Call to order – Adoption of the agenda, seconded, unanimous

Approval of the November 9th, 2016 minutes –seconded, unanimous

Call for nominations/volunteers for Benefits committee chair -Debbie Patten was nominated by Justin Yates: we move to send her name as a recommendation to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee for the Chair position in the 2017-2018 Academic year, seconded, unanimous

Discussion on Project Grant funds availability
-The Provost wrote a memo to the Faculty Benefits Chair and the Deans approving the proposal Matthew Zacate wrote regarding changing when Project Grant funds are available.
-The Benefits Committee examined the proposed resolution to send to the Faculty Senate to edit the handbook
    The committee likes the proposed wording of the revision; the new dates are clearly written and will help recipients understand exactly when they will receive their funds.
-Motion to introduce this as a formal proposal, seconded, unanimous.
    -The committee members will take this proposal to their departments and be prepared to vote on it at our next meeting.

Discussion on Tuition waiver program
-The Benefits committee might consider asking to revise or expand the tuition waiver program.
    -How many people who are using the benefit are taking additional courses where they would need additional hours?
    -Our benefit is similar to other KY schools, but UC lets spouses/dependents have full tuition and we are also competing with them
    -Anecdotally it seems like most of the use of this benefit is from staff
-More possible revisions we might consider
    -Changes the procedure so that “paying” students get priority before individuals using the tuition waiver to register for courses
    -Raising the age for dependents
    -Allowing the benefit to be used for graduate classes
    -Increasing the benefit for part-time employees from 3 credit hours
-What would the effects be on enrollment?
-Could check with the Budget Committee to ask about whether there would be an effect on other programs i.e. is there a pot of money set aside for this program and others?
  -There were convoluted answers about this in the past, but it would be worthwhile asking again now that there is a new budget model
  -There is a limit to the amount of money, but we don't know what it is
  -We would like to know what this costs NKU each year
-We will send a few people from Benefits committee to work with a few from the Budget committee and HR to look into this: Gabe Sanders, Melissa Moon, and Debbie Patten are nominated/volunteered

Discussion on Benefits received by retired faculty
-A group of retired faculty ‘Emeritus Faculty Society’ is being organized
-As far as we know there are no written policies about the benefits retired faculty receive or whether some benefits are restricted to emeritus versus all retired faculty?
-Benefits they might have include:
  Free parking
  Free membership to campus recreation, along with their spouses (spousal coverage was revoked/reinstated)
  NKU Email
  Use of the library
  Ability to reserving a room on campus (this is an idea if not already a benefit)
-As there is nothing official, should we take this up and formalize it?
  -Yes: Benefits committee should be trying to attract the best individuals so it would be good for marketing and attracting quality faculty
  -No: In an attempt to codify them, would it cause them to be noticed and taken away?
-Where would a policy go? With HR as part of your exit package? If so, it would not be binding vs. if it was in the Faculty Handbook? But would the handbook even apply to retired faculty?
  -It could be as simple as gathering a list of existing benefits and making it visible to all NKU faculty, which would be useful for those who are considering retirement
  -As a first step, let’s informally ask what the benefits for retired faculty are by asking recently retired faculty

Discussion on Concerns regarding how decisions are made by Human Resources as regards to changes in Health Care benefits
-There was an elimination of an investment option for High Deductible Health Savings account
-A small number of faculty members were impacted, they contacted HR and the Benefits Chair upset at this change, and it appears that an agreement/compromise was made
-However, affected individuals were still concerned that when changes are made, some employee costs go up more than others and this might be an unfair system
-Does our committee even play a role in these decisions? No, middle administration makes this decision without us
-What could we do? We could make a suggestion to them about how they go about making decisions
-Should we do a survey? Should we talk with individual departments?
-After some discussion, our response is that HR probably did their best to impact the least number of faculty in their decision-making, and although these individuals were disproportionately affected, it seems that they were initially benefiting more than others

Discussion on making a recommendation for increased funding for Faculty Benefit Awards
-The Provost continues to ‘overfund’ and had indicated to departments that she would consider a request for more Project Grant funds, for instance
-We might request for more funds for the areas she has traditionally been increasing
-We could paint this as something to help morale in light of the lack of raises
-It also might be good to show how project grants help bring about bigger grants, do we keep track of this?
-We will come up with some concrete examples to present to the general faculty as options for a benefits expansion, perhaps in a survey (more grants, bigger grants, travel funds?)
-Let’s come up with ideas of specific questions we could ask the faculty to discuss at a future meeting

Motion to adjourn, seconded, unanimous