

The State University of New York  
**Center for SUNY Retirees Service Corps**

**Appointment of a Task Force on SUNY Retirees**

- To look at the working of the retirees programs at SUNY and non-SUNY campuses.
- To study issues relating to SUNY retirees.
- To recommend actions to promote greater involvement of retirees in service and with each other.

**Task Force Members**

- Ram Chugh, Emeritus SUNY Potsdam (Chair)
- Vince Aceto, Emeritus SUNY Albany
- Carol Donato, SUNY University Faculty Senate
- Anne Donnelly, Emeritus SUNY Cobleskill
- Jim Kalas, SUNY Albany
- Curtis Lloyd, Assistant Vice Chancellor for University-wide Human Resources
- Susan McDermott, Hudson Valley Community College
- Peter Thomas, Advisor to Task Force
- Carl Wiezalis, President, SUNY University Faculty Senate
- Judy Wishnia, Emeritus, Stony Brook University
- Tom Wolff, Emeritus SUNY Upstate Medical University

**Profile of SUNY Retirees (estimates)**

- Total retirees since 1996 =13,000
- Average age of employees when retired = 62 years
- Average years of SUNY experience when retired = 24 years
- Classification of the retirees:
  - 10% administration; 34% faculty; 23% professional/non-faculty; 29% secretarial/clerical; 32% maintenance staff and others.
- Education: 20% Doctoral degrees; 18% Masters/professional degree;
  - 17% Associate, Bachelor, some graduate work; 30% High school; 14% below high school
- Race: 8% Black; 3% Hispanics; 86% White; 3% Asian.
- Gender - 47% Male and 53% Female

*NOTE: On the average 1,200 – 1,300 SUNY employees retire each year.*

**Strengths of Retirees**

- Highly educated
- Specialized expertise
- Practical skills
- Many years of working experience

*While some retirees continue to stay involved, there is no formal mechanism to connect retirees and their skills with service opportunities, and vice versa.*

**Examples of Available Expertise**

- Healthcare

- Social Services
- Economic Opportunities
- Education
- Environmental Issues
- Business Initiatives
- Mediation/Negotiation
- Agriculture

### Programs Relating to Retirees at SUNY Campuses

- About ten campuses with retirees programs – University Centers at Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Stony Brook, and Cortland, ESF, Oneonta, New Paltz, Potsdam, and Plattsburgh.
- A wide diversity among the retirees programs – University Centers at Albany, Binghamton and Buffalo have very active retiree programs.
- At present there is no system-wide structure/database to connect retirees with service activities.
- Several campuses expressed strong support for having a system-wide center housing a database on retirees and their specialties and specific service organizations which can then be used to connect retirees with organizations, and vice versa.

### Programs Relating to Retirees at Other Institutions

*There is a growing interest at major universities both nationally and internationally to provide programs for connecting retirees with service opportunities.*

Example of campuses with active retirees' programs:

- The University of Southern California Emeriti Center
- Ohio Council of Higher Education Retirees
- North Carolina State University Association of Retired Faculty
- University of California at Berkeley Retirement Center
- Retired Academics and Librarians of the University of Toronto
- Arizona State University Retirement Association
- Duke University Retirees Program
- *And many other universities have centers/institutes on retirees*

### Growing Recognition of the Value of Retirees

- In the 60's, focus was almost exclusively on the dependency needs of elders, not on their potential as a community resource according to a Harvard report called *Reinventing Aging*.
- Instead of asking "Who will take care of them?" We should be asking: "What could they contribute?"
- Retirees and elderly are becoming a new force in society. They have time, talent, considered trustworthy, and display civic pride.

*Recent studies on retirees and elderly show:*

- Retirees are our only increasing natural resource – utilize it effectively.
- States seek to tap into growing resource - Older Volunteers.
- Aging is an asset for communities and higher education.
- Strengthening of universities through contributions of retirees.

### Selected Survey Findings

#### Relating to Retirees and Elderly

- Integrate retirees into your mission – provide caring environment – assess their special needs – promote programs to utilize their time and talent in a mutually beneficial way.
- Investment at universities should continue into retirement with appreciation and gratitude.

## Selected Survey Findings

### Relating to Retirees and Elderly

- Older Americans (65 and over) are referred to as “Super Volunteers” – they are often the most reliable and committed of all volunteers.
- Only about 22% of older Americans volunteer.
- A 2006 study (The Joys of Retirement Survey) found that 68.3% of retirees would volunteer if *asked* and 86.1% said they would volunteer if asked to do *something that interests them*.
- A 2004 AARP study showed that 79% of baby boomers believe they will still be working after retirement – some doing part-time jobs – but mostly expect to devote more time to community service – 75% of those are interested in doing things to help others – 50% of those expressed interest in those areas to help improve quality of life areas, such as education and social services.

### Administration and Governance of the Center for SUNY Retirees

- The Center is administered by a SUNY retiree serving as a part-time executive director.
- It functions under the jurisdiction of the system-wide Human Resources.
- A system-wide Advisory Committee composed of about 15 members (mostly retirees) representing various stakeholders, guides the work of this Center.
- A steering Committee, composed of five members from the Advisory Committee, oversees the day-to-day work of the Center.
- The Center has been given a small budget and staff to support its activities.
- The hope is this will be a Center *for* retirees, *by* retirees, *of* retirees, dedicated to serving the needs of retirees.

### The Center’s Tentative Action Plan

- A note of caution - we are a new entity - we have a lot of work to do - we are feeling our way around.
- We will be talking to many people at each SUNY campus to seek their input and guidance and, hopefully, we will soon have a clear sense of our direction and our priorities. Here are some of the strategies we intend to follow.

#### The Center’s Tentative Action Plan (cont.)

##### 1. Create Awareness about the Potential of Retirees.

- Make campuses aware that retirees are a rich resource that remains largely untapped.
- Make periodic presentation to SUNYWIDE associations, campus presidents – faculty governance – unions, and other appropriate groups. (like the one I am doing today.)

#### The Center’s Tentative Action Plan (cont.)

##### 2. Encourage each SUNY campus to create programs relating to retirees.

- Retirees tend to identify with the campuses where they were employed. A campus is not only a workplace but a place where we mature and develop lot of professional and social ties and memories.
- A campus becomes a reference point in one’s life and it remains that way long after retirement.
- However the connection between the campus and the retirees often breaks down rather quickly and not much effort is made to reconnect with them.

#### The Center’s Tentative Action Plan (cont.)

2. Encourage each SUNY campus to create programs relating to retirees (cont.).
  - Individuals considered valuable by the campuses before their retirement, find themselves no longer appreciated. Most retirees experience a big let down.
  - Retirement does not imply a total disconnection with one's work; it only means entering a new phase in one's life where one's knowledge and experience would be put to a different use.

### **The Center's Tentative Action Plan (cont.)**

2. Encourage each SUNY campus to create programs relating to retirees (cont.).
  - The Center plans to encourage each campus to create programs devoted to retirees.
  - A retiree program on a campus strengthens the community-campus bond, which is both good in itself and good for the campus during difficult times (*like now*).

### **The Center's Tentative Action Plan (cont.)**

3. Developing a manual for starting a retirees program.
  - The Center plans to develop a simple manual outlining the process a campus might follow to start a retirees program.
  - The manual will identify some of the best practices - and provide links to those programs.
4. Survey your campus retirees.
  - The Center plans to provide sample survey questionnaires which could be used by the campuses to assess the needs of retirees and what they would be willing to offer to the campus and local communities.

### **The Center's Tentative Action Plan (cont.)**

5. Identify barriers and difficulties in starting and sustaining retirees programs.
  - The Center plans to identify the barriers and difficulties other campuses faced in starting and sustaining such programs and how to overcome them.
6. Center for SUNY Retirees webpage.
  - The Center plans to develop a webpage devoted to SUNY retirees. It will be our window to the outside world.

### **The Center's Tentative Action Plan (cont.)**

6. Center for SUNY Retirees webpage (cont).
  - The webpage is expected to have the following features:
    - Serve as a clearing house.
    - Serve as a link to retirees programs at SUNY campuses.
    - Contain a list of service opportunities within SUNY.
    - Discussion Board feature allowing SUNY retirees to interact with each other in a social network.

### **The Center's Tentative Action Plan (cont.)**

7. Collection of data on retirees.
  - This is going to be the toughest task but we are going to use every channel to collect information on our current retirees.
  - Would seek assistance from HRD, unions, campus phone books, and other channels
8. Create a SUNY-wide association of the campus retirees' organizations.
  - Many of the coordinators of the current retirees programs expressed strong interest in meeting with other coordinators to exchange ideas and their working experiences.

### **The Center's Tentative Action Plan (cont.)**

9. Work with other organizations relating to retirees and elderly including unions.
- Networking with unions and other organization is vital – to learn from their experience.
  - Avoid duplication and reinventing of things which could be learnt from others.

### **The Center's Tentative Action Plan (cont.)**

10. SUNY ID card for retirees.

- This card would allow the retiree to use services at all SUNY Campuses

### **Role HRD Can Play**

- Help in gathering data on current retirees.
- Help in creating awareness about the potential of retirees to your campus and community.
- Start thinking about creating a center for retirees at your campus.

### **In Conclusion**

- In a way, all of you sitting here constitute a part of future SUNY retirees.
- I'd like to emphasize that the Center for SUNY Retirees cannot perform magic – it has a limited budget – limited staff.
- Right now I have been doing it alone with not much help.
- We need to coordinate and network. Working together will be our guidepost.
- Thank you very much for your listening to me.