

UGARA COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Wray Nicholson House Conference Room

Monday, March 14, 2016

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Present: Mark Eason, Freda Scott Giles, Sharron Hannon, Travis Jackson, Marcus Jennings, Paul Kurtz, Tom Lauth, Arthur Tripp, Sharron Thompson, and Brahm Verma.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tom Lauth.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the February 8 meeting were approved.

Committee Reports

- **Treasurer's Report.** The current balance is \$15,017.61. (Complete report appears at the end of the minutes).
- **Benefits.** Mark Eason reported no new Legislature or Board of Regents activity regarding retirees. This is day 36 of 40 for the Legislature and nothing new has been introduced and there are no new minutes posted on the TRS website. With no April Regents meeting, it will be May before any new minutes are posted.
- **New Retirees Reception.** Lindsay Copus reported via email to Lauth that the reception invitation that was circulated at our last meeting is going forward. Lauth recently met with Pat Allen, the speaker at the reception. Everything seems to be in order at this point. A list of new retirees will be available at our next meeting so that current UGARA Council members can call and personally invite/remind retirees to attend.
- **Nominations.** The Nominations Committee included Freda Scott Giles, Sharron Hannon, and Tom Lauth. A slate of candidates was presented to the Council and all were approved. Current member, Tom Landrum, will be the Vice President. A nomination for the Secretary position will be named at the April meeting. New Council members for the 2016-2019 term include Jim Cobb (faculty member from History), Tom Eaton (faculty member from the Law School), and Nancy McDuff (Admissions Office) and for the one year term (2016-2017) Laura Dowd (Academic Advisor, Arts & Sciences).
- **University System of Georgia Retirees Council (USGRC).** Brahm Verma reported on the activities of the March 4 meeting. Statistics were given to the USGR Council about the number of retirees who had been contacted about the insurance change and Verma shared that UGA had reached 100% of its eligible retirees with the observation that UGA's HR staff went to great lengths to contact retirees and even went to retirees' homes in some cases. Additional discussion occurred at the USGRC meeting regarding problems with Aon Hewitt. The USGRC Communication committee, chaired by Verma, gave a PowerPoint presentation with recommendations for the University System of Georgia Human Resources staff. Once minutes from that meeting are posted, the full presentation can be viewed in the USGRC minutes on the website http://www.usg.edu/academic_planning/committees/view/usg_retiree_council. Verma reported that the chair of the USGRC objected to several of the Communication committee's recommendations and, in particular, that every institution develops a retiree council. Nonetheless, Verma noted that the USG staff has been very responsive and is following up on many of the committee's recommendations. For instance, for those institutions that do not have a HR department, the USG office is looking at ways those institutions can find an office that can assemble a list of retirees to form a list-serve, how to consolidate retiree information at the system level, and how to develop a website in which all this information would be available. Because of objections to portions of the report, the committee

decided that rather than having the report approved, two motions would be created, one of which was approved. A copy of the approved motion is included at the end of these minutes. The italicized statements in the motion are essentially responses from the system to the members of the Communication committee. The system office spoke up in behalf of the motion and it was passed. Verma noted that the passed motion encouraged the development of institutional-level organizations (not councils). One additional activity included the election of Missy Cody (Georgia State University) to chair and that was the only position filled.

Old Business

- Update on UGA HR Retiree Health Enrollment Process and Retiree Insurance Information Center: Travis Jackson.
 - (1) Retiree Information Center. As noted in previous meetings, The Information Center was closed on January 29 and was considered a tremendous success.
 - (2) Non-Responders. There are approximately 25 retirees who are considered non-responders. UGA Human Resources worked diligently to find and contact these retirees, but there still remained about 17 that did not do anything. Jackson noted that the Board of Regents is not taking a hard line to disenfranchise anyone and is working with Aon now to see if these retirees can get enrolled even now.
 - (3) Aon Hewitt. There is great dissatisfaction by USG with Aon Hewitt, particularly with issues that are impacting billing and the amount of HRA dollars that need to be funded. The USG Board is exerting great pressure on Aon to make improvements, but it would be difficult to make a contract change in the near future. As stated previously, no payment is involved in the contract and there are limits in getting changes. Unfortunately the pain in transitioning to a new company in the future might also be difficult, but necessary if issues are not resolved.
 - (4) Centralization of Benefits. At the system level, centralization of benefits (billing, communications, etc.) in UGS has been delayed for the time being because of implementation issues. This centralization may still be several years away. Jackson pointed out that service for retirees would remain at the institutional level and UGA would continue to service its retirees. This was followed by a discussion about current employees and the need to ensure they are aware of the policy change before they retire. Although there is a retiree checklist on the USG website, most individuals don't go to the website. While it has always been a policy at UGA to encourage employees to make retirement plans early, the UGA HR office has hired an outreach person whose focus is on educating employees on campus and making presentations to employee groups.
- UGA Representation on USG Retirees Council. In February, Lauth wrote a letter to Provost Whitten proposing that the UGA representative to the USG Council be the immediate past President of the UGARA Council and that the alternate (substituting for the representative when necessary) be the sitting President. In response to Lauth's letter, Provost Whitten thanked him for the suggestion, but wanted the Council to know that this appointment is her prerogative. She then concluded her response by asking Lauth to serve on the USGRC for next year and he has accepted.

New Business

- President's Report. Lauth reported:
 - Thank You Letters to Chancellor Huckaby regarding his response to questions submitted at a special October 12 UGARA meeting and to President Morehead regarding his support of the Information Center were sent and copies of those letters were attached to the March minutes.
 - Institute of Gerontology Study: (a) Scope, method and funding and (b) Invitation to guests from the College of Public Health and the Institute of Gerontology to attend UGARA's April meeting. As discussed in earlier meetings, Lauth had contacted the Institute of Gerontology regarding interest in

conducting a scientific study on the impact or transaction costs associated with the new method of providing health care insurance to retirees. The Institute is interested in and willing to doing the study. Since the Council's last meeting, Lauth met with Dean Williams of the College of Public Health to further discuss this potential study. A central point in this follow-up discussion is whatever study is conducted by the Institute of Gerontology, it should have scientific integrity and also be informative about the aging process. UGARA's intent is not to identify findings that would be intentionally critical or counterproductive with the University of Georgia's relationship with the University System. From emails circulated earlier and discussions at previous Council meetings, there were two possible surveys proposed: (1) Online survey through Qualtrix to about 1,000 retirees which would cost approximately \$2,500. (2) Phone survey to a sample size of about 100 which would cost approximately \$10,000. Lauth recommended to the Council that the first survey might serve us reasonably well and that we budget \$2,500 to this effort. Before accepting motions on his recommendation, Lauth noted that Verma, on a separate track, is also working with the Institute of Gerontology and suggested that we invite the Dean of the College of Public Health and the Director of the Institute of Gerontology to meet with us not only about a survey, but also about a more comprehensive plan for what the Institute might do for retirees. An invitation has been issued for guests from the College of Public Health and Institute of Gerontology to attend the Council's April meeting. Scott Giles then made a motion that the Council support a study by the Institute of Gerontology with funding of \$2,500. Thompson seconded the motion. A discussion followed initiated by Kurtz expressing concern about a study associated with this population using a computer. He suggested that a hybrid format using both a computer and paper survey would be more appropriate and wondered if the President's office and/or the Regents' office might be willing to support such a study. Scott Giles suggested that we should conduct a smaller initial home study and from there a larger study might be more easily justified. Further, she said the question should be broached with our guests on April 11 as to how they propose to deal with the problem of individuals who might not be able or willing to use a computer to complete the survey. Kurtz then stated that while he had initially planned to make an amended motion, we probably should move forward with a study in a timely manner. He also stated that he felt we should keep open the possibility that we might want to fund more than \$2,500 after we learned more from our April meeting and we move further down the road on conducting the study. The original motion passed.

- Scott Giles requested that a discussion of the gun law legislation be added to the agenda at a future meeting should it not be vetoed by the Governor.
- Save the Date: New Retirees Reception – May 5, 2016.

Meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting: Monday, April 11, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. Please note that the meeting may go longer than usual because we are having guests.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharron C. Thompson, Secretary

UGARA Treasurer's Report
March 15, 2016

The UGARA account balance is currently \$15,017.61. This total reflects a payment of \$50.80 to Athena Web Design for web site maintenance.

Submitted by Tommy Altman, UGARA Treasurer

USGRC Communications Committee

Motion

March 4, 2016

At the October 23, 2015, USGRC meeting, the Communications Committee presented its Recommendations, which are appended to the minutes of that meeting. After discussion, the Committee's Recommendations were tabled to the next meeting and are therefore on the floor for discussion at the March 4, 2016, USGRC meeting. The Committee wishes to express its thanks to the USG Retiree Council members and the USG System Office staff for their review and insightful suggestions for improvements to the Committee's Recommendations. Based on the feedback the Committee has received, the Communication Committee makes the following motion:

A. The USG Retiree Council endorses the proposal to exploit modern electronic technologies to create USG- and institution-level communications networks, including the suggestions for implementation proposed by the USG System Office.

1. *The USG Retiree Council thanks the USG System Office for reviewing the Communication Committee report, already setting up a USGRC listserv and proactively initiating several actions aligned with the Committee's report outlined below.*
2. *The USG Retiree Council recognizes that each institution maintains retiree contact information in the Human Resources/Payroll System which includes current mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. We commend the University System for proactively taking the following actions:*
 - *Recommend to institution HR office that at retirement, new contact information based on their retirement is collected from the retiree, and give instructions to the retiree on who to contact if any of their contact information changes.*
 - *Recommend to institution HR office mailing reminders to retirees annually*
 - *In the near term, the system office will recommend that each institution create a listserv for retirees. If this is not possible, the system HR office will work with SSC to create a report that each institution can run that contains retiree e-mail addresses. When information needs to be sent to retirees, the System HR office will provide the communication template and ask that the institutions run the report and send the communication by e-mail to their retirees and send by regular mail.*

We appreciate the Systems office concerns that a listserv requires someone to maintain, monitor, and respond to the posts. Some institutional HR offices may not have the resources to administer a listserv.

- *Planning in the longer term to move administration and communications of retiree benefits to a central location and be standardized for all retirees. This will ensure the timing and content of retiree communications is the same for all retirees. The central location will communicate to all*

USG retirees via e-mail and regular mail using the contact information in the HR/Payroll System. In addition to the communications, one central call center will handle all retiree questions/issues relating to contact information, benefits enrollment and eligibility, premium payment, etc.

The Systems office further observes that retirees will continue to engage with their institution through Retiree Associations or Councils which could be developed and supported through the institutional Foundation, Academic Affairs or HR office.

- Working to standardize retiree benefits communications and for creating a USG retiree website/webpages where the most up-to-date information is being posted about retiree benefits and for recommending that all institutional HR websites redirect retirees to the USG webpages for questions about retiree benefits coverage. For the short term for questions about retiree billing and premiums, the USG website could redirect retirees to SSC, for ADP institutions, GA Tech, UGA or Augusta University. Once the process is standardized across all institutions, this information will be added to the USG Benefits website. One click access to the retiree benefits pages will be available from the USG website.*

B. The USG Retiree Council endorses the proposal to encourage the development of institution-level retiree organizations linked to the USG Retiree Council, including the suggestions for implementation proposed by the USG System Office.

- 1. The USG Retiree Council commends the USG System Office for proactively taking actions to:*
 - Continue encouraging each institution to establish an institutional retiree organization that links with the USGRC and for assisting in connecting institutions without such an organization with institutions who have strong organizations to help them build and develop their own organizations. We are thankful that the USG System Office remain committed to building a culture at our institutions and across the USG in which retirees are valued and their welfare is promoted and fostered.*
 - The Systems Office limitations is noted and accepted that it is not common practice for the System Office to prescribe the specific names, goals, and purpose of institutional groups. Nor is it common practice to prescribe which organizations are part of the formal governance structure at an institution. As such, we are unable to support the specific recommendation for retiree organizations to be called Institution Retiree Councils and be part of an institution's structure.*
- 2. The USG Retiree Council will work with the USG System Office to encourage the development of vibrant, effective retiree organizations at each institution of the University System. Each institution's retiree organization is entitled to select its institution's representative on the USG Retiree Council.*
- 3. The USG Retiree Council members will work with their respective retiree organizations to assist retirees becoming an officially recognized as part of each institution's governance structure, for example, by liaison representation to faculty and staff governance bodies, similar to the liaison representation between the USG Retiree Council and the USG Faculty Council and USG Staff Council.*