

Meeting Summary
Research Associates Advisory Committee
October 2, 2014

1) Caucus Time (30 minutes)

2) Carry forward: RA / SRA Orientation

- Discussed organizing a tailored orientation for new and established RAs / SRAs, to highlight relevant policies and information
 - May be offered two times a year
 - RA / SRA colleagues from Humanities / Social Sciences and Science would be present
- Event would be in addition to the quarterly University-wide orientation sessions
- Committee suggested additional training for PIs regarding RA / SRA policies and procedures

Action Items

- Orientation event structure and content to be contemplated by Committee and HR representatives
- Training for PIs to be explored

3) Carry forward: Confirming the Terms of Reference (TOR)

- Discussed TOR language regarding the ratio of RAs to SRAs on the Committee
 - Committee agreed that the ratio be finalized at 4 RAs, 5 SRAs and 3 from either group
- Committee agreed that Committee vacancies should be filled as they arise
- Members invited to volunteer for vacancy on Agenda Planning Committee (APC)

Action Items

- Call out for new Committee member to be undertaken
- Members interested in filling the APC vacancy to put their name forward

4) Carry forward: Guest from VPRI

- Judith Chadwick, Assistant Vice-President, Research Services and Portfolio Operations, responded to questions regarding potential research funding sources (external or internal) for RAs / SRAs
- Clarification re: the role of the VPRI - to help faculty identify funding sources, develop and endorse funding applications, and help set up budgets
- Vast majority of external funders require applications to be from faculty
- [Policies for Senior Research Associates and Research Associates \(Limited Term\)](#) contemplate that Senior Research Associates may be co-PIs
- [The Guidelines re: Eligibility to be a PI](#) can be found online on the VPRI website
- Access to external funding increasingly competitive
- Committee spoke to the challenges of establishing a record as a researcher without the ability to act as a PI and expressed interest in modifying the internal funding process

Action Item

- See Item 10

5) Benefits: Paramedical Practitioners

- Provided brief overview of current benefit plan usage
- Committee requested addition of acupuncture coverage and revision of \$500 combined maximum for paramedical (chiro, physio, RMT) to \$500 each per year
- Committee advised that any plan adjustments would be part of an overall review of compensation changes for July 2015

Action Item

- Bring forward for discussion at future meeting

6) Update / Implications of USW Renewal Collective Agreement

- Angela Hildyard provided an overview of the recent agreement with USW
- RAs and SRAs will receive the same 0.5% ATB as USW effective January 1, 2015 (based on June 30, 2014 salary)
- University will also meet with USW, UTFA, and representatives of other unionized and non-unionized employee groups regarding a Jointly Sponsored Pension Plan (JSPP), possibly a multi-employer plan
 - Provincial government is encouraging Broader Public Sector (BPS) employers to move to JSPP model and doing so may provide pension solvency relief. Government also expects a move to 50/50 share in contributions.
 - Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT), Teachers, Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP), and Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) are examples of existing multi-employer JSPPs with (or approaching) 50/50 contribution ratios (employee and employer)
 - Non-represented employee groups, such as the RA / SRA group, will have a seat at the U of T discussions re: a JSPP
 - More information to come regarding the composition of this working committee
 - Pension contribution increases scheduled for July 1, 2015 and July 1, 2016 will not be implemented and will be replaced by a contribution increase to 7.7% / 9.50% (below and above the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE)) effective June 30, 2017 if new pension plan structure not yet confirmed
- Committee advised that any Benefit plan adjustments would be part of an overall review of compensation changes for July 2015

7) New Employee & Family Assistance Plan (EFAP) Provider

- Effective November 1, 2014, Homewood Health will be our EFAP provider
- Communications will be sent out in late October / early November, including a letter and brochure mailing to the home
- Services of Homewood Health are notable, in particular their extensive catalogue of e-learning resources

8) Speaking Up / University of Toronto Faculty and Staff Experience Survey (UTFSES)

- Survey running October 20 to November 14
- Committee was asked to encourage participation among colleagues
- Survey is now 100% online – employees will be sent a unique link via email
- www.uoftme/speakingup
- If participation rates are high enough, high level results will be shared with the Committee at a future meeting

9) Update re: United Way Campaign

- Campaign runs September 22 – December 31
- Committee asked to encourage colleagues to donate

10) Possible Independent Research Opportunities for SRAs

- Committee shared desire for opportunities to work independently; possibly structured as a term assignment / professional development opportunity
- Committee will brainstorm possible opportunities and challenges to bring to a future meeting

Action Items

- Committee to discuss this item among themselves and consult with broader community to compile a full range of options for consideration
- Committee to send ideas to Secretariat before the Advisory Committee meeting in which this item will be discussed so that information can be reviewed in advance