

RETIREE ASSOCIATION BOARD MINUTES
Wednesday Sept. 27, 2023
9:30 a.m., in-person, MAC Hall Vista Room

Attendance: President Dan Spielmann, Kathy Pletcher, Chris Sampson, Chris Style, Curt Heuer, Frank Madzarevic and Carol Emmons
Guest: Brian Rammer

Update on UW-Green Bay developments

Alumni relations director Rammer gave a brief overview of recent news across campus:

- There have been changes in University Advancement leadership. With a move from four vice chancellors to three and Tony Werner leaving the University, vice chancellor for inclusivity and engagement Dawn Crimm has accepted additional duties heading up the advancement division.
- The new bachelor of science in mechanical engineering has been accredited.
- An update of the UWGB master plan is underway. (Details are online at uwgb.edu... under "facilities")
- Nominations for the annual Alumni Awards are being accepted online in two categories: Outstanding Recent for graduates out 15 years or fewer, and Distinguished Alumni for those removed 16 years or more from their UWGB graduation dates.
- UWGB Career Services functions are being devolved through the respective academic colleges, with the potential for closer association with job shadowing, internship programs and related activities.
- A late-October reception was being planned to collect and highlight "Phoenix Rising" stories. Professor Bill Sallak, Brian Rammer and Deb Anderson of the Cofrin Library are coordinating.
- Replacement of the Cofrin Library building is still in the pipeline, but it will be a few years. A rapid rise in projected construction costs – from an estimated \$96 million to \$125m or more – means demolition of the current 8-story structure will not occur before 2026 at the earliest.

Review of recent retiree events, and discussion of future programming

President Spielmann shared his and others' impression that the Annual Meeting – in the form of a late-summer indoor picnic dinner at the Weidner – went well with decent food, good conversation and an interesting presentation and update by Chancellor Michael Alexander. Retirees and their guests seemed to enjoy the outing. The \$609 in event expenses were nearly entirely offset by the amount paid by participants. (As for attendance, more on that, later.)

The May Arboretum Walk was also successful, with a turnout consistent with prior years.

The spring women's basketball reception at the Kress Center attracted several dozen attendees. Many of the participants are season ticket holders themselves. There was consensus to try such a reception on an annual basis, although we could perhaps fine-tune the timing, logistics, etc.

It was agreed that a fall STEM Center tour would be an attractive program, and should be scheduled as early as possible.

As for Weidner Center and UWGB Music and Theatre events, the 2022-23 programming season passed by without a designated Retiree Association outing taking place. (Few if any retirees took up the offer for reduced-price tickets for the one touring vocal music show that was publicized.) It was mentioned that the Weidner Philharmonic might have a good concert for organizing a retiree's "night out" in '23-24; Dan and Brian Rammer agreed to touch base on a possible spring date.

Open-ended discussion of events and Retiree Association future

Discussion morphed into a more general conversation about the decline in attendance for Retiree Association events. It seems clear at this point that as the UWGB "founding generation" continues to age, move away or disengage from active participation because of health considerations or (let's be honest) death, the future of the Association is uncertain. More recent UWGB retirees and younger people, in general, seem less likely to be interested. The picnic and Annual Meeting in the Weidner is a good example; it was a fine event but attendance continues to slide, down to perhaps a few dozen retirees if you subtract out invited guests. In fairness, such numbers are a trend that is negatively impacting club and volunteer participation across American society, especially in the years following the COVID pandemic. Nevertheless, the Retiree Association needs to "get younger" or it will die off as an organization.

Chris Style raised the question of whether the Association "owning" some sort of campuswide signature event – she cited the annual Fill the Hill flamingo drive at UW-Madison to raise funds and participation among alumni and community/campus friends as just one example – might be worth talking about. Frank mentioned that the conversion of the old Shorewood Golf Course is an example of something that some older UWGB alumni and retirees might nostalgically view as a loss, but the truth is that, with its newfound use as a cross-country course and hiking/skiing destination it has the potential to be just as popular and perhaps more so, in terms of drawing more people (back) to campus. Retiree Association leadership needs to be open to new opportunities.

It was agreed that the board would resume discussion on these important observations at the next meeting and beyond.

Next meeting

A Doodle poll will determine the best date for the November meeting.

Chris Sampson moved and Dan seconded to adjourn, and the vote was all ayes, at about 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Sampson, Recording Secretary