

Annual President Report

Bill Donohue

September 1, 2019 – August 31, 2020

2019-2020 was a tumultuous year in the history of UMRA. It started out with strong programming including a presentation by President Joan Gable in November just 4 months after she began her presidency and UMRA's first ever Holiday event in December with a dinner in the campus club and a vocal chorus of students from 7Days. We meet with two new regents and expressed our optimism about the University in an article that was published (copy attached) in MinnPost, a widely read and circulated news site.

In March the **covid** virus struck and our in person meetings for the rest of the year were cancelled to avoid health risk to our members who are among the most vulnerable of populations to the virus. UMRA rallied through the efforts of many people to establish remote programming. Through the magic of Zoom technology, we presented forums and one workshop through the summer with strong presenters and startlingly good attendance. This effort continues into 2020-21 with added programming (UMRA AM) suggested in response to the lack of in person meetings.

UMRA showed great resilience in the face of a global pandemic which has changed life not just for our organization but for our country and the world. We continued to conduct business through our committee structure and again elected new officers and directors as in past years. We are optimistic about the future.

FORUMS

UMRA held 9 forums in 2019-20. The forums in March and April were cancelled due to the pandemic. In May through August we held 4 forums using zoom technology so we could meet remotely and keep our members safe and socially distanced. The forums were all well attended even those done by zoom. More importantly they helped drive the mission of UMRA and to stir the intellectual curiosity of our membership.

The forums were wide ranging including as noted the president, the new provost Rachael Croson, the State of Minnesota CFO Myron Frans who later became the CFO of the University. and other topical speakers. We heard from the Minneapolis Chief of Police Medaria Arradondo, Professor Doug Lee Director of the U of M Masonic Cancer Center, Professor Jack Zipes one of our grant recipients, John Suzikida on American Concentration Camps in WW II, Tom Evers Executive Director of the Mpls. Parks Foundation and Professor John Christensen on Medicare.

WORKSHOPS

UMRA held six workshops during the year. The March and April workshops were cancelled because of the pandemic. However in July we did our first workshop ever by zoom which as it turns out was among our most well attended. It addressed the mental health aspects of aging in the time of covid. The workshops also explored educational opportunities for seniors, understanding hearing loss, age friendly universities and senior housing and long term care options. They continued to deal with the practical issues of aging in realistic ways

CLUBS and INTERST GROUPS

UMRA also continued its tradition of fostering interest groups and clubs. The book club, the photo club and the armchair traveler were very active even in the time of the pandemic. Our Social Activities Committee/ Travel Committee had arranged for a working relationship with Roads Scholar unfortunately the first ever UMRA trip with Roads Scholar fell victim to the pandemic.

The Professional Development Grants for Retirees were extraordinarily successful this year. The committee awarded 18 grants totaling nearly \$69,000. Unfortunately the U informed UMRA in the summer it would no longer fund the grants because of financial cuts caused by the pandemic. However in true UMRA fashion we have decided to continue the program at a lower level (\$20,000 from the reserves in this account) for the next year and have started a fund raising campaign through the foundation to continue our support of these research grants.

UMRA also sponsored a panel in March on immigration. We heard from Minnesota lawyers and paralegals who had gone to the border and counseled immigrants. In addition, we heard from the University International Student and Scholar Services about immigration issues facing the University and its students who number just under 6000 (just under 12% of enrollment) from 130 locations in the world.

Finally through the tireless efforts of Will Craig UMRA has entered into to a partnership agreement with the Alumni Association.

Committee Operations

The committee structure of UMRA operated vigorously and well throughout the year including after the pandemic caused meetings to be done through Zoom. Each of the committees performed well and took care of the business of making UMRA operate and advancing our programming and our mission. I would particularly note the establishment of the Continuity and Organizational Memory Task Force which studied our structures and reporting and brought forth comprehensive recommendations to improve our organization, its documentation and record keeping.

GENEROSITY

Finally, we should also note that UMRA surveyed its membership on our members volunteer activity which showed 78% of the respondents from our membership volunteer both

inside and outside the U in very high hourly amounts. It is a tribute to our members who it is estimated contributed almost \$2 million in the value of their time.

Finally, finally, It should also be noted that the University Foundation reported to us that our members had contributed over \$26.9 million dollars to the U in the current fundraising campaign. . The generosity of our members to their institution is overwhelming.

It was a very good year thanks to the efforts of many people. As I said in my last newsletter column running UMRA is a team sport and we have a really good team.

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Feeling optimistic about the prospects and future of the U of M

We encourage the Legislature and citizens of the state to support the university's new president, her new provost and the Board of Regents in the upcoming legislative session.

By Bill Donohue and Frank Cerra



University of Minnesota

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Jan. 22, 2020 As we embark on a new year, we want to express our optimism about the prospects and future of the University of Minnesota. We are the [University of Minnesota Retirees Association](#) (UMRA), a group of nearly 600 former faculty, staff, spouses, partners and friends who know the university well and care about it immensely. Our members have committed nearly \$28 million to the U's ongoing "Driven" campaign

since 2011, and volunteer more than 20,000 hours annually in service to the university. We want it to succeed.



Frank Cerra

Over the past year UMRA has conducted a series of forums and interviews with U of M leaders to get some sense of the university as it goes through a presidential and provost change as well as adding four new regents. As a result of these meetings, we feel very optimistic about the future of the university. All of those we talked with were thoughtful, realistic and practical about the university. We think the future looks bright.

We have heard from the following:

- Board of Regents Chair David McMillan
- University President Joan Gabel
- Regent Mary Davenport
- Regent Janie Mayeron
- Director of Athletics Mark Coyle

Our optimism is based on the positive impression these leaders have made on us and the commitment they expressed to taking a practical, nonpolitical approach to operating the university. While it is too early to judge these leaders on their deeds, they are well informed and thoughtful about how to properly operate the institution. The new

president is articulate and well versed in higher education trends and has an excellent initial sense of the university's strengths and weaknesses. She has hired a new provost who is an experienced administrator with an impressive background (behavioral economist). The two new regents we spent some time with exude the kind of high-quality judgment and integrity that should serve the university well. We expect they will be great fiduciaries for the university. Hopefully, the new leadership will also help to create cooperative relationships both inside and outside the institution and move forward in a team-oriented direction.



Bill Donohue

As we see it, the University of Minnesota is a unique state asset that is devoted to the ultimate long game: educating our children in hopes they will stay and become good citizens of our state; doing research to improve the human condition; assisting the state in its key enterprises — including agriculture, technology, and business — and drawing human capital to the state.

The U's budget of about \$4 billion educates our young people (15,000 graduate each year), creates research (think taconite; open heart surgery; apples [Honey Crisp, Haralson, Sweetango®]; the "black box" flight data recorder; Ziagen, an AIDS drug), and provides service to the state through U of M Extension. In 2018-19, the U of M Venture Center

launched a record 19 startup companies (most located in the state) based on technology developed at the U of M, and more than 150 startups were launched from FY06 to FY19, including 70 in the health care field (bio/pharma/medical devices).

Our men's and women's athletic teams have been wildly successful this year in the Twin Cities under Athletic Director Coyle. The football and volleyball teams as well as the UMD hockey team provide a source of pride and good feelings. They are the "front porch of the university."

The rest of the university, however, is the house that needs to be our primary focus and the object of support, because the university is essential for the long-term success of our state in an extremely competitive world.

We encourage the Legislature and citizens of the state to support the university's new president, her new provost and the Board of Regents in the upcoming legislative session.

Bill Donohue is president of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association (UMRA). Frank Cerra is its president-elect. This piece was written on behalf of the UMRA. The following members of UMRA also contributed to this commentary: Lynn C. Anderson, John Anderson, Vernon Cardwell, Will Craig, Cathy Lee Gierke, Cherie Hamilton, Eric Hockert, Jean Kinsey, Jeanne Markell, Ron Matross, Kristine Mortensen, Kathleen O'Brien, Chip Peterson, Donna Peterson, Richard "Fitz" Pfutzenreuter, Richard Poppele, Jerry Rinehart, Terry Roe, KaiMay Terry, and Gloria Williams.

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