Appendix A: Charge Letter
October 29, 2013

Dear __________,

I am writing to invite you to serve as a member of the Healthcare Task Force, which is being jointly appointed by the University Faculty Senate and the Administration. The formation of this task force is motivated, in part, by recent concerns raised by faculty and staff in conjunction with the Take Care of Your Health initiative that was introduced for the 2014 benefits year beginning in January. Beyond these immediate concerns, however, the University has a compelling long-term interest in the health of its employees and the provision of access to high quality healthcare in the future as resources become increasingly scarce.

The membership of the Healthcare Task Force, composed of faculty, staff, and administrators from across Penn State, has been selected to bring together knowledgeable individuals with backgrounds and expertise in healthcare policies and programs, insurance, finance, and related aspects that will help to inform decisions about our planning, programs, partnerships, financing, and communications with respect to the health care of our employees and their dependents. Each of us has selected six members of the task force and an additional member was added jointly after review of the initial members selected.

Matters within the purview of the Healthcare Task Force include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- The benchmarking of healthcare benefits programs, including those with wellness components, at peer public and private universities and major corporations, and the identification of key trends in healthcare benefits programs and planning.

- Data-driven and science-based assessments of alternative approaches to reduce the rate of increase in Penn State’s health care costs. These may include the benchmarking of peer university cost structures to assess the relative magnitudes of employer and employee contributions, the efficacy of earnings-based contributions, the advantages of promoting internal or favored external facilities and services, and possible ways to increase the choices in healthcare coverage and prices among covered employees and their dependents.

- The exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of various kinds of programs, such employee wellness programs, which could result in an improved health status for Penn State employees and their dependents.

- Investigate improvements to communication, understanding, consultation, transparency, and employee participation for current and future healthcare programming and healthcare benefits.
We have asked Dr. Keith Crocker to chair the task force and he has graciously agreed. Dr. Crocker is the William Elliott Chaired Professor of Insurance and Risk Management in the Smeal College of Business. He is very knowledgeable about many aspects of healthcare programs at Penn State and in other sectors, and he has previously chaired the Joint Committee on Insurance and Benefits.

The task force should prepare its report to be presented to the Faculty Senate and Administration at the Senate’s meeting of April 29, 2014. Staff assistance will be provided by the Office of the President to support the work of the task force, along with any necessary financial and other resources for data collection, site visits, and access to outside expertise.

If you are willing to accept our invitation to serve on this important task force, please notify Susan Youtz at scv1@psu.edu as soon as possible so that work can begin in the near future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brent Yarnal
Chair, University Faculty Senate
E. Willard & Ruby S. Miller Professor and
Associate Head of Geography

Rodney A. Erickson
President