

Benefits plan passes by slim margin

CHRISTINA POE | *The Jambar*

In a five to four vote, the Youngstown State University Board of Trustees Internal Affairs committee, members passed a proposal that could extend health care benefits to same-sex partners of YSU faculty.

The final proposal will be voted on at a special full meeting of the Board of Trustees tonight at 5 p.m.

Vice President for Administration John Habat presented the document to the Board. It outlined healthcare benefits including medical,

vision, dental and prescription that would be offered to the employee, their domestic partner and their combined dependent children.

The first page of the proposal stated YSU is aware of the variety of employees within its walls.

"Youngstown State University is committed to the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified and diverse workforce; and ... the University recognizes that some employees are in a long term, committed and personal relationship with a same sex domestic partner ... [the board] does hereby author-

ize the Administration to offer health care benefits..."

The document also states the employee and partner must meet eligibility requirements, such as sharing a permanent residence together and submit an Affidavit of Domestic Partnership

Habat's data, based on studies from other universities, estimated 1 percent or 12 employees would apply for these benefits.

Minus the 10 percent dividend paid by employees, the document said the total estimated yearly cost to the university would be \$60,000.

The vote was a close five to four, with the main opposing issue concerning the impact the proposal would have on YSU's budget.

Trustee Don Cagigas, who voted against the proposal, said with state funding in decline and health care costs continually rising, adding more benefits at this time would be a "financially irresponsible" decision for the university.

"We should be looking at ways to reduce the cost structure before adding more to it," Cagigas said.

Cagigas added that, within

the last five years, overall employee benefits have increased by 46 percent.

Cagigas said the responsibility of the board is to look into how an issue would affect the university and its students in the future when making a decision.

One of Cagigas' concerns is that additional costs created by the resolution could end up "falling on the students" down the road.

Trustees Millicent Counts, Larry Esterly and John Pogue, who voted in favor of the proposal, could not be reached for comment.

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