April 2020

Redirecting our resources to tackle COVID-19

By Jakub Tolar, MD, PhD

The onset of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic in Minnesota engaged the University’s public service responsibility in a very direct way. A research university is designed to do this, and we have redirected our resources to tackle COVID-19.

Our health care faculty and staff pivoted our clinical practices to focus on preventing and treating COVID-19. Quickly, we migrated more than 90 percent of our patient visits from in-person to phone or video consultations. And M Health Fairview dedicated Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul entirely to the care of patients with COVID-19.

We have experts in all fields necessary to perform research to better understand and fight this virus: immunology, microbiology, public health, veterinary medicine, bioengineering, and a multitude of other relevant disciplines. Here are a few examples of the work we are doing to help our communities and state.

Testing capacity

There was a clear need to increase testing capacity in Minnesota. We gathered equipment and resources from across our campuses and created an accredited testing laboratory on the first floor of the Microbiology Research Facility. Within one week, scientists and researchers deployed this single-focus resource to reduce the testing backlog.

Clinical trials were operational for three drugs repurposed in the fight against COVID-19:

- Hydroxychloroquine for those directly exposed to, but not yet demonstrating signs of, COVID-19 infection. In one week, this trial enrolled 10 percent of the expected 1,500 participants.
- Losartan for those with minor symptoms of a positive COVID-19 virus diagnosis. The University is part of a national, multi-site trial.
- Remdesivir, originally developed to treat Ebola, is being used for patients who are critically ill with COVID-19.

Another clinical trial using natural killer cells to target the coronavirus is in development.

We launched Rapid Response Research Grants for projects designed to give actionable results within a short timeframe. In the first week, 11 grants were awarded to departments across the University. The grants support a range of projects, including biophysical modeling of COVID-19 clinical trials, creating faster diagnostic tests, and developing a vaccine.

See Tolar on page 4 ...
From The President

Confronted with a pandemic
What a difference a month makes. Instead of preparing for spring and the planting of gardens, we are confronted with a global pandemic that threatens our health and well-being. As seniors, we are among the most vulnerable people endangered by the pandemic. On top of that, the economy is seriously stalled, and our investments are negatively affected.

It is, of course, a field day for the epidemiologists, and we are being educated about how viruses spread and what we can do. We will find out in the next several weeks whether our collective efforts have blunted the spread, “flattened the curve,” and enabled our health care system to deal with the pandemic.

For our Retirees Association, we have been forced to cancel our forums, workshops, and other meetings for March and April. I will let you know in a few weeks if we are on for UMRA’s annual meeting and celebration in May. Assuming the crisis abates, we will consider some summer programming to make up for all the cancellations. Stay tuned.

This newsletter includes an article on the University’s response to the pandemic by Jakub Tolar, MD, PhD, the U’s Medical School dean, vice president for clinical affairs, and campus public health officer. Dr. Tolar is an academic scientist and physician who has a unique perspective on these issues. Please take a look at what he has to say.

Cautious but virtually connected
It is impressive that the University has responded so rapidly and so well to this emergency. President Gabel has taken strong steps to keep our community safe, and great efforts are being made to continue the education and graduation of our students.

Also on the bright side, UMRA has announced a total of $69,000 in professional development and research grants to 18 University retirees. You can find that news starting on page 5. Our thanks to Dick Poppele, chair, and the other members of the UMRA Grants Committee who reviewed this year’s applications and selected the winners.

In the meantime, we have become a cautious and virtually connected society. Cares Committee Chair Ron Matross has compiled tips from UMRA members for coping during the shutdown (see page 3). My own current favorites are as follows:

Books. I am a murder mystery aficionado and just finished C. J. Box’s Long Range, the latest in a recurring series about a Wyoming game warden. I also recommend Rescued by David Rosenfelt, a tale about a criminal defense lawyer who is enthralled with dogs, and anything by Allen Eskens, a former criminal defense attorney from Mankato, who has written several books, most famously The Life We Bury.

Media and TV. I have enjoyed The West Wing on Netflix, a series about the presidency in the 1990s and early 2000s (comforting nostalgia), and, on Amazon Prime Video, Bosch, based on Michael Connelly’s murder mysteries.

If you have books, TV shows, or activities to recommend, please email your suggestions to me. Ron and I will figure out how to put them on the website.

Stay Safe!
—Bill Donohue, president UMRA, donohue@umn.edu, 651-308-4229

Nominees for 2020–21 program year
The UMRA Nominating Committee presents the following slate of candidates for the 2020–21 program year. The election of officers and board members will be held during UMRA’s annual meeting in May.

• President-elect: Jan Morlock
• Secretary: Gary Engstrand
• Treasurer: Greg Hestness
• Renewing board members: Vernon Cardwell, Cathy Lee Gierke
• New board members: Jan McCulloch, Barb Shiels, Catherine Wambach

Current President-elect Frank Cerra will become president automatically.

The May issue of the UMRA Newsletter will include candidate information. A big thanks to everyone who contributed suggestions.

—Nominating Committee: Jerry Rinehart (chair), Rebecca Anderson, Jean Kinsey, Ron Matross, Marj Savage, and Frank Cerra (ex officio)
Making lemonade
By Ron Matross

“When life gives you lemons …” Boy, do we ever have lemons now.

I thought it would be fun to ask the UMRA Cares Committee and some others how they were coping positively with the coronavirus situation, “making lemonade” as it were.

Suzanne Bardouche has been sewing protective masks and practicing social distancing by walking the back alleys of her neighborhood. Will Craig has been diving into Minnesota Department of Revenue data, analyzing how Minnesota retailers have been doing against online competitors. Pat Tollefson has been reviving her old hobby of sketching, and memorizing the Mary Oliver poem, *Where does the temple begin, where does it end?*

Ron Anderson has been re-reading the book that helped inspire his work with the Cares Committee, *On Caring* by Milton Mayeroff. Maggie Catambay has been painting watercolors and working as a “craftivist,” knitting articles for the needy.

Earl Nolting has been reading and making phone calls to friends and family members across the country. Helen Carlson has been following a custom exercise program from YouTube videos and participating in online meetings with groups to which she’s connected.

Kris Mortensen has been baking cookies for family and friends. I have been riding my bike a couple hours a day, meditating, and taking online courses.

Cheerful protective face masks, two kids’ and four adult-size, sewn by UMRA member Suzanne Bardouche.

Online resources

We’ve all become increasingly reliant on the Internet to help us stay connected and cope. Fortunately, every day brings new resources for us to use. Here are a few that we’ve found to be helpful:

- **Silver Sneakers** has a variety of online exercises classes and videos for seniors. [tools.silversneakers.com](http://tools.silversneakers.com)
- The meditation app, **Headspace**, has a free section called Weathering the Storm, with meditation, sleep, and movement exercises. [headspace.com](http://headspace.com)
- **Coursera** provides a wide range of free university courses. I’m taking the famous Yale course, *The Science of Well Being*, which offers practices as well as theory. [coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being](http://coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being)
- The local climbing gym **Vertical Endeavors** is offering online yoga and fitness classes. [verticalendeavors.com/yoga-fitness/online-unwind](http://verticalendeavors.com/yoga-fitness/online-unwind)
- **Zoom** is the video conferencing app that many people are using these days for online happy hours, club meetings, and other get-togethers. [zoom.us](http://zoom.us)
- Several offerings from the U of M **Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing**, including: *Pathways to resilience during times of change*, a free webinar April 15; *Stress busters*, a weekly free stress reduction and meditation class; *10 ways to have better conversations*, April 23 well-being lecture featuring Celeste Headlee; and another free webinar, *Mindfulness during challenging times*. 
HELLO, my name is Earl Nolting

Hometown? Columbus, Indiana.
When did you join UMRA? 2005
What was your very first job? Summer city park concession stand helper, age 14, earning 35 cents per hour.
What was your occupation when you retired from FT work? Director of Counseling and Student Services in the College of Continuing Education. From 2006 to 2009, my wife, Judy, and I provided family therapy and counseling through our own practice, Northstar Counseling and Meditation Services. Judy passed away in 2011.
Where were you in 1969 when Apollo 11 landed on the moon? At the University of Wisconsin–Madison, in my first year as an assistant director at the UW Counseling Center.

If you were an Olympic athlete, what would you like your sport to be? Because of an undiagnosed eye problem, I was never very good in athletics. But as an Indiana kid, I loved to watch high school and college basketball. Still do.

Do you have a favorite place on the U of M campus? The old Psychology Building and Eddy Hall, then home of the Student Counseling Bureau, where I grew up as a professional.

What is a fun fact about you we might not know? I learned to sail on Lake Mendota in Madison with the UW–Madison Hoofers club. Judy and I went to Madison in 1968 after I completed my PhD in psychology and a one-year post-doc at the University of Minnesota. We owned a small sailboat for several years. It was a family thing, enjoyed by all.

What is something you currently enjoy doing? I love reading mysteries, doing puzzles (especially crosswords), and card games.

... TOLAR from page 1

In the spirit of Minnesota biotechnology innovation, one project harnessed the know-how of engineers and anesthesiologists to create a low-cost mechanical ventilator by combining a common tool tray and a manual resuscitator known as an Ambu Bag with a motor to automatically compress the bag.

All of these initiatives are possible thanks to the hard work, dedication, and compassion of our faculty, staff, and students. We hope you’ll share our pride in these accomplishments.

Dr. Tolar is dean of the University of Minnesota Medical School, vice president of clinical affairs, and campus public health officer. For more information about the U’s response to COVID-19, here are links to three frequently updated websites.

clinicalaffairs.umn.edu/news-events/updates-covid-19
med.umn.edu/covid1
cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19

Welcome new members to UMRA

Please give a hearty welcome to eight new members who joined UMRA between mid-February and early March. Encourage anyone you know to attend our monthly meetings, greet all newcomers, and help introduce them to other members.

- Christopher J. Coyne, Office of the Vice President for Research, Sponsored Projects Administration
- Marie Hammond (wife of deceased UMRA member Jerome W. Hammond)
- Barbara Jensen, College of Liberal Arts, Writing Studies
- James E. Johnson, Facilities Management, Custodial
- Mary O’Brien (and Kevin O’Brien), University of Minnesota Foundation (UMF)
- Kathe Wilcoxon, UMF, Communications
- Jane Young, Health Sciences, School of Dentistry

For contact information, please visit umra.umn.edu > Contact Us > Member Search (login required).
2020–21 PDGR awards: From prevention science to wearable design

UMRA members associated with the School of Statistics, Department of Political Science, Medical School, University Libraries, College of Education, Department of Art, College of Design, and Law School have been awarded 2020–21 grants from the University of Minnesota’s Professional Development Grants for Retirees (PDGR) program. Twenty-two applications were submitted. The grants committee approved 18 for funding totaling nearly $69,000. Ten of the winning applications were submitted by members of UMRA.

The 2020–21 awards represent a range of faculty interests and projects, including four from the coordinate campuses of Duluth and Morris.

All fully retired employees of the University are eligible to apply for the grants for professional development or research.

2020–21 award recipient John L. Romano, professor emeritus, Department of Educational Psychology, College of Education and Human Development, applied to attend and present at the 2020 Society of Counseling Psychology Conference (held every 5 years) as a scholar who has made major contributions to the profession. Romano’s expertise is in prevention science—an interdisciplinary specialty that employs scientific methods to prevent, delay, and minimize problems, strengthen protections, and promote community health and well-being.

First-time PDGR grant recipient Joyce Lyon, associate professor emerita, College of Liberal Arts (CLA), plans to use her award to re-imagine and redesign Some Pages for A Book of Hours—a suite of 18 digital broadsides—as a traditionally formatted book. Inspired by the medieval Book of Hours, Some Pages is an image and text narrative about the last 18 months of Lyon’s mother’s life. Despite the difficult subject matter, the strong and positive response to the exhibit in 2018 convinced Lyon to make the work available in book format for use in caregiving and hospice support and in community discussions of end of life.

Artist and repeat PDGR grant recipient Wayne E. Potratz, CLA professor emeritus and scholar emeritus of the college, will use his 2020–21 grant to support attendance and participation in two iron art conferences, and to hire an undergraduate research assistant to help with preparations for an exhibition of cast metal sculpture.

Joseph M. Terry, MD, an ophthalmologist, is studying modifiable factors that may affect the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the most common cause of blindness among older people in the developed world. His study aims to determine whether long-term vegetarians develop advanced AMD less frequently than other people and reach later age for need of treatment.

Lisa Vecoli, retired librarian and curator of the Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, is using oral histories to document early lesbian activism in the state. In year one of her project, funded by a 2019–20 PDGR grant, she collected interviews with women involved in the creation of local spaces and organizations for lesbians. Vecoli’s goal for this year is to collect an additional 20-25 interviews to diversify the voices of the project and gather examples of less formal community formation across the state.

Karen L. LaBat, Morse Distinguished Professor Emerita, College of Design, plans to use her grant to develop a basic anatomy workshop focused on body structure, and supporting materials for wearable product designers. The workshop will be a follow-up to the book, Human Body: A wearable product designer’s guide, co-authored by LaBat and a medical doctor.

See PDGR on page 7 …
Volunteering through the University Retirees Volunteer Center (URVC) was suspended in March because of the coronavirus. So, for this month’s contribution to the UMRA Newsletter, we would like to offer a testimonial on the benefits of volunteering, to both recipients and volunteers.

— Randi Lundell, volunteer officer manager, URVC

Science with Jane Phillips

When I retired in 2015, I decided to volunteer at the nearby care center where my parents spent their final days. I was so impressed with the vitality of the center and wanted to contribute to it. Shortly after starting and doing various tasks, I noticed there were many programs in art and music, but few in science.

Being the geek that I am, I asked if I could introduce some science programs to help the residents with life-long learning — and having fun with science. They said, Yes!

I knew I could count on the College of Biological Sciences Instructional Labs to help me with equipment and specimens because, as the coordinator of those labs for 25 years, I had encouraged CBS to contribute to science programs for K-12 students and teachers.

So, what do we do in these programs at the care center? Everything! The residents are amazing. We have isolated DNA from strawberries; looked at our cells; made models of the solar system; studied seashells, trees, the brain, genetics, the heart, the ear, the brain, sex determination in animals, tectonic plates; and more.

Having spent my 40-year career entertaining undergraduates with the wonders of science, I now have a second career — entertaining seniors! But no exams.

Firsthand | Experiences with aging

By Helen Carlson

Seven phases of aging—retirement, extended middle age, early transition, revised lifestyle, later transition, final period, living into dying—provide a framework for describing what I’ve come to think of as my gifts of aging.

Challenges in caring for my parents over 14 years made necessary an early retirement from my 28 years of teaching, research, publishing, and service. I left much-valued work that had included creation of learning technologies and many collaborations with colleagues in national and international settings.

As my parents’ physical disabilities and dementia increased, I became a shadow of my former self, experiencing firsthand all the trauma of their later phases of aging: revised lifestyle, later transition, final period, and living into dying. Unexpectedly, I also received many gifts of being. Reading, walking, and singing together, and using sensitive caregiving strategies deepened our emotional connections. Keeping vigil during the last weeks of my mom’s life, as I had with my dad, became one of the most meaningful experiences of my life—a thin place between immanence and transcendence, life and death, strength in weakness.

‘A new me’

Then it was time for me to downsize from a hobby farm to a condominium near a nature center. This early transition became for me like an extended middle age. I volunteered as a citizen scientist, a historical society archivist, a member of the UMRA Cares Committee, and as an advocate for families with young children, especially those who were homeless. Coupled with earning certificates from the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, the “doing” part of my life increased exponentially. I could easily walk the three-mile nature trails each morning, take the bus and train to events, and spend time with family and friends. I had invented a revised lifestyle, “a new me.”

Now, in later transition, I and my husband have become caregivers for each other as chronic health issues arise.

Another gift, a workshop, “Living Well with Chronic Conditions,” has provided viable strategies and structures.

Also, as out-of-home activities decrease, the gift of time for silent meditation and reflection as a base for ethical will creation, organizing important end-of-life documents for heirs, and expanding community
connections through live-streaming and webinars, has increased. And as I look to the final period of my life, I am confident there will be new gifts of aging to help me, once again, answer the questions, *Who am I now? What will I do? With whom will I do it?*


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**In remembrance**

We report the passing of UMRA members as we learn of these losses to our University community. We send our condolences to the families and friends of our colleagues.

**Neal Nickerson** died on December 31, 2019. Dr. Nickerson graduated from Macalester College and earned his MA at UMD and EdD from Columbia University. He was professor emeritus in the College of Education and Human Development, Department of Educational Policy and Administration, and taught for more than 50 years. In 2013, he received the President’s Award for Outstanding Service.

**Eville Gorham** died on January 14, 2020. He was Regents Professor Emeritus in the College of Biological Sciences, Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior. Dr. Gorham earned his PhD in botany from University College London and was considered the “grandfather of acid rain research.” His research focus was on the effect of acid rain and radioactive fallout on woodland plants and wetlands. An ecologist and environmentalist, he taught at the U of M for 36 years until his retirement in 1998.

—Kathleen O’Brien, UMRA Cares Committee

**UMRA Cares supports members**

If you learn of someone who is facing a difficult life challenge, or for assistance and support in the event of the death or serious illness of an UMRA member or family member, please email us at umracares@umn.edu or call 612-626-4403 and leave a message for UMRA Cares.

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**2020-21 PDGR awards from page 5**

Additional members of UMRA among this year’s awardees are:

- **Kathryn J. Sedo**, retired professor, Law School
- **William D. Sudderth**, professor emeritus, School of Statistics
- **John L. Sullivan**, Regents Professor emeritus, Department of Political Science
- **Carol Urness**, retired professor and curator of the James Ford Bell Library

Please visit the UMRA website at umra.umn.edu for Serving U > Grants for Retirees/Previous PDGR Awards/2020 PDGR Abstracts Retirees, where you will find all the recipients of this year’s awards listed along with descriptions of their projects. All are to be congratulated!

Funding for the annual competition is provided by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and an endowment fund established by UMRA that is managed by the University of Minnesota Foundation (UMF). The Office of the Vice President for Research administers the funds and announces the awards.

The resources for this year’s awards came partly from carryover from previous years (about $26,000), when fewer grants were awarded, plus $40,000 from the Provost. We also withdrew $3,000 from our fund at UMF. The goal is to be able to fund at least 10 grants per year.

In addition to supporting the awardees with grants of up to $5,000 each, the PDGR program provides resources to engage undergraduate students in research.

—Dick Poppele, chair, UMRA Grants Committee

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**PDGR grant recipient Wayne E. Potratz, at the 50th Annual Minnesota Iron Pour in 2019.**

Potratz, aka Iron Guy, describes an iron pour as “an athletic, aesthetic, pyrotechnic event where iron is melted in a cupola and poured into sand molds to make sculpture.” As the button on his coveralls attests, he loves his work!
Have you changed your address, e-mail, or phone?
1. Print new information below.
2. Cut out this form and address label.
3. Mail both to the address above.

Name _______________________
Address _____________________
City, State ___________________
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For more information 612-301-1257 or arboretum.umn.edu

Thank you to the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, for helping to sponsor our April newsletter.