

Association of Retired Faculty and Staff (ARFS)
University of West Georgia
Coordinating Council Meeting, January 20, 2017, 10:00 am - 11:43 am
Conference Room, Alumni House
MINUTES

Present:

Mitch Clifton, Ben DeMayo, Daniel Flinn, Swain Harris, Kevin Hemphill, Frances Jackson, Denice King, Bruce Lyon, Wanda McGukin, Anne Richards, Ali Rosborough (recently named Executive Director of Alumni Relations), Jan Ruskell, Martha Ann Saunders, Karen Smith. **Not Present** (and excused): Jimmy Drew, Debbie Novak, Glenn Novak, Linda Wagner.

1. Mitch **called the meeting to order** at 10:00 am and all in attendance introduced themselves to one another.
2. The **minutes** of the meeting held October 7, 2016 had been distributed on line in advance of today's meeting. MOTION (Ruskell/Lyon): to approve them as distributed. There being no additions or corrections noted, they were approved on a voice vote as distributed.
3. Comments made on **evaluations of the 2016 annual reunion were reviewed**. These were largely positive - and most items evaluated were marked either Excellent or Very Good. A few had negative things to say about the meal. Most thought the meal was fine. One person thought the meeting was too long. Mitch said we would want to continue giving President Marrero 10 minutes to speak if he was willing to attend. Our Business meeting was minimal in length. He and Anne had discussed either shortening her remarks, or eliminating them altogether by creating a brochure that covered all she said which could be made available to attendees. Wanda mentioned that so many of the comments made by retirees were touching and meaningful, and it was agreed we wouldn't want to eliminate the opportunity for them to speak at this event.

Bruce asked the group to consider the issue of charging attendees some amount to defray the cost of the reunion. All costs for this event are currently paid for out of the Alumni Association budget. He also raised the possibility of informing retirees being honored that the group would provide complimentary meals for them and only one guest. Mitch said it is his understanding that we will have the same budget to work with next year as we had this year. Kevin explained that in past years the meal and all expenses related to the reunion (e.g., medallions, engraving of medallions, commemorative booklet, invitations, printing costs for handouts) have been paid out of the Alumni Association operating budget, which is provided annually by the Foundation. He said that he and Ali Rosborough have already been talking about the budget for Fiscal Year 2018. It is their hope that a separate operating budget for ARFS can be approved by the Foundation, enabling ARFS to make its own decisions about how much of that to spend on its various activities, including the reunion. Kevin suggested that the Coordinating Council hold off on discussing particulars related to charging attendees for the event until it is known what the Foundation is willing to provide. All agreed that this was a good idea.

Denice King stated that, whether something is charged or not charged for an event can affect people's attitudes about the event. In some people's minds, the significance of an event is "elevated" when a fee is charged to attend it. Some take the event more seriously if they pay

something for it and more people might want to attend a given event if they have to pay something for it.

Bruce said he assumed that staff who assist in planning the event or those who speak at the event would not be expected to pay to attend it. Others concurred.

Anne said she feels very differently than those Denise talked about when it comes to events honoring individuals. In particular, it has always concerned her that people are charged to attend the Alumni Awards event. This is an event intended to honor given individuals publicly, but she has become aware when attempting to encourage folks to attend that many decide against attending because of the charge. And it also limits the number of people an honoree may feel comfortable telling about the event knowing those they tell will have to pay to attend. Once many hear about the cost, they say they'll just honor the person they know, individually, on a separate occasion. As a result, less of a crowd is present to honor those being celebrated at the event itself, which seems a shame.

Dan Flinn said that if he were to be charged to attend someone else's retirement event, he would prefer to take the person to lunch and not go to the public event.

Frances said she thought the numbers of guests attending this event could potentially get out of hand if a limit is not set on the number of family members an honoree can bring to the event.

Following this discussion, it was agreed to delay a decision on the matter until our next meeting (to be held in March) so that Kevin and Ali have time to discuss the matter further with higher-ups in their division. Kevin noted, however, that the Foundation Board doesn't officially meet again until May. He added that, at some point as our group determines what other projects or activities we want to undertake, it will be important for us to have our own budget.

4. Plan for the 2017 Annual Reunion (choose a date, time, and location). The upcoming year's football schedule for home games and the commitments of Alumni Relations personnel to Homecoming and other campus events was discussed. Although Anne has already informed a handful of retirees she contacted that the gathering is likely to be held in early September, due to various conflicts the following dates were identified as possibilities for next year's reunion:

1. Saturday, August 26, 2017
2. Saturday, September 9th (if a home game with Miles is moved to the preceding Thursday)
3. Saturday, September 16th (a week prior to Homecoming).

Denise agreed to check with the Country Club to determine the availability of space there for the above dates, and to request a reservation from 9 am - 3 pm on that day, a table for Registration in the lobby, a buffet lunch [Thanksgiving menu or other less expensive options], and chairs set up near a front podium for honorees.

5. This year's retirees. Anne distributed the list of 2017 retirees we already know about, and the In Memoriam list as well. The following individuals volunteered to serve as contact persons for the following retirees:

Wanda McGukin - Robert Van Edwards

Bruce Lyon - Debra Hytower, Tom Mackel, Patricia Pinkard
Swain Harris - Charles Marlar, Dean Wilburn
Dan Flinn - Shelia Redwine

Anne mentioned that, until we establish a date certain for our reunion, we're not yet ready to proceed with contacting honorees for information needed for this event (e.g., years of service, availability of photo, person they want to write a tribute statement, current contact information). Fortunately, there is still plenty of time at this point.

6. Set the date for the next Coordinating Council Meeting.

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held on Friday, March 10, 2017 and 10:00 am.

7. Problems concerning retirees taking classes at UWG. Ben DeMayo, who retired from UWG in 2003, described the difficulties that have confronted him as he has attempted to take classes as a senior citizen at UWG in accordance with the Georgia Constitution. The Constitution of the State of Georgia, Article VIII, Section VII, Paragraph IV, Waiver of Tuition provides that "The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia shall be authorized to establish programs allowing attendance at units of the University System of Georgia without payment of tuition or other fees, but the General Assembly may provide by law for the establishment of any such program for the benefit of elderly citizens of the state." Such a program has been in effect for some time, making it possible (with few exceptions) for persons over age 62 to take courses at institutions in the University System of Georgia if space is available in those courses.

See <http://www.aseniorcitizenguideforcollege.com/2010/07/georgia.html>

Unfortunately, as Ben explained, sometimes it is not possible to know if space is available until classes begin. At that point, regular students have to pay a late fee to enroll in the class. Ben, himself, has been charged such a fee when seeking to enroll in a class on the day classes begin. When he protested, he was told he could request a waiver of the fee. He wondered why this was necessary given the wording of the Constitution, authorizing attendance "without payment of tuition or other fees." He has also been asked to fill out a five-page application for admission to the university each time he has sought to take a class - at a cost of \$40 each time. For some reason, the application he completed the first time is not preserved and the questions on the form seem more applicable to a relatively young student and not a person who spent 45 years on campus as a Professor (since they include questions requesting information about parents, for example). He has also been asked to create a new username and password on each separate occasion he has made application to take a class. When he protested this, he was told he had to make a visit to ITS to straighten things out. In another instance, he was informed that he was admitted and could take the class, only to learn subsequently that a "hold" had been placed on his account for no apparent reason. It was eventually removed, as no basis for it was found in the long run, but he had to make contact with yet another office on campus to resolve the problem. He got the impression in dealing with all this that one office on campus is not always in clear communication with other offices to prevent such problems from occurring. In another instance, he was told by the Registrar's Office that he was "too late" to add a course without permission from the Dean of the College in which the course was offered.

While a story in *USA Today* (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/2016/01/04/senior-citizens-free-college-classes/78278904/>) states that "It's easy to contact the undergraduate office at the Georgia college of your choice to find out how to register for classes, Ben has found the process a convoluted, arduous, and frustrating one on our campus. He was also informed that the institution gets \$600 per student from the state for any senior citizen who takes advantage of this

program. As a result, he wondered why UWG makes it so difficult for seniors to enroll in its classes. The institution gets the same amount whether the senior citizen audits the class or takes it for credit.

Other institutions (e.g., Dalton State College, which only requires a senior citizen to fill out a one-page form which primarily asks for contact information and proof of age and residency in the state of Georgia) seem to have streamlined or well-greased the process for seniors seeking entry to classes in accordance with the above-mentioned Constitutional provision. Ben said he also knew of another senior in the community (John Lebowitz) who seemed to be able to register for classes with less difficulty. He didn't understand this inconsistency in light of his own experience.

Ben said he brought this matter before our group in the hopes that we might be able to do something to reduce the number of bureaucratic obstacles he or others face in seeking to register for classes as a senior citizen.

Anne mentioned that the Barrier Team, which Amber Smallwood chairs, seemed the best place to take these concerns [see <https://www.westga.edu/community/engagewest/barrier-team.php>]. She and Kevin had shared with that group the problem we had as a result of an informal way in which the termination form asked if a person was "retiring" from the university. Unless a person was fired, transferring to another department, or deceased, the supervisor filling out the form typically wrote "Yes" to the question about whether the person had retired. April Duffie, a member of the team, was able to get an additional question inserted, asking if the person met the Board of Regents criteria for retirement. That small addition resolved problems we've had over the past 11 years in determining who is a bonafide retiree and who is not.

It was agreed that Anne would summarize Ben's concerns in the minutes of today's meeting and then Denice will take responsibility for passing these concerns on to the Barrier Team. Mitch also recommended that Ben be copied on any email exchange about the matter so he knows what's happening in relation to his concerns. Mitch also said he would keep all Coordinating Committee members up to date via email.

8. USGRC meeting (October 21, 2016) and upcoming USGRC meeting (April 7, 2017)

Anne Richards highlighted some of the information shared at the meeting held October 21, 2016, which she circulated to the ARFS listserv last year in the form of notes she had taken at the meeting. She underscored the value of the meeting in providing retirees with up-to-date USG information about what is happening with healthcare changes and explained the significant advocacy role the Council plays in keeping USG personnel apprised of retiree concerns. She informed the group about the role played by the Total Rewards Steering Committee (TRSC) at the University System level in setting the parameters for benefits provided to retirees and current employees. She mentioned that, in the past year, Dorothy Zinsmeister, first president of the USGRC, had been granted permission to sit in (as a nonvoting member) when the TRSC met. When other groups (Staff Council, Faculty Council) discovered this, they too requested equal representation at TRSC meetings. Instead of providing this, the TRSC informed Dorothy that she could no longer attend their meetings. Many retirees expressed considerable unhappiness with this decision because they realize that a lot of topics and initial steps toward policy formulation may arise in these meetings that have implications for retirees, yet existing members of the committee may not be aware of these as retirees are. Anne added that the

USGRC is also a good source of information about what other retiree organizations are doing in the USG.

Anne noted that the USGRC is still in the process of becoming the organization envisioned when it was first created. At the present time a few USG institutions have no representation on the Council, and some representatives are not themselves retirees. Some USG institutions have no organized retiree organization. As a result, their retiree "representatives" on the USGRC have been chosen by an institutional administrator rather than being selected by an organized group of retirees. These are all problems the USGRC is working to resolve.

Mitch announced that the next meeting of the USGRC will be on Friday, April 7, 2017 - and will be held at the USG office in Atlanta in order to facilitate a dialogue between Council members and the new Chancellor of the USG, Steve Wrigley. Mitch reported that both he and Anne intended to attend and he will inform the group if the room chosen for the meeting might permit others to attend as well.

A discussion took place regarding some of the consolidations currently underway in the USG. Someone asked if any plans had been talked about for the University of West Georgia to merge with another institution. Anne said she had heard at an AAUP meeting a year or more ago that consideration was being given to merging Georgia Highlands College with the University of West Georgia. Following that meeting, she asked President Marrero about the prospect. His response was that he would want to establish a "dating relationship" with Georgia Highlands prior to considering a "marriage." Anne didn't know what had been happening in this regard, however.

Swain mentioned that some partnerships make good sense that the System is considering and has arranged - because the schools involved are located in close proximity to one another. In other cases, an institution with a "small-town" ambiance is partnered with a much larger institution, and students are not happy as a result. Alumni are often not happy either, and existing personnel at each institution face various unexpected challenges.

9. Campus Center survey. Mitch explained that, on behalf of the Coordinating Council, he had sent a letter to President Marrero, inquiring about the possibility of retirees getting free access to exercise facilities in the Campus Center. President Marrero had written back, asking if our group had surveyed retirees about their interest in such an opportunity. That prompted the Council to develop a survey. In advance of today's meeting, Mitch had circulated a copy of the revised version of this survey and a finalized version is now ready for distribution. He expressed appreciation to Debbie Novak and Martha Ann Saunders for their thoughtful review of the survey and their editorial suggestions for revising it. He had previously raised the question over email as to whether the survey should go to all retirees on our listserv, or only those who live in the area. Wanda and others recommended it go to all retirees on our listserv, especially because retirees are so mobile and may leave the area temporarily, only to return at a later date. Beyond this, some come to Carrollton on a fairly frequent basis, but reside elsewhere. Mitch also reported that, once the survey is in final form, Kevin has agreed to distribute it and tally the results.

Denice mentioned that Kevin might want to add a question requesting updated contact information for retirees whose information has changed. All agreed this would be a good idea.

A discussion took place about the hours when retirees might be more likely to use the facilities. It was agreed that retirees are more likely to use them in morning hours, sometimes very early morning hours. (Dan, for example, currently uses them at 6 am.) Some in the group have noticed that in morning hours (6 am - 11 am or 12 noon) very few students seem to be using the facilities. Most students can be found using the exercise facilities in the late afternoon and evening.

Frances noted the matter of parking - and the difficulties retirees might face in finding parking close to the Campus Center if they wanted to utilize the facilities.

10. Possible new Activities for Retirees this Year. Mitch asked if Council members had recommendations in this regard. Jan asked if we were still working toward offering a pre-retirement workshop for those wanting to prepare for their retirement. Someone from the Business and Finance area might serve on a panel. Perhaps Paul Phillips could speak about the psychological adjustments retirees go through. Someone else might focus on how to stay active in retirement.

These comments led to a discussion about creation of a pre-retirement brochure, as has already been done at Emory University and Valdosta State University. Denise reported that Frank Pritchett asked her whether or not the Coordinating Council is still interested in his developing a pre-retirement brochure. The response of the group clearly indicated that they would very much like to see him do this and they very much appreciate his willingness to do this. Denise said she would pass the word along to him and suggest that he also contact UCM about contributing to its design.

Anne displayed a copy of the Valdosta State University brochure, which Dennis Marks (current president of the USGRC) discussed at the last meeting of the USGRC. The Emory brochure is two sides of one sheet of 8.5x11 inch paper - and is simply printed in black and white with no graphics. The Valdosta State brochure has more graphics and looks more attractive but Dennis mentioned that it is very difficult for others to download online because of this. He recommended groups follow the Emory model instead of his own as a result. Swain mentioned that it is possible to program a document placed on line in such a way that graphics can be "stripped" from it if a person wishes to download it.

Anne also explained that the Retiree Association at Clayton State University has created a 30-page Retiree Handbook as well as a brochure about their retiree organization. [Both are readily available online by googling Clayton State University Retiree Association.] The Handbook provides information for persons already retired about how to handle various matters once retired. Much of the information it contains is relevant to retirees in other USG institutions.

Swain said that one of the biggest concerns for faculty and staff pre-retirement has to do with how they might handle the financial realities of retirement. As a result, he thought retirees should have information about this at least three years prior to retiring so they can plan ahead. A lot also have questions about how to cash in their sick leave. He explained that, personally, he found a one-on-one meeting with a TRS representative more helpful than material posted on the website pages designed to provide information to retirees. At these meetings, the prospective retiree can bring a spouse and children to hear information about what is going to happen and what decisions have to be made. Some individuals approaching retirement consider drawing out

all their retirement money rather than remaining in the USG retiree program. In most cases, this is not in the retiree's best interests but they have to be educated as to why this is so. He recommended retirees meet with a TRS representative 1-2 years prior to retirement.

Denice said she thought that a brochure would have to have very general information in it to deal with the variety of situations individual retirees might face. She also thought it was a good idea to contact Human Resources well in advance of the year one expects to retire.

Anne read from the Valdosta State University brochure, which provides a timeline and step-by-step guide to assist with a person's transition into retirement that begins 5 years prior to retirement. It contains such general recommendations for that time period as attending events on retirement issues and benefits, requesting a Personal Earning and Benefit Estimate Statement from Social Security, developing a network of peers willing to discuss their experiences with choices they made in retirement planning, thinking about post-retirement use of time and possible commitments, reviewing retirement plan asset allocations, long or short-term goals, and distribution options.

Two years prior to retirement it mentions contacting Medicare, reviewing health care and projected costs for medication, becoming informed about living wills, etc. It contains both specific and generic recommendations from 5 years prior to retirement to 1 month prior to retirement.

Someone proposed that we consider putting a pre-retirement check-list on the UWG HR page and the ARFS website. Swain said that, if this were done, the links should be monitored often to insure they are still current and working. In his experience when employed, links on important websites he pulled up (e.g., the FBI Most Wanted list) often changed after their initial posting.

Karen reminded the group that many retirees are not savvy about or comfortable with using a computer, so it would be helpful if, in addition to what is available on the computer, there are brochures that can be picked up at a meeting or in an office - or we can offer to mail to persons who are considering retirement. She said having a brochure available in the HR office would be beneficial.

Bruce asked if the pre-retirement brochure is the one Frank was working on. Anne said she thought so as she recalled sending him a copy he requested of the one developed at Emory.

Denice asked what she might do as a follow-up to today's meeting and her last conversation with Frank. It was agreed that we would like her to share with him what was mentioned at today's meeting, to encourage him to move forward with his development of the brochure he had in mind, and to plan on providing us with a draft copy in advance of our meeting on March 10th. So far as budgeting for the production of this brochure is concerned, Anne mentioned that our HR office here might be quite willing to pay for it - as was the case in Valdosta. Dennis Marks brought the copy of the one the Valdosta Retirement Association developed (based largely on the one from Emory University) to the VSU HR office and they were delighted to take responsibility for getting it into print form. They saw the clear need for it as much as retirees did.

Dan Flinn mentioned that so many individuals retire at different ages. He, himself, has retired four times from different work settings and still finds difficulties understanding how to deal with some Medicare regulations.

11. Committee Reports

a. Jan asked about the balance in the **Scholarship** fund. A handout provided by Kevin for today's meeting indicated that the current balance in the account is \$20,785.00. Someone asked about a section of the handout that made reference to a "transfer" of funds related to this account. Anne explained that contributions intended for the scholarship had inadvertently been directed to two different accounts soon after the scholarship effort was launched. Once that was discovered, funds were transferred from one of the accounts into a combined account that more accurately reflected the total amount actually raised for the scholarship.

Jan reported that she and Debbie Novak have been discussing ways our Association might be able to secure additional funds for this scholarship through some sort of fund-raiser. They became aware that places like American Pie have agreed to a "Spirit Night" event where a percentage (say, 10%) of all purchases on a given evening are designated for a particular organization. And they learned that a department on campus found a free script for a Mystery Dinner Theatre event which served as a fund-raiser for that department. In some cases persons can read their assigned roles for such theatre productions and don't have to memorize lines in advance or go through hours of rehearsal. Denice noted that putting on an event such as this still requires a lot of work and pre-planning and typically involves a commitment of time and energy for many members of a group. She described a fund-raiser organized by a women's group she is a part of that simply required buying chances for a day at a local spa (and was held around Mother's Day). Because it was a raffle, which often sells itself, carrying it off was not too hard. She also mentioned that some of the businesses doing the spirit-night fund-raisers reserve only particular nights for these events.

Karen mentioned that Chick-fil-A has agreed to hold spirit night fund-raisers for local high schools. In some cases, a percentage of the sales from all home football games could be used for a particular purpose. Martha Ann asked if people really made any money from spirit nights. And she wondered if there were that many retirees who would be interested in attending football games.

It was mentioned that any fund-raiser we might plan has to be cleared in advance and approved by our Advancement office. Denice offered to find out how the idea of our organizing a fund-raiser of any type would be viewed and to report back about this at our next meeting.

b. Wanda announced that the next **GA-HERO meeting** will be held on May 5, 2017 at the Georgia Archives building in Jonesboro, near Clayton State University. The meeting begins with coffee at 9:30 am and runs from 10 am to 2 pm. Lunch (in the form of a sandwich, piece of fruit and dessert) is provided for a fee - this time cost will be \$15 [part of which goes to support GA-HERO operations, since it currently charges no dues]. Swain asked for additional information about the group. Wanda explained that she is our official representative from our retiree association to that group and that she and Anne have attended several of their meetings. Anne explained that the USGRC is a meeting for retirees from institutions in the University System of Georgia but GA-HERO is an organization that includes retirees and retiree organizations from all over the state - both public and private. It is also affiliated with a national organization known as AROHE (Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education), to which our retiree

association belongs. This gives us the eligibility to vote at GA-HERO meetings and has connected us to a meaningful national resource (AROHE) providing "best practices" information from retiree organizations nationwide. One example Anne gave in this regard was the booklet compiled by retiree organizations in California, listing all the professional and service activities and financial contributions provided to the state of California (and elsewhere) by retirees in the California system. This booklet, which comes out on a regular basis, was described as indicating that retirees constitute the equivalent of an additional institution in the state system. Anne also mentioned that in the first week of October, 2018, the bi-annual meeting of AROHE will be taking place at the Emory University Conference Center in Atlanta. Unlike the USGRC (which is typically open only to a designated representative and an alternate), GA-HERO meetings are open to any and all retirees who wish to attend. Anyone who would like to attend the meeting in May can let Wanda or Mitch know - or can register directly by going to the GA-HERO website.

12. Other Business

Denice distributed copies of a brochure for a **river cruise organized by the Alumni Association at UWG**: an 11-day "Blue Danube River Cruise" going to Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, and the Czech Republic. Departure date: May 11th. Airfare is free if the trip is booked by January 31, 2017. The total amount for the trip has to be paid by February 10th to reserve a space. This cruise is put on by MayflowerTours. Wanda commented that the trip looked "absolutely fabulous" and, if it were not for the fact that she and her husband are returning from another trip just two weeks prior to this one, she would definitely be interested in signing up.

Denice explained that the Alumni Association organized its first alumni trip, using the Collette travel company, last year - going to Ireland. MayflowerTours was chosen this year because of the "great incentives" it offered. The university has also reached out to Leland and Gherry Gustafson to insure its trips don't conflict with others the Gustafsons are planning. Leland and Gherry came to the presentation about the upcoming trip and said they were happy to promote it. They had just been on a Mayflower trip to the Christmas markets in Germany and spoke highly of the company. Denice said she has a copy of the powerpoint presentation about the trip for anyone who is interested and added that the university is very optimistic about the level of customer service that will be provided by MayflowerTours. Swain said he has seen ads for this group on TV.

Denice explained that the Alumni Association wants to grow its travel program and has made contact with other groups in Georgia who might join with UWG in planning a trip. In 2018, the university hopes to plan trips in several price ranges - one domestic trip and one international trip. Other options considered: arranging a trip that involves both alumni and friends of the university, including members of the Board of Trustees and retirees. The Alumni Association is using their Facebook page to promote these trips and will have more advance planning information on Facebook in the future.

Someone suggested Denice look into "Diamond Tours." This is a company popular with the Senior Center and the Chamber of Commerce.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 11:43 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne C. Richards, Secretary

