

President's Report 2015-2016

I will begin by saying “thank you” to all of you for joining UMRA. Your membership goes a long way to establishing, and maintaining, UMRA’s status as the organization that fosters the interests of retirees within the larger University of Manitoba community.

I also say “thanks” to all the members of the UMRA executive committee. We meet approximately four times a year. All executive members take their work seriously as evidenced by the fact that they rarely miss a meeting. A further “thank you” is extended to the Faculty Association which lets us meet in its board room without charge and to use its parking spaces.

Although there are more university retirees than UMRA members, the executive committee endeavours to be a voice for all U of M retirees in dealing with university administration on any retiree-related issue. This is achieved by at least two annual meetings with a senior member of the administration and at other times through emails and telephone conversations.

The major issue of this past year was the university’s announcement in the fall of 2015 that it planned to cancel university-sponsored email addresses for support staff retirees while altering the email regime for academic staff. This announcement generated strong pushback from those affected. While I don’t know how many retirees “complained” directly to university administration, I personally handled about 200 emails, a number that illustrates how much the university proposal upset those directly affected. In the end, university administration revised its proposal. What was ultimately implemented was much different from what the administration first announced. Throughout the process UMRA executive argued the case for the continuation of university-sponsored retiree email addresses and that any change to the email environment must treat support and academic retirees equally.

When it was all over, 346 retirees requested a new “umr.umanitoba” email address with an auto response on their old cc.umanitoba address directing senders to their new email address; 30 retirees closed their cc.umanitoba email address entirely but asked for an auto response directing senders to another, but non-university, email address. In total 524 cc.umanitoba email addresses were closed; this number includes the 376 retirees who opted for one of the two options above and another 148 retirees who let their email addresses lapse through inaction.

The two annual President’s Receptions continue to be important events on the UMRA calendar. Another “thank you,” is in order, this time to the university President’s Office for continuing to fund these events. In addition, the university gives UMRA a telephone number (which is monitored by UMRA vice-president Dan Sitar from his home), provides a campus mailing address, an email address, hosts the retiree website, covers the twice-yearly cost of printing and mailing *Retirees News*, and shares the cost of sending a delegate to the annual conference of the College and University Retirees Association.

I look forward to the year ahead and fully expect that UMRA will continue to grow as it advances the interests of all UManitoba retirees.

Ed Unrau, President