

Domestic Partner Benefits Resolution

- Whereas**, More than three hundred colleges and universities offer benefits to domestic partners, including eleven of WKU's nineteen Benchmark Institutions (Ball State University, California State University–Chico, California State University–Fresno, Eastern Illinois State University, Indiana State University, Eastern Michigan University, Oakland University, the University of Northern Iowa, Western Illinois University, Wichita State University, and Youngstown State University) and the University of Louisville, The University of Kentucky, Northern Kentucky University, and Centre College in Kentucky¹; and
- Whereas**, Domestic partner benefit programs at other Kentucky state institutions have withstood legal and political challenges; and
- Whereas**, seventy-four of the *U.S. News and World Report* top 120 schools now offer domestic partner benefits to all employees²; and
- Whereas**, Numerous governmental agencies, including thirteen states and 145 cities and counties now offer domestic partner benefits to all employees³; and
- Whereas**, over eight thousand six hundred private employers now offer domestic partner benefits, including employers in Bowling Green, in Kentucky, as well as companies doing business with the University such as AAUP, Aetna, AIG, Alliant Energy, American Express, Aramark, Ashland Corporation, AT&T, Barnes and Noble, BellSouth, Best Buy, Cisco Systems, Clear Channel Communications, CVS, Darden Restaurants (Red Lobster), Eaton, Gap Inc, General Electric, General Motors, HCA (Greenview Hospital), the Home Depot, IKON Office Solutions, J.C. Penney, Lexmark, Lowes Corporation, McDonalds, McGraw-Hill, Microsoft, Office Depot, Procter and Gamble, Sears Roebuck and Company, Staples, Starbucks, TIAA-CREF, UPS, United Auto Workers, Walgreens, and Weyerhaeuser⁴; and
- Whereas**, employees of Aramark who work on campus are eligible to receive domestic (same and opposite sex) partner benefits; and
- Whereas**, WKU currently makes “comprehensive health care benefits . . . available to full time employees and their eligible dependents. Employees may elect to cover lawful spouses and unmarried dependent children from birth to age 24 as long as the dependent child is claimed as a federal tax exemption,”⁵ but does not offer the same benefit to unmarried partners; and
- Whereas**, WKU does not currently offer equitable benefits for all of its employees and the expansion of domestic partner benefits will lead to more equality; and

¹ WKU Human Resources and Human Rights Campaign (www.hrc.org)

² www.hrc.org

³ www.hrc.org; American Association of State Colleges and Universities, “Domestic Partnership Benefits: Equity, Fairness, and Competitive Advantage,” www.aascu.org/policy_matters/pdf/domestic_partners07.pdf

⁴ www.hrc.org

⁵ “Anthem at WKU” (<http://www.wku.edu/Dept/Support/HR/AAAweb/Anthem%20at%20WKU.htm>)

Whereas, the WKU Strategic Plan calls for WKU to offer benefits that are competitive with benchmark institutions; and

Whereas, WKU's policy states that the University does not discriminate based on marital status or sexual orientation; and

Whereas, WKU's ability to recruit and retain high-quality employees may be compromised by its lack of competitive benefits; and

Whereas, Provision of benefits to domestic partners does not have a significant effect on the cost of programs⁶, and

Whereas, Family coverage under the WKU insurance program is self funded and the provision of such benefits will have a minimal effect on university finances, and

Whereas, eligibility criteria for such benefits can be made specific, and

Whereas, SGA recently passed a resolution supporting the provision of domestic partner benefits;

Therefore, be it resolved that the University Senate of WKU urges the university administration to extend all university benefits available to spouses of WKU employees to domestic partners of unmarried WKU employees.

⁶ "A 2005 Hewitt Associates study found that **the majority of employers — 64 percent — experience a total financial impact of less than 1 percent of total benefits cost**, 88 percent experience financial impacts of 2 percent or less and only 5 percent experience financial impacts of 3 percent or greater of total benefits cost. An earlier, 1997 Hewitt Associates study found the impact on employers' costs was 'minimal, with the addition of domestic partners, regardless of whether coverage was extended to same-sex or opposite-sex domestic partners. Companies report increases in medical claims of less than 1 percent after domestic partner coverage was introduced.'" (<http://www.hrc.org/issues/workplace/benefits/4827.htm>). See also www.aascu.org/policy_matters/pdf/domestic_partners07.pdf.