

# Senior Scholars and Professors Emeriti Project

## Survey findings summary report



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In the spring and summer of 2023, University of Manitoba (UM) Senior Scholars and Professors Emeriti were invited to complete an online survey regarding their perspectives on these roles at the UM. In total, 78 individuals consented to the research survey, although not all 78 individuals answered each question.

## Respondent characteristics

Respondent age groups are shown in Table 1, with the most common response being 70 to 79 years old (almost 50%). Other respondent characteristics are shown in Tables 2 to 6. More than two thirds of respondents were men, with almost three quarters having worked on the Fort Garry campus. Most of the participants were living in Winnipeg (86.1%). There was a good representation of both Senior Scholars (51.3%) and Professors Emeriti (60.3%), with 8 individuals having been in both positions. About a third had been in their role for 10 to 19 years, while a quarter had been in their role for less than three years. Prior to retirement, most had been in the position of Professor (85.9% of 78), 11.5% were Associate Professors, and there were also two who reported being an Instructor or Librarian.

**Table 1: Respondent age groups (n=72)**

Age group (years old)	Frequency (%)
50 to 64	5.6
65 to 69	13.9
70 to 79	48.6
80 to 89	29.2
90 to 99	2.8

**Table 2: Gender identities of the participants (n=71)**

Gender identity	Frequency (%)
Man	69.0
Woman	31.0
Non-binary/Trans/Gender diverse	1.4

**Table 3: University of Manitoba position location prior to retirement (n=72)**

Location	Frequency (%)
Fort Garry campus	73.6
Bannatyne campus	25.0
Other (Northern Manitoba)	1.4

**Table 4: Geographic location of where the respondent was living at the time of the survey (n=72)**

Location	Frequency (%)
Winnipeg	86.1
Further than a day's drive away	9.7
Within an hour's drive	4.2

**Table 5: Current or past Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita position (n=78).**

Position	Frequency (%)
Senior Scholar	51.3
Professor Emeritus/Emerita	60.3

NOTE: Participants could select more than one position (8 individuals selected both).

**Table 6: Length of time being a Senior Scholar and/or Professor Emeritus/Emerita (n=76)**

Length of time (years)	Frequency (%)
< 3	25.0
4 to 6	18.4
7 to 9	17.1
10 to 19	34.2
≥ 20	5.3

## Primary reason for becoming a Senior Scholar and/or Professor Emeritus/Emerita

Participants were asked to provide the primary reason for taking on the new role after retirement in an open-ended question. The most common categories of responses were continuing research, writing/publishing, to stay involved, library privileges, got nominated, and technology and its supports.

# Activities engaged in as a Senior Scholar and/or Professor Emeritus/Emerita

In line with the above question in Table 7 we can see the selections respondents made when asked what activities that they had engaged in since becoming a Senior Scholar and/or Professor Emeritus/Emerita (noting that they could select all that applied and provide other examples). Engaging in research activities and writing were selected by the most respondents. In addition to the options provided, respondents also provided 30 ‘Other’ activities which included: mentoring/editing other writers, volunteering on committees outside the University, teaching, consulting, doing work for journals, assisting with student competitions, and organizing conferences.

**Table 7: Activities engaged in as a Senior Scholar and/or Professor Emeritus/Emerita (n=75)**

Activity	Frequency (%)
Writing articles, book chapters, books, etc.	78.7
Conducting research activities	70.7
Supervising graduate students/serving on a graduate student committee	44.0
Mentoring faculty members	30.7
Participating on University committees	29.3
Receiving or maintaining research grants	24.0
Creating artistic works	4.0
Other	40.0

# Activities they would like to have engaged in but have not been possible thus far

Sixty respondents provided responses here, with most of the activities falling in categories associated with the previous question as well as teaching-related activities, providing advice to others, attending social and other activities, and giving presentations or participating in conferences.

## Frequency of being physically at a UM campus

Table 8 shows the responses to how often respondents were physically on campus. The range was from 'daily' (5.3%) to 'never' (10.7%), with the most common responses being 'at least once per month' (24%) or 'at least once per term' (28.0%).

**Table 8: Frequency of being on a UM campus (n=75)**

Length of time	Frequency (%)
Daily during the work week	5.3
2 to 4 times per week	10.7
1 day per week	14.7
At least once per month	24.0
At least once per term	28.0
At least once per year	6.7
Never	10.7

## Virtual engagement with UM

Sixty-three individuals indicated that they engage virtually with UM, with the most common response being 'attending presentations' (82.5%) followed by 'attending meetings' with UM faculty/staff (52.4%) or UM students (23.8%; see Table 9). 'Other' responses included: thesis exams, computer classes, using library resources, teaching, and training others.

**Table 9: Virtual engagement activities (n=63)**

Activity	Frequency (%)
Attend presentations	82.5
Attend meetings with UM faculty/staff	52.4
Attend meetings with UM students	23.8
Deliver presentations	17.5
Other	26.9

## Office space and lab space

More than half (56.8%) of respondents had been provided with an office at UM (n=74), with most indicating that the office space was 'shared' (54.8%). In response to the comment section for this question we heard many different stories about office spaces. Several explained changes due to the pandemic. Another explained that their office space was only for 6 months. We also heard that a large Faculty had decided that no retired faculty would have office space anymore, so offices had to be vacated by June 2023. Some also shared the sentiment that they felt their home offices were more suitable or they did not want to use University resources.

When asked if they would be interested in obtaining an office or shared space, 82.8% of the 29 who answered this question said 'No'. Comments here were similar to the comments in response to the last question. In addition, we heard that shared office space is problematic in terms of having a "secure location to store confidential information". Another person also suggested that working at home is more effective now with virtual meetings, etc., and not having to spend time on travel or money on parking and gas.

In terms of lab space, only 9.3% of the 75 respondents indicated that they have been provided with lab space, although 57.3% responded that it was 'not applicable', leaving a third indicating 'No'. For the seven respondents who provided more details about the lab space, five indicated it was shared and two had private lab space.

## Support or services

Most respondents (82.7%; n=75) indicated that they had been provided with IT support. When asked about other services or supports being provided, 43.2% of 74 respondents selected 'Yes', 39.2% selected 'No' and 17.6% selected 'Not applicable'. Examples of other supports or services are administrative/secretarial services, book storage, classroom setup, office supplies, and assistance with running a lab.

## Connection to the University based on communications received

Most respondents suggested that they have felt connected to the University based on communications that they have received from the University (83.8%; n=74), their faculty/school (78.0%; n=74) or department/college (73.0%, n=74). However, some respondents indicated that they felt cut-off once they retired or they had to request to receive connection (e.g., UM Today), some of the communications contained too much new jargon, and the new website was more difficult to navigate to find people.

## Transportation and accessibility issues

When asked about transportation related issues affecting them in coming to campus for work or events, more than one third (37.0% of 73 respondents) indicated that they did have issues. Common complaints were related to parking, especially the cost of it, having to pay for a full year, and challenges with finding it (line-ups for parkade). A few mentioned the fact that it used to be covered for Professors Emeriti. It was also mentioned that because of parking issues their engagements with UM were lessened. A little over a tenth of respondents (11.0%; n=73) had accessibility issues engaging as a Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita. One person explained that their walking difficulties made it difficult to get around campus. Another related that virtual meetings have allowed them to stay in touch.

## Frustrations being a Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita

Almost half (48.5%) of 68 respondents indicated that they have experienced frustrations being a Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita. Some examples have already been expressed above (e.g., parking). Example sentiments have been expressed this way:

“...the university/faculty does not initiate action to take advantage of my wisdom, experience and talents”



“...there are few signs of knowing or caring what I have done or am doing. I’d say the same about some of my friends who are recent retirees. They seem almost forgotten.”

“Senior scholar and Emeritus professor[s] are not use[d] by University of Manitoba, as an asset to secure advantages in national and international platforms, as other universities do. A quick comparison of Websites at UM, with University of Toronto for example, will show how others use this asset for their advantage in publicity and national and international ratings.”

Other examples include the short term for Senior Scholars, several individuals talked about getting cutoff of Microsoft or other UM software, termination of email and other computer resources at retirement and then having to get it re-established, losing individual webpage and so cannot be found now, software updates and university computer networks, and hard to know who to call if lose digital access (computer crashes).

## **Process to become a Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita**

Participants were given the opportunity to provide comments about the process to become a Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita. Fifty-one responses were given, with a common issue being length of time for approvals, and for some the accompanying loss of access to everything at retirement before their new position started. There were also mixed comments about the approval process itself (too easy, needs to be standardized across units, not needed at all and should be automatic for Full Professors, arbitrariness, bias for administrators, etc.). One person also expressed the opinion that there is little prestige associated with being a Senior Scholar “despite years of teaching, research and service to university”.

# Benefits of being a Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita for the person as well as the University

Participants were asked to provide the three main benefits for them in being a Senior Scholar or Professor Emeritus/Emerita, in an open-ended question. Sixty-six respondents created a long list of benefits for themselves:

- continued access to several supports, services, activities, etc., of their pre-retirement position
- continuing their roles as researchers, committee members, and contributing to students
- allows them to maintain their relevance
- “stay up to date”
- provide recognition and validation of their past work
- stay connected with colleagues
- One individual also stated explicitly that it provided an “ideal transition from full-time work to retirement.”

In terms of benefits to the University, again a long list was provided by the 66 respondents. Examples are shown below:

- Research contributions
- Expertise as a valuable resource
- University committee service
- Free student supervision
- Mentorship for staff and students
- Outreach activities
- New grants and research contracts
- Publications that list UM affiliation (citation counts, reputation, visibility)
- Free work in general
- Assistance with courses for students

- Potential donors to UM
- Institutional knowledge
- Assistance at convocation
- Completion of unfinished work
- Proof-reading and other forms of providing feedback for others
- Reference letters for students

## Interest in suggested specific opportunities for Senior Scholars or Professors Emeriti

Participants were provided with a list of specific opportunities that might be offered to Senior Scholars or Professors Emeriti. Table 10 shows their interest in these suggestions. Note that participants could select all that interested them. The most popular was a website to highlight the work and/or achievements of Senior Scholars or Professors Emeriti, with 60.0% selecting this option. Other suggestions from respondents included: interviews on UM radio station, annual or bi-annual conferences featuring distinguished retirees, more clarity in promoting positions for everyone, and funds to pay for office costs. One person did express their concern that if they were provided with opportunities that this might mean that they would then feel obligations to the University.

**Table 10: Interest in suggested specific opportunities for Senior Scholars or Professors Emeriti (n=60)**

Suggested options	Frequency (%)
A website that highlights the work and/or achievements of Senior Scholars or Professors Emeriti	60.0
A regular opportunity for a speaker series for Senior Scholars or Professors Emeriti	46.7
Opportunities to provide mentoring to UM professors or staff	40.0
Opportunities to provide mentoring to UM students	38.3
A meeting space for Senior Scholars or Professors Emeriti	26.7
Other	33.3

## Ideas to improve the experience of Senior Scholars and Professor Emeriti

While many of the 51 respondents to this open-ended question suggested that nothing was needed, others gave many examples several of which are in line with some of the issues identified above (e.g., parking, office space). One example was to do surveys like this. Other examples are listed below:

- Clearly stated benefits and responsibilities of the positions
- Speed up the approval process
- Retirement plan discussion well in advance with unit leads (e.g., department head)
- Re-socialize due to pandemic
- Yearly review or check-in
- Access to small research grants from the University

Finally, one respondent said this: "...more readiness to celebrate the contributions and untapped gifts that distinguished retirees have to offer."

## Conclusions

The many findings from this study, in combination with other findings from this project (e.g., Focus Groups), will be helpful for suggesting changes to policies and procedures, as well as making recommendations for new initiatives related to Senior Scholars and Professors Emeriti.





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