

# UMRA UNIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

*A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association*

JANUARY 2009

## President Bruininks to address UMRA members at luncheon, January 27

President Robert Bruininks will be our featured speaker at UMRA's January luncheon.

Appointed the 15th president of the University of Minnesota on November 8, 2002, Dr. Bruininks has served the University for more than 40 years since his first appointment as an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology. He rose to full professor with work center-



ing on human development and performance policy research in education and social services, and strategic improvement and accountability in fields of pre-kindergarten through high school and higher education. During those years he served as principal investigator on more than \$22 million in grants and contracts to support research, teaching, and outreach programs.

Dr. Bruininks became dean of the College of Education and Human Development then executive vice president and provost. Following the departure of President Mark Yudof, he was named president.

Over the past six years, Dr. Bruininks has overseen a major strategic planning and positioning effort aimed at making the University of Minnesota one of the top three public research universities in the world. Toward that end, the University has been

implementing systemwide changes to its academic and capital investment strategies as well as its organizational structure and operations.

In 2003, due to a downturn in state revenue, the University took a 15 percent cut to its biennial funding from the State of Minnesota. Bruininks was widely praised for his management of the cuts because he protected the University's core academic programs. In 2005 he was successful in arguing for new state funding to preserve a vibrant and thriving research university.

Now there are new challenges as the Minnesota Legislature convenes in the current difficult economic climate to consider its level of support for higher education in general and the University of Minnesota in particular. President Bruininks will lead the University as it faces those challenges in the 2009 legislative session.

We look forward to President Bruininks's appearance at UMRA and to hearing how the University will address the challenges that lie ahead.

— Hal Miller, President

### Reservations, please

Thank you for your willingness to make luncheon reservations by sending in your checks well before the deadlines. Since we began this practice, our reservation and check-in procedures have gone much more smoothly, and everyone has more time to visit before lunch begins.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

JANUARY  
LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday  
January 27, 2009  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
Note: Normal time returns

**Featured Speaker**  
Robert Bruininks, President,  
University of Minnesota  
“Challenges Ahead”

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

**Cost**  
Prepayment: \$12 per person.  
\$14 at door for those not prepaid.

**Reservation Deadline**  
**Thursday, January 22**  
To reserve your place(s) and to take advantage of prepaid price, you must send a check, payable to UMRA, to UMRA Reservations, c/o Becky Hurst, 1794 Roxanna Lane, New Brighton, MN 55112 before the deadline date. You may contact Becky at 651-636-5568; e-mail: [rebecca.hurst@comcast.net](mailto:rebecca.hurst@comcast.net)  
Reservations requested after Jan. 22 will be on a waiting list. Please let us know about cancellations by noon, January 22.

**Parking**  
Parking is available in the East River Road Garage at UMRA's membership discount, \$5 for the entire day. Come early and visit the Bookstore.

**Board Meeting at 10 a.m.**

UMRA NEWSLETTER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### *ON GOING TO THE MATTRESS*

In some ways, 2008 was the worst of times. We had meltdowns in many areas: housing values, failure of financial institutions, and loss of confidence in the market. Those of us who grew up in the Great Depression fear another depression approaching the scope of that one. Many who rode the giddy rise of the Dow Jones upward are feeling it roller coaster down. We who have conservative investments are holding our collective breath waiting for those shoes to drop. We're tempted to slit our mattresses and deposit the money we have left there.

I, along with several of you, am heavily invested in the general account of Minnesota Life's Securian Financial Group. UMRA's Human Resources liaison, Jackie Singer, arranged for President-elect Bob Holt and me to be invited to the December meeting of the SCAFA Benefits Sub-committee on Retirement. The central item of that agenda was a report from Securian executives on the status of their general account. We were informed that Securian manages assets of \$25.4 billion, of which \$10.4 billion is in general account assets. University of Minnesota general account assets total \$1.1 billion or about 10 percent of Securian's total general accounts.

According to the report we heard, Securian appears to be solid and not in danger of the meltdown that has occurred in several financial institutions. They point to their quality as measured in the high scores that they have received from four established rating agencies. They also report that their investment philosophy, including the diversity of their investments, the competitive return on those investments, their asset allocation, and the balance

of yield enhancement and total return strategies have kept them strong. They say they are different from troubled companies in that, for example, they don't borrow to meet liquidity needs, have no concentrated exposure to asset classes or security types, and they use derivatives to manage balance sheet risks, not as a business for profit. They shared their current exposures, but showed that their diverse portfolio and conservative management offset those risks.

While this is interesting and encouraging, Bob suggests the following warning: You should know that "neither [of us] is in any way expert on the accounts of Securian or any other financial institution. Nor are we aware of any member of the association who is an expert in these matters. Thus it would not be prudent to suggest that UMRA can provide you with the information and analysis necessary for you to evaluate the level of risk your deposits with Securian are subject to. We were, however, impressed with the expertise of some members of SCAFA as indicated by the questions they put to officials of Securian. We also think the HR keeps a careful and knowledgeable eye on Secuiran and would inform those who have accounts there of any troubles that may appear on the horizon. The best UMRA can do is to stay in close contact with both SCAFA and HR and relay to you our best estimate of their work."

But I can say that I was reassured by the presentation and decided not to make room in my mattress for my retirement funds that are managed in the general account by Securian.

— Hal Miller, President

## Small grants committee moves ahead with 41 applications to deliberate

The grants committee, consisting of pre- and post-retirement colleagues appointed by Graduate School Dean Dubrow and designated to receive applications for the first round of retirees' small grants, met on December 8 to discuss the next steps.

The plan remains in place: to fund 10 grants of up to \$3,500 in each year of the program's three-year trial run.

By the December 15th deadline the committee had 41 applications in hand from the Twin Cities and coordinate campuses. They plan to meet again on February 12 to make recommendations for funding to Dean Dubrow, who will announce the winners on or about March 1.

— John Howe, Chair, UMRA Small Grants Committee

## Conversation builds language skills

Happy 2009 to all readers from the staff and board of the University Retirees Volunteer Center. This month we share with you some thoughts from two volunteers who participate as mentors in the “Partners-in-English—One-on-One” program for graduate students, post docs, and their spouses.

Ann Erickson meets with three University students she has been helping for several years. “This is a two-way exchange,” she says. “They have improved their English by conversing with me and I have learned about their cultures from them (they are from China and South Korea). Sometimes they ask questions for which I don’t have ready answers. In researching the answers for them, I learn more, too. We are now such good friends that I have taken them on ‘field trips’ around the Twin Cities to places of interest like the Capitol and the Art Institute so they can learn more about our community. I enjoy seeing these things through their fresh eyes.”

Another volunteer in this program is Bill Peria. He currently meets with two graduate students from South Korea. He notes, after having worked with six or eight such students in the last few years, “They all have surprisingly large vocabularies, but they need help with pronunciation. They learned English in Korea from teachers who sometimes did not know how the words should be pronounced. So I help them practice phrases that contain the sounds they need. Each meeting lasts 30 minutes and consists of conversation and reading from a newspaper or textbook. Reading the *Minnesota Daily* helps them with colloquial English. These sessions help them become more comfortable with the language and are also satisfying for me.”

You do not have to be a University retiree to volunteer with URVC (in fact, you don’t need to be retired at all). Many choices of activity are available, both at the U and at non-profit agencies in the community. Find out more by contacting the center at [urvc@umn.edu](mailto:urvc@umn.edu) or 612-625-8016. The office is staffed 9 a.m. to noon, weekdays. At other times, leave a message and someone will get back to you. Volunteering is rewarding and enjoyable!

—Judy Rosenblatt, board member and volunteer, URVC

**Reminder Note for your datebook:**  
The UMRA luncheon meetings are back to the normal schedule. Lunch will begin at 11:30 a.m. and we’ll remain on this schedule through April.

## Remember when you retired?

The UMRA Membership Committee is planning a Retirement Seminar this coming spring to present practical information for new retirees. We are seeking your assistance in making the presentations most meaningful. Please send us your input on the following questions:

- What information or advice do you now wish you had been given **before retirement?** (*list two or three examples*)
- What information or advice do you now wish you had been given **at retirement?** (*two or three examples*)

*And, if you think there are areas where you could use advice or information in your retirement years, please tell us about those as well. The UMRA program committee may be able to plan a program or seminar for members to address issues of concern.*

Send your responses to: Membership Chair Harlan Hansen at [hhanse@aol.com](mailto:hhanse@aol.com), or mail to 880 Tanbark Dr., 204, Naples, FL, 34108. A summary of your responses will be included in an upcoming newsletter. Thank you.

## IN MEMORIAM

We lost a good many good people in 2008. Friends and members of UMRA, they will be greatly missed. With sadness we note their passing. Our condolences to their families.

Sarabeth Taylor Barnes,

General College, d. January 28, 2008

Margaret (Peg) Wipperman,

Central Administration, d. April 5, 2008

G. Edward Schuh,

former dean, HHH Institute, d. May 4, 2008

Stanley Sahlstrom,

former UMC provost and Regent, d. June 2, 2008

Leonid Hurwicz,

Economics - Nobel Laureate, d. June 24, 2008

Spouse Evelyn is an UMRA member

Vernon Ruttan, Applied Economics, d. August 18, 2008

Alfred Aeppli, Mathematics, d. September 14, 2008

Spouse Dorothee is an UMRA member

Mildred C. Templin,

Child Development, d. October 22, 2008

Douglas Pratt, Plant Biology, d. November 8, 2008

Spouse Beverly is an UMRA member

Dennis Watson, Microbiology, d. December 1, 2008

Keith N. McFarland,

former dean, Human Ecology, d. December 27, 2008

Spouse Mary Ellen is an UMRA member

If we have missed anyone, please contact me.

—John Anderson, Data Manager, [ander049@umn.edu](mailto:ander049@umn.edu)

## Past President reports on conference

In October, Past President Gayle Graham Yates represented UMRA at a conference of the Association of Retiree Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) held in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California. She joined 125 delegates from the U.S. and Canada in “gaining information, insights, and inspiration about what retirees are doing in their campus organizations and how retirees are being served by our institutions.”

Presentations included 1) lectures on creative aging, brain health, and recent neuroscience discoveries encouraging to aging persons 2) campus leaders sharing aspects of their retiree work—lifelong learning; campus re-employment; volunteering on campus and in the community; identifying retiree needs and providing benefits, programming, and opportunities for them; starting, promoting, and fostering a retiree organization; and the importance of synergy between retirement organizations and the administration 3) a report on a recent AROHE survey of 140 colleges and universities regarding retiree organizations and their activities.

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For additional information about  
UMRA and its activities, and to see photos of past  
events, go to [www.umn.edu/umra](http://www.umn.edu/umra).

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“In several ways, the University of Minnesota comes out well in comparison with others,” Graham Yates noted.

The AROHE organizations are vastly different from one another: Some are units of their universities; some are centers that coordinate activities, benefits, and classes; some are several separate organizations; some have paid staff. Many are single groups that meet socially, advocate for retirees, provide programs, book clubs, interest groups, or travel.

Our organization is for all U of M retirees and their spouses whatever their employment category; we meet monthly with speakers, advocate for retirees, and to some extent participate in faculty governance. UMRA has secured retiree privileges, discounts, and benefits, and works with URVC to offer volunteer opportunities and OLLI in lifelong learning.

Graham Yates sent a report of the conference to the University’s administration, concluding, “And now I look forward to our further work with the hope that we may make our desire to have a U of M Retirees Center a future reality.”

## Don’t forget: FREE lunch for prospective members

Help build membership by encouraging fellow retirees to sample UMRA’s hospitality and programming. Invite a prospective member to join you for lunch this year. Just call in to alert us when you make your reservations.

University of Minnesota  
McNamara Alumni Center  
Room 264, Suite 250  
200 Oak Street S.E.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002



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