

Resolution to Fix the Tobacco Surcharge Enrollment Process

1. WHEREAS, the current benefits enrollment system applies a \$100/month tobacco user surcharge to all covered employees and their dependents by default, meaning that nonsmoking workers—in a state where 84% of people do not smoke¹—must explicitly opt out, or else pay a substantial penalty; and,
2. WHEREAS, even if an employee indicates that they and their dependents do not smoke, they are automatically reclassified as smokers the following year; and,
3. WHEREAS, the Franklin College Faculty Senate is aware, after very limited outreach by United Campus Workers of Georgia (UCWGA), of no fewer than a dozen nonsmoking employees who have paid fees in the hundreds or thousands of dollars, and of these, several who have failed to recoup their lost wages in the appeals process; and,
4. WHEREAS, it is impossible for OneUSG Connect to distinguish between smokers and employees who are classified as smokers in error, or to determine how many employees are misclassified and paying the surcharge unknowingly; and
5. WHEREAS, Karen Elliot, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Total Rewards, in response to the October 5th, 2021 Resolution regarding Tobacco Surcharge Errors and Refunds, offered no justification for the “opt-out” system; and
6. WHEREAS, a simple technical solution can resolve this issue permanently, while still requiring smokers to pay the surcharge;
7. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that OneUSG Connect introduce a mandatory yes/no selection for tobacco use, rather than automatically enrolling all covered employees and their dependents as smokers.

¹ <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Smoking/state/GA>