University of Manitoba Retirees Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Marshall McLuhan Hall
October 5, 2024
(*pending approval at the 2025 AGM*)

In Attendance: Gene Walz, Daniel Sitar, Dennis Cooley, Peyapatne Venkatesh, Maureen Forrest, Donna Strang, Heather Brownlee, Gail Mackisey, Jay Goldstein, Carol Goldstein, Laurie Morris, Ron Morris, Fiona Parkinson, Bill Kops,Wayne Simpson, Gladys Stewart, Denise Reitsma, Noreen Sealy, Spencer Sealey, Brenda Hann, Janine Harasymchuk, Michael Helawa, Joan McConnell, Lloyd Schreyer, Janet Sealey, Mark O'Riley, June Stewart

1. Approval of the Agenda

Motion to accept the agenda
Laurie Morris / Maureen Forrest **Carried**

2. Approval of the Minutes of AGM held on September 30, 2023

Motion to accept the minutes
Jay Goldstein / June Stewart **Carried**

3. Business Arising

Information to be covered in the following reports.

Last year we approved revisions in our by-laws to award members for service to UMRA. Several awards to be made later today: three service awards and two merit awards.

Motion to accept
Janet Sealey / Bill Kops **Carried**

4. Reports;

President, (Janet Sealey)

This is my 3rd Annual Report as President of UMRA. Selected highlights of the past year's activities are provided below:
Your Executive Committee has been kept very busy this past year. We continue to work on behalf of all retirees advocating for improved retirees' benefits. And we have been working

with Johnson Insurance to find other retiree benefits plans (similar to the Retired Teachers of Ontario plan offered through CURAC) that might be of interest to those who have reached the age of 75 and can no longer stay in the university plan and/or for those who wish to supplement their university benefits.

With the help of the members of the Communication Committee, an UMRA banner was purchased this past spring. The banner was displayed at the spring President's Reception and also at the Center on Aging's Spring Symposium in May 2024, where UMRA had their own booth to provide promotional material regarding the benefits of joining the association.

I was the UMRA representative at this year's Annual Conference of the College and Universities Retirees Association of Canada (CURAC) held at the University of Waterloo from May 22 to 24, 2024. The theme for this year's conference was 'Staying Resilient in Retirement'. At the awards dinner, Dan Sitar, UMRA Past President, received a Tribute Award in recognition of his multiple leadership roles in UMRA. Dan also received an Appreciation Award from CURAC for his work on their Board, the Benefits Committee and the Health Care Policy Committee.

Mark O'Riley, Vice President, and I attended the annual Three Minute Thesis competition for graduate students on Wednesday April 10, 2024 to award the 2nd place prize which is funded solely by UMRA. For the first time this year, the trophy awarded to the second place winner now bears the name of the University of Manitoba Retirees Association. The 2 nd place prize is valued at $1250.00 and it is important to UMRA to show the wider university community that retirees have a continuing interest in the educational enterprise of the university and our willingness to provide financial support to an activity that helps students.

At last year's AGM, we announced that the Executive Committee had approved a new Awards By-law to include Service Awards to recognize the years of service of volunteers and a Merit Award to recognize a Member's exemplary contribution to UMRA. At the 2023 Fall President's reception, the first set of Service Awards and Merit Awards were presented. Nominations for the Merit Award had to be received by the Executive Committee by June 30, 2024. I am very pleased to announce that Gene Walz, Chair of the Communication Committee and editor of the newsletter is the first recipient of the UMRA Merit Award through the nomination process. Gene will be presented with his award at the 2024 Fall President's reception.

Something new this past year is our monthly e-blasts. With the help of Bill Kops and Mark O'Riley, our e-blasts identify events and articles that we hope will be informative and of interest to retirees. We continue to try to raise the profile of UMRA and promote the benefits of joining the association. Again this year we reached out to AESES and UMFA to include a promotional article in their newsletter or communication tool. And we added to our Membership Resources page, a link to the University

Women's Club on the UMRA website and they have reciprocated by including a link to the UMRA website on their website.
June Stewart provided a zoom session on Retirement and Money Management. We hope to offer more educational workshops/sessions this coming year.

UMRA continues to have input in the University's retirement planning seminars which are well attended and the information being presented is very much appreciated by the staff.

The university's Donor Relations Department reported that in their fall 2023 campaign, the UM retiree community contributed a total of $10,870. Of the $10,870, $2,550 went to the UMRA Scholarship and $7,760 to the UMRA Bursary. The remaining $560 of the retiree gifts was allocated to other funds. And in March 2024, the Donor Relations Department sent an email/snail-mail fundraising appeal not only to retirees but also to the wider university community of academic and support staff. This fund appeal raised $625 for the UMRA bursary fund and $1,575 for the UMRA scholarship fund. We wish to thank all the retirees who generously donated to the UMRA Bursary and Scholarship.

Mark O'Riley and I had another meeting with the Dafoe Library archivist to discuss our plans to archive UMRA documents, files, pictures etc. We are in the process of gathering and preparing all of our documents for what likely will be a major fall archiving project.

In the coming year, UMRA will be working with Kamillah El-Giadaa, Training & Development Manager, Volunteer Manitoba to promote volunteerism and feature volunteer opportunities for members of UMRA. And under the direction of Dr. Bill Kops, UMRA will help promote the UM Adult Companionship Services Directory — a new program to connect caregivers of adults within the UM community with students offering support through companionship services. The Adult Companionship Services (ACS) Directory, launched by Family Resources in collaboration with the Centre on Aging and the UM Age- friendly University Committee, will serve as a centralized hub to locate companionship service providers and post job opportunities. More information regarding this initiative will be forthcoming.

I want to thank the members of our various UMRA committees for all their work, especially the Executive Committee for their hard work and commitment to enrich the lives of retirees through community and advocacy.

Motion to accept the President's report:
Janet Sealey / Jay Goldstein **Carried**

.

Vice-President and Benefits and Pension Committee, (Mark O'Riley)

It's been my pleasure to serve in this role for another year.

Benefits and Pension: My primary focus has been to work with the UMRA Benefits and

Pension Committee to address issues around University retirees' benefits. Listed below is an update that I wrote for the latest UMRA newsletter. This summary will do a good job of bringing you up to speed with our actions since the last AGM.

The University benefits plan is an essential support for the UMRA membership. For many of us when we are healthy, it serves to give us peace of mind in knowing that if at some point in the future we have health issues, we will have the support to get us through without compromising our finances. When health challenges do arrive, the benefits plan and how well it serves us can have a huge impact on our lives. We want to do all we can to ensure that when these issues arise, our members don't bump up against the limitations of a benefits plan that is no longer in line with their needs. Obviously, we don't have control of University spending but we want to do all we can to advocate for our members.

These efforts are tempered with the fact, that not everyone in the University community can afford expensive benefit coverage, so we are constantly trying to thread the needle to ensure that the coverage is affordable but still resilient enough for as many of our members as possible. UMRA has an 8 person Benefits and Pensions Committee to deal with this issue. The committee also has been looking for alternate benefit plans to cover gaps that exist in the University's benefits supports in areas like travel insurance. We want to do all we can to ensure that our members don't have to go to the open market on their own to negotiate benefits. We use the size of our membership to negotiate better rates. Currently our members have access to the CURAC benefit plan (https://curac.ca/en/member-benefits/insurance](https://curac.ca/en/member-benefits/insurance)) that can be used to enhance coverage at competitive rates. We are constantly looking at other ways to offer our members access to affordable enhancements to their coverage but we recognize that for most of our members the University plan is the only plan that is affordable.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the article UMRA has been expressing its concern to the U of M administration about their retirees' benefits plan for several years. The plan for active employees has seen numerous enhancements over the last several years, whereas our retiree plan has had only minor adjustments. Several times UMRA has almost got the university to the table to begin negotiations only to have some external event like, a provincial freeze on public wage & benefits expenditures, the pandemic, and major changes in staffing at the university interrupt our efforts. After a number of these external event set back our cause, members of the UMRA Benefits and Pension committee decided to launch a specific campaign to get our needs in this area prioritized by the University. We reached out to several unions and gained their support to help raise this issue. On Tuesday July 30th we met with Jamie Gerlach, Director, Total Compensation and HR Systems. The discussion centred on the following enhancements

in several key areas to bring our plan closer to the active member coverage.

- Addition of Vision care
- Enhancements to Diabetic Supplies
- Removal of Annual Drug deductible
- Increase of Drug maximums
- Increase to the overall lifetime maximum
- Increase to the coverage for Paramedicals
- increase to cap on dental care

As we begin these negotiations with the University, the make-up of our committee has been enhanced with several new members to ensure that we have voices from the different communities that are part of the UMRA membership. Getting to negotiate with the University has been a real team effort many members of the committee came up with ideas that helped to get us here. My thanks to the members of the committee and particularly to my co-chair June Stewart and to UMRA's President Janet Sealey for all their help and good ideas.

We are also continuing to explore the possibility of finding other plans that could be used by our members to give them additional coverage at reasonable rates, especially in areas where there are gaps in the university plan.

Privacy: In this area there was little action in this part of my portfolio. Last year a number of changes were made to how we secure the membership list and these measures seem to be working.

UMRA Bench: We have entered into negotiations with the university to install a bench on the Fort Garry campus that has a plaque on it, indicating that it was donated by UMRA. Pricing, the type of bench and its location have all been agreed upon. We are hopeful that the work will be scheduled soon.

The University Oversight and Subcommittee of the Sun Life U of M Group Retirement Plan : This Committee is responsible for monitoring the performance of the Sun Life/University of Manitoba Group Retirement Plan products, their financial results, and related matters. Meetings are scheduled as needed or at least once a year. UMRA has a member (June Stewart) on the Committee. June has indicated that at three meetings in the last year and a half the committee has made several changes to the products in the Group Retirement Plan to maximize the plans returns.

(This report has been prepared by June Stewart.)

There was considerable discussion by attendees at the AGM. Mark stressed that UMRA has been trying to work effectively with the University of Manitoba regarding benefits improvements. There will be no improvement for members who retired before 2004. Our collaborations with other unions who have pressed our concerns with U of M have opened possibilities of improved benefits and reduced fees for UMRA members. They seem to have led to a positive University response. We will continue talks with the University and other unions, hopeful of making gains. We are attempting to tailor the benefits so that they fit our members' priorities and needs. We are also seeking something closer to the improvements active employees have recently been awarded. Our members pay full fees but have received few of the improvements.

The Benefits and Pension committee will meet on Oct 17 to discuss benefits that we might be able to gain through other agencies. We have been checking what could be available through College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC), MEDOC and Johnson Insurance travel insurance, the Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTO), and the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba (RTAM). We will meet to discuss what came from the Oct 17 meeting on the proposed enhancements to the current UofM Retiree benefits plan, and then prepare an e-mail blast on the prospects. We are seeking access to dental, health, and travel coverage through multiple venues, including those that offer flexible options. Members have urged the Executive to conduct a letter-writing campaign and keep pressing the U of M.

Motion to accept the Vice President and Benefits and Pension Committee report :
Mark O'Riley / June Stewart **Carried**

Treasurer June LaRonde

Assiniboine Credit Union — Period ending June 30/2024 S14,357.94

Income:

Membership: new/renewal/life for 2023/2024	$2851.00
CURAC Affinity Program Rebate	849.17
Total Income	$3700.17

Expenses:

UMRA 20th Anniversary	$2517.01
Spring President Reception:	
Banner	476.00
3MT gift cards	115.80
Human Rights Museum	306.00
Zoom License	240.00
UofM-3MT Awards	1250.00
CURAC membership-2024/25	300.00
CURAC Conference -2024	567.69
AROHE membership 2024/25	165.22
Total Expenses	$5937.72

Credits:

CURAC Fees paid by U of M	300.00
Human Rights Museum Entrance fee	230.00*
('Subsidized by UMRA)	
Total Credits	$530.00

BMO- Bank of Montreal (period ending June 30, 2024

Opening value	$28,719.72	
Change in value	1,323.77	
Closing value	$30,043.49	$30,043.49
Total Assets		$44,401.43

The UMRA Award for U of M students is ongoing and successful.

Motion to accept the Treasurer's report:
Joan McConnell / Gene Walz **Carried**

Membership Committee (Gladys Stewart)

Members: Gladys Stewart(chair), Jay Goldstein, Norma Godavari, Jean Paterson, Dianne Bulback. We are pleased to welcome Dianne, a recent UMRA Member to the committee.

Statistics for 2023-2024 Membership Year (October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024)

As of Sept 9, 2024:
Total membership = 834
Members (lifetime, annual or biennial fee paying)= 461 (55%)
Associates = 373 (45%)

Since the start of this membership year, 26 retirees joined UMRA, 18 members were deceased with a net change of +8. Final year end membership numbers will be presented at the AGM.

Membership fees: Annual fees remain unchanged with the option of renewing for one year ($15) or two-years ($25); the fee for a lifetime membership is $100.
Reminders for renewals of annual memberships for 2024-2025 have been sent by mail in late August. There are 61 annual/ biennial paying members up for renewal.
The membership committee held two meetings in the past year to review Member benefits, committee service, and plan for events. A visit and tour of the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights occurred on the afternoon of May 14th with 18 participants. All Members, Associates, and guests were invited. UMRA subsidized Member admission

fees to the museum by $5.30. The committee is in the process of planning a fall event such as a tour of the electrical museum or a tour of the U of M architecture. UMRA Service awards were initiated by the UMRA Executive in 2023. The membership committee keeps track of the number of years that members have served on the executive and other committees. As of October 1, 2024, records of years of service will be awarded to 3 members, two members achieving 10 years, and 1 member achieving 5 years.

Thank you to Jay Goldstein, for his continued commitment and work on the membership records database. Please send any changes in your address by email to retirees@umanitoba.ca.

Motion to accept the Membership Committee report:
Gladys Steward / June Stewart Carried

Communications Committee (Gene Walz)

No official in-person meetings during the year. Committee seems to function okay by emails — though that will likely change this year.

Janice Mann continues her great service on the website as well as providing inside info on dates for In Memoriam column.

Bob Talbot continues taking photos for website and newsletter.

Gene Walz solicited articles, interviewed people, and edited the newsletter while working well with Karen Armstrong on formatting. She deserves much credit.

Committee is still looking for new members.

Let us know if you aren't getting your Newsletter. It is mailed by Human Resources who are missing email addresses for some of the names on their list of retirees. Contact Gene if you have material for the Newsletter or for the UMRA website. He can easily be reached through his email genewalz@hotmail.com

Motion to accept the Communications Committee report:

Gene Walz / Wayne Simpson Carried

Endowment Committee (Ed Unrau)

UMRA is the sponsor of two endowment funds, one of which is a bursary to support students in any discipline and the other a scholarship fund to support graduate students engaged in a program related to aging.

For the past several years, both funds have been large enough to provide financial support to students from each of the funds.

At the end of the fiscal year, March 31, 2023, there was: -- $30,716 in the UMRA Scholarship fund; and --$33,128 in the UMRA Bursary fund.

Since then the Donor Relations Department has sent combined email/snail mail solicitations not only to retirees but also to the wider university community of academic and support staff. These appeals were sent in the fall of 2023, and in the spring of 2024. Both appeals generated a combined total of approximately $12,000. Because the year-end reports for the endowment funds was not available when this report was written, it is not possible to report on the extent to which each of the funds benefitted from the fall and spring appeals.

Although the UMRA constitution provides for an endowment fund committee, it has not met since before COVID. The committee's inactivity is due in part to the fact that Donor Relations has taken up the fund raising appeals, something that the committee did in its early years. Although UMRA executive must keep track of the status of the two endowment funds, this does not require the convening of a committee. Because I was an ex officio member of the endowment committee when I was president almost a decade ago, I continued as the point of contact between the UMRA executive and Donor Relations with respect to the UMRA funds.

The Centre for Aging looks after the scholarship and bursary awards funded by UMRA for students doing research that deals with aging.

The members asked if UMRA could consider increasing the number or the size of the awards? Janet indicated that any new scholarship or bursary proposal would have to go through a university approval process. And UMRA would need significant fund-raising to expand our awards values.

Motion to accept the Endowment Fund report:

Janet Sealey / Daniel Sitar **Carried**

Past President/Nominating Committee (Daniel Sitar)

Overall, my responsibilities for 2023-4 have been limited this past year. As Past President, I also serve as Chair of the Nomination Committee of UMRA. This year, all Executive Committee positions are continuing for 2024-25. There is no slate of candidates to be considered for election for the upcoming year. We have been fortunate to continue to recruit new members to our committees. Thus, we are able to bring fresh visions to our organization. I also serve as the University retiree representative to the annual United Way of Winnipeg Campaign. I am pleased to report that University of Manitoba retirees

continue to demonstrate leadership in making contributions to such a worthy cause. This leadership was recognized by a Spirit of Collaboration Award to the University of Manitoba at the Champions for Change celebration

Motion to accept the Past President/Nominating Committee report**:**

Daniel Sitar / Gene Walz **Carried**

5. New Business

We are still waiting for the installation of the bench which the Executive has approved of, drawn up the plans for, and arranged funding for. The project awaits on the UofM for completion.
We have been productively working for months on placing the UMRA archives in the UofM Elizabeth Dafoe Library. A major project this year.

6. Adjournment

Motion to accept
Ron Morris / Kill Kops **Carried**.