Resolution in Support of Proposed Changes to UW Retirement-Related Regulations
Pertaining to Surviving Spouse Benefits

WHEREAS, UW policies governing Board retirement (for all employees) and emeritus status (for academic personnel) are found in three different locations: UW Reg 4-2 (Employment provisions applicable to all personnel); UW Reg 5-1 (Academic personnel); and UW Reg 5-173 (Regulations governing vacation, sick leave, and compensation for faculty and university officers); and

WHEREAS, the multiple locations are confusing and may limit access to retirement-related information. They also introduce inconsistencies as regulations tend to be revised piecemeal; and

WHEREAS, Board retirement benefits for surviving spouses, such as tuition benefits, are unclearly written such that they are difficult to interpret, which can lead to inequitable treatment of surviving spouses. More importantly, several recent cases have raised questions about the extension of Board retiree benefits to surviving spouses of employees who were eligible for Board retirement benefits at the time of death but had not actually retired. Currently, surviving spouses of such employees are not eligible for valuable survivor benefits, in particular the conversion of sick leave balances to a contribution to group health insurance premiums; and

WHEREAS, Board retirement, emeritus status, and sick-leave conversion benefits are UW policies. They do not in any way affect costs or benefits associated with participation in the Wyoming State Retirement System; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate supports the changes proposed by the Offices of Academic Affairs, Human Resources, and Legal Counsel as follows:

- Reorganize and consolidate Board retirement benefit information to improve accessibility and transparency. In particular, the description of specific Board benefits should appear in Regulation 4-2 rather than Regulation 5-173, because most of these specific benefits are available to all employees, not just faculty. Benefits only available to academic personnel, i.e. emeritus benefits, can be identified as such.

- Clarify the current list of surviving spouse benefits to eliminate ambiguities that create inequities in administering the regulations. In particular, currently available surviving spouse benefits such as tuition discounts and office space need to be clarified.

- Extend all Board retiree benefits, including the sick-leave conversion benefit—which reduces health insurance premium costs for the retiree and his beneficiary—to the surviving spouses of those employees who die still employed by UW but eligible for Board retirement.

AUTHENTICATION: The foregoing Senate Resolution 314, duly adopted by the Faculty Senate of the University of Wyoming under date of September 24, 2012, is hereby transmitted to the President of the University of Wyoming for review in accordance with UW Regulations.

Tucker Readdy
Secretary of the Faculty Senate