

A message to our members:

If you have participated in this year's open enrollment for medical benefits, you have probably noticed, as we have, an increase in your cost for these benefits. The increased benefits costs did not surprise us, however the manner in which the administration has distributed these costs amongst all University employees greatly surprised and dismayed us.

The Association, as well as the administration, have always agreed that the distribution of benefit costs amongst employees should always reflect a higher cost for those earning higher salaries so that there will be less of a burden on employees who earn less.

The changes in the cost of medical coverage for 2011 have been calculated in a manner that places a higher increase in costs on the lowest paid employees than it does on those at the top of the salary scale. For example, for family coverage under the Medical Mutual 90/70 plan, the university's lowest paid full-time employees, those earning no more than \$22,000 annually, see an increase of 61% (an additional \$330 a year), while the University's highest paid employees, those making more than \$200,000, see a 6% increase (an additional \$162 a year). A similar pattern is found for single coverage and for the other plan options. You can view comparison charts at the Association website, <http://www.aaupksu.org>, then click News.

We are not arguing that those of the top of the salary structure do not pay more for their health insurance, nor do we suggest that they do not subsidize lower paid employees. Clearly both are true. However, in terms of real dollar impact, an increase in cost of 61%/\$330 a year is much more significant to the lower paid employees than that \$162 a year is to someone making over \$200,000.

We feel strongly that this change in the distribution of cost increases is unfair. We believe these changes financially punish Kent State employees who earn the lowest salaries and insulate those at the top of the salary structure. This method of cost shifting is highly regressive and unilaterally flattens out a progressive contribution plan. This change in the distribution of cost increases by the University is not required by either of our Collective Bargaining Agreements.

We have met with members of the administration to express our great concern and dismay (we are undoubtedly one of the "inquiries" referred to in the recent email from Human Resources.) These meetings were unproductive as the administrators with whom we met were apparently not interested in discussing options that we feel would be more equitable to the University's lower paid employees, and yet still cost neutral to the University.

We can only hope that the administration will change its position and give consideration to more equitable options.

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