



“A” for Achievement: Changes in Actions, Attitudes, Alliances, and Aims

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In the almost eight years that I have participated in the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE), a pleasant undercurrent of conversations about issues such as “elder progress,” “on-going roles in our institutions,” and “getting organized” has grown into a wave of change permitting new actions, attitudes, alliances, and aims by and for retirees from colleges and universities. Some of these changes are of major importance.

One example of changed alliances, aims and actions is the statewide AROHE memberships made available to retiree associations at institutions in the SUNY system. Another new alliance and operational model is the October 21-24, 2012, AROHE biennial conference hosted, not by one but by a coalition of retirement organizations from three North Carolina sister institutions.

Yet another change and new alliance is the cooperation between AROHE and College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) to explore academic retiree status and organizations internationally, expanding from the AROHE-CURAC alliance to the United Kingdom and ultimately to other countries. AROHE itself is building on its powerful history of association development toward the aims of strengthening and maintaining retiree organizations and their influence in promoting retirees’ connectedness with their institutions.

I believe that major events such as those above are built on and made possible by small changes in actions, attitudes, alliances, and aims in every campus retiree association, local efforts that will ultimately have a wide effect. Some of these campus-specific events may be so small that we recognize their significance

only in retrospect. Let me give some examples from my own campus.

Recently, I was invited to speak about AROHE and its various activities to my university’s Faculty Senate. I had been a member of this assembly probably 15 years earlier, and at that time none of its members, including campus leaders, even knew that the Retired Faculty Association (RFA) and certainly not AROHE even existed.

As I began to look over the audience, I was surprised that, after 10 years of retirement, I recognized some familiar faces. Then it struck me. I knew these people, not from shared history as colleagues, but because they had participated in some way with the RFA.

Two of the Faculty Senators had been speakers at RFA meetings. Two of the voting Senators are elected as representatives of the RFA. The Senate secretary had helped the RFA obtain a list of new retirees. And here I was, 15 years later, in a key campus group, some of whose members had actively engaged with campus retirees as equals, talking with them about retirees’ international participation. That’s a change in alliances, actions, and aims, and very likely in attitudes.

Does your campus president know you? Don’t call to talk with him/her. Call the executive assistant and make an appointment. Be sure to tell the assistant what you want to talk about. Briefly. You will be surprised at how willing this leader is to meet retirees. Two retired colleagues and I, representing our RFA, decided to stop whining about being ignored and to talk with our chancellor about two topics: retiree parking and on-going roles for retirees.

We had a half-hour an appointment within a week. We walked in to the inner sanctum—complete with fireplace. The chancellor in white shirt, tie and glen plaid suit greeted us and to our surprise introduced us to the chief of police and the dean of the School of Law, who was

also president of the Faculty Senate—the chancellor’s back-up team. Needless to say, we never got past “parking,” a hot topic on many campuses.

When we returned some weeks later, the chancellor was in his shirtsleeves and alone. In retrospect we recognize that this was the day we began to talk about retirees’ continuing contributions and to lay the foundation for retirees as Faculty Senators and international conferences. That day real changes in actions, attitudes, alliances, and aims began.

What issues in your association can be addressed by small efforts to change actions, attitudes, alliances, and aims? Can you document the spread of progress from small beginnings? ■