

UMRA UNIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

APRIL 2005

Provost Sullivan to speak on strategic positioning of the University

From time to time, perhaps when the stars are in proper alignment, the scheduling of our monthly luncheon speakers seems especially fortuitous. So it is this month, when we welcome Provost Thomas Sullivan.

As we are all increasingly aware, the University is engaged in what is being called a strategic repositioning effort.



The effort is driven by the steady erosion of state financial support, escalating tuition, intense competition from other universities for the very best faculty and students, efforts to keep abreast of rapidly

developing fields of knowledge and, through it all, the struggle to gain ever greater efficiencies within the University system.

More than in past planning efforts, the stakes this time around appear to be particularly high. In the weeks ahead, planning decisions will continue to demand the attention of faculty, administrators, regents, politicians at the state capital—and University retirees.

Provost Sullivan is playing the lead role in orchestrating the difficult work of planning, so he will speak with special authority about

progress to date and prospects for the future when he meets with us on the 26th.

Tom Sullivan became senior vice president for academic affairs and provost on July 1, 2004. Prior to that, he served from 1995 to 2002 as dean of the University's Law School, and as Irving Younger Professor of Law. Before coming to Minnesota, he was dean of the University of Arizona College of Law for six years. His areas of teaching and research include antitrust law, civil procedure, business regulation, and trial practice. A nationally recognized authority on antitrust law and complex litigation, he has authored or co-authored eight books and more than thirty articles.

As if all of this were not enough to keep him busy, Professor Sullivan has served as consultant, fellow, and chairperson of a long list of professional associations. Students have been much on his mind as well. At the Law School he received the Stanley V. Kinyon Teacher of the Year Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Each year the UMRA Board invites a member of central administration to bring us up to date on the health of the University. Speaking on "The University at a Crossroads: Securing the University's Leadership Position," Provost Sullivan will have important things to say.

Mark your calendars for the annual spring banquet May 24

As has been our custom, the annual spring banquet, at which we elect new officers, will replace our luncheon meeting for May. The speaker will be the Honorable Alan Page, one-time stalwart with the Minnesota Vikings and, more recently, Associate Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Additional details will follow in the May newsletter, but in the meantime, be sure to save the evening of May 24 on your calendar.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

APRIL
LUNCHEON MEETING

Featured Speaker

Thomas Sullivan, senior vice president and provost, University of Minnesota
"The University at a Crossroads: Securing the U's Leadership Position"

**Tuesday
April 26, 2005
11:30 a.m.**

Location

Conference Room ABC
Campus Club, Fourth Floor,
Coffman Memorial Union,
East Bank Campus, U of M

Cost

\$12 per person (tax included)

Reservation Deadline Thursday, April 21

To reserve your place(s), send a check, payable to the University of Minnesota Retirees Association, to David Wark at 1313 5th St., SE, Mpls, MN, 55414; call 612-379-3854; or e-mail him at wark@umn.edu. Reservations requested after April 21 will be placed on a waiting list. Cancellations must be received by noon Wednesday, April 20.

Free Parking

For two hours of free parking in the East River Road or Weisman Museum garages, bring your ticket in for reimbursement.

Board Meeting at 10 a.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the academic year begins to wind down, change is once again in the air at the University—this time clothed in the language of “strategic positioning.” Those of us with memories of Commitment to Focus and earlier planning efforts may be inclined to say, in the words of that great American philosopher Yogi Berra, “it’s déjà vu all over again.” But this time around, things look different. The defining circumstances of America’s public universities, the U of M included, have changed, the situation is more dire, and the very health of the institution seems at risk.

From our safely cloistered position as retirees, it’s deceptively easy for us to skim through the accumulating news reports and conclude that it’s now someone else’s problem. Of course, it largely is. Yet few of us are willing to set the University’s interests so casually aside.

What then, to do—other than worry? By meeting with Provost Sullivan at our luncheon on April 26th, we can become better informed about exactly what’s at issue and what’s being done about it. More than that, we can take advantage of the opportunity provided by the strategic positioning initiative to begin new conversations—among ourselves, with governance groups, and with University administrators—concerning ways in which faculty, P&A, and civil service retirees can contribute to the repositioning effort.

Another recently produced document also suggests that such an initiative on UMRA’s part would be timely. Not long ago,

Professor Carol Bland of the Medical School directed a study commissioned by central administration entitled “Senior Faculty Perceptions and Practices During the Late Career and Planning for Retirement.”

Among the study’s numerous findings was the discovery, not really surprising, that large numbers of retired faculty wish to retain meaningful ties with the University but, perhaps also not surprising, find too little encouragement from the University and its collegiate units to do so. As a result, countless individuals are deprived of important opportunities and the University of valuable experience and talent. The same holds true of many civil service and P&A retirees. As Carol observes, the situation calls out for someone’s attention. Why not ours?

UMRA has two different but complementary missions. One is to serve as an advocate for the rights and interests of all retirees. The other is to find ways in which the association can best serve the interests of the University. With that second mission in mind, the Board, in coming weeks, will review the strategic positioning initiative and Carol’s report, with an eye to exploring ways in which UMRA can strengthen its commitment to serving the University and enhancing its place in the University community.

We solicit your thoughts and promise to keep you informed as the discussion proceeds.

Cordially,
John Howe, President

Annual nominating process in place

Each year at this time the Board appoints a Nominating Committee to prepare a slate of nominees for association officers, to be followed by election at the May Banquet. This year the assignment is more formidable than usual because successors must be found for our secretary, Dave Wark, and treasurer, Robert Plunkett, in addition to a president-elect and four Board directors. Past President Gerhard Weiss has generously agreed to chair the Nominating Committee. Other members are Earl Nolting, Dan Panshin, Judy Howe, and Corky Johnson. UMRA members who wish to nominate colleagues, or volunteer themselves, for any of these offices should get in touch with Gerhard (via weiss003@umn.edu or 612-922-5352) or any of the other committee members.

Civil service colleague Pat Tollefson joins the UMRA Board of Directors

In an association such as ours, it’s important that the Board reflects the diversity of our membership. With that in mind, we’re pleased to report that Pat Tollefson has joined several other civil service colleagues as a director on the UMRA Board. In keeping with By-Law procedures, the Board appointed Pat to a position that opened recently via a resignation.

Pat retired after 26 years of service to the University, most of those years in the Office of International Student and Scholar Services. She also worked at the Institute of Child Development and in Student Life Studies. Now that her schedule has simplified, she spends more time pursuing her musical interests as a member of The Larks, a women’s choral group, and as bassoonist in the St. Anthony Civic Orchestra.

UMRA negotiates campus parking discount program for UMRA members

As previously announced, the UMRA Board has recently negotiated special discount programs for members with University Bookstores, Intercollegiate Athletics, and Rec. Sports. You can find information about those programs in past newsletters, and on the association's Web site at www.umn.edu/umra.

We're now happy to report that we've negotiated a new discount program with Parking Services. UMRA members will be able to park for an unlimited time in a single day for \$4.00 at any of the three following facilities: the Gortner Avenue Ramp in St. Paul, East River Road Garage on the East Bank in Minneapolis, and Lot 86 next to the Law School on the West Bank. The discounted rate will be available at any time of day, on any day of the week. The single exception is if the facility is accommodating a special event and charging an event rate. (This exception includes the Gortner Ramp in St. Paul during the State Fair.)

Starting date for the new discount program is still to be determined, but will fall during the late spring or early summer. Some arrangements are still under discussion including how UMRA members will identify themselves at the parking facility to claim the discounted rate. When all is in place, notice will be given on the UMRA Web site, via the members' e-mail listserv, and in the September Newsletter—so stay tuned!

Members who have questions about the new program should contact John Howe via e-mail (howex002@umn.edu) or by phone at 651-645-2584.

Drawing comparisons of health care coverage for retirees at Big Ten universities

At a December meeting of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs, Jackie Singer, Director of Retirement Programs in the Office of Human Resources, reported on a recently completed survey of health care coverage for faculty retirees at Big 10 universities. The study's findings should be of interest to UMRA members. Selected findings are given below.

For under-65 retirees:

- Six institutions subsidize employee-only medical costs. Illinois provides 5 percent for each year of service, with full subsidy after 20 years of service. Iowa, Michigan State, and Ohio State subsidize at 100 percent; Michigan at 95 percent; and Penn State at 83 percent.
- Four universities—Michigan State, Michigan, Ohio State, and Penn State—subsidize health coverage for family members in the range of 80 to 100 percent.

A message from the Volunteer Center

There are many ways to make a difference in a child's life. One is by contributing an hour or two one afternoon a week as a tutor at the Phyllis Wheatley Center in St. Paul to help young students improve their reading and math skills. What better way to offer help and gain personal satisfaction?

To find out more about this opportunity and many others offered by the Volunteers Center, call 612-625-8016.

National Car Rental discounts are available to University retirees

During our salaried years at the University, many of us took good advantage of the U's discount program with the National Car Rental company. At the same time, many of us perhaps did not know that this discount program remains available to all University retirees—civil service and P&A colleagues, as well as faculty. A bit of sleuthing, however, has revealed that this is, in fact, the case.

University retirees can continue to take advantage of the program for personal as well as business travel, both in the U.S. and abroad. To tap into the arrangement and see if it serves your traveling needs, simply request the contact code from your former department or office, and proceed to get in touch with National. This announcement is another result of the Board's continuing efforts on your behalf.

- Of the Big 10, only Minnesota, Illinois, Northwestern, and Penn State offer plans with no deductible. Five schools offer an indemnity-like co-pay of between 10 and 20 percent of charges.
- Wisconsin offers no health care subsidization, but does convert some sick leave at retirement to a defined contribution account to pay premiums. Sick leave is set at 22 days at hire, plus 12 days per year. Minnesota has a similar but more liberal policy.

For over-65 retirees:

- Five institutions subsidize employee-only medical care. Illinois provides a 5 percent subsidy for each year of service, with full subsidy after 20 years of service. Iowa, Michigan State, and Ohio State offer a 100 percent, and Michigan a 95 percent subsidy.

Coverage comparisons—Continued on page 4

Coverage comparisons—continued from page 3

- Three universities—Michigan State, Michigan, and Ohio State--subsidize health coverage for family members in the range of 93 to 100 percent.
- Only Minnesota, Illinois, and Northwestern offer plans with no deductible. (Penn State and Purdue are unknown.) Three universities offer an indemnity-like co-pay of between 10 and 20 percent of charges.
- Again, Wisconsin does not subsidize, but does convert some sick leave under the formula described above.

In response to a question, Ms. Singer observed that Minnesota's rank among Big 10 universities in providing retiree health coverage is difficult to determine because there are a variety of criteria to be considered. Minnesota does not subsidize retiree health coverage at all, and so would rank low on cost to employees. At the same time, it offers very comprehensive benefits, including pharmacy costs and co-pay arrangements, which retirees can purchase at a University group rate, so would rank high on quality.

**For additional information about
UMRA and its activities, visit the association's
Web site at www.umn.edu/umra.**

Board seeks information from retirees affected by pre-1963 benefits plan

In the March newsletter, the Board announced its intention of examining the extent to which faculty retirees invested in the pre-1963 benefits plan continue to be significantly disadvantaged. Since publication of that announcement, several colleagues have sent information concerning their experience under that plan. The Board is eager to receive additional input and information. Please contact John Howe by mail at 1421 Hythe St., St. Paul, MN, 55108; by phone at 651-645-2584; or via e-mail at howex002@umn.edu.

Mario Bognano honored at retirement

From time to time, we're asked to announce retirement ceremonies for long-time colleagues at the University. On April 14-16, a symposium titled "Governing the Global Workplace" sponsored by the Humphrey Institute, Industrial Relations Center, and Law School will honor the career of Professor Mario Bognano. International policy makers and distinguished academics will focus on the impact of globalization on the workplace. For information, go to www.umn.edu/globalworkplace or call 612-624-5592.

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Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002

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