

# UMRA NEWSLETTER

A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

MARCH 2018

## ‘J’ Hamilton to shine spotlight on Minnesota’s renewable energy leadership

Thanks to smart state and corporate policies, Minnesota is home to almost 60,000 clean energy jobs across the state and is leading the nation in growing our economy while developing our renewable energy potential.



At UMRA’s March 27 luncheon, climate policy expert J. Drake Hamilton will describe the economic and environmental benefits to our state, as well as next steps for capitalizing on the emerging clean energy economy.

Hamilton’s responsibilities as science policy director of Fresh Energy ([fresh-energy.org](http://fresh-energy.org)), a Twin Cities-based nonprofit, include scientific analysis and policy development of clean energy solutions to global warming that will maximize economic opportunities for all. She bridges daily the line between social and natural sciences.

Hamilton gives more than 50 invited presentations each year to civic and business organizations. Recent audiences have included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 3M, Medtronic, Allina Health, Xcel Energy, Great River Energy, and UnitedHealth. She has also testified before the Minnesota Legislature on science-based energy policy proposals. Her work has been featured in numerous local and national media outlets.

A native of New York’s Hudson River Valley, Hamilton earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in physical geography at Dartmouth College and the University of Minnesota respectively, with a focus on climatology and water resources. She has worked as a water quality planner at the Metropolitan Council, modeling nonpoint source pollution mitigation in the Minnesota River, and as an assistant professor of geography and regional sciences at George Washington University. She was awarded a fellowship from the European Union to study climate policy in Europe. *Mpls-St. Paul Magazine* has named her “one of 100 Minnesotans who make things happen.”

In 2015, President Obama honored Hamilton at the White House for the work in Minnesota to grow the economy while spurring development of clean energy jobs. She has represented Fresh Energy at three U.N. global climate summits, and witnessed the final adoption of the Paris Agreement in December 2015. She brought Minnesota energy leadership to the global spotlight in 2017 by convening a panel of speakers at the 23rd annual Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany, at which representatives from the Dayton administration, the Minnesota legislature, and Target described the deep carbon reductions occurring in the U.S. heartland.

In her spare time Hamilton grows organic peaches, pears, plums, and apples, which have won blue ribbons at the Minnesota State Fair.

—Chip Peterson, UMRA President

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

### LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday, March 27, 2018  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

#### Featured Speaker

‘J’ Hamilton, science policy director, Fresh Energy

#### Location

Conference Room ABC  
Campus Club, Fourth Floor  
Coffman Memorial Union

#### Menu

Porketta pork loin, mashed potatoes with caramelized onion pan sauce, coffee and tea.  
For special dietary needs, please request when making your reservations.

**Reservations ARE Required.**  
**Deadline: Thursday, March, 22**  
Prepayment of \$16 per person.  
Annual prepayers, please make reservations.

To reserve your place(s) and parking, send your check payable to UMRA to:

UMRA Reservations  
c/o Judy Leahy Grimes,  
1937 Palace Ave., St. Paul, MN  
55105-1728

Or, contact her before the deadline at 651-698-4387 or [Jleahy4654@aol.com](mailto:Jleahy4654@aol.com).

Please honor the reservation deadline; to cancel, please call by **Thursday, March 22.**

#### Parking

University ramps and reserved space in East River Road Ramp with UMRA’s discount coupon — \$6 for the day.

## March 27 Workshop: Keeping up with technology tools

Ever run into technical difficulties when surfing the Internet? Or had trouble finding something on the UMRA website? Then this workshop is for you!



*Lisa Larson*

Lisa Larson, a training consultant with the University of Minnesota's Office of Information Technology (OIT), will be the first presenter for a two-part, IT-focused workshop following UMRA's March luncheon. Larson will provide an overview of the very useful Google Apps (G Suite) technology tools available to all U

of M retirees and an introduction to Lynda.com, an excellent library of online training videos for learning about a wide variety of technology topics.

Larson will also provide an overview of services offered by OIT's Technology Help desk, including how to access the U's Virtual Private Network (not available to all retirees) for improved access to library materials, installing anti-virus software, and troubleshooting Internet connection issues. Larson (llarson@umn.edu) has been with OIT since 2014 and specializes in training for Google Apps (G Suite), storage systems, and various other software.

During the second part of the workshop, UMRA Webmaster Cathy Lee Gierke will present the features of the new UMRA website, assisted by David Naumann, UMRA website design leader. They will explain the website's structure and show how UMRA members can best use the site. Topics will include website content, where to find things, how to solicit web assistance, online sign-up for membership and luncheons, and how to search for members.

Gierke is a member of the UMRA Board of Directors and new UMRA Communications and Outreach Committee. She worked in the computer industry before coming to the University, where, at the Carlson School's Business Career Center, she managed and enhanced CARS, the U's first web-based automated recruiting system. Gierke is currently doing research at the Halberg Chronobiology Center.

Join us at 1:30 p.m., following the UMRA luncheon, for this workshop in the ABC Dining Room of the Campus Club. There will be ample time for Q & A.

—Ron Anderson, acting chair, Workshop committee

## Come at 10:30 for coffee and social time before luncheons

Thanks to the Campus Club again this year for making its Bar and Lounge available to UMRA members for coffee and visiting before our luncheons. There is no charge and no need to RSVP.

## Parking reservations available

Combine your reservation for the UMRA luncheon with a reservation for parking and ensure your parking space. Tell the attendant when you arrive between 10 a.m. and noon. Pay when exiting, using your UMRA parking coupons as usual.

## When you need to cancel ...

Wait-list members want your cancelled reservations, so if circumstances will prevent you from using your UMRA luncheon reservations, please call, nay *shout*, to say your spot will be available. When reservations close, as they regrettably do, our reservation maven keeps a wait list. She is a genius at filling available seats *IF* she knows they will be vacant.

Make someone happy; if you find you can't be there, contact Judy at jleahy4654@aol.com or 651-698-4387.

## UMRA honors former U student for website work



*At the February Luncheon meeting, UMRA webmasters Cathy Lee Gierke and David Naumann thank Max Fierke (center) with a gift from UMRA for his four years of work building the website.*

## UMRA BOARD NEWS

At its February meeting the Board focused on significant developments in three areas of work as follow-up to the October Town Hall luncheon meeting:

### Attracting new members

The Board reviewed a graph of membership trends. Following several years of slow but steady growth, numbers have dropped in each of the past two years, including a seven percent decline from February 2017 to February 2018. Nonetheless, the tenor of the Board discussion was optimistic, for reasons described in John Anderson's article (see right column). Restoring our access to new retirees, coupled with a free first-year membership offer, and the invitation to make a five-minute pitch at each OHR pre-retirement seminar, should permit us to quickly reverse the dip in our membership numbers.

### Luncheon venue

Related to the anticipated growth in membership, as well as the increasing pressure on the space in Campus Club ABC, the Board has explored several alternative locations for the monthly luncheons. Although, in the past, the Campus Club has been reluctant to make the larger West Wing space available for our luncheons, an UMRA delegation will meet with Campus Club leadership in March to review the situation one more time before closing on an alternative site. Stay tuned.

### Communications and Outreach Committee

At its January meeting the Board endorsed the report, a year in the making, of the Communications Task Force. The report's key recommendations included: "Appoint a permanent Communications and Outreach Committee with a clear definition of its charge as distinct from the Membership committee. The most important job of the Communications and Outreach committee will be to raise UMRA's visibility, to put our name in print wherever possible in the U of M and to make UMRA a recognizable and respected organization within the University community." I am pleased to say that the new committee, chaired by Board member Claudia Parliament, is now up and running. Other members are Becky Anderson, Will Craig, Cathy Lee Gierke, Ginny Hanson, Jean Kinsey, Jeanne Markell, Kris Mortensen, and Terry Roe.

—Chip Peterson, UMRA President 2017–18

## UMRA will reach out with free introductory membership

More than a year ago the Office of Human Resources (OHR) ceased supplying UMRA with contact information for persons who had retired from the University in the previous month. This HIPAA-driven change in policy deprived UMRA of our primary mode of contacting retirees to invite them to join us.

To compensate for this change, UMRA proposed to University administration that we supply a letter of invitation, which OHR will then send to retirees. We were delighted to hear recently that the University has approved our proposal, which will permit us to reach our target audience while avoiding the release of retirees' identity and contact information to UMRA. We are now hammering out details with OHR and expect to begin mailings to new retirees very soon.

To make joining UMRA more enticing and thus introducing more people to the range of our activities, the Board has decided to eliminate the first-year membership fee.

Changes in the website have been made and the UMRA brochure has been reprinted to reflect this new approach to recruitment. Also, a supply of brochures has been delivered to OHR so that counselors



*Employees attending OHR pre-retirement seminars signed up to receive UMRA's Retirement Information Kit.*

can distribute them to retirees when they have their final consultation.

Employees who attended OHR Pre-Retirement Seminars were welcomed by UMRA membership committee members, who offered to send a Retirement Kit by email to those who supplied their name and email address. The Retirement Kit is an annotated directory of active web links on a broad spectrum of retirement matters, which will be of interest to people considering retirement or already retired. The Retirement Kit is posted on the UMRA website in the category of **Member Services/Resources for Retirees**

—John Anderson, Membership Committee chair

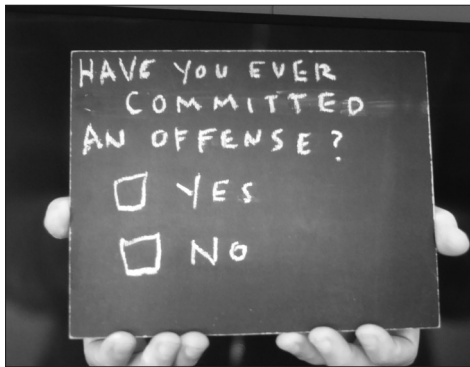
## February speaker: consider criminal justice reform at a personal level

What if you were always introduced by the worst thing you have ever done? UMRA's February luncheon speaker, criminal justice advocate Emily Baxter, posed this provocative question to inspire us to think about "the empathy and opportunity chasm" that exists between those who are convicted of criminal offenses and the rest of us.



February speaker Emily Baxter

Baxter is the founder and executive director of the media-based organization We Are All Criminals ([weareallcriminals.org](http://weareallcriminals.org)). Her distinctive approach to advocacy includes asking people to think in very personal terms about the lifelong consequences of a criminal record. The United States accounts for 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population, she noted.



The February speaker argued for criminal justice reform, urging audience members to think of a time when they could have been in trouble.

"Many policies since the 1970s have led to this mass caging. It is a tsunami of humanity," she said, "and it is not born equally across our country."

Furthermore, being imprisoned in the U.S. does not improve the chances for a better life on the outside. "Prison is warehousing with trauma," Baxter said. "We need a criminal justice system that is based on rational, reasonable, and merciful plans for preventing criminal behavior."

Her organization's advocacy includes supporting Restore the Vote-Minnesota, a coalition aimed at restoring the voting rights of convicted felons who have served their time and are living in their communities.

—Kristine Mortensen, content editor

## Call for nominations for UMRA Board and officers

At our May annual meeting, UMRA members will vote for four UMRA Board members and three officer positions: president-elect, secretary, and treasurer. These are important positions for UMRA, especially because all of UMRA's work is done by volunteers. Although these positions require some extra hours, this is a great way to use some of our own talents and capabilities to strengthen our organization, and to form new friendships in the process.

If you would like to consider serving in one of these positions, or wish to suggest someone you believe could fill one of them, please contact me ([dcp@usfamily.net](mailto:dcp@usfamily.net)) or any member of the Nominations Committee: Ginny Hanson ([hanso045@umn.edu](mailto:hanso045@umn.edu)), Earl Nolting ([jenolting@comcast.net](mailto:jenolting@comcast.net)), Gerald Rinehart ([g-rine@umn.edu](mailto:g-rine@umn.edu)), and Pat Tollefson ([p-toll@umn.edu](mailto:p-toll@umn.edu)).

— Donna Peterson, Nominating Committee chair

## FLG April meeting focuses on elder care

All UMRA members are invited to the Wednesday, April 25, Finance & Legal Group (FLG) workshop on Elder Health Care Administration, 2 p.m. at the John A. Knutson & Co., PLLP, classroom, 1755 Prior Avenue, North, Falcon Heights, MN 55113.

Topics will include medical issues, care taking, funding long-term care (LTC), and issues with LTC facilities. Lead presenters are Jayne Clairmont, president and CEO of English Rose Suites, and Tracy Keibler, founding director of ApparentPlan, a nonprofit organization partnering with communities of faith to provide healthy aging programs and advocacy services to older adults. UMRA members will contribute to the conversation.

You may also join us by computer, tablet, or smartphone. For directions to the location, or how to sign in for the online presentation, please contact Kim Elm, administrative assistant, John A. Knutson & Co., [kelm@jakcpa.com](mailto:kelm@jakcpa.com), or call 651-379-5732.

Please let me know of any issues and questions to address at the workshop, and if you wish to contribute your experiences.

—Andy Whitman, FLG coordinator  
[awhitman@umn.edu](mailto:awhitman@umn.edu) or call 612-747-6015

## February workshop recap— Falls are dangerous *and* preventable

Chances are, most of us will experience falling in our later years, but despite many commonly held myths about falling, it should not be considered a normal part of aging.

Falls result from a combination of personal and environmental factors and can be prevented.

Even so, falls should be the concern of everyone—individuals, family members

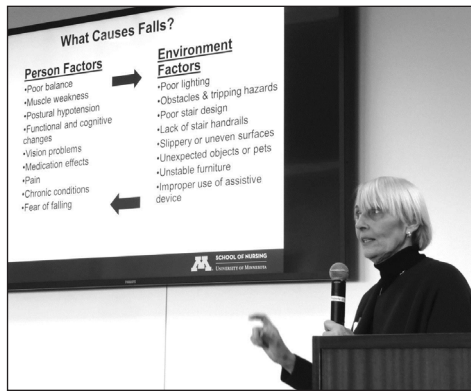
and health care providers. Dr. Jean Wyman, director of the Center for Aging Science and Care in the School of Nursing, told UMRA's February workshop attendees, "It takes a child one year to develop independent movement and 10 years to develop independent mobility. An adult can lose both in one day."

Many personal factors can contribute to falls, including poor balance, muscle weakness, cognitive changes, vision problems, and fear. Environmental risk factors include poor lighting, tripping hazards such as scatter rugs and pets, slippery and uneven surfaces, unstable furniture, and improper use of assistive devices.

Among the myths about falling is the notion that limiting activity is one way to avoid falling. Not true, said Dr. Wyman. Keeping active is crucial to maintaining muscle strength and balance. Among her other recommendations: have your vision checked annually; do not take sleep aids, including pain killers, with "PM" in the name; don't carry things in both hands when walking; wear slip-resistant shoes and boots; and tell your health-care provider if you do fall—it could be an early sign of illness.

If you are interested in participating in research focused on improving health and wellness in adults age 70 and older through increased physical activity, the U is currently enrolling volunteers for the Ready Steady wellness program, sponsored by the NIH. To learn more, contact study coordinator Ifra Biyoow at 612-624-2686.

—Kristine Mortensen, content editor



*At UMRA's February workshop, Dr. Wyman highlighted the main causes of falls among seniors.*

## Volunteer Opportunities: History Day judge, mock trial juror

Fellow retirees: Let's continue the grand adventure of learning and also help young people just entering their own educational journeys. Here are two projects for everyone:

**History Day Judging:** The last regionals are on March 24, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., for Minneapolis Public Schools at Roosevelt High School and Metro Junior East at White Bear Lake High School. The State Final Competition will be April 28 at Coffman Union, U of M: Round 1 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Round 2, from 1 to 5 p.m. (experienced judges).

An optional in-depth judge training is offered April 12 at The Minnesota History Center. Judges may choose the Junior Division (grades 6–8) or Senior Division (grades 9–12) as well as competition categories when registering. Judges (in teams of two) view projects, interview students, select winners, and provide written feedback. Meals and free parking are provided. Everyone interested in history is invited to register as a judge.

**Mock Trials:** Mitchell-Hamline School of Law, April 26, 27, and 28. All cases will deal with traffic accidents. Jurors view the trial, deliberate on a verdict, announce it, and offer constructive advice to the student "attorneys." Each trial runs from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. An 8 a.m. breakfast and pizza/salad lunch are provided, with free parking at William Mitchell College parking lot, 875 Summit Avenue, St. Paul. Here's a chance to contribute to the legal education system.

For a synopsis of specific trial cases on each date, contact University Retirees Volunteer Center: [urvc@umn.edu](mailto:urvc@umn.edu) or 612-625-8016.

—Alan Kagan, URVC coordinator

## Book Club to discuss *A Memory of Violets* at March meeting

The Book Club will meet Friday, March 16, at 2 p.m. to discuss *A Memory of Violets* by Hazel Gaynor. Club member Joni Mitchell will lead the discussion. The Book Club meets on the third Friday of every month except December. Meetings are held at the 1666 Coffman Building, which is on Larpenteur Avenue near the St. Paul Campus. Newcomers are welcome! For more information contact Pat Tollefson at [p-toll@umn.edu](mailto:p-toll@umn.edu).

## In Remembrance

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

**Mary Ellen McFarland**, widow of Keith McFarland (who served in faculty and administrative positions for 44 years), died on January 29, 2018. A distinguished national leader in the field of home economics, she was awarded the University of Minnesota Outstanding Achievement Award in 1977. Both Mary Ellen and Keith joined UMRA in 1989.

**Wesley Keith Wharton**, professor emeritus of rhetoric, associate dean in the College of Agriculture, died on January 17, 2018. He is survived by his wife, Barbara Wharton; both had been members of UMRA.

**Ruth Stein**, widow of Marvin Stein (d. 2015, professor emeritus of computer science and electrical engineering), died on January 31, 2018. With a Ph.D. from the University, Ruth taught children's literature at the U of M and Macalester College. Fluent in ten languages, she was a docent at the Weisman Museum and Landmark Center. The Steins were UMRA members through 2009.

**Judy Farmer** died on February 14, 2018. Along with her husband, Ted Farmer, professor emeritus of history, Judy was an engaged member of the community and UMRA. An educational innovator, she served on the Minneapolis School Board for 27 years (1980–2007). Judy and Ted joined UMRA in 2011. Ted continues as an UMRA member.

## UMRA Cares supports members

For assistance and support in the event of the death or serious illness of an UMRA member or family member, please e-mail us at [umracares@umn.edu](mailto:umracares@umn.edu) or call 612-626-4403, and leave a message for UMRA Cares.

Also, if you learn of someone who is facing a difficult life challenge, please contact the UMRA Cares Committee.

### *Food for thought*

“One person caring about another represents life's greatest value.”

—Jim Rohn

## Book Notes

This month two Book Club members share impressions of the February book, *The HomePlace: A Colored Man's Affair with Nature* by J. Drew Lanham.

**Judy Leahy Grimes** writes: I liked Lanham's economy of words and his gentle, very honest portrayal of how he lived his life. To me, some things that stood out were his experiences with guns: the first when he kills a sparrow with his new BB gun and even as a young boy realizes it was a needless act. Later in life he shot a giant buck, which provided his family with food for a year.

Also, I was struck by this small paragraph on p. 57: “I loved my parents, but I've long found it ironic that any black people coming through the civil rights movement, witnessing all the violence the period brought to bear, and with their parents born at the edge of slavery, would carry the whip forward as a means of control. I've tried to do better with my own children.” He does not diminish his love and admiration for his parents, but, admirably, he chose not to follow that path.

**Mary Jane Towle** writes: Lanham beautifully demonstrates his pride in his West African heritage. He says, “I am as much a scientist as I am a black man; my skin defines me no more than my heart does. ... I've yet to have a wild creature question my identity.”

With a “birder” husband, I can fully appreciate the author's interest in nature and birds and that he wants to encourage more African American young people to enter such fields as botany and zoology. My husband and I have noted there are very few African American birders in Minnesota or in our wider travels.

When speaking of the flora and fauna of his beloved Edgefield, South Carolina, Lanham nevertheless admits that “Edgefield has been less welcoming of—less of a refuge for—human diversity.”

We hope everyone will consider reading this very interesting and inspiring book.

— UMRA Book Club

## Cares Committee offers series on meditation and mindfulness

In response to requests for information and programs on mindfulness and meditation, the Cares Committee is presenting a three-part Newsletter series on getting started in meditation. Part 1, books on meditation, begins in this issue. In April and May smartphone apps and classes and training will be covered. We will follow up with a workshop in the fall.

### Beginning meditation and mindfulness part 1: Books

The most accessible avenue for beginning meditation is books, and there are many available. Below is a review of a recent best-seller that offers a good introduction to the practice of meditation.

#### *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics* by Dan Harris and Jeff Warren with Carlye Adler

##### Review by Earl Nolting

Dan Harris, co-anchor of the weekend edition of ABC's "Good Morning America," experienced a full-blown panic attack while on air in 2004. Afterward, as he tried to understand the experience and prevent a recurrence, he became interested in meditation. He found the practice so helpful that he wrote his first book on meditation and created an app, "10 % Happier."

In talking with people, Harris observed that many were uncertain about meditation and had trouble starting or maintaining a meditation practice despite the practice's many well-documented benefits.

Harris found an experienced meditation teacher, Jeff Warren, and they came up with the idea of a "10 % Happier bus tour." They recruited journalist Carlye Adler and together set off on an 11-day, 18-state tour to "...find interesting and diverse groups of people who wanted to practice [meditation] but weren't actually doing it." *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics* is a result of that trip.

The book is a breezy and irreverent introduction to meditation practice in the mindfulness tradition. The authors mix anecdotes about people's reservations about meditation (e.g., lack of time, religious associations, can't focus) with specific meditation techniques that address these reservations and form the foundation for a regular practice. The exercises range from less than a minute to up to two hours and include ways of applying mindfulness to everyday life situations.

If you're a "fidgety skeptic," the book is a good way to try some mindfulness practices with a minimal investment of time and money.

## Four good reasons retirees should "try on" mindfulness practices

Mindfulness practices help us:

1. manage the emotional stress of aches and pains (temporary or chronic) without the side effects of medications or alcohol.
2. come to terms with regrets and diminished physical capacity.
3. cope with age-related sensory changes. Those of us with a hearing disability know how easy it is to "tune out" conversations, lectures, and TV programs. This type of mindful attentiveness is work; the exercises in Harris's book ease the work considerably.
4. with memory issues by making it easier to turn off our "auto pilot" and be more present with our daily activities. Being more present helps us remember them better.

In short, mindfulness techniques help us to age more skillfully.

— Ron Matross, Cares Committee member

## Photo Club to feature pix of reflections at March meeting

The UMRA Photo Club will meet on Tuesday, March 13, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the St. Anthony branch of the Hennepin County Library in the small shopping center at New Brighton and St. Anthony Boulevards in St. Anthony Village. You are invited to join other members at 11:30 a.m. for lunch and camaraderie at the Great Dragon Buffet, located across the parking lot from the library. (Ask for the senior discount.)

This year, meetings are starting with theme pictures from all club members. The March theme is "Reflections." Attendees are asked to email two to three photos of reflections to Dick Kain, [kain@umn.edu](mailto:kain@umn.edu) by Monday March 12, and to bring five to seven pictures on a thumb drive to share and discuss.

If you enjoy taking pictures, consider coming to one of our meetings! We welcome photographers of all abilities. Most of us are amateurs who like to take pictures and want to get better. We all benefit from the help we get from each other. For more information contact Craig Swan at [swan@umn.edu](mailto:swan@umn.edu) or Sheri Goldsmith May at [goldsmith09@gmail.com](mailto:goldsmith09@gmail.com).

# UMRA University of Minnesota Retirees Association

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UMRA's phone: 612-626-4403  
Website: [umra.umn.edu](http://umra.umn.edu)

*Thank you to the University of Minnesota Bookstores for  
sponsoring the March Newsletter.*



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## Welcome new members to UMRA

Please give a hearty welcome to three new members who have joined UMRA since the last newsletter. Greet them at luncheon meetings and help introduce them to others:

- Mingjen Chen, College of Engineering and Sciences, Chemistry, Civil Service
- Gary Engstrand, College of Education and Human Development, OLPD, P&A
- Joy B. Osborn, School of Dentistry, Dental Hygiene, Faculty

*For contact information, see Member Directory at  
<https://umra.umn.edu/membership>*

## Sneak preview: April and May

- April 24 program: Erika Lee, director of the U of M's Immigration History Research Center
- April 24 workshop topic: Alzheimer's
- May 22 Annual Meeting: Speaker, University President Eric Kaler

Important calendar notice: The annual meeting May 22 is scheduled for 4 to 6 p.m. rather than the usual noon hour. Please note in your calendar now.