

PSO News

October, 1999

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Annual Meeting

Friday, October 29, 1999; Noon - 1:00 pm, HUB Auditorium.

Guest Speaker: Regent Dan Evans

The PSO holds our annual meeting every fall. It is a great chance to find out what the PSO has been doing during the past year. We celebrate the accomplishments of members of the PSO, get to network with our colleagues and enjoy some refreshments. We also invite in leaders from our state to speak to us on UW related topics.

This year we are exceptionally fortunate to have Regent Dan Evans speak to us. Regent Evans has held numerous important positions in the past, including US Senator, Governor of Washington State, Washington State Representative, and President of Evergreen State College; he continues to be an influence on our state and community. He has been a member of the Board of Regents since 1993 and was President of the Board of Regents from 1996–97. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear this great citizen. Please join us for a lunch hour of learning, sharing and refreshments!

From the Chair

The PSO: Who Are Those People and What Do They Do?

Hi: I'm Fred Nick, the new Chair of the Professional Staff Organization (PSO). What is the PSO? The PSO comprises all members of University of Washington Professional Staff. Do you have to pay to be a member? No, you are considered a member the day you are hired.

The PSO has been working hard for 10 years, promoting issues important to UW Professional Staff. In recent years, the PSO has especially focused on numerous important processes. For example, we have been communicating proactively with campus leaders and service departments to improve the working environment and career opportunities of our members.

We have labored hard to highlight the need for higher base salaries as well as salary increases. We instigated changes to the 1998 Professional Staff Salary Survey process to improve its accuracy and promote measuring benefits that outside firms offer their staff above base salaries. Members of the PSO are helping conduct the Professional Staff Salary Survey for 2000 and will continue this important work.

Many members of the PSO went to Olympia during the last legislative session to convince legislators to give the Professional Staff raises on par with the faculty. Members gave testimony to committees, talked to individual legislators, attended meetings and drafted letters presented in person to legislative leaders. We worked both with the UW lobbying team and on our own. It was a lot of effort but we feel there was a payoff in the end for all of us in salary increases and retention funds.

Recent issues we are working on include the following:

- Creating and instituting supervisor training.

- Reviewing Telecommuting Policies created by the Human Resources staff.
- Helping review candidates for the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources.
- Providing feedback on the new VEBA benefits program.

Members of the Professional Staff Executive Committee meet regularly with Executive Vice President Weldon Ihrig and groups from Human Resources. We hope to create liaisons with Professional Staff Organizations at other Universities and have met with the Classified Staff Association at the UW. The PSO created the first Professional Staff awards, provided a staff mentoring service for many years and now offers small scholarships to members who would like to attend career development workshops or seminars (see article below). We have members sitting on Faculty Council Subcommittees concerning accountability, retirement and research. The PSO Board tries to help find the right person to provide answers to questions posed by PSO members.

So what do we want from you? Your participation! We need people to volunteer for committees, suggest ideas, communicate and participate! How about running for a PSO Board seat? There will be elections in the spring. We also accept contributions of funds (e.g., monthly payroll deductions). While fund-raising is definitely not central to what we do, we do use money to provide for copying, mailing and scholarships. Small donations enable us to continue our work and some funds are indirectly returned to you through our scholarship program.

What if you are not a joiner? How about signing up for our listserv (see the signup process, bottom of page 1). You will receive mail in the form of questions and answers by other staff that you might find interesting. Maybe you know the answer and can give a colleague a leg up. The operative idea is we would like 100% participation by all of you in our collective future. Feel free to contact members of the Board with questions or suggestions. You can also send email to psoboard@u.washington.edu. The PSO Board would love to see many of you step up to the plate and help in whatever manner you can. Thank you and see you around campus!

Fred Nick, Chair, PSO Board

Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) Medical Expense Plan (MEP)

*Kathleen Dwyer
Interim Assistant Director of Human Resources, Benefits*

Legislation passed during the 1998 Legislative Session enables the UW to offer eligible employees the option of establishing a VEBA using the unused sick leave cash payments currently made at retirement. Pending action by the Board of Regents action this month may allow professional staff, as well as other staff and librarians who accrue sick leave, the opportunity to vote on a VEBA.

If authorized by the Board at their October meeting, a vote would be conducted to determine employee interest in the VEBA. Education including a variety of meetings would be held at the Seattle, Bothell and Tacoma campuses, and at UWMC and Harborview to provide information and answer your questions about what a VEBA would mean to you.

These special tax-free accounts can be used by the retiree and eligible dependents to pay medical expenses after retirement, and are operated under rules established in the Internal Revenue Code.

Currently, employees receiving their sick leave cash-out payment at retirement must pay federal income and

FICA taxes. A VEBA Trust is used to accept the sick leave cash-out without paying these federal taxes, resulting in significant savings, typically 25% or greater, to the retiree. Additionally, the UW saves its portion of the FICA tax.

In addition to the retiree, payments from the Trust for medical bills can be made for dependents including a spouse, dependent children and other dependents as defined by the IRS.

Using these tax exempt monies, retirees could pay for out-of-pocket health-related expenses including premiums for medical, dental and vision insurance; premiums for Medicare Part B and Medicare Supplement; and health-care plan co-payments and deductibles

If a spouse or dependent children survive the retiree, they can continue to access the funds to pay for medical benefits until the account is used up. If there are no eligible dependent(s), the funds remaining in the account will be paid as medical benefits to the heir(s) of the retiree's estate. Payments made to estates are taxable.

Implementation of the VEBA would be by vote of impacted employee groups. The following groups have been identified: Professional Staff, Librarians, non-represented Classified Staff, and Staff represented by Labor organizations.

If the VEBA is authorized by the Board, the University would coordinate voting for certain employee groups not represented by labor unions, including Professional Staff, Librarians, and non-represented Classified Staff. Those staff represented by labor unions would be contacted directly by their union representatives regarding the union voting process. Each union would then notify the University of the results for their members.

The VEBA would only be implemented if the group vote determines that a majority of those employees wish to participate in such a program. If approved, participation is mandatory for anyone retiring in the calendar year. Frequency of voting would be evaluated based on an advisory question included on the ballot, which will be mailed to members of each voting group.

A Reminder Regarding Outside Consulting

Shelley Middlebrooks
Manager, Office of Compensation & Professional Staff Programs

The University recognizes that individuals, the University, and the state benefit from staff involvement in and support of outside organizations and industry. Many benefits flow from these connections.

Professional staff may engage in outside consulting work or part-time employment provided that such outside employment is not to the detriment of their University obligations and job performance or in conflict with the proper discharge of the employee's official duties.

Advance review and approval of outside consulting/employment activities is required whenever such outside activities stem from, could conflict with, or relate to the individual's job responsibilities while at the University or to the individual's status as a University employee. Use the Request for Approval of Outside Professional Work for Compensation—Professional or Classified Staff Employee, form UoW 1301, for requesting such approval. This form is available through Central Stores.

The Professional Staff Program (UW Operations Manual D42.1) references outside consulting activities and part-time employment by Professional Staff. This information can be found by visiting the Office of Compensation and Professional Staff Programs website at: <http://www.washington.edu/admin/ocpsp/profstaff/ps.prgm.html#sec.7.n>

The complete policy may be found in the University of Washington Operations Manual, D47.3.D42.1, Section 7.n. which is located at your nearest Reference Station.

PSO Scholarship Program

*Danya Tomlinson
PSO Scholarship Committee*

One of the goals of the Professional Staff Organization is to foster professionalism and encourage professional development for our members. This type of growth is beneficial to the employee and the employer and provides a positive atmosphere for colleagues to work together.

The PSO Scholarship Program was established with these goals in mind. Since its initiation in Winter 1998, this program has awarded 40 scholarships, totalling approximately \$8,400. The program is funded solely through voluntary donations from professional staff members.

The PSO Scholarship program awards five scholarships per quarter for a maximum of \$250 per person per year.

The application process is simple – a one-page application with supporting documents. If you are interested in the program, please feel free to contact Danya Tomlinson, at 543-9054 or e-mail at **danyat@u.washington.edu**.

The [PSO Scholarship guidelines](#) are available for viewing on the PSO Web site.

[Return to the PSO Home Page](#)

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