

UMRA President's Report 2020-2021
Frank B Cerra MD
"Team Sport in the Year of the Zoom"

When I inherited the presidency of UMRA from Bill Donohue, the Corona Pandemic was in full force, the Campus Club was closed, as was the University, and there was no vaccination in sight. In person meetings were replaced by stay-at-home, social distancing, handwashing, masks and wondering how good your HVAC was against corona.

So, UMRA turned to virtual communications via Zoom. The Program Committee and Board decided to not close down for the Summer, and, instead, went to three major Zoom events per month: UMRA AM, Living Well Workshop and the Forum. OIT was instrumental in helping us get these up and running and in supporting them as the technical platform. From May 2020 to June 2021, UMRA broadcast 30 programs of which 12 were forums, 9 were workshops, and 9 were UMRA AM. We were notified by OIT that UMRA would start being charged for OIT's services commencing in December 2020. An interest group in Zoom technology, initiated by Virgil Larson, started up, learned the technical side of Zoom and has since provided the platform for all the major events. This effort is a good example of the UMRA team effort that makes the organization run well.

A retreat of the board and committee chairs was held via Zoom in August 2020 with the theme of "Keeping and Growing a Vibrant Organization". Information on the current status of the organization was presented followed by breakout sessions that discussed approaches to increase membership and the vibrancy of the organization. Three examples of the fallout [confusing, what do you mean by fallout?] are: maintaining visual and voice contact in interesting content areas in the three major monthly webinars, continuing the monthly newsletter through the summer months in addition to the rest of its monthly productions, and having frequent new member visits. John Anderson did a great job with the latter, as did Kris Mortensen and her team with the newsletters and video postings of the webinars, and Virgil and his team with the technical support.

Given our members' interest in health insurance and the dissatisfaction with the prior years' open enrollment workshop in October, a new open enrollment workshop was planned with University Human Resources. An overview of Medicare was presented followed by the University retiree plan options in general and in specific. Although there is room for improvement in the session, most felt it was an improvement over the past approach.

UMRA's Journal of Opinions, Ideas & Essays (JOIE) had been inactive since the retiring of its prior editor. Will Craig developed a passion to resurrect this venue for UMRA member publications and spearheaded its revival. A new editor was recruited, Kris Bettin, and new policies and procedures were developed and approved by the Board. Articles from the membership are now being submitted for review.

Under the leadership of Bill Donohue, a group to review and recommend changes to the UMRA Bylaws was initiated. It recommended several changes including ending the president's term the end of June with the new president starting on July 1. The changes were initially accepted

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by an email vote of the membership in October 2020 and were then approved by a membership vote at the annual meeting, held via Zoom, in May 2021.

The University informed UMRA that the usual \$40,000 in funding to the Professional Development Grants for Retirees (PDGR) program would be discontinued in fiscal 2021-22. Funding was available for PDGR grants for 2020-2021 and grants were awarded. With the assistance of the University of Minnesota Foundation, a crowdfunding effort was initiated to try and raise the needed funds for 2021-22. Two members made major gifts, members contributed, and the funding was successful. After more discussion, the PDGR committee (led by John Bantle), with the Board's assent, initiated an application request for 2021-22 to the membership (confusing, what do you mean? ... invited grant applications for 2021-22 from the UMRA membership?), and recommended that UMRA leadership have conversations with the Provost's Office in the Fall of 2021 about restoring the University's financial support for the program.

Chip Peterson and Jerry Reinhart enlightened us to the need for better record-keeping and continuity, and successfully led the Organizational Memory and Continuity Task Force. General principles, formatting of reports, review of the website and many other areas were integrated into a new policy and procedure that was approved by the Board. The historical record of the organization will become better organized and available for the membership.

The Campus Club was informed by the University that its subsidy would also be discontinued. The CC board initiated a call for suggestions for a new business model from its key users, of which UMRA was one. A response was submitted, and the club is moving ahead with a new approach, including a reduction in the annual dues. In addition, the club reopened for business in May 2021. UMRA is in the process of deciding when to return to in-person meetings and the venue for those meetings. To that end, a member survey was sent out to UMRA members in June and the subject will be remanded to a task force.

UMRA interest groups continued to be very active, e.g. Armchair Traveler, Photo Club, Family History, and two book discussion clubs. With the book club as an example, there was a member request to initiate a second club as the number of members included in the first book club is limited. A process for new interest groups was developed and approved by the board.

The second floor of McNamara, where the UMRA office is located (room 250) is undergoing renovation. Plans are in place to recreate room 250 during the renovation. In the meantime, the telephone number and UMRA address remain the same. The room is shared with the University Retirees Volunteer Center and the University of Minnesota Women's Club.

With some effort, UMRA's Annual Business Meeting was held in May 2021 as a Zoom webinar. And, with a team effort, the polling function was put into use. The changes in the UMRA

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Bylaws and the election of the slate of officers and new board members were approved by the quorum of attendees.

Respectfully Submitted
Frank B Cerra MD, UMRA President 2020-21