

UC EMERITI REDEFINE RETIREMENT

Since the 1990s biennial surveys of emeriti have repeatedly shown how extensively many “retired” UC faculty contribute to the University’s prestige, welfare and missions through their continuing devotion to research, teaching, professional service, and public activities.

None of these surveys, however, have been more important and timely than the recent one for 2007-2009, whose results appeared just as the large Post-Retirement Benefits Task Force appointed by UC President Mark Yudof was drafting a report to aid him in advising the Regents this fall on steps to resolve the University’s increasingly underfunded benefit obligations.

For fifteen months units of that broadly representative thirty-two-member body had consulted administrators, faculty, staff, and students throughout the University, as well as four national advisory firms concerning the situation.

Finally by last May the task force labored to convert those sessions of explaining, discussing, absorbing, weighing, and filtering scores of priorities, biases, ambiguities, ambivalences and vagaries into options and recommendations for its report. Under such complex circumstances, a single strong minority demur to the options it advanced could well be considered complementary in not being complimentary.

From the start, President Yudof had forwarded both a helpful context and a problem. On one hand he designated that UC should provide “competitive benefit programs to aid in recruiting and retaining the highest quality faculty and staff,” and should sustain its “commitments to its current and future retirees”—positions strongly supported by a poll of faculty and staff—while on the other hand he found the programs’ future funding unsustainable.

Thus the task force confronted a challenge of short-changing an ideal without changing it, a project desperately calling for ingenuity in doctoring details, tactical trimming, wise wile, and diligent damage control. The highest quality at the lowest possible price. Legerdemain economics short on the oxygen of good news and humanistic warmth.

Little wonder, then, the relief and pleasure at a gust of fresh air when, in the midst of this mulling, Charley Hess of UC Davis, a task force steering committee member and chair of the Council of UC Emeriti Associations (CUCEA), distributed his Council’s 2007-2009 Emeriti Biobibliographic Survey Report.

Sunlight through the clouds! Warmly welcomed for felicitous reference points and abundant facts firmly documenting the value of first-rate faculty and first-rate benefits, selective data from the survey now climax the Benefits Task Force report under the title “**Retirees – a Vital Part of**

the University Community,” a point emphasized by an appendix including the survey’s complete results.

These results will be especially important this fall and, perhaps, winter, as the Regents continue to consider the sustainability of emeriti benefits. Besides their online appearance as an appendix to the task force’s report, the survey’s data are on CUCEA’s website. But if this is news to you, or if the task force report’s 106 pages daunt your diligence, here, for handy insights, is the survey’s introduction and summary.

UC Emeriti Biobibliographic Survey 2007-2009

Introduction and Summary

A glow through the gloom of UC’s current budget woes relates wryly to the funeral fun of two classic cartoons: *The New Yorker* pictures two elderly businessmen looking into the street from a large window of their opulent club. A hearse is passing by, followed by an armored truck. One comments casually, “George always swore he’d take it with him.”

By coincidence *The Chronicle of Higher Education* offered an academic counterpart: In a campus hallway two old professors stare in dismay at a notice tacked tackily on a bulletin board. One laments, “Too bad about old Ainsworth. Published and published, but perished all the same.”

The fun about obsessiveness in both cartoons is doubled by the way George is successful and Ainsworth is thwarted. Yet what’s success? For George it’s ultimately and literally a dead end. But old Ainsworth is survived by what made him distinctively valuable. So a parabolic twist turns success topsy-turvy: the businessman’s wealth, his ultimate identifier, will be buried with him, whereas the professor’s works, his ultimate identifier, will have a life beyond his.

Such edgy wealth-and-works humor suits the rough seas UC finds itself in these days, where ultimately the state needs the University’s work even more than the University needs state funding. But when one’s a Titanic and the other’s an iceberg, laughter lasts longest in lifeboats, and this biobibliographic survey floats a few.

Often overlooked in the multiplicity of UC’s vital culture is the work of hundreds of productive emeriti, an immense assortment of leaders in their fields who instinctively redefine “retirement.” As these persist in their research, teaching, advising, and professional services, they amount to a large, experienced, and prestigious workforce represented, incidentally, by a Council of UC Emeriti Associations (CUCEA), an organization whose mission, size, and membership are unequalled at any other research university in the country.

Still, higher education usually attends more to the cost of emeriti benefits than to what emeriti do. And since most schools have many ponds of other fish to fry, why should they mix their missions (or metaphors) to meddle or muddle with odd old ducks?

This survey illustrates why:

- (1) Because in an inspiring contrast to common assumptions about retirement, the survey's 1,219 academically active respondents forcefully reveal what a lively resource emeriti can be.
- (2) As the reputation of major universities primarily relates to the quality of their faculty, survey data illustrate emeriti as veterans in mixing UC's educational values with their prestige.
- (3) Especially heartening in these dire budgetary days, most emeriti research, teaching, and service cited in the survey were (and are) *pro bono*, in effect a bonus and great bargain for the University.
- (4) The survey shows how durable this bonus and bargain can be. As world-class scholars (hardly the sort to stop thinking and sharing when they turn 65), most UC emeriti, like old Ainsworth, are quintessentially obsessive, making them a remarkable investment: a blue chip asset likely to pay generous dividends to students, UC, the state, and the country for many years.
- (5) Moreover, the number of those years, with all their productivity, is *increasing*. Beyond the 65-year lifespan assumed by Social Security in 1935, modern healthcare has already given emeriti, on average, nearly 20 additional years to flourish—virtually half of an extra career.

At UCLA this vitality and value emerged in sixteen emeriti vying for a 2008 Dickson Award honoring post-retirement scholarship, teaching, and service. The bulk of their retirement dossiers bulged file folders beyond all modesty. The least among them had published a distinguished book. Daunted, and after agonizing over the superfluity of merit, judges finally split the award five ways. Not represented: an anthropologist whose “best book” was published in his 92nd year.

Much of this continuing academic immersion was not anticipated by a Berkeley emeritus who jotted, “At last I’m beginning to ‘get’ retirement”—i.e., to receive, to grasp, to understand it, all in one, which for most survey respondents meant being “just as busy” or “busier than before retirement.” For them the future is now, and they’re a vigorous part of it in the following ways:

Out of 3,690 emeriti surveyed, 1,219, or 33%, with a median age of about 76, responded. Of these, 351 contributed funds to the University via extramural grants which supported 1,372 staff, including 749 research assistants and 279 post-doctoral fellows, besides providing liberal sums for University overhead. While many others funded research personally, examples of teaching and research funded by grants included a new \$1 million chair in Environmental Chemistry assumed by a UC Davis emeritus, and a Berkeley emerita's \$2.3 million from the NIH.

Research and professional enterprises during the biennium were prolific. As if they were old Ainsworths aspiring to glorious tenure in some Great Beyond, emeriti published 446 books, 3,737 articles, 741 book chapters, 579 book reviews, delivered 3,340 professional lectures or papers, and reported 1,023 scholarly projects in progress—all when they were not distracted by work on 1,188 abstracts, 425 professional reports, 852 consulting reports, and 105 technological projects, or weren't pursuing Aesthetics or Truth in producing 138 films or videos, 752 literary works, 4 music or theater works, 449 performances, or 413 art works for 83 exhibitions.

Over half of the survey's respondents taught, 484 on their home campus and 233 across town, the nation, or in countries around the world. While they were perhaps most suited to graduate programs, their teaching and advising of 6,644 undergraduates as well as 7,091 graduate students reflected a strong undergraduate slant at Davis, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz, plus a special program of intensive undergraduate mentoring at San Diego. Some respondents taught elsewhere because of campus budget limits, a fact suggesting that enhanced and thoughtfully applied emeriti recall provisions could make sound economic and educational sense.

Along with teaching, the survey shows an immense emeriti commitment to University citizenship. All told, respondents served on 2,930 UC committees during the biennium. Most important for the University's renown and their disciplines was their service on 1,056 doctoral committees. Most significant for the University's budget crisis was the extraordinary number of 205 who served on fund-raising entities. The support signaled by this last figure has also appeared in more than \$200 million donated by former faculty over the years.

Given their experience and expertise, emeriti were quite naturally tapped for service on 183 advisory committees and 390 administration committees, as well as for special appointments or positions ranging from an Academic Senate Chair (Riverside), Senate committee chairs, department chairs, assistant and associate deans, deans, directors and vice chancellors, to important slots, however ethereal and transitory, at various altitudes in the UC President's Office.

Then too, there is always a particular professional discipline clinging to every academic's center of consciousness, a specialty and national or international reputation beyond UC that coheres one's identity as a working expert, a distinctive presence, or even an Ainsworth on a bulletin board. And in their professional worlds emeriti tend to shine as stars far longer than on a campus. Thus it's not surprising for the biennium to find 711 on professional committees and 215 who held offices, as well as 559 with editorial appointments on important professional journals. But loads of labor can be a price of one's prestige, as most experienced in vetting 6,363 article submissions, 923 book manuscripts, and writing 6,974 recommendations.

Of course honors accumulate for such renown and diligence, like a Linus Pauling Medal and election to the National Academy of Sciences for emeriti at Santa Barbara; or a Pulitzer Prize for a UCLA emeritus; or a National Humanities Medal conferred at the White House, and the surrealism of being named an Officer of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth, when one lives in Riverside. A Davis emeritus sighed over "a wall covered with honorary plaques, papers, and

statuettes.” It’s all in the game but a worthy one, as are Distinguished Teaching awards cited by respondents. All told, within just these two years, 434 honors attested to this crowd’s distinction.

After such professional notoriety Community Service seems footnoteish but, even before UC’s currently critical political days, public relations deserved the attention emeriti gave them. During the biennium these and other worthy causes prompted their service on committees of 544 local, 73 state, and 196 national organizations, while masochists held offices on 116, attention which no doubt contributed to the 74 honors they received in this arena.

In sum, how may one define the spirit that rises from this survey’s quite stunning or numbing mass of data? In composing a history of Western Civilization for Oxford University Press, a historian has recently been advised by editors to simplify some of his terms for a student readership. “Altruism” was one of them.

Too civilized? Extending beyond old Ainsworth, that quality seems to inform the efforts of many emeriti who, by adding an ultimate third to their long careers, are unobtrusively contributing so much to everyone and everything that UC serves and stands for.

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