

COMMITTEE ON EMERITI RELATIONS
Annual Report, 2007 - 08

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

Although this report may seem irrelevant to all but emeriti faculty, it is perhaps of greatest relevance to those who are not retired because it may be of use in thinking about the current state of campus governance, deciding when you want to retire, and figuring out how to negotiate your retirement package. One conclusion that could be drawn is that it might be best to wait as long as possible to retire and to be sure everything you are promised to facilitate your retirement is put in writing.

Put another way, the issues that faced the Committee on Emeriti Relations this year concerned (1) gaining administrative and Senate support for emeriti who continue to contribute to the academic mission of the campus through teaching, research, lectures, involvement in cultural events, and many unpaid donations of time and service; and (2) insuring that there is adequate Senate involvement in any issue that might involve changes in the local benefits package that emeriti agreed to upon retirement.

The academic year began for the committee with an e-mail addressed to the past CER chair stating that the chair of CER had been eliminated from the Campus Welfare Committee by its chair, Assistant Chancellor Ashish Sahni. Sahni said this was done in the interest of facilitating committee work by making the committee smaller. Here is how the news was conveyed:

“For the 2007/08 academic year, I have decided to try reducing the membership of CWC. Since you are affected by this decision, I am writing to alert you of the change in committee membership prior to the distribution of the letter appointing CWC's members. This is in no way any reflection on your contributions to the committee; however, as Chair, I want to try this experiment and learn how the committee operates in a reduced size.”

The committee's first action was a brief survey of emeriti on a wide range of issues. The replies from 45 emeriti (primarily from the 80+ emeriti who still live in the Santa Cruz area, with another 80+ living elsewhere) suggested that they were generally satisfied with their situation at that moment. The typical local emeritus comes to campus two or three times a week to check mail, see colleagues or students, or use the library. Many attend campus lectures and cultural events. Moreover, as we also know from an earlier survey of emeriti, many emeriti remain involved in their research and continue to publish.

However, there were some concerns expressed by a few emeriti. One issue involved computer support for those who remain active in teaching and research, which we discuss in the following two paragraphs, but more frequently there were problems when it came to teaching opportunities. Only seven of the 45 who returned surveys had taught in the past year.

The committee then tried to formulate a policy for determining if and when divisions should service computers that emeriti were given by the campus during their time of active service.

Since at least one division had decided that no emeriti would receive any support, even if they were recalled to teaching, the committee made an effort to define “active” emeriti with the hope that divisions would then have a way to provide service to those emeriti who were still supporting the broad educational mission of the campus. In a proposal that received a positive preliminary response from the chair of the Senate’s Committee on Computer Technology, the committee suggested four criteria to define an “active” emeriti.

The proposal was then discussed at CCT, where there apparently was strong opposition on the part of one or more members. In any event, CER never heard back formally from CCT and then dropped the matter for the time being. The issue of computer support for emeriti may be one of those frequent cases where administrators envision hordes of greedy emeriti making demands of them and where currently active faculty forget that they may be emeriti some day.

The committee then tried to address a new issue, the seemingly abrupt policy change that prohibits employees in Services to Academic Staff in colleges from any longer helping faculty with their narrative evaluations. This issue was brought to us by an emeritus professor recalled for teaching who always has had help with evaluations for disability reasons. CER drafted a letter asking that relevant Senate committees look into the matter, but learned that there is no committee that found this issue fully in its purview.

CER had no further activity until June 13, shortly after the incumbent chair and the staff assistant to the committee held a transition meeting with the incoming chair, Ronnie Gruhn. Soon thereafter the incumbent chair accidentally learned from Lee Duffus, the president of the association of retired staff members, that the Office of Physical Education and Recreation (OPERS) had decided to charge emeriti and retired staff \$132.50 a year for a recreation card that always has been given to them without charge as a stated part of their retirement package. OPERS claimed that it had sent out notification of this change in early June, but our queries to emeriti and retired staff soon determined that this e-mail had not been sent.

CER slowly learned that the policy had been proposed by the director of OPERS in early spring. It was then approved by a campus fees committee. The chancellor signed off on the new fee in late April or early May. As the issue was unfolding and information was slowly being gathered, the chair of CER asked for a meeting with the executive vice chancellor to discuss the principles involved and the lack of consultation with any Senate committee, but was told by the executive vice chancellor’s assistant, after she talked with him briefly, that we would have to meet with the vice-chancellor for student affairs first. This raised another major issue for us concerning the right of chairs of Academic Senate committees to have access to top-level administrators on issues that seems to be of central concern to Senate members.

As instructed, the current and incoming chairs of CER, along with Duffus, met with the executive vice chancellor for student affairs, Patricia McGinty, and the director of OPERS, Ryan Andrews, on June 23, when a good exchange of information and perspectives occurred. The executive vice chancellor for student affairs and the director of OPERS said they had no knowledge of previous promises to emeriti by the central administration and no understanding that they needed to consult relevant Senate committees. For our part, we stressed that OPERS always has been viewed as a campus-wide resource that is managed by the Student Affairs Office and that our concerns were with the central academic administration for allowing a

subordinate unit to impose a fee on emeriti and for failing to consult with the Senate on a matter that directly affected Senate members.

On July 2 we were able to obtain a meeting with the chancellor that occurred on July 29. He opened the meeting by saying that there had been consultation on the imposition of the fee, due to the presence of faculty and staff representatives on the fees committee, but that it was not adequate consultation. He thought more was needed. He then suspended the fee for a six-month period while he undertakes a wide range of consultations, including with relevant Senate committees, and said his office would pay for recreation cards for emeriti and retired staff from its discretionary funds while the issue is discussed during the Fall Quarter. Although those who attended the meeting (the incumbent and incoming CER chairs, along with Duffus) welcomed this decision by the chancellor, the incumbent chair did dispute the idea that any consultation had occurred because the discussions did not involve any relevant Senate committees. Then there ensued a very good discussion of a wide range of issues relating to emeriti and retired staff, many of which we had not anticipated raising.

There was one part of this work on the fee issue that was particularly gratifying for us. We were able to express to the chancellor in person and in our letter of July 29 that there are ongoing contributions to the campus by emeriti, both in unpaid services and financial donations, that seem to have become invisible to the campus community and the central administration. We noted that the unpaid contributions included everything from lectures, membership on senior thesis and dissertation committees, letters of recommendation for former students and current faculty, service on campus and Senate committees, participation in significant cultural events like Shakespeare Santa Cruz, ongoing publication in prestigious academic journals, and attendance at alumni fundraising events where the presence of their former teachers is often an important reason for attendance on the part of some alumni.

Moreover, we were able to provide new information to the chancellor at our July 29 meeting concerning financial donations to the campus by emeriti and retired staff. Thanks to the efforts of the development office, we can say that from fiscal year 2003 through fiscal year 2008 the campus received 367 donations for a total of \$1,343,000 from emeriti and 1,359 donations of \$25 or more for a total of \$841,000 from retired staff members. We also can add that the campus will receive future monies from trusts and wills provided by emeriti and retired staff, although there is no way to know an actual dollar amount on this form of financial contribution due to a variety of uncertainties until the gift is “realized.”

In the 1990s, faculty and staff who were about to retire were given handouts saying that as annuitants of the University of California, Santa Cruz, they would receive several local benefits, including a recreational card and an A parking sticker. By 2007, the handout stating these benefits included the following phrase: “Currently (reviewed each year).” In a quiet but direct way, we think the administration is now telling retiring members of the campus that oral promises and inducements printed on administrative handouts may not be honored in the future. This addition to the pre-retirement handouts can be viewed as an invitation from central administrators to accept their decision if they choose to take back some or all of our local benefits for the usual reason central authorities in all organizations use—a major crisis--when they act without conferring with those lower in the pecking order. The decision to allow the OPERS fee to be imposed seems to have been made within this general kind of crisis atmosphere on the campus. Every subordinate unit seems to be on its own to find money, with the central

administration perhaps looking the other way because the situation is “extraordinary,” as we were told, beyond what those now retired could ever imagine, even though we faced major budget crises in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It is within this context of decreasing consultation that CER welcomes the new process that the chancellor has offered for reconsidering the OPERS fee he has temporarily suspended. It may be an opportunity for all members of the Senate, whether retired or not, to discuss issues of faculty-administration coordination and consultation to see if they are as full and open as they could be. It also may be a time for the administration to consider whether it is a good idea in the long run to impose fees on annuitants on fixed incomes who continue to contribute to the campus through unpaid services, direct financial donations, and stipulations in wills and trusts. Retired professors may have common decency and moral right on their side on some of these issues, but unpaid services and financial donations may be the only leverage that emeriti have in their effort to save local benefits for current and future emeriti.

Next year's committee will need to remain vigilant concerning any proposed changes to the benefits that emeriti receive. It will need to continue to emphasize to the administration the importance of timely consultation with the Academic Senate on emeriti issues. It will need to give particular attention to ensuring that in the future emeriti who contribute actively to research, teaching, and other important aspects of the academic mission and life of the campus receive appropriate divisional support for their work.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE ON EMERITI RELATIONS

Roger Anderson

Joyce Brodsky

G. William Domhoff, Chair

Ted Holman *ex officio*

August 31, 2008