

# **RFAO President's Report to the RFAO Membership**

Presented at the RFAO Annual General Meeting, November 14, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

In what has seemingly become a regular tradition, the bulk of your Executive Board's efforts have been focused on health care insurance. I shall return to this topic later in my remarks.

The RFAO Board continues to hold scheduled monthly meetings, supplemented by active email exchanges. I do want to highlight here what a pleasure it is for me to work together with such a talented set of colleagues who volunteer so much of their personal time to espouse our collective interests. This year was particularly notable in that we once again began holding in-person meetings on campus. Two of those gatherings involved as our guest the new Chief Human Resources Officer for UVM. One of Mr. Lehman's initiatives following arrival was the creation of a new role within his office, that of retiree engagement coordinator. Duties include assistance in the planning of retiree events and being the internal liaison with the health insurer of the day. Another action outcome has been the production of a quarterly electronic newsletter that is specifically designed for retirees.

There are several continuing initiatives that the Board itself has undertaken. You may recall that, after several years' effort, we finally achieved a milestone in an agreement with the Provost's Office, establishing a classification of "active retired faculty" status and thereby making it possible for those who needed licensed software in order to support their work to apply for that access. So far 24 emeriti have had their applications reviewed and all received approval.

Another important effort has been to demonstrate the depth and breadth of retiree contributions to this institution. Early in 2024 a pair of my Board colleagues, Dwight Matthews and Ralph Budd, took the lead in designing a survey that was sent out to our membership list. The feedback demonstrated impressive intellectual contributions in journals, book chapters, lectures at UVM and other institutions, review and editing activities, mentoring, board memberships and philanthropy. The summary results were communicated to senior UVM officials. They are also posted on our website.

Another issue we are trying to tackle is the lack of communication from the University about relevant happenings on campus. We understand that some of you are not keen to be recipients of a flow of messages from the university. However, for those who do wish to remain connected and to be regarded as a constituent part of the general University community, we are looking for a way to enable emeriti and other retirees to "opt-in" in order to receive news of interest.

Finally, let me return to the health insurance issue. It was towards the end of May that Cigna notified the University that the company would be terminating its contract as the insurer of UVM retirees as of 1/1/2025. This was an unexpected surprise, being a full year short of the original agreement. This put the University and our Board in a difficult predicament, with not much time to plan for a transition. I want to express my appreciation to two colleagues in particular who moved quickly into action. Ruth Farrell is chair of the Health Insurance Working Group of the University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC). These committees don't normally function during the summer, but this summer they did. The other is Ralph Budd who constructed a survey which went out to you all, seeking retiree input on their preferences for different models of health insurance. Those empirical data then fed into Ruth's working group's deliberations and were especially helpful in reinforcing the recommendations that UBAC

submitted to the President and the Provost. Given the shortened timeframe involved, the recommendation made was to stay with a continuation of a Group Plan, especially from a provider with which we are already familiar in BC/BS. We now will have a less rushed period of time over the next 12 months in which to evaluate other group plans and other models such as private Medicare Marketplace customized policies. You can be assured that the Board will continue to closely monitor these developments and engage as effectively as we can with university decision-makers.

Respectfully submitted,  
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