

# Article for newsletter

## Big Ten Conference – sharing ideas to improve support to our members and our schools

---

### Lede:

Delegates to the Big Ten Retirees Association 2024 annual conference met at The Ohio State University in July to learn about Ohio State, share ideas, and develop closer ties among the 28 attendees from 12 of the 14 Big Ten schools. Minnesota will host the conference in 2026.

### Body:

Delegates to the Big Ten Retirees Association (BTRA) 2024 annual conference met at The Ohio State University in July to learn about Ohio State, share ideas, and develop closer ties among the 28 attendees from 12 of the 14 Big Ten schools. Current and past UMRA presidents Julie Sweitzer and Eric Hockert represented UMRA, enjoyed the camaraderie, offered insights from Minnesota for successful engagement between our university and our members, and gathered best practices from the other retiree associations.

Of particular interest to the other schools were our University Retirees Volunteer Center; Silver Gopher Service Corps; Cabinets of Curiosity tours; extensive number of UMRA leaders, including our liaison to the Board of Regents; our membership in the U of M Age-Friendly University Council; outreach to all campuses in the U of M System; and active participation in U of M governance with our representation on the U's Senate committees.

The roundtable discussions of best practices were highlights of the conference. The topics included leadership development, member recruitment and retention, member communication and engagement, and special programs outside the campus community. We have shared many ideas about recruitment and engagement with UMRA's Membership and Communication Committee for its consideration.

Next year's BTRA meeting will be held August 5–7 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Minnesota will host the 2026 BTRA meeting and we hope there will be representatives attending from all 18 schools in the Big Ten Conference—including Washington, Oregon, UCLA, and USC, who became the newest members of the Big Ten on August 2. The new schools have been invited to join BTRA, along with Rutgers and Maryland (who joined the Big Ten Conference in 2014), but at this point only Maryland has become an active BTRA member.

A planning committee chaired by Eric Hockert is well on its way to making the 2026 event a success. Our committee includes a strong group of six individuals with many good ideas

# Article for newsletter

## **Big Ten Conference – sharing ideas to improve support to our members and our schools**

---

and plans, but if you have some thoughts to contribute please feel free to contact either of us.

—Julie Sweitzer, UMRA president, [jsweitzer@comcast.com](mailto:jsweitzer@comcast.com), and Eric Hockert, UMRA past president (2023–24), [ehockert@umn.edu](mailto:ehockert@umn.edu)