

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

October 18, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Taka Ashikaga, Richard Branda, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule, Lee Thompson

Absent: Stephen Cutler, Jack McCormack, Beth Mintz

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 1:50pm

1. Minutes of September 20, 2023, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Review of issues to be raised in the upcoming session with our guests.
 - i. The availability of providers who are not in network, and how they can be identified by members since they are not listed on the Cigna website.
 - ii. The need for a specific advocate for members who can't advocate for themselves.
 - iii. New retirees and those newly eligible for Medicare need to know who to contact for problems with coverage.
 - iv. There needs to be improvement in the ability of customer representatives to help members identify providers that accept Cigna.
 - b. Caitlyn Sisler (UVM HR) and Cigna representatives Becky Wells and Tyriney Sims-Caudle joined the meeting at 2:00pm.
 - i. In response to concerns about finding providers in some areas of the country and getting answers from Cigna in a timely fashion, the representatives replied that the directory of providers has been updated and is up and running. Cigna has not heard complaints about the directory. The regular customer representatives should handle most calls initially but problems can be escalated. However, the Board had the sense that not all customer representatives knew who to contact to escalate a problem.
 - ii. The Cigna website only lists in network providers but Cigna will work with out of network providers. To establish that a provider is available, the member needs to contact the provider and state that it is a group plan.
 - iii. Some members have complained that the Mayo Clinic won't accept our Cigna plan. It was pointed out that Mayo does not accept any medicare advantage plan.
 - iv. There has been no change in the Sarasota hospital coverage situation. Twenty-three retirees were affected and Cigna contacted them; three have taken other insurance coverage and the others found providers who accept Cigna.
 - v. Back and forth discussions continue with UVM regarding a contract but there have been no issues with processing UVM claims by Cigna.
 - vi. Some members prefer to get help with hearing aides from the Eleanor Luse Center at UVM. The Center will see patients with Cigna coverage but they must pay up front. The Center will help with filling out forms.
 - vii. HR meets with new retirees to review their benefits. HR recommends that if retirees are moving from this area, they establish the availability of local coverage by providers and hospitals.
 - viii. HR explains to new retirees that they should get good service from Cigna. If there is no resolution after a period of time they should contact HR, which will work with Cigna to escalate the problem.
 - ix. Cigna has negotiated with CMS to have 500 procedures removed from the list requiring pre-authorization. But many delays in claim payment are due to incorrect provider coding. The billing for providers is by code and is the same amount for in and out of network providers.

- x. HR continues to meet periodically with Cigna representatives, and Chris Lehman and Richard Cate are engaged in Cigna issues.
 - xi. The general sense by HR is that the need for escalation has decreased.
- c. United Academics update (Alison): UA continues to work for faculty/staff representatives on the Board of Trustees. UA is interested in learning about parking issues for retirees and may include these in a bargaining session.
- d. UBAC report (Ruth): The UBAC had its first meeting following summer break on September 21st.
 - i. Several members have resigned from the Council since the last meeting in the spring due to schedule conflicts, changes in position, and for other reasons. Ellie Miller resigned as one of the two full-time UA members and was replaced by Linden Higgins (Biology). Additionally, both Faculty Senate representatives, the Staff Council representative, and one Staff United representative resigned, and replacements were still pending at the time of the meeting. The Council still lacks members from the Teamsters and United Electrical Workers unions.
 - ii. The Council had a good discussion about priority-setting at the September meeting. CHRO Chris Lehman will attend the October meeting and share his ideas and perspective about priorities.
- e. There was no Faculty Senate meeting since the last Board meeting. The next meeting is Monday, October 24, which will be held in person (with no remote option) at 4 pm in the Keller Room, 107 Ifshin Hall (in Kalkin building).
- f. Status of letter being considered for submission to the Administration and associated strategy. The Board feels that the President needs to state the University position and go on record as being willing to work with retirees who lost insurance coverage of their preferred providers after the switch to Cigna. Retirees were promised equal coverage after the change but this has not happened for all members. Since UVM saves money when a retiree changes insurance plans to preserve provider coverage, perhaps this money could be applied to the members' new plan. The Board hopes to have a final version of a letter for the President and other officers soon.
- g. Details of the Annual General Meeting scheduled for November 2nd (along with strong encouragement of in-person attendance of Board members!)
 - i. The voting software has been refined and ballots will be going out to members on the listserv soon. Voting will close on October 31st in accordance with the by-laws. Alison will handle audio-visual support at the General Meeting, and a zoom link will be sent out 2 and one week prior to the meeting.
 - ii. The Speaker, Dr. Josh Bongard, Veinott Professor of Computer Science, will speak from 3-4pm. The title of his talk is "Organisms, robots, and AI. Past, Present, and Possible Futures".
 - iii. Board members are encouraged to attend in person and bring a friend.
 - iv. There will be light refreshments.
 - v. Following the lecture and discussion President Gurdon will provide a brief report on the Executive Board's activities during the year. One other item on the agenda will be the announcement of the results of the election of representatives to the RFAO Executive Board. The meeting will conclude with the opportunity for input and advice coming from our members in attendance.
 - vi. There was discussion of inviting retired staff through the staff council.
- h. Other Business. None

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40pm

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for: November 2, 2023, at 3pm

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for: November 15, 2023, at 2pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda