

Santa Monica College
Collegewide Benefits
Minutes of the Meeting
October 27, 2005

Present

Sandi Burnett, Co-Chair
Lenore Banders
Al DeSalles
Peter Geltner
Jeanette Goolsby
Mitra Moassessi

Absent

Pat Brown, Co-Chair
Ana Rojas
Reagan Romali

Assistants

Letty Kilian, Staff Assistant
Mimi Vaval, Resource Staff Assistant

Guest

Gregory Brookins

Co-chair Sandi Burnett called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

Approval of October 13, 2005 Minutes - No quorum. Placed on November 3rd Agenda.

Reports and Discussion

Consultant Gregory Brookins Report - Copies of the Workload Summary of the Benefits Department prepared by Gregory Brookins were provided to the Committee. Consultant Brookins covered key areas of his report.

- **Purpose** - To document current responsibilities of the Benefits Coordinator; review the responsibilities of the Benefits Coordinator as they relate to CalPERS functions; and provide recommendations to the Committee.
- **Procedures** - Interviewed the Benefits Coordinator and developed background information. Narratives and recommendations were based on information obtained during interview; additional information was obtained from the Human Resources department.
- **Recommendations** - The summary report recommendations were based on the Benefits Coordinator's current workload and did not take CalPERS functions into consideration.

Discussion centered on the manner in which SMC's contract with CalPERS was negotiated in relation to the employee information database. It seems unlikely that CalPERS would be willing to provide SMC's database which includes the retirees. The retiree database is entirely compiled and maintained by CalPERS. Twenty-five percent of our CalPERS members are retirees and they deal directly with CalPERS.

Consultant Brookins will prepare the recommendations relative to the extensive database and complex functions involved with retirees that CalPERS currently handles.

Report Date: November 16, 2005
Workload Summary of the Benefits Department
Prepared By: Gregory Brookins
On behalf of the Collegewide Benefits Committee

Purpose

The purpose of this summary is to:

1. Document the general responsibilities performed by the current Benefits Coordinator.
2. Review the responsibilities of the Benefits Coordinator as they specifically relate to current CAL PERS functions.
3. Provide recommendations based on the limited procedures performed.

Procedures

1. Met with the Collegewide Benefits Committee regarding the scope of the project.
2. Interviewed Mimi Vaval, Benefits Coordinator.
3. Developed background information, narratives and recommendations based on information obtained during interviews with the Benefits Coordinator.
4. Obtained additional information
 - The Benefits Coordinator's job description was obtained from the Human Resources Department.
 - Details of daily, weekly, monthly and annual responsibilities were obtained from the Benefits Coordinator.
 - A sample contract from Benefit Service Center, who services the LACCD, was provided by Dr. Pat Brown, Dean of Human Resources.

Subsequent Procedures

Upon completion of the items noted in the Purpose and Procedures sections, a narrative and recommendations will be presented to the Collegewide Benefits Committee. At that time, the need for additional procedures will be discussed.

Recommendations

1. Hire Another Full-Time Employee in the Benefits Department
Since 2001, the Benefits Department has operated with one full-time employee, the Benefits Coordinator. No other employee has a detailed day-to-day understanding of the health, dental, vision and retirement benefits systems. This situation could have devastating repercussions, if the Coordinator leaves the company or is unable to attend work for an extended period.
2. Assess Current Strength/Weaknesses of CALPERS
CALPERS currently administers health care benefits for faculty, classified staff and management and retirement benefits for classified staff. Before making a final decision to replace CALPERS, a detailed assessment of the current services provided by CALPERS should be performed, realizing that much of that information may not be obtainable from CALPERS. In the interim period and during the Request For Proposal (RFP) process, the committee should continue to

look for ways to assess the services provided by CALPERS, particularly in the areas of database and system maintenance.

Recommendations (Continued)

3. Assess the Administrative Workload Associated with Any New Responsibilities
Additional workload resulting from the assumption of responsibilities currently performed by CALPERS would have a significant impact on the Benefits Coordinator position. Special consideration should be given to the current job description and reprioritizing current responsibilities to ensure that key tasks are completed if CALPERS administrative responsibilities are assumed in-house.
4. Quantify the Workload Performed by CALPERS Relating to Retirees
Retirees comprise approximately 25% of the individuals receiving medical benefits. Currently, CALPERS provides servicing for retirees and their survivors. Any phone calls fielded by the Benefits Coordinator pertaining to retirees are redirected to CALPERS. The committee should assess the services provided by CALPERS relating to retirees so that these tasks can be considered in prioritizing job responsibilities that may be transferred in-house.
5. Reconsider the Role of Student Workers in the Human Resource Area
During the preparation of the narrative for the Benefits Department, it was noted that student workers are used for filing and processing paperwork related to COBRA. Considering the current need for fulltime staffing (Recommendation #1) and the highly sensitive nature of benefits information and other human resource documents, it is strongly recommended that the role of student workers in the Human Resources Department be re-evaluated as part of this reprioritization process.

Background

The Benefits Department is responsible for administering fringe benefits for faculty, classified staff, management and retirees. Among the benefits included are health insurance, dental insurance, vision care, life insurance, voluntary additionally purchased disability insurance, and retirement benefits.

Mimi Vaval, the current Benefits Coordinator, is responsible for administering benefits under the supervision of Dr. Pat Brown, Dean of Human Resources. Mimi began as an assistant in this department in 1998. In December 2001, she took over the Coordinator position. The assistant position she previously held was eliminated and she currently is the sole employee responsible for administering benefits.

Since 1993, Santa Monica College has used CALPERS to administer health and retirement benefits for classified staff and health benefits for faculty and management. Approximately 20-25% of the Benefits Coordinator's current workload relates to CALPERS oriented activities.

Summary of Overall Responsibilities

The Benefits Coordinator's normal schedule is 7:30-4:30pm. She normally handles benefits for 1,800 to 2,000 employees. These figures currently consist of 850 Full Time

Classified Staff & Faculty and 1,000 Adjunct Faculty (of which 750 are working this semester). Peak season for the Benefits Office extends from August to December. Peak season includes open Health Plan Enrollment, new employee orientation, etc. During peak season, the Benefits Coordinator shares time equally among the following responsibilities:

- Communication (Phone Calls - Appx 100 calls per wk (50 calls during non-peak)/E-mails - Appx 50 e-mails per wk/Meetings with Employees)
- Employee Orientation (Preparing benefits-related Flyers/Bulletins) & Health Plan Enrollment (Online Kaiser/CALPERS/Delta/PMI/PSP & Updating HR System)
- Day-to-Day Operations – (See Daily/Monthly)

The spring semester workload is much lighter than August to December. Although full time faculty is not hired during the spring, newly qualified adjunct faculty and classified staff must be enrolled. Additionally, non-qualifying employees (faculty & staff) leaving the district must be deleted from the system.

Other Responsibilities

In the fall 2001, the responsibility for inputting automatic deductions for parking passes was assumed by the Benefits Office. This process occurs once per year (for full-time employees) and twice per year (for adjunct faculty). The process is performed for 224 full-time faculty, 350 adjunct faculty, and 250 classified staff. This process does not appear to be related to benefits. The benefits office is considering the possible “rollover” of faculty/staff parking deductions to each subsequent year in order to reduce the volume of paperwork; thereby automatically continuing deductions in future years unless the employee chooses to opt out.

Another set of duties which involves a high volume of input are the voluntary deductions into the Human Resource System (HRS) connected to Payroll. These deductions include Tax Shelter Annuities (TSAs), Section 125 contracts, union dues, charitable donations, credit unions payments, deposits, etc. for faculty, classified and management. During high volume months such as December, monthly updates and changes often number in the hundreds for TSAs and Section 125 contracts. These changes must be input in the HRS system before the College Holiday closing in order to be reflected in the first payroll of the New Year which runs during the Holidays. Also, billing for each of the health plans and voluntary deductions must also be paid on a monthly basis.

The current department challenges are high volume of activity and shortage of staff. Although the Benefits Coordinator has a student worker to help with clerical work, there is no other employee trained to administer benefits. As a result of the staff shortage, additions and deletions of employees to health care plans are monitored. However, monthly reconciliations of the various health care bills have not occurred on a normal basis since 2002, when the department was reduced to one person.

Other responsibilities performed by the Benefits Coordinator include:

- Maintaining records, filing, etc. Records for the 2 most recent years are maintained in-house and the remaining records are stored off-site. (The process of preparing records for storage takes about 2 days each year)

- Updating, purging files, other database or file management (No significant projects)
- Meeting with Vendors on an as needed basis.
- Special Projects performed on an as needed basis

Education/Seminars/Updating Knowledge

The Benefits Coordinator attends the LA County Benefits workshop once per year to keep abreast of benefits under LARISA health plans. She is a Resource Person for the Collegewide Benefits Committee. Recently, she received in-house training from CALPERS on their ACES system, which is the system used by CALPERS to administer its health plan. CALPERS e-mails the coordinator the updates to benefits packages as they occur. This current fiscal year, the Benefits Coordinator was asked to conduct 2 retirement workshops, a responsibility that was not required in the past. There have been no other workshops in recent past.

PERCENTAGE OF WORKLOAD BY ACTIVITY

Activity	Estimated Percentage of Workload
Employees/District (County) Info Referral/Phone Calls/Working with District Regarding Reporting	50%
Health Plans/Online Enrollment/Paying Bills/V-mail/E-mail	25%
Retirees (COBRA; AB 528 – Direct Payment to SMC Benefits (Dental/Vision)	25%
Total	100%

CALPERS

Newly hired Classified employees are processed through CALPERS for health and retirement benefits. Newly hired Faculty employees are processed through CALPERS for health benefits only. Initial membership begins with SMC Human Resources forwarding necessary paperwork to LA County where it is input to the CALPERS system. It is estimated that 20-25% of the workload results from CALPERS-related work processes.

Among the routine processes that relate to CALPERS are:

- Research oriented issues (employees)
- Requesting help from a CALPERS rep
- Online Adjustments/Corrections to enrollment info
- Adjustments/Corrections to invoices
- Phone calls (Approximately 2 Calls per week)
- E-mails (Approximately 10% of E-mail volume)

As online updates are prepared by the Benefits Coordinator, CALPERS e-mails an update report the following day.

Each month, the Benefits Coordinator processes CAL PERS billing on-line. This process is time consuming project since CALPERS print restrictions allow only 2 pages of data to be printed at a time. As a result, retrieving the CALPERS monthly bill online can take several hours to ½ day depending on the work flow that day (phone calls, e-mails, other interruptions, etc.) On an as needed basis, the coordinator requests a benefits census to verify the presence of certain employees in the CALPERS system.

Other Responsibilities

In addition, the benefits office also begins the process of remitting any applicable benefits (life insurance, etc.) to the survivors of any eligible employee upon his or her death.

In accordance with an agreement, the benefits office processes medical benefits refunds for 45 early retirees. This payment process takes about 2 to 3 hours per month.

The benefits office also processes COBRA payments for 36-40 former employees. In addition, payments are processed for 24 retirees in accordance with AB 528 (retirees continuing to remit dental insurance premiums after COBRA benefits have concluded). AB 528 retirees are eligible for dental only. This process is completed with the help of a student worker. If a student worker is not available, this process takes the Benefits Coordinator about a ½ day to complete.

Each month, bills for approximately 20 vendors are completed. This process takes about a 1/2 day to complete.

In addition, the Benefits Coordinator administers Section 125 Health Benefits which includes the preparation of flyers, bulletins and meetings with vendors. After employees are enrolled by the vendors, the Benefits Coordinator receives the contracts and inputs them into the system.

PERCENTAGE OF WORKLOAD CALPERS VS. NON CALPERS

Activity	Estimated Percentage of Workload
CALPERS Duties	25%
Non CALPERS Duties	75%
Total	100%

Glossary of Health Plans –

Full Time Faculty and Classified Staff – 100% Health Benefits

- PERS CARE
- PERS CHOICE
- PERS KAISER
- BLUE SHIELD
- DELTA DENTAL **OR** DELTA PMI & VSP (Vision Care)
- LIFE INSURANCE

Qualifying Adjunct Faculty - After 3 Semesters, qualifying Adjunct Faculty are eligible to choose from among the following health care plans:

Kaiser (Other Non-PERS)
or
DELTA DENTAL OR DELTA PMI
or
VSP (Vision Care)

Co-Chairs Report on Meeting with Interim Superintendent - No report was available. The co-chairs did not have a full meeting with the Superintendent on October 19, 2005. A scheduled appointment with the Interim Superintendent is scheduled for Monday, October 31, 2005. Member Mitra Moassessi requested that the minutes reflect that the Committee Co-chairs have not had a meeting with the Interim Superintendent.

Health Benefits Forum - The Health Benefits Forum will be held next Wednesday, November 2, 2005 in B-111. A campus-wide e-mail was sent and flyers were posted in public locations and all academic departments.

Agenda for Next Meeting

- Approval of October 13, 2005 Minutes
- Demo of the Website
- Co-Chairs Report on Meeting with the Interim Superintendent

The next meeting of the Collegewide Benefits Committee will be held on Thursday, November 3, 2005 from 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. in the Library Conference Room.