Gordon, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Education, School of Medicine
11. Clark W. Sorensen, Professor Emeritus, Jackson School of International Studies
12. Yusuf Pisan, Associate Teaching Professor, Division of Computing & Software Systems
13. Tomas Rocha, Assistant Professor, College of Education
14. Sabrina Tatta, HAS Center, College of Arts & Sciences
15. Gregory Lund, Assistant Teaching Professor, School of Urban Studies.
16. David Socha, Associate Professor, School of STEM
17. Gianluca Interlandi, Research Assistant Professor of Bioengineering
18. Mira Shimabukuro, Teaching Associate Professor, School of IAS, UW Bothell
19. Marcos Llobera, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology
20. Susan B. Nolen, Professor Emerita, College of Education
21. Wayne Au, Professor, School of Educational Studies, University of Washington Bothell
22. Juliana Villegas, Associate Director, Honors Program, University of Washington
23. Sarah Tuttle, Assistant Professor, Department of Astronomy
24. Sarah Elwood-Faustino, Professor, Department of Geography
25. Silvia Ferreira, Associate Teaching Professor, School of IAS, UW Bothell
26. Kirsten Foot, Professor, Department of Communication
27. Lucy Jarosz, Professor Emerita, Department of Geography
28. Jim Pfaendtner, Professor, Departments of Chemical Engineering and Chemistry
29. Paul Beame, Professor, Associate Director, Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering
30. Mary Mahon, Assistant to the Chancellor, UW Bothell
31. Jan Spyridakis, Professor Emeritus, Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering
32. Mark Ellis, Professor, Department of Geography
33. Louisa Mackenzie, Associate Professor, Dept. of French and Italian Studies
34. Ann Mescher, Associate Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering
35. Kristen Patton, Professor, School of Medicine
Alexandra S. Portillo

From: Mindy Kornberg <mindyk@uw.edu>
Sent: Friday, October 23, 2020 10:37
To: Alexandra S. Portillo
Cc: Rachel Gatlin
Subject: Fwd: Regence Concerns

Categories: FCBR

Alexandra,

I would appreciate if you would provide the email below to FCBR Committee meeting for discussion at our next meeting. Thanks, mindy

Mindy Kornberg J.D.
Vice President for Human Resources
University of Washington
4300 Roosevelt Way NE
Box 354960
(206) 685-4730
http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/

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Begin forwarded message:

From: Mindy Kornberg <mindyk@uw.edu>
Date: October 21, 2020 at 5:07:04 PM PDT
To: Jennifer Mankoff <jmankoff@cs.washington.edu>, Office of the President <pres@uw.edu>
Cc: Margaret A Shepherd <mshep@uw.edu>, Rachel Gatlin <rachelbr@uw.edu>, Mindy Kornberg <mindyk@uw.edu>, Barry Nemeth Jr <bnemeth@uw.edu>
Subject: RE: Regence Concerns

Dear Jen,

On Monday, Rachel Gatlin and I met with Dave Iseminger, Director of Employee and Retirees Benefits Division to discuss previously raised issues around the pre-authorization process. This afternoon HCA responded in writing to our concerns and I wanted to share the message with you.

“HCA is aware of the concerns and challenges UMP members have been raising about the preauthorization process for therapy visits. We have been working with Regence and Evicore to
understand changes that can be made to these processes. Although specifics cannot yet be shared at this time, HCA does plan to have changes made to the UMP therapy preauthorization process effective January 1, 2021, which will ease some of the burdens both members and providers have been experiencing recently."

I felt the meeting was very positive and I am cautiously optimistic we will see helpful process change. We will continue to keep you posted as we are provided more information.

Best, mindy

From: Jennifer Mankoff [mailto:jmankoff@cs.washington.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 9:14 PM
To: Office of the President <pres@uw.edu>; Mindy Kornberg <mindyk@uw.edu>
Subject: Regence Concerns

Dear Ms. Kornberg and President Cauce,

I'm writing on behalf of a number of University of Washington employees to ask for your help in addressing concerns regarding the behavior of Regence in administering the very popular Uniform Medical Plan, specifically with regard to its new pre-approval process, which has negatively impacted many families at the university.

The following letter, signed by 35 faculty and staff from multiple UW campuses, details the concerns, including quotes from patients and providers, and suggests some concrete actions that could be taken to help with this.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OJx7066P6LBtP5umy8If_ipNlEMOWFS3vJ-9DxOjhw/edit?usp=sharing

I would love to work together to improve the situation. Please let me know if you have any questions, and whether we could schedule a phone call / zoom call to talk about these concerns and the suggested solutions.

Thanks very much,

Sincerely

Jennifer Mankoff