

Retired in Service: A Survey of the Volunteer Activities of UMRA Members

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Methodology

- **An informal internet survey**
- **Sent to 613 on UMRA mailing list and 475 on URVC list**
- **Respondents were not identifiable, and follow-up was not individualized.**
- **Responses received from 218 UMRA members (36% of the list) and 173 URVC (38% of the list) members with overlap between the two groups**
- **Only UMRA data discussed here**

Extent of UMRA Volunteering

% Volunteering	77.5%
% Volunteering at U of M	41.7%
% Volunteering in the Community	68.3%
<i>Comparison: % of Adults in Twin Cities Volunteering</i>	<i>46.3%</i>
Average Annual Hours at U of M	78.5
Average Annual Hours in Community	120.0
Average Annual Total Volunteer Hours	198.5

Estimated Value of UMRA Volunteering

Estimated annual hours volunteered at the University by UMRA members	20,066
Estimated value of University hours (@ \$28.15 per hour)	\$564,865
Estimated annual hours volunteered in the community	50, 241
Estimated value of community hours	\$1,414,298
Estimated total hours volunteered	70,308
Estimated value of all volunteer hours	\$1,979,163

University Volunteers' Activities

Served UMRA or URVC	39.6%
Advised/mentored students	39.6%
Been a subject in a U research project	22.0%
Conducted research	19.8%
Served on a campus committee or board	15.4%
Assisted with campus events or outreach	14.3%
Been a guest speaker/presenter in a course	12.1%
Taught a course	11.0%

Perceived Benefits of U of M Volunteering

	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	Not at all
Volunteering at U was intellectually engaging	52.7%	33.0%	12.1%	1.1%
Used previously developed skills	42.9%	30.8%	14.3%	11.0%

Community Volunteers' Reasons for Volunteering

Percentage rating reason as “very important”	
Make a difference	66.4%
Give back	58.4%
Help people in need	56.4%
Use your skills	43.6%
Find purpose	43.0%
Connect with other people	40.9%
Have fun	26.2%
Feel better about yourself	24.2%

Non-volunteers' Reasons for not Volunteering

<i>Includes both UMRA and URVC responses</i>	
Busy with other activities	48.0%
Health-related issues	30.7%
Caretaking of family members	29.3%
Transportation/mobility issues	14.7%
Scheduling issues	13.3%
Not enough information about opportunities	10.7%
Taking a rest from volunteering	10.7%
Didn't fit well with a volunteering assignment	5.3%

Suggested Ways to Aid Volunteerism

- **More opportunities for those with physical limitations, including more ways to volunteer while sitting, working at home, and in places closer to home, with better transportation**
- **Better publicity of the URVC and volunteer opportunities**
- **Better matching and utilization of retiree's skills**
- **Making University departments more aware of the possibility of utilizing retiree volunteers**

Retired in Service: A Study of Volunteerism by Members of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association and University Retiree Volunteer Center

Lead: Ron Matross

Selections from the Report Appendices with Verbatim Open-Ended Responses

The information below is comprised of comments selected from the survey's open ended questions which were part of Appendix A. and Appendix F. of the Report. I chose them based on their specificity and apparent usefulness i.e. they included comments that could lead to an action on our part. Others may view the Report and decide to select different comments. I have intended these selections and summaries to be representative of all comments.

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Here is a high level summary of the selected comments listed and categorized below.

High Level Summary

1. People like different communication routes to receive information about volunteer opportunities. Some prefer phone calls or other personal connections while many others prefer electronic methods – email, online sign-up.
2. Confusion about the relative roles of UMRA and URVC continues to exist. There were even comments that a lot of people were unaware of URVC. They want UMRA and URVC to work together.
3. As we age there is a greater need for physical accommodations e.g. work from home or a need to be able to sit.
4. Parking on campus was mentioned many times as a problem.
5. Opportunities can be either inside or outside the university. People would like access to both. They would also like a greater variety of volunteer opportunities.
6. They want to volunteer in ways that are meaningful and take full advantage of their skills and expertise and their minds.
7. There were a few interesting comments that it would be helpful if the university didn't appear to be quite so "left-leaning" and partisan. There was also a comment about not having to take on the "agenda of a group".
8. A few commented that they don't like be notified or called at the "last minute".

Appendix A. Responses to Volunteer Question Survey #6. Names of University Organizations where Volunteers Have Served. (UMRA and URVC responses not separated)

Summary of selected comments

Responses
U of MN China Center
Dept of Applied Economics
Goldstein Museum of Design
U of MN Landscape Arboretum
WAM

Appendix E Responses to Volunteer Question Survey #25. How might the University do more to encourage volunteerism? (UMRA and URVC responses not separated)

Summary Categorization of selected comments

Testimonials

- **Perhaps having volunteers write short pieces for the newsletter on their volunteer activities.**
- Have an online list of URVC volunteers who are willing to discuss their organizations and volunteer experiences with people who are new to volunteering.
- Possibly more publicity about opportunities and reasons for volunteering.
- You are doing fine. Sally is a great help.
- Tell others about positive experiences
- Showcase what current staff and retirees are doing, and needs they are addressing or that need volunteers.

Share the message

- **Publicize** the U's volunteer programs for retirees. Many I talk to are unaware or think you have to have graduated from the U.
- **Additional promotion (online, email, hardcopy, personal invitations).**
- **Market to current staff/faculty** to get them involved before retiring.
- Providing the information about UMRA and the URVC with retirement materials at Employee Benefits.
- The Office of Human Resources can do more to inform those about to retire of the opportunities for volunteering after retirement.
- Have some programs about persons who volunteer out of their membership highlighting experiences and opportunities.

Communications

- **Phone calls**
 - **Personal calling** to build relationships and encourage membership and participation
 - I love getting **phone calls** and don't use the internet as much.
 - Continue with letting us know about volunteer opportunities. I am **not sure the new sign up system or whatever it is called is going to work as effectively** with publication of opportunities.
- **Electronic communication**
 - I really appreciated getting notice of options **via my e-mail**.
 - **Maybe a website where you can sign up** to volunteer instead of just emails.
 - Continue to make opportunities available **through emails, newsletters**.
 - **Send emails** with interesting opportunities.
 - **Send more emails** making known various volunteer opportunities, including short-term, one-time opportunities.
 - **Send more email** notifications regarding needs for volunteers.
 - I've found that presenting opportunities through **email messages is helpful**.
 - Make sure opportunities are **communicated in many ways--websites, newsletters, newspaper, etc.**
 - Post listing of volunteer jobs with descriptions, hours required....and folks can **sign up on line**.
- **General**
 - **Make crystal clear whether this organization is for retirees from the University, or University is part of the title of the organization.**
 - Announcing volunteer **opportunities earlier**.
 - **A lot of people are unaware of URVC.**
 - **I did not know there was a Volunteer Center.** Perhaps they are already doing a lot. I will learn about them. Publicize volunteer possibilities more widely
 - **I am not sure many people really know about your opportunities.** Finding more ways to reach out to the public- better PR! - is essential.
 - Provide easily accessible list of volunteer opportunities.
 - Make it easier to know what volunteer opportunities are possible
 - Highlight specific volunteer activities in monthly newsletter
 - Make opportunities more widely known
 - Maybe increasing awareness of opportunities
 - Keep us posted with opportunities.
 - I don't think many people are aware of URVC.
 - Advertise

Physical/Health issues

- Need to **be able to sit**
- Need **more office jobs for seniors**
- **I can't stand for a long time** so I need a chair to **be able to sit** down at times.

Opportunities

- **Greater variety**
 - It's OK to encourage **service in the community. Don't worry if we aren't doing volunteer work at the U of MN.**
 - **Vary** the opportunities
 - Provide a **wider range** of volunteer opportunities across the community
 - Have a **large variety** of opportunities.
 - **Increase the types of organizations** available to UMRC volunteers, more small and large arts organizations, hospitals, large clinics, provide rides to Seniors without transport so they can get to spots and attend cultural and education opportunities such as Olli
 - Find more opportunities at the U for retirees to volunteer for
- **Be meaningful**
 - **Stop asking retirees to do trivial tasks. Use their expertise and knowledge in a meaningful way.**
- **General**
 - It is much easier to volunteer as part of a group. It might be useful to assemble small groups of retirees with similar interests and then have those groups seek volunteer opportunities in line with their interests.
 - Create an expert system of skills of retirees and match with interested volunteer organizations.
 - More focus on what areas the volunteer is most interested in and helping them find opportunity to help out in that area.
 - Offering one time or short term opportunities such as 4 weeks.

UMN connections

- **UMRA and the URVC can work together more effectively** to bring opportunities to our members.
- Have Deans work with dept heads
- Link with the extension service
- Keep the Arboretum in mind as an option.
- I frankly don't recall if my volunteering has been via UMRA or the UMVRC.
- The University administration needs to "drill down" to the Department level and solicit where and for what volunteers could contribute. UMRA may create a committee to study the design of such a process.
- Encourage depts and ctrs to reach out to their retired employees.

Other

- **Ideologies**
 - **The University would have to appear to the community to be less partisan and less politically left-leaning.**
 - Please **don't require that we take on the agenda of a group** we might help out. One group I helped out was too pushy about their issues and agenda.
- **Parking issues**
 - Access to and **parking at U is daunting**; it deters even attending UMRA EVENTS!!!!
 - It is extremely **hard to park** at the U. I will never volunteer at the U as long as there's no easy parking.
 - **Help with parking**
 - **Location and parking are big issues.**
 - **Parking is a big concern!!**
- **General**
 - Provide training in how to be a good volunteer
 - Encourage free or low cost training/updating skills opportunities
 - It is really helpful if volunteers are thanked. The library does a good job with that.
 - I don't know how to register for the University Retiree Volunteer Center.
 - Maintain a strong relationship between academic units and retirees
 - Provide funding to UMRA and increase funding to URVC. The departments and units should continue to engage with their retirees to provide opportunities for them to support their previous departments and units. The U should create and make known volunteer opportunities to retirees through URVC. Without displacing paid positions, this could increase the U's activities in support of its various missions without substantial increase in costs.

Appendix F. Responses to Volunteer Question Survey #20. Are there things that UMRA or the URVC could do to make volunteering easier or more attractive. (Asked only of those who said they had not volunteered in the past year.)

Summary Categorization of selected comments

Opportunities

- The volunteer opportunities don't often match my interests and there does not seem to be much variety. Would also be nice to know all the opportunities.
- Last minute opportunities with short notice, and ability to cancel, also if something comes up.

Physical/Health Issues

- Are there volunteer activities that can be **done from home**, i.e., calling for activities, membership.
- Find things that I could **do from home**.
- **Can't stand for long periods of time so** I need to be able to have access to a chair when I am volunteering
- Find things that could be **done from home** for people who can no longer drive

Communications

- **I don't like being called at the last minute.**

Other

- I find driving around or even near campus difficult with all the road closings, backed up traffic and the like.
- Transportation is a big issue. I would say transportation, transportation, transportation . . . if it is coupled with health related issues, then it becomes truly formidable.