

Another AROHE board member and I are working on a short document that colleges and universities can use to convince their upper administrations of the importance of retirement organizations. As you can readily see, it is thus far heavily focused on faculty. I want that to change. Please forward any ideas you might have about how to make this more inclusive to me.

Thanks, Joyce (Szabo, UNMRA AROHE Representative and AROHE Board Member)

AROHE BRIEF

Making the Case to Presidents, Provosts, and Directors of Human Resources For Supporting Retiree Associations

Context:

AROHE believes there is significant value for institutions in more effectively supporting the full span of a faculty and staff member's career from recruitment and orientation through retirement and beyond. Retirement is not an exit but one more transition in the arc of faculty and staff development and, like the other stages of the faculty and staff life cycle, requires institutional support and programming.

Since 1994, when mandatory retirement for tenured faculty ended, faculty members have been able to choose when, or even whether, to retire. Those who delay retirement may attribute their decision to economic reasons; to the fact that people are living longer and healthier lives; to their love of teaching and scholarship; and to their inability to imagine what a next chapter might look like. While voluntary retirement has been a boon for individual faculty members, delayed retirements make institutional long-term planning difficult, incur significant cost in terms of higher salaries, and also inhibit the waves of recruitment that can bring to an institution new knowledge, new perspectives, and increased diversity.

Even though staff retirements do not often present the same kinds of challenges as faculty ones do, AROHE's experience and research confirm that institutions benefit by acknowledging the change that occurs when long-serving staff members retire, by recognizing their legacy and achievements, by offering support for that transition, and by keeping staff retirees connected to the institution after retirement.

One of the best ways to provide a structure and support for post-retirement life is the formation of a retiree association.

What Is a Retiree Association?

For some broad definitions, please see the following Briefs on the AROHE web site:

Retiree Association

Retiree Center

Emeritus College

It is important to note that each academic institution is unique. There are broad categories of institutions in the United States, such as community colleges, technical colleges, religious

colleges, liberal arts colleges, historically Black colleges and universities, Native American colleges, public universities, and research universities. Even within these separate categories (and these are not exhaustive), an individual institution develops its own unique culture as a result of its origin, history, location, size, traditions, and mission. The retiree association established at any particular institution will reflect the needs, culture, and available resources at that institution.

Why Support a Retiree Association at Your Institution?

AROHE believes that retiree associations are essential to the intellectual, social, and physical well-being of retired faculty and staff. These organizations encourage timely retirement and ensure the continued loyalty of faculty and staff to their institution while channeling their seasoned expertise and abilities into continuing innovative engagement with their institutions and communities.

- Providing an institutional home for faculty and staff after retirement sends a message to the whole institution, and to those who are being recruited to work there, that this institution is a good place to work and that this institution has a commitment to its employees and their wellbeing up to retirement and beyond.
- Knowing that a retiree association will allow continuing connection (both social and intellectual) with colleagues and the institution encourages senior faculty and staff to retire in a timely fashion, making room for new colleagues and new initiatives.
- A retiree association provides a structure for the institution to stay connected to, and benefit from, the institutional memories, expertise, and experience of retirees.
- A retiree association provides an organizational structure whereby retirees may be called upon for mentoring, supervising student work, institutional service, and teaching the occasional course. These activities are especially important for institutions with limited resources.
- A retiree association often raises funds to support student scholarships or meet other institutional or community needs.
- A retiree association can provide a structure to link volunteers with opportunities for institutional and community service.
- Those institutions with retiree associations report stronger records of philanthropic giving back to the institution (evidence for this?)
- Institutions with strongly supported retiree associations report an extraordinary level of post-retirement activity by retirees, bringing considerable honor and recognition to the institution (e.g., “A Virtual Eleventh Campus”)

What Resources Does a Retiree Association Need?

AROHE believes that money spent supporting retirees is more than repaid by benefits to the institution.

What follows are AROHE’s recommendations for support of a successful retiree association.

- Home base: Retiree associations are most successful when they are linked to an administrative home on campus, most often the Provost's Office, but sometimes Human Resources, or even Advancement.
- Space: Some retiree associations have a dedicated space on campus (whether a building or a single office). It is essential that retirees have somewhere for their committees to meet on campus and that they have access to a venue appropriate for social events, lectures, and panel presentations.
- Administrative support: Every retiree association needs some paid administrative support, ranging from a full-time executive director to part-time administrative assistant, depending on the association's size.
- Budget: Some retiree associations support their budgets by individual dues or targeted fundraising. But it is very important that the home office also provide some budget or in-kind support for retiree programming.

What Are the Next Steps?

As the (inter)national organization supporting the work of retirees and retiree associations, AROHE stands ready to help you establish your retiree association. Our website offers

A start-Up Kit

Briefs describing different kinds of associations and their structures

Successful practices and programs adopted by associations at a range of different institutions

We also offer consultation services at reasonable rates to help you form the association that is right for your campus (details).

Notes:

- I have not provided references yet. Wanted to see if this was on the right lines.
- I have sought documents from Carl H (Cincinnati Emeritus College) and Gray Crouse (Emory Emeritus College) to see if they would be willing to share their proposals to the administration for setting up their respective colleges—but neither has responded.