

# **Big Ten Retirees Association (BTRA)**

## **Conference (2026)**

### **Annual Report**

**July 2025**

#### **Summary**

UMRA is hosting the Big Ten Retirees Association (BTRA) conference (July 29-31, 2026). A planning committee is currently working to develop and prepare for this conference. The main venue will be the Graduate Hotel near campus. This year's 2025 conference (Michigan) has 35 participants and we expect a similar number for our 2026 conference.

#### **Recommendations**

1. UMRA should continue to support the planning committee and the conference with resources of people and, potentially, funding. Less than \$15k expected will be needed from a combination of the Provost, sponsors, and UMRA. Attendee fees will offset other expenses.
2. UMRA will not be expected to host the BTRA conference for another 10-15 years (or more depending on changes to the current rotation of hosting schools).
3. A newsletter article should be written and published to provide information to UMRA members about the 2026 conference. This may include a note that the conference is open to select representatives from the other Big Ten retirement associations and is not intended to be a conference open to other retirement association members. This means that the 2026 conference is not open to UMRA members other than the ones identified and selected by the UMRA President and UMRA Board.
4. A separate BTRA Toolkit will be published following the 2026 conference that will include the BTRA Conference Handbook along with other learnings from recent conferences and any official updates to the Handbook. This

Eric Hockert  
BTRA conference (2026), Chair  
7/27/25

Handbook contains a detailed description of the various activities, committees, roles, and results needed to put on a successful BTRA conference.

### **Current Status**

1. Contract signed with the Graduate Hotel
2. Program outline completed with further details to be developed based on input from the other school members at the BTRA conference (August 2025 at Michigan) and the mid-year online zoom BTRA meeting (January 2026).
  - a. The program will include
    - i. Campus tour
    - ii. Invited speakers (we plan to invite UMN President Cunningham)
    - iii. Organized opportunities (panel discussions and roundtables) where attendees will review and discuss selected areas of common interest and best practices to support their retiree associations and their members.
    - iv. A reception (East Cliff to be considered) and other breakout sessions and other chances for attendees to socialize and get to know each other and the other organizations.
    - v. BTRA business meeting
3. Keynote speaker has been confirmed – Chris Farrell (journalist and a senior economics contributor for American Public Media's Marketplace and part of Minnesota Public Radio).
4. Support from the Provost's office was included in the update to the MOU between UMRA and the Provost (2025 update).
5. Financial details have been created in an initial spreadsheet. The current financials suggest an amount less than \$15k will need to be secured e.g. Provost, sponsors. This is separate from the funds received through conference fees from the participants.
6. Financial line items include -
  - a. Registration fees
  - b. Sponsorship donations
  - c. Printing costs (flyers, signage, brochures, ...)

- d. Supplies (pens, paper, name table tents, flip charts, markers, water bottles, ...)
  - e. Gift bags, speaker recognition and thank yous
  - f. Meals, food during breaks
  - g. Liability insurance
7. The committee is meeting regularly, has met six times and plans to meet approximately monthly until and shortly after the August 2026 conference.

### **Committee Members**

Kristy Frost-Griep

Diane Gihl

Kathy Jensen

Sally Kohlstedt

Russel Luepker

Diane Young

Eric Hockert (Chair)