

THE 2009 CONFERENCE OF BIG TEN RETIREES ASSOCIATIONS

The University of Iowa hosted the 2009 Conference of Big Ten Retirees Associations August 14-16 in Iowa City. The Emeritus Faculty Council and the University of Iowa Retirees Association were responsible for the event. The planning committee included the past presidents of the University of Iowa Retirees Association and the Emeritus Faculty Council. Letters of invitation and registration materials were mailed to member associations in May. The registration fee was increased to \$125. for each attendee. Every association was represented by at least one member with most having two or three attendees. There were 22 registrants from the other institutions, 34 from the University of Iowa, and 9 guests for a total of 65. Out of town guests stayed at the Iowa House in the Iowa Memorial Union. The conference sessions were held in the Levitt Center for University Advancement and at the Iowa Memorial Union.

Registration was Friday afternoon in the Lobby of the Iowa House. Guests were transported by Cambus to the Levitt Center for University Advancement for a reception and dinner. The reception was in the Wyrick Rotunda with dinner in the Green Assembly Hall on fourth floor which provides a magnificent view of Iowa City and the University of Iowa. Penny Hall, President of the University of Iowa Retirees Association, welcomed the group and introduced the speaker. Wallace Loh, Executive Vice President and Provost, spoke on "The Changing Ecology of Public Research Universities." The musical entertainment for the evening was provided by "The Tempered Brass," a group of four retirees.

After a continental breakfast in the Iowa Memorial Union, the group assembled in the Levitt Center for University Advancement for the morning's program. Tony Franken, President of the Emeritus Faculty Council, welcomed the group and introduced President Sally Mason. She discussed some of the problems which the University of Iowa had faced during the preceding year including the flood of 2008. She also noted some of the challenges confronting the University of Iowa as well as other institutions of higher education.

"The Big Ten and Its Academic Counterpart: The Committee on Institutional Cooperation" was the theme for the remainder of the program on Saturday morning. Sam Becker, Professor Emeritus of Communication Studies, University of Iowa, discussed the institutional benefits of belonging to the Big Ten. Among the benefits are higher academic standards for athletes, graduation rates for athletes that exceed the rates for other students, and presidential involvement and responsibility for decisions. Barbara McFadden Allen, Director of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), described that organization which includes all of the Big Ten Universities plus the University of Chicago. The CIC supports collaborative academic programs across the member institutions. Its activities include leadership development, shared course development and delivery, high bandwidth networking, high technology applications and research, international programs with a focus on study abroad access, recruitment of a diverse graduate student population, library and information services, higher education policy, and coordinated purchasing. Sam Becker then moderated a discussion of "The

Relationships of the Collective Big Ten Retirees Association and of the Individual Associations to the Big Ten and the CIC.” It was a lively discussion and several ideas of potential relationships with the CIC were presented. Ms. Allen noted that projects and activities would need to be suggested by member institutions rather than by the CIC or one of the retirees groups.

After lunch Rod Lehnertz, Director of Campus and Facilities Planning, showed slides and described the flood of June 2008 and its effect on the University. He also discussed the Master Plan for the University of Iowa. Following his presentation Mr. Lehnertz led a bus tour of the campus which included stops at the Press Box of Kinnick Stadium and the Old Capitol, a historic museum which served as the first capitol of the State. The day concluded with dinner and music by the Soul Friends Jazz Trio, another group of retirees.

The program on Sunday began with a presentation about teaching in the Senior College by Laird Addis, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy. Professor Addis described some of the benefits from teaching in the program. After his talk, representatives described the opportunities for learning which their associations provide. A majority described their involvement with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institution; some pointed out retirees could attend regular courses on their campuses. None of the associations had programs such as the Senior College.

Delegates from each association next described the activities and challenges facing their group. Several sponsor health fairs, some organize trips, and all publish newsletters. Many brought newsletters and other materials for distribution. One mentioned the difficulty in getting members to serve on their board. Dick Stevenson, Past President of the University of Iowa Retirees Association, described how successful offering the newsletter by email this past year has been.

The Conference concluded with the annual business meeting. Doris Burton and Sandra Churchill from Indiana invited the group to the 2010 meeting which will be August 20-22. Dick Stevenson presented them with two monkeys so that he could get the monkey “off the back” of Iowa. The Wisconsin representatives proposed a change to biennial meetings due to costs. Iowa supported the suggestion, but a straw vote showed that most groups wanted to continue meeting annually. The Michigan delegates discussed the Big Ten Web Site which they provide. They urged associations to help keep the Web Site updated by submitting information in a timely manner. The 2009 Conference adjourned at noon.