

**Minutes submitted by Kim Hachiya, board secretary**

Submitted to the Association Board of Directors, May 11, 2023

Approved by the BOD on August 10, 2023

**UNL Emeriti and Retirees Association Membership meeting**

April 18, 2023

Cather Dining Center

A luncheon meeting of the UNL Emeriti and Retirees Association convened at 11:45 a.m. April 18, 2023, at the Cather Dining Center. Approximately 45 members and guests RVSPed for the meeting, which also was live-streamed.

President Linda Major called the meeting to order. She recognized the following during Memory Moments:

**Donna Aksamit, College of Education and Human Sciences**

**Jeannene Flotree, University Health Center**

**Joseph (Joe) Pospichal, University Purchasing**

**Merle Schaal, Accounting**

**Donald Steinegger, Agronomy and Horticulture**

A donation honoring university emeriti and retirees who passed away during the past year is made to the ERA Scholarship Fund in recognition of their service.

Earl Hawkey reported the financials are in good shape and that as of the end of March, the scholarship fund stood at \$44,647.72.

Don Weeks reported that after working with UNL HR, it was decided that all faculty and staff retirees will automatically become free 1-year members of the association with the availability to opt out. He also announced a “backstage at Lied Center” tour will occur at 2 p.m. May 16th. This will include a promotion for the upcoming 2023-24 season.

Jane Zatechka announced a coffee meet-up at 9:30 a.m. April 27 at the Mill at Innovation Campus.

Linda reported that the board met with Chancellor Ronnie Green, who gave us his candid assessment of the state of higher education nationally and in Nebraska, and his reflections on his 13 years at UNL. We will be making an honorarium in his name to our scholarship fund.

President-elect Larry Dlugosh introduced Heath Mello, NU Vice President for External Relations, who delivered an informative talk about the Nebraska Unicameral.

Highlights included: (All comments are attributed to Heath and are his own opinions and observations.)

1. While the legislature’s unique one-house structure has historically meant the body does a lot of work during sessions, this year has been radically different and slow. He predicted fewer than 30 bills would pass, an historic low. Our unicameral is, in Heath’s assessment,

the most powerful legislative body in the U.S. due to its structures and rules. There's a considerable amount of transparency and public engagement; each introduced bill must have a hearing, three rounds of debate are required, and there are no "conference panels" that modify proposals coming from separate houses.

2. There's still a lot of pride in this structure. BUT...

3. This year, by Day 64 (the day he was speaking to us), they had passed just one bill. This is unprecedented and concerning as big issues are not being addressed.

4. Why?

- \* Term limits mean this session has 22 first-term senators; 13 others are term-limited; three have been appointed; there's a new speaker; 10 new committee chairs; new clerk.

- \* Considerable concerns about social policies (abortion, gender-affirming care, Second Amendment) so debates on other items have been limited.

- \* Lack of compromise, loss of civility (public belittling of senators), anger from the public on all sides has diminished trust in the body. Heath fears this is the "new normal" and added, "we as Nebraskans lose out when nothing gets done."

5. NU is most interested in its budget (asking for a 2.5 percent increase) and bills that fund need-based scholarships and require all families to fill out a FAFSA. The latter helps us with recruiting.

6. Why advocate for the University?

- \* NU system graduates 11,000 students annually to join the Nebraska workforce

- \* NU has a \$5.8 billion annual economic impact on the state

- \* 1 of every 27 jobs in Nebraska is connected to the University

- \* There's a 9-1 return on investment for tax dollars allocated to the University

7. How ERA members can help:

- \* visit [Nebraska.edu/advocates](http://Nebraska.edu/advocates) for information

- \* contact your state senator and urge their support of NU

- \* tell your stories and opinions about NU's value

8. Heath hopes this year will offer a "teaching moment" that shows compromise and consensus-building are better than divisiveness and war. He attributes much of the invective to social media, which he described as a "blood sport" that increases the rudeness and damaging discourse. "Washington style politics have crept into our politics here," he said. The increase in "big money" and "outside money" has been damaging. Perhaps, he said, it's time to try to limit outside money in campaigns.

9. Heath said there are some "great" freshmen senators, and he sees that as a hopeful indicator.

After Heath's talk, Linda announced we will make an honorarium to the scholarship fund in his name. She noted this was our last luncheon of the semester and wished the group a pleasant summer.

Meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.