

A SENSE-OF-THE-SENATE RESOLUTION CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE

BACKGROUND

Concerning the matter of rising health insurance costs and the announced forthcoming changes in the University's system of funding faculty and staff health insurance, the Faculty Senate recognizes:

- that because health care costs and related insurance costs are increasing dramatically nationwide, the problems of providing these benefits affect most if not all large organizations in the country, including Western Kentucky University;
- that this phenomenon is acknowledged as a demanding challenge to the leadership provided by Western's President, one with which he has grappled with in the past and will continue to confront in the future as a dedicated administrator;
- that the President's reported efforts to work in concert with other organizations in this area to devise new insurance groups or other systems is a commendable initiative aimed at helping the University carry its responsibilities to faculty and staff in a cost-effective way, and is therefore applauded and encouraged; and
- that the Faculty stands ready to assist in any appropriate way these and other suitable efforts aimed at solving a management challenge of significant proportions; but
- that the University is also further abandoning its long-standing policy of providing traditional group health insurance as a fully-paid fringe benefit to faculty and staff;
- that this fringe benefit is appropriate as partial compensation to faculty and staff for the performance of their duties, especially in an era during which salary adjustments have failed to keep pace with inflation;
- that Western's faculty have in good faith loyally served the University during their prime professional years in the belief that the University would in good faith maintain the fringe benefits policies that have rewarded its members over the years, policies, which have been in continuous effect from the times of initial employment until recently;
- that the University's intention now to substitute a system under which faculty and staff will progressively lose an important health insurance fringe benefit by being required increasingly to bear financial responsibility for it, constitutes a fundamental shift in University philosophy.

RESOLUTION

Therefore, it is the sense of the Faculty Senate:

- that the University's shift in philosophy is rejected, as unacceptable to faculty members, a large proportion of whom are now approaching the twilight of their careers; and that the Faculty Senate repudiates this shift in philosophy because it denotes a lessening of the esteem in which the University holds its faculty, it undermines faculty morale by devaluing their services to the University, and it is in these and other ways an ominous portent of the future.