

Report to the Faculty Council from the Division of Retired Faculty

The Division of Retired Faculty of the Faculty Council was created February, 2011 when the Council approved an amendment to the Faculty Code “to provide voting representation for retired faculty.” (**Resolution 2011-1**) It seems fitting to provide a report to the Faculty Council of how this division has progressed to meet its objectives.

Background:

The initiative for this structural change to the *Faculty Code of University Government* began with a growing recognition of an increase of younger retired faculty who wished to continue a meaningful post-retirement engagement with the university. In 2008 William Andrews, Senior Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences appointed a committee of retired faculty to study and report on the current status of Emeriti Professors. The findings of this committee, chaired by Jaroslav Folda revealed a strong interest among retired faculty to continue their professional activities, suggested the ways the university could exploit the resources offered by retired faculty, and identified several barriers that discouraged participation in on-going university affairs.

At the same time the UNC Retired Faculty Association (RFA), an independent 501_C,3 not for profit organization first organized in 1986, provided the only organized resource for retired faculty. Since a primary mission of RFA was and continues “to support and uphold the mission of UNC-CH through leadership, consultation, and all available avenues”, the restlessness reflected by the Andrews Report, motivated the RFA Executive Committee to explore how the relationship between all retired faculty and the university could be strengthened for the benefit of both retired faculty and the university.

In 2009 members of the RFA Executive Committee met with then Chancellor Thorpe who supported the initiative, designated RFA as an officially recognized organization of UNC-CH (similar to recognition of other organizations such as the Rams Club), and assigned Provost Ron Strauss to help further an engagement of retired faculty in university affairs. Provost Strauss then facilitated a meeting with then Secretary of the Faculty Council, Joe Ferrell, who in turn enabled an initiative to change the Faculty Code to create a new Division, Retired Faculty, with two representatives elected from retired faculty at large.

Relationship of retired faculty at large and Retired Faculty Association:

Retired UNC faculty comprise a nebulous group of men and women who held UNC pre-retirement tenured and non-tenured track university appointments. The UNC Retired Faculty Association (RFA), on the other hand, is a membership organization composed of three types of membership: Regular Members, retired UNC-CH tenure track and fixed-term faculty and professional staff; Associate Members, retired faculty and professional staff from other accredited institutions of higher education; and Honorary Members. In the absence of any other retiree organizational structure at UNC, RFA has functioned as an agent for retired faculty through which their university-related interests and initiatives may or may not pass. Thus RFA acts to support and encourage those retired faculty initiatives, such as the follow-up on the Andrews Report, that foster ties between on-going university undertakings and its faculty retirees. It is through this relationship that RFA advocated for and sustains retiree representation on the Faculty Council. In conversations with sister universities the relationship of UNC retired faculty to the university through representation in university institutions of governance, appears a unique effort to utilize the continuing value of faculty once they leave

active duty, and it has encouraged retired faculty at other universities to seek similar relationships that integrate retired faculty with on-going university concerns.

Some examples may help clarify the developing role of the Division of Retired Faculty:

A retired faculty member who was not an RFA member asked a retired faculty delegate to the Faculty Council how to get a resolution concerning gun control on campus before the Council. The delegate alerted RFA which, along with the delegate, helped sharpen the resolution and assist its path through the labyrinth of university governance until it reached the floor and was approved by the Council in December, 2016.

Another example: During 2015-2016 a group of retired faculty members began to discuss the need for a seminar to address issues that inevitably arise during the retirement transition. The Institute for the Arts and Humanities collaborated with RFA to develop two “pilot” seminars which were offered in Fall, 2016 and Spring, 2017. The seminars will continue to be offered each fall, and the collaboration has been extended to planning a workshop for all faculty in Spring, 2018 to help employed faculty anticipate and plan for their eventual retirement.

Another example: The growing vitality between retired faculty and the university continued when a retired faculty member and member of RFA contacted Elizabeth Barnum, director of Carolina’s International Student and Scholar Services and offered to set up a program that pairs retired faculty with scholars coming to campus from other countries. RFA endorsed the program and helped recruit volunteer retirees. While the program’s intent was largely to assist the scholars with acclimation to campus life and American culture, the overriding result of this collaboration of retired faculty and international scholars has been a feeling of a home away from home for the scholars. The program has expanded beyond discussions of everyday living to include assistance with transportation, dating and identifying resources for children. This program (<https://www.unc.edu/spotlight/visiting-scholars-find-home-away-home/>) has taken on an increased importance under the proposed limitations on foreign travel, and the anxieties over the status of international students at UINC-CH.

The Faculty Council delegates have also served to update retired faculty on university matters coming before the Faculty Council as appropriate to their interest, offering opportunity for feedback from retired faculty to the Faculty Council. At the height of discussions over the athletic/academic improprieties retired faculty delegates provided two informational forums for retired faculty, solicited their concerns and comments and asked the RFA to prepare a summary of these meetings that was forwarded to the Chair of the Faculty Council and the Chancellor. Retired faculty were kept informed as the Faculty Council moved through this difficult time, and subsequently a written report summarizing the actions of the Faculty Council was circulated to all retired faculty.

More recently Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost James Dean’s presentation before the Faculty Council on Academic Performance was distributed to all retired faculty as a means to keep them current of the progress Carolina continues to make toward its stated goals of excellence.

The closer relationship between retired faculty and the on-going activities of the university have fostered participation of retired faculty in the Law School’s mock trials, assistance with interviews of Fulbright applicants, a proposal from UNC Press to re-issue out of print books by retired faculty that continue to have

professional relevance, and successful efforts to bring Tom Ross, Margret Spellings, Chancellor Folt, “Bubba” Cunningham, and other university officials to general retired faculty meetings to discuss current on-going issues.

Conclusion:

With the help of Rob Bruce the Friday Center has given retired faculty a campus home. The Friday Center has outreached to retired faculty by providing meeting space and limited staff support for its activities, and it hosts an annual reception for all UNC retired faculty members. Along with an annual reception by the Provost for retiring faculty, these events, along with representation on the Faculty Council, serve not only to recognize retirees’ previous service to the university, but more importantly validate their worth in the ongoing university accomplishments.

Representation of retired faculty on the Faculty Council has clearly enhanced a productive relationship with retired faculty and the dynamic role UNC plays in the state and nation, made difficult by the statutory requirements defining faculty retirement as “termination of employment and the complete separation from active service with no intent or agreement, expressed or implied, to return to service.” (G.S 135-1(20)). For example, until recently UNC Human Resources did not have a yearly historical roster of faculty retirees. Once they retired, faculty were “off the books” and formal information about faculty retirees was transferred to the State Retirement System. UNC Human Resources has treated faculty strictly in line with retirement as termination, even though the Faculty Code assures titles of Emeriti status to faculty retirees, continued benefits of library use, email services, benefits that accrue to holders of active UNC 1 Cards, and continued office space if available and depending on Departmental decisions. The enhanced participation of retired faculty over the past several years has softened the statutory austerity of the definition of retirement.

The increased interest among retired faculty not only in continuing their scholarly interests, but in their desire to make continuing contributions to the vitality of the university, and the growing recognition that faculty retirement is not termination, but a process that begins during active teaching and research, has been made evident by the university’s phased retirement program. Division of Retired Faculty has requested a seat on the Faculty Welfare Committee to facilitate an exchange of information affecting the welfare of both on and off campus faculty. The Division of Retired Faculty continues to seek guidance as to how it may continue to the interests of retired faculty and their continued involvement in the university.

As our retirees have become more active in the life of the university we have been reminded that the future of our great university has always been guided by its past, preserved in part by the institutional memory present faculty members carry with them as they depart formal research and teaching responsibilities. Our faculty never retire but remain a vibrant part of UNC.

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