



Benefits Task Force September 2017 to December 2018

Introduction:

Puget Sound is committed to offering fair and competitive total compensation that includes salaries/wages and benefits. The Faculty Compensation Philosophy and the [Staff Compensation Policy](#) articulate guiding principles for faculty and staff compensation, respectively, and recognize the importance of benefits as a meaningful component of total compensation. Just as Puget Sound seeks to be near market medians for salaries/wages within affordability parameters, it also seeks to be near market medians in aggregate total compensation that includes benefits.

Puget Sound offers a comprehensive benefits program that is grounded in its [Benefits Philosophy Statement and Guiding Principles](#). Human Resources is responsible for monitoring and assessing Puget Sound's benefits in an ongoing way. Periodically (every 5-8 years), Human Resources is charged by the Vice President for Finance and Administration to lead a task force of faculty and staff members in a deep holistic review of the effectiveness, competitiveness, and financial sustainability of the university's benefits program and to develop recommendations within a budget-neutral (or budget-positive) and financially viable context. This holistic review requires intensive learning, in-depth study and analysis, and often difficult choices. It is a process that typically requires one to two years of commitment and work, given the strategic importance, level of complexity, and connections of compensation to larger bodies of work, such as strategic and financial planning.

Benefits Task Force Charge:

Benefits Task Force members are asked to think broadly and institutionally in fulfilling a charge to represent the best interests of all members of the university

community as a whole rather than the interests of any one constituent group. Task Force members will be charged to address the following:

1. Benefits Philosophy: Early in the process, review the university's benefits philosophy statement and provide any recommendations for review and consideration by the Vice President for Finance and Administration in consultation with the President's Cabinet.
2. Communication: Communicate with the broader campus community about its charge, general timeline, approach to the work, opportunities for input, progress toward fulfilling the charge, and ultimately, its recommendations and supporting rationale.
3. Benefits Value and Priority: Evaluate Puget Sound's overall benefits structure and benefits components relative to the university's Benefits Philosophy. Seek input from the broader campus community to understand faculty and staff members' benefits interests and to determine how they value and prioritize components of the university's benefits program relative to the other components to gain a clear sense of priority.
4. Cost and Market Comparison: Evaluate the cost of Puget Sound's overall benefits structure and major benefit components relative to peers and other applicable market data. Consider cost of total benefits and major benefits components as a percentage of salaries and/or per FTE in comparison to available peer data and general market data as applicable/appropriate.
5. Specific Benefit Requests: Consider and address questions, concerns, and requests for new or enriched benefits that have come forward from applicable faculty and staff committees or individuals, in keeping with Benefits Philosophy and fiscal parameters.
6. Modeling: Test the ongoing financial viability of the benefits program, including any recommended changes, by forecasting the cost of total benefits in comparison to forecasted available funding within the university's overall budget model.
7. Recommendations: Develop and prioritize recommendations for review and consideration by the President's Cabinet. Any significant new benefit or significant change in existing benefits requires Board of Trustee approval. Recommendations must be cost-neutral and fit within projected budget availability within the university's long-range budget modeling tool that reflects projected enrollment, revenues, and costs to achieve a balanced budget.
8. Written Report: By December 15, 2018, deliver a written report that responds to the Task Force charge.

Benefits Task Force Membership:

Vice President for Finance and Administration Sherry Mondou, in consultation with Faculty Senate Chair Alisa Kessel, Staff Senate Chair Anna Coy, and others, appointed three faculty and three staff members who together and with co-chairs represent a reasonable range of position categories and demographic characteristics.

Co-Chairs (*ex officio*):

- Cindy Matern P'09, P'11 , Associate Vice President for Human Resources / Career and Employment Services
- Katie Holmes '01, Director of Compensation and Benefits

Faculty members:

- Sara Freeman '95, Associate Professor, Theatre
- Ben Lewin, Professor, Sociology and Anthropology
- David Sousa, Professor, Politics and Government

Staff members:

- Ricky Nieto '07, Purchasing Clerk, Dining and Conference Services
- Anne Smith '06, Associate Director of Database Records, University Relations
- Kristen Spiese '92, Development Manager, Technology Services

Task Force Support:

- Administrative support: Lori Johnson, Finance and Administration
- Subject matter support: Kenni Simons, Benefits Manager
- Financial modeling support: Janet Hallman '84, Associate Vice President for Financial Planning and Analysis
- Survey and data support: Ellen Peters P'19, Director of Institutional Research and Retention

Time Commitment:

It is estimated that the Benefits Task Force will meet approximately two hours every other week from September 2017 through December 2018, with readings and assignments between meetings.

Note: Faculty members of the Benefits Task Force who are currently assigned to a standing committee of the Faculty Senate for 2017-18 will be replaced on the standing committee in order to serve on the Benefits Task Force.