

Emeriti and Retirees Association General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, April 16, 2024
Nebraska East Union

Minutes submitted by Kim Hachiya, April 18, 2024

The UNL Emeriti and Retirees Association General Membership Meeting occurred April 16, 2024 at the Nebraska East Union. President Larry Dlugosh called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. More than 110 had preregistered for the meeting.

Larry explained that last year, ERA had invited UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey Gold to speak at our April meeting; since then he was named priority candidate for the NU system presidency, and the system scheduled him to be in Omaha on April 16. We had secured a backup speaker, but when Gold accepted our invitation, we released her and she had a new commitment. So the Exec Board decided to use this meeting to chat with our membership for feedback and ideas. We learned when we messaged our membership via email (twice) about this change, that there appears to be a lot of system failures in terms of folks getting our emails. So that was good feedback on how we need to solve our communications problems.

Memory Moments names were recognized:

Carol Bom	Landscape Services/Facilities
David Kent Peterson	Campus Planning
Rick Williams	Nebraska East Union
George Tuck	Journalism and Mass Communications

Larry introduced new/first-time members to the group.

Upcoming tours and activities were announced:

- April 23, tour of Kiewit Hall 3 p.m.-4 p.m. (Coffee chat, 2 p.m. in Kiewit Café) 65 have already registered.
- May 13, tour of Davis Global Center at UNMC; limited to 40 people. Provide your own transportation.
- ERA pop up with OLLI 2 p.m. May 21 with backstage tour and season announcement

Larry led the discussion. His PPT included the following

- Introduce the topic Review of ERA activities and ideas for the future
- Outline the plan for today's meeting
- Powerpoint presentation and Ideas from Members

Larry noted that most B1G institutions have separate organizations for emeriti and staff. We are unusual in combining both into one organization, although a few others also do so.

Lots of people don't know about this organization and we are working to let people know about us. Currently 600+ on the membership list. Goal is to keep folks engaged with us.

1. Programming: key activities are social, informational and educational activities. We have seen a big boost in attendance.

2. Communication is crucial. Website, newsletter. New editor Connie Boehm is considering a quarterly publication that is shorter but more frequent distribution. We also post on our website:

Emeriti-retirees.unl.edu

Some members do not have/use email; some do not use text or messenger. We are looking to figure out how to reach them. A big difficulty is that staff retirees lose access to their unl.edu email addresses on their separation date, so we lose the ability to contact them.

3. Money/scholarship/awards

Our revenue sources are dues and donations.

We have \$63K in our scholarship; goal is \$90K by 2027

4. Current Partnerships:

NU Foundation, UNL Administration, Campus Unions and Catering, UNL Extension Office. There's an MOU with OLLI and we will probably do more dual events with them.

We are members of the B1G Retirement Association and AROHE (Association of Retiree Organizations in Higher Education). We meet with the B1G group twice a year (once virtually and once in person at the annual summer conference). AROHE is a storehouse of good online information.

5. Benefits: works with Human Resources to advocate for benefits for retirees and emeriti. One of the things that frustrate us now is that staff may not have the easiest glide path to retirement or access to benefits.

Committee chair Roshan Pajnigar noted that staff are excluded from several items. We understand that faculty do have ongoing needs to be on campus, particularly if they are still advising, teaching or conducting research, but we are trying to bring more equity to the benefits the university offers to all retirees. Parking is always a problem. Allow staff to use the employee assistance program, but EAP staffing precludes that. Roshan said, "We will not give up. I will not give up and we will try to keep staff email privileges through a 90-day extension for staff. There are discounts for Lied Center and others for faculty but not staff. We are working on that."

Engagement: Vickie Highstreet working with SLICE to find volunteers for things.

Bylaws: we stay up to date on bylaws.

Larry listed our five goals as identified by the Board of Directors in December 2023.

1. diversity and inclusivity
2. electronic dues and payment systems—we are looking for software that might help us do that.
3. needs-based scholarship
4. "Brand" Identity and developing our brand to assist promoting the organization
5. mentoring pre and new retirees

Larry asked people to jump in where they might have interests and expertise

Future tasks:

How to recruit new members

How to keep them engaged

(Most B1G groups say they keep about 20% of their members engaged)

In 2028 we will be the host institution for the annual summer conference. By then there will be 16 or 18 member institutions. Big question: BUDGET for the conference. We need to start making plans NOW. (Ohio State indicates they are budgeting \$30K for this summer's conference.)

How can we be more reflective of the university in general? How do we get more staff members

Program committee has become a standing committee. An active committee that would love members and input. Are there other interest groups? Walking group? Book group? Wine club?

Communication: Connie wants to make the newsletter shorter, but more frequent, photos. She would love to have help on this.

Revenue: should we consider looking for retirement-friendly organizations to become sponsors? Places like assisted living places; NU Foundation; Alumni. Larry noted that we do not want to share names with TIAA or insurance or medicare advantage etc. A lot of BIG assns. have sponsors.

Discussion

How many attend the BIG meeting? Last year 38. TOSU said their budget is \$30K for the meeting. Conference registration fee is \$350 each. Costs for the host institutione include food, housing, tours (shuttle bus rentals), etc. It was suggested that it would be nice to have one of the meetings that would invite our membership. Larry said the conference is a great chance for the host University to show off facilities, faculty, etc.

Sponsorships: Start with a list of what we do that a sponsor would be interested in. Larry: we bank, we go to pharmacies, what organizations would be interested in us? Think creatively: who owns pets? Would veterinary companies be interested in us? Hospitals. Larry: OLLI is also looking for sponsors and we are looking at more collaborations with them.

It was asked whether we are looking for sponsorship for the conference (which we host in 2028) or for the organization in general? Larry thinks it's for the organization as a whole and a second choice is the conference.

Size of the scholarship: right now it's \$1,000. It is worth it to students. The UNL scholarship and financial aid office vets applicants and awards the scholarship based primarily on need.

Don Weeks noted we record our meetings and they can be accessed afterwards. He said the tech committee, headed by Alfred Stark, needs help in recording meetings, etc. So if you are interested in volunteering or know of folks with skills, let us know. We also are interested in finding an online way for people to reserve and pay for lunch online and pay for dues online. Don thinks we would have more renewals if folks could just do it online. We are searching for software. Let us know if groups you are members of use software that you find useful. There are software products available but at a hefty price. Using UNL's system is problematic because it can only be accessed by those with a unl.edu email address, meaning staff retirees cannot access the program.

Question:

What is the relationship of this org to the university? Why can't we use the university's pre-existing systems? Does the organization advocate for anything? Why are we not advocating for staff? For the university? By belonging, if folks know we are advocating for the university perhaps more people would join.

Larry said we are in a "loose tight coupling." We work with the university but only lightly associated. In terms of advocacy, we have senators who want to get rid of tenure, we have budget cuts, we have attacks on DEI efforts. Jim Lewis said clarity on the arguments would make the organization more powerful. Larry: we have not tiptoed into those areas. We need to not perhaps be political but focus on things important to the University of Nebraska.

Larry pointed out surveys on the tables and asked folks to respond or contact board members directly if you have comments.

Because we do not meet formally over the summer, our next general membership meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 19, 2024.