

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

## **Annual Report (FY25)**

### **Eric Hockert**

Eric Hockert (UMRA Past President FY24) and Julie Sweitzer (UMRA President FY25) attended the BTRA conference at Ohio State last year (August 2024). The report is included below (Attachment A) and was used for an UMRA newsletter article. Diane Young (UMRA President FY26) and Sally Kohlstedt (UMRA President-elect FY26) will attend this year's BTRA conference at the University of Michigan. They will lead discussions on the results of a demographics survey of the BTRA organizations memberships (coordinated and compiled by Eric Hockert) and will be co-leaders of a discussion on Age Friendly Universities.

## **Recommendations**

1. UMRA should continue to participate in the BTRA conferences in the future.
2. UMRA should also actively participate in other BTRA activities throughout the year e.g. By-Laws review and updates, mid-year online (Zoom) meeting as well as other discussions and surveys that may come up.
3. Eric Hockert will be the BTRA Chair starting at the end of the 2025 BTRA conference (Michigan) and will continue in that role through the end of the 2026 (August) BTRA conference to be held at the University of Minnesota. This position is the lead coordinating role for all BTRA activities.
4. Note – UMRA is hosting the BTRA conference (August 2026) and has a planning committee actively developing the program and conference details. This committee includes Diane Young, Diane Gihl, Kathy Jensen, Russell Luepker, Sally Kohlstedt, Kristy Frost-Griep, and Eric Hockert (committee chair).

## Attachment A

Article for newsletter

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

7/28/24

Eric Hockert

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.

Eric Hockert  
BTRA Representative (FY25)  
7/27/25

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 AgeFriendly 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

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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)

Eric Hockert  
BTRA Representative (FY25)  
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