

# University of Victoria Retirees Association – 2018 AGM

## UVRA President's Report – AGM, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### *Topics*

- *Letter of Understanding*
- *Events*
- *Office needs*
- *UVRA Scholarship*
- *Insurance*
- *Succession Planning*
- *Farewell and Hail*

### **Letter of Understanding, signed 2/2/2018.**

Those of you who read our newsletter *Grey Matters!* will be aware of the significance of this document for the future of the Association's relationship with the University. After consciously creating an arm's-length status at the outset, the Association has broadened its outlook considerably over its 25-year history. There is now a strong case for closer cooperation, not only to reflect the broad interests and efforts of our much larger membership, nor just to secure in one document the benefits that members and other retirees enjoy and may aspire to, but to seek ways to work better with the University to achieve common goals.

We already share similar aims in terms of outreach into our geographic and academic communities. Whether winning research grants, volunteering our skills, or speaking at local or discipline-specific meetings, many UVic retirees continue to greatly contribute. That, too, fits with the University's mandate to create social capital. The public appetite for these rich offerings of local expertise is obvious.

The area where there is much room for improvement is 'inreach': how can those of us who don't want to 'hand in our keys and go away' continue to contribute to our own wellbeing and still contribute to the University after retiring? Currently, those efforts are haphazard at best, without coordination or focus. As our member survey last November showed, UVRA is the single best means for the University to find willing cooperation among its former employees, in the spirit of the new Strategic Framework. The aim of the LoU is to provide our own 'framework', to codify our relationship in more meaningful ways. There are so many unrealized mutual benefits and needs: faculty and student mentorship, access to research and other collegial networks, graduate student supervision, committee participation, campus docents -- to name only the most obvious. The obstacles to tapping into these 'retired' resources (often, legal concerns) are not as daunting as some suppose. Other post-secondary institutions have overcome them (UBC is one). Why not here?

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## **Events (Social, Elder Academy, Masterminds).**

This has been a most active year. In addition to our traditional, well-attended lunches (Christmas, Chinese New Year), members have enjoyed fully-subscribed visits to Sea Cider, the Navy's command bridge training facility (two groups), Abkhazi Gardens, and the CRD watershed. RBC also hosted a session on Death and Taxes that drew about 60 attendees.

As reported in separate summaries for this meeting, UVRA's engagement with our local community had another banner year: John Anderson and members of the staff of the Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health arranged this April's very popular series of 4 Masterminds talks by UVic retirees – the 13<sup>th</sup> year of this series. David Docherty once again organized Elder Academy sessions which consistently drew from 25 to over 100 participants. He will be a nearly impossible act to follow.

Earlier this year, we once again set out to explore how Continuing Studies might help coordinate the Elder Academy, as proposed by the University 5 years ago. This time, though, thanks to David's dedication, we had three highly successful years of 'proof of concept', to reinforce our position. The resulting response from Continuing Studies was very disappointing: it would have effectively weakened the essence and presence of the Elder Academy goal of bringing stimulating events, led by first-class experts, at low or no cost, to the local community aged 55+.

Our focus now is on sustaining momentum, perhaps at a less ambitious pace. Simply put, David's desire to pass the baton lacks another runner to pick up the challenge. We have formed a committee to look at alternative models for organizing future events, and are exploring the possibility of collaborating with other units on campus.

## **Office Assistance.**

Our Office Manager, Lou Schmidt, has given us two years of supreme service, reorganizing the office, rationalizing the records, sending and answering emails and phone calls, and registering participants and payments at the events just mentioned.

Contrary to a rumour that only came to our attention recently, *Lou is a volunteer, working sometimes up to 40-hour weeks without remuneration.* Clearly, this is an untenable situation in a large, all-volunteer organization such as UVRA. A priority of our work to give concrete meaning to the Letter of Understanding is therefore to seek paid, part-time office assistance. The alternative is that much of what is mentioned above will simply have to shrink or even cease, and your association will have to reduce its activities severely. (As an aside: our colleagues at UBC-APE have a 60% FTE paid office manager, and SFU-RA have a much smaller amount to fund a few hours per week.)

## **UVRA Graduate Scholarship.**

By the time you read this, we may have reached our first goal of raising \$12,500, to be matched by UVRA. That \$25,000 would fund an annual scholarship of \$1,000 for a graduate student doing research into our age group. At the Annual General Meeting, we will propose setting a similar target, with similar funding, to double the scholarship.



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Your support will be much appreciated.

## **Insurance.**

This year, a third option for Extended Health and Dental insurance, and a fourth for Travel insurance were added to the range available to our members and other retired post-secondary employees. CURAC, our umbrella association for similar retiree associations in Canada, has negotiated a new option via the Retired Teachers of Ontario policy. More details and comparison charts are to be posted on our website as they reach us, and as our limited expertise allows.

*(Note: if you are familiar with Cascade, the UVic website platform, we need you urgently! We are edging towards a new 'Edge-compliant' website for UVRA.)*

## **UVRA's 'presence'.**

A concern for any volunteer organization like ours is succession planning. Each year, we encourage new retirees to join and participate in UVRA. Volunteering isn't for everyone, but for those who do volunteer (usually in at least two organizations!), the social and mental rewards are palpable. As is obvious, if you are still reading, there is much work still to be done, to create a stable, productive relationship with the University and to meet the needs of our large membership. More recent retirees presumably still have an active network of university colleagues who might be encouraged to join them in, say, organizing an event for us, or working on better integration into University activities. Large or limited, we have a project for you!

*Vale atque Ave!* (to reverse the Roman greeting).

This is my farewell report, as I end my second 2-year term as your President. I have enjoyed working with our very engaged Board members, and the challenges and the achievements that we have made on your behalf in the past four years. Now, I am looking forward very much to working with our next President, John Anderson. John brings an impressive background of experience at UVic and further afield. He hit the ground at some pace, too, as soon as he retired last year, taking on the editorship of our Newsletter and arranging the 2018 Masterminds speakers. Stay tuned – he will bring new energies and insights to UVRA!

Peter Liddell,  
President, UVRA