The Supreme Court in American society

2020 was a banner year for news from and about the U.S. Supreme Court. Regardless of one’s political affiliation or perspective, the Court played a compelling role in the public life and politics of our nation.

We all know of the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in September and the rapid confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett one week before the November 3 election, when topics that once seemed dry or inconsequential, such as differing judicial philosophies, term limits, and court packing, became front and center in the news cycle.

We also likely are aware of a number of noteworthy decisions made by the Court in 2020, including rulings that: 1) afforded protections to LGBTQ workers; 2) invalidated abortion restrictions related to hospital privileges; 3) authorized states to “punish” faithless electors; 4) allowed New York to proceed with a state subpoena for then-President Trump’s taxes; 5) upheld the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals immigration policy; 6) invalidated certain pandemic restrictions on churches; and 7) deferred a decision on whether undocumented individuals may be excluded from the U.S. census. Perhaps most consequential of all the Court’s decisions were the election cases from Pennsylvania and Texas that the Court declined to hear.

But few of us know anything about the inner workings of the Supreme Court.

Professor Timothy R. Johnson is a nationally recognized and widely published expert on the Supreme Court, and you are invited to join him for the March 23 UMRA Forum, when he will peel back the layers in his presentation on “The Supreme Court in American Society.”

The U.S. Supreme Court is the most opaque of our national institutions, according to Johnson. His talk will open up the Court in ways that the public rarely sees. He will demonstrate how the justices, who are not elected and sit for life tenure, make decisions that affect all aspects of American life.

Professor Johnson is a Morse Alumni Distinguished Professor of political science and law at the University, a 2018 semi-finalist for the prestigious Robert F. Cherry Award for Great Teaching, and recipient of the 2018 American Political Science Association’s Distinguished Teaching Award.

Please register and join us for the UMRA forum on March 23 starting at 12 noon.

—Barbara Shiels, UMRA Board and Program Committee member

MARCH 16 WORKSHOP

Treasure or trash?

How do you assess the historical value of what you’ve stored away and decide what to do about it?

Are you getting ready to downsize? Unsure what to do with all the files from your office? Planning to spring clean during the pandemic?

There are many reasons why you might need to go through filing cabinets or boxes you packed a decade or more ago. And, while this activity may bring a sense of joy, nostalgia, or dread, these materials might well be of value to others, including those who are charged with preserving the past.

See WORKSHOP on page 6...
From the President

I hope you are safe and well and have considered the COVID-19 vaccine if it has been offered to you. Check with your health system, health provider, or the Minnesota Department of Health to see if you qualify and where the administration sites are located.

The UMRA A.M., Living Well Workshop, and UMRA Forum webinars via Zoom were all technically supported by Virgil Larson, John Anderson, and the UMRA Zoom Team in January and February. The team will continue their support as we move into March and beyond. Many thanks to Virgil and the team.

If you have not yet made a $20 voluntary contribution via the UMRA website to Support Zoom Programming, please consider doing so. UMRA will incur technical expenses as the year continues.

The Minnesota Legislature is in the process of appointing new regents. UMRA, with Bill Donohue's shepherding, submitted a commentary that was published in MinnPost on February 11: “New U of M regents should be nonpartisan people of substantial accomplishment.”

At the UMRA retreat last August, there was a discussion about social isolation during the pandemic and what additional approaches UMRA could provide to promote community engagement. One of the suggestions was to create an UMRA Facebook group open to all retirees. Gary Engstrand, with help from the UMRA Communications & Outreach Committee, has done that. See “Connect with UMRA on Facebook” on page 5 to learn more.

It is time to develop a slate of candidates for the UMRA Board. Past President Bill Donohue is leading this effort. If you are interested, please email Bill at donohue@umn.edu and let him know.

The University has received a large grant from the U.S. Department of Defense to establish the Bioindustrial Manufacturing and Design Ecosystem (BioMADE), one of 16 institutes within the new Manufacturing USA network. The institute will engineer microbes such as bacteria, yeast, and algae into products to purify drinking water and prevent corrosion on metals; are resistant to fire; and can be used for other innovative applications. BioMADE will be the focus of the March 9 UMRA A.M. via Zoom and is described in “BioMADE: A catalyst for growth” on page 3.

Thanks to Will Craig’s passion for written communication, the Journal of Opinions, Ideas and Essays (JOIE) is being re-energized with the appointment of a new editor. UMRA member Kristine Bettin came highly recommended for the position and is eager to get started. You can learn more about her in “JOIE has a new editor” on page 8.

Stay safe and well.
—Frank Cerra, MN, UMRA president

Nominations sought for UMRA Board and officers

The Nominating Committee is seeking candidates to serve as members and officers of the UMRA Board of Directors. We invite you to contribute to UMRA by offering to run for a position yourself or by nominating someone else who would add value and perspective to UMRA’s efforts. We need a strong slate of candidates to continue the work of UMRA.

The committee will consider nominations and make recommendations to the current Board in April, and the membership will vote in May for each of the open positions and those that require re-election.

The following are up for election or reelection:
• at least two board positions, each for a three-year term (2021–24, renewable)
• treasurer and secretary, each for a one-year term (renewable)
• president-elect, for a one-year term followed by one year each as president and past president

Jan Morlock, our current president-elect, will become president next year.

Please send your suggestions or questions to me at donohue@umn.edu. Thanks in advance for your help.
—Bill Donohue, UMRA past president and chair, Nominating Committee
A new hub of innovation

The new Bioindustrial Manufacturing and Design Ecosystem, or BioMADE, an institute dedicated to boosting nonmedical bioindustrial manufacturing in the United States, will be the focus of attention for UMRA A.M. on March 9.

Part of a cooperative agreement with 32 other universities, 30 companies, and the U.S. Department of Defense, the institute will be located in a new Microbial Cell Production Facility on the Twin Cities campus in St. Paul.

How did this come to land in Minnesota? What will be the role of University of Minnesota scholars and researchers with the new institute? What did it take to create the many layers of partnership to make this possible? Will the institute energize new technologies and biomanufacturing in Minnesota? The College of Biological Sciences has long invested in biotechnology resources on the St. Paul campus. How will the new institute leverage those resources as part of an innovation ecosystem?

Andrea Backes and Michael Smanski, both extensively involved with the development of the University’s proposal for the institute, will be our guests on March 9 to tell us about BioMADE and the bustle on the St. Paul campus. For your homework before the event, take a look at the BioMADE and UMN video created for the proposal.

Andrea Backes was recently named chief of operations for BioMADE in Minnesota, coming from a 10-year leadership role with the College of Biological Sciences. Michael Smanski is a McKnight Land Grant Professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, and Biophysics and scientific leader of the University's component in BioMADE.

Please register and join us for UMRA A.M. at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, March 9, via Zoom.

—Jan Morlock, UMRA president-elect and Program Committee chair

BioMADE: a catalyst for growth

The Board of Regents has unanimously approved contractual agreements for the University’s Twin Cities campus to serve as the primary site of the new Bioindustrial Manufacturing and Design Ecosystem (BioMADE), making the University site one of 16 institutes within the new federally funded Manufacturing USA network.

The BioMADE institute “promises to be a catalyst for significant growth in bioindustrial manufacturing and an economic opportunity for Minnesota,” the University said in a news release announcing the decision made by the Regents during a special meeting held in January.

The U.S. Department of Defense announced in October 2020 it would award BioMADE at least $87.5 million in federal funds over seven years, which will be matched by more than $180 million in funding from non-federal sources. Cargill, the Minnesota-based global agribusiness leader, is a key participant in the BioMADE project.

“This is a transformational opportunity for our University and our region,” said University President Joan Gabel. “BioMADE will leverage our already thriving life science and MedTech industries … to create many new local opportunities for discovery and innovation, as well as for entrepreneurship, investment and employment.”

New products and technologies

Background materials reviewed by the regents indicate bioindustrial manufacturing can yield new products and technologies with applications such as anti-corrosion coatings, water purification systems, heat- and fire-resistant materials, enzymes that can purify drinking water, biofuels, and films for electronic touch screens and circuit boards. In discussing the project, the regents confirmed the facility will not engage in medical or warfare-related research.

Valery Forbes, dean of the College of Biological Sciences, highlighted the new institute’s alignment with the college’s strategic plan and Biotechnology Resource Center (BRC).

Central to the BioMADE initiative is the creation of an 82,000-square-foot Microbial Cell Production Facility (MCPF) on the Twin Cities campus in St. Paul. The production facility, which the college will finance with space leased to BioMADE, will allow large-scale production and application of BRC research to real world problems.

See BioMADE on page 6 ...
On being maroon and gold, and Black

Meet cognitive neuroscientist Damien Fair, PhD. A 2020 MacArthur Fellow, he joined the University of Minnesota faculty last summer as Redleaf Endowed Director of the Masonic Institute of the Developing Brain, with faculty appointments in the Department of Pediatrics and the Institute of Child Development.—Kristine Mortensen, editor

“Dean Tolar’s energy and excitement were uplifting. The commitment was unabashed and clear-eyed. We were going to do something big.”—Damien Fair, PhD

When did you come to the University of Minnesota and what brought you here? In July 2020, right in the middle of the pandemic! I started the process nearly two and a half years ago, with an invitation to speak from Megan Gunner at the Institute of Child Development and Dean Jean Quam in the College of Education and Human Development.

I was already being recruited [from Oregon Health & Science University] by a few other institutions to grow my lab and build a new program or center, and had already built a vision of what it would require to break down silos of expertise—development, neuroscience, non-invasive imaging, clinical practice, computing and engineering, community engagement and outreach (particularly in underrepresented populations), tech transfer, and business leaders, policy makers, etc.—and start building “information bridges.”

The first thing you need is to have all of the expertise, and to be honest the only place [that did] was the University of Minnesota. The second thing you need is energy, motivation, excitement, drive, and the will to make it go.

On a subsequent visit I met Dean Jakub Tolar, and I was nervous. Well, Dean Tolar walked out of his office and screamed, “Damien!!! I’m so excited for you to be here. Let’s do this!”

His energy and excitement were uplifting. The commitment was unabashed and clear-eyed. We were going to do something big on developmental brain health and we were going to do it now. In less than 10 minutes, I knew I had to be here. And to put the icing on the cake, I’m from Minnesota, I love it here, and I couldn’t imagine a more comfortable place and environment for me to carry on building this transformative program.

What was something about the University that surprised you when you got here? Its depth of expertise. The University is a “crown jewel” that is underappreciated in the academic communities. I think the culture here is a bit modest … but some of the world’s experts across many disciplines are sitting right here at home.

How do you as a neuroscientist see the impact of discrimination on individuals and society? The impact is extremely large. For places like Minnesota, where it is becoming more diverse and whose growth is largely driven by underrepresented populations, maximizing opportunities for everyone is critical. After winning the MacArthur Award, I tried to sum up these sentiments with this quote:

“Every step toward a deeper characterization of brain function brings advances in health care, education, technologies, economics and other enhancements to our society that deeply touch our everyday lives. However, continued progress will not come with a homogeneity of ideas, thoughts, education, experience, and culture. We need to embrace ‘variability’—our diversity—and provide access to this pursuit to all of the talents that exist in our society. It could be argued that the driving factor of discovery and advancement of nearly every civilization has been the result of human variability, where some outlier, oftentimes being of minority status, pushed the society in a way that no one could have ever imagined. Ironically, in the sciences our ability to proportionally value the importance of this principle has been limited.”

See MAROON AND GOLD on page 5...
Tell stories. There are a number of posts already on the site; everyone is welcome to add to the conversation. Unless you set your device to do so, you will not receive pings or notices of posts to the group, but you will see posts on your Facebook page.

The UMRA Facebook group is open to all U of M retirees, so please feel free to suggest the group to your retiree friends or invite them directly from the Facebook group page once you are a member.

—Gary Engstrand, UMRA secretary

Food for thought

UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.

—Dr. Seuss
HELLO, my name is Frank Busta

Hometown: Montgomery, Minnesota (aka the kolacky capital of the world).

When did you join UMRA? In 1999.

What was your very first job? Church custodian at age 13 ($12.50/month); box stacker on labeling crew at Green Giant at age 16 ($0.87/hour).

What was your occupation when you retired from FT work? First time: Professor of food microbiology. Second time: Director, National Center for Food Protection and Defense.

What is the name of the first record you bought? In the Mood by Glenn Miller.

If you could learn a new skill, what would you like it to be? Or, if you were an Olympic athlete, what would you like your sport to be? I would like to be fluent in Mandarin, but I would settle for Spanish. Decathlon, as long as I am dreaming.

Do you have a favorite place on the U of M campus? The Food Science & Nutrition Building on the Twin Cities campus in St. Paul.

What is a fun fact about you we might not know? I played sousaphone in the high school band, mainly because I was big enough to carry it, even in seventh grade.

What is something you currently enjoy doing with your time? Playing cribbage and doing jigsaw puzzles with Jean.

WORKSHOP from page 1.

Your grandmother’s diary, your grandfather’s commemorative medal, or some of your own work papers might shed light on a particular time and place.

Making sense of legacies

Our March Living Well Workshop will focus on how and why archives decide what they accept. Our presenter, Erik Moore, is the head archivist for the University of Minnesota Archives and spends his time in the basements, storerooms, offices, and homes of the faculty, staff, and administrators who call upon him to make sense of their legacies.

Moore is also co-director of the University Digital Conservancy, the U of M’s institutional repository of scholarly works, research data, and institutional digital records. He has advanced degrees in library and information sciences and historical studies.

Please register for this Zoom webinar to be held on Tuesday, March 16, at 11 a.m.

—Ron Matross, chair, Workshop Committee

BioMADE from page 3.

Dean Forbes said the creation of the MCPF will be an important step in establishing a biotech quadrant on the campus. Ground-breaking for the new facility is scheduled for September 2021.

In discussion with the regents, Richard Cramer, the U’s vice president for research, said the BioMade initiative is supported by the Engineering Biology Research Consortium, a national nonprofit organization whose members include representatives from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. President Gabel noted that these connections can help develop a pipeline to Minnesota for graduate students and employees.

To learn more, watch the excellent nine-minute video, BioMADE and UMN, created as part of the University’s original proposal. Use the password: CBS.

—Jerry Rinehart, UMRA Liaison to Board of Regents
Decumulating assets during retirement

The Retirement Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs, with guidance from the Office of Investments and Banking (OIB) and the Office of Human Resources, is considering the addition of a “retirement tier” to the University’s retirement plans.

Previous changes to University retirement plans were designed primarily to assist employees in the accumulation and investment of assets. Attention has now turned to assisting plan participants with the spending or “decumulation” of these assets during retirement. In November 2020, the subcommittee heard a presentation about this by Andrew Parks, deputy chief investment officer at OIB.

Parks noted that a majority of retirees worry that their assets may not last their lifetimes, and he identified risks retires must manage—including longevity, liquidity, and inflation—when making investment and spending decisions. He described the retirement tier as including “a range of products, solutions, tools, and services, all of which allow a plan sponsor to broaden the plan’s goals from one wholly focused on savings to one that also accommodates and supports participants who are near, entering, or in retirement.”

Benefits of a retirement tier

The benefits of a retirement tier include keeping assets in the plan, thereby maximizing University leverage, and providing continuity for employees, Parks said.

In January, representatives of Fidelity Investments made a presentation to the subcommittee describing tools available on Fidelity’s NetBenefits website for creating, evaluating, and executing plans for drawing on retirement assets. OHR intends to send newsletters to plan participants in the coming months highlighting the resources available from Fidelity.

In March, the subcommittee will hear from Securian about its General Account and General Account Limited.

Later this spring, the subcommittee will explore available investment products geared toward decumulation, learn how peer institutions are addressing decumulation, and receive information about how retirees use the NetBenefits planning tools.

Parks fittingly described the University as being in the second inning of a nine-inning game.

—Ken Larson, UMRA member of the Retirement Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs

A thoughtful and riveting reflection on policing

UMRA’s own Greg Hestness gave a thoughtful and riveting reflection on the past and future of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) for the UMRA A.M. webinar via Zoom in February.

Greg served for 12 years as the head of public safety and chief of police for the University of Minnesota. Before that, from 1975 to 2003, he served on the MPD in numerous roles, from patrol officer to deputy chief for nine years. He grew up in Minneapolis, graduated from Central High School, and still lives in the city. He was articulate, genuine, and spoke from his own experience.

You can find a longer summary of his presentation as well as the slides and a video recording of the February 9 webinar on the UMRA website.

—Bill Donohue

Thank you to the University of Minnesota Foundation for sponsoring our March newsletter and February forum.
Welcome new members to UMRA
Please give a hearty welcome to 24 new members who have joined UMRA since early January.

- **Kathleen Anderson**, Medical School, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, associate professor
- **Audrey Boyle**, Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), Consortium on Law and Values, grants manager
- **Susan Christensen**, Medical School, Duluth campus, assistant to the dean of admissions
- **Gwendolyn Gmeinder**, University of Minnesota Extension, government relations administrator
- **Kevin Haroian**, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Psychology, Minnesota Center for Twin & Family Research, director
- **Margo Herman**, Extension, Center for Youth Development, Extension educator
- **Susan Jackson**, Health Sciences, College of Pharmacy, assistant to the dean
- **Patricia Jondahl**, OVPR, Sponsored Projects Administration, senior grant/contract administrator
- **David Langley**, Center for Educational Innovation, education specialist
- **Trina Langley**, University of Minnesota Foundation, executive assistant
- **Bonnie LeRoy (and John LeRoy)**, College of Biological Sciences, Department of Genetics, Cell Biology, and Development, professor
- **Gail Manthei**, Office of Academic Clinical Affairs, Community-University Health Care Center, manager
- **Toby Oberg**, Medical School, Clinical Neuroscience Administrative Center, finance professional
- **Daniel J. Pesut**, School of Nursing, professor
- **Amy Renne**, College of Pharmacy, Duluth campus, career and academic advisor
- **Susan Rolandelli (and Doug Grina)**, Medical School, Neurology, clinical research nurse coordinator
- **Daniel Romero**, Medical School, Department of Pharmacology, associate professor
- **Steve Sanders**, Auxiliary Services, Parking & Transportation Services, alternative transportation manager
- **Michele Smoody**, College of Pharmacy, administrative professional
- **Claire Stuckey**, University of Minnesota Law Library, library program specialist
- **Mike Zerby (and Judy Zerby)**, Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication, adjunct faculty

For contact information, visit the Member Login page at umra.umn.edu (login required).

JOIE has a new editor
Kristine M. Bettin is the new editor-in-chief of UMRA’s online journal, JOIE. She was appointed by a unanimous vote of the UMRA Board during its January 2021 meeting.

JOIE—the Journal of Opinions, Ideas, and Essays—was launched by UMRA over a decade ago for publishing articles by U of M faculty and staff, current or retired. Articles are posted on the University Digital Conservancy, which provides free public access and long-term preservation of works created at the University.

JOIE’s profile dimmed in recent years, with few new articles being added, but readers know about it. Hundreds of JOIE articles are read and downloaded each month.

Kris Bettin retired from the University (and joined UMRA) in 2016 after 42 years in the biomedical field. She began her work as a researcher and has 27 academic articles to her credit. In 1999, she decided to switch fields and was hired as the coordinator for the then-new undergraduate neuroscience program at the University. From there she moved into her final position as executive assistant to the head of the Department of Neuroscience. Included in her many duties were reading and editing material written by faculty members. She joined UMRA in 2016.

Her recent discovery of JOIE’s need for a new editor-in-chief spurred her to volunteer to work on improving the journal’s visibility, increase its readership, and grow its treasure trove of varied and interesting articles.

—Will Craig, UMRA Board member
In remembrance
As we learn of the passing of UMRA members and University leaders, we share this information with our community. We send our condolences to the families and friends of these colleagues.

Richard “Fitz” Pfutzenreuter III, age 68, died on January 24. Born and raised in St. Paul, Fitz graduated from Hamline University with a degree in philosophy and began an unlikely career in finance, serving first as a budget analyst at MnDOT followed by 11 years on the fiscal staff of the Minnesota Legislature. In 1991, he was recruited to the U of M Office of the Senior VP for Finance and Operations where he served for 24 years for four presidents, retiring as vice president for finance and treasurer. Fitz’s intelligence, creativity, and dedication ensured stability during fiscal ups and downs and secure financing for research facilities, classrooms, student centers, and stadiums across the University. He loved Minnesota and our University, and as a public servant was committed to making both better. Fitz was also an avid sportsman known for fishing and hunting and as a family man. He is survived by his wife of 40-plus years, Andrea Burg, sons Henry (Kathleen) and Ben (Sophia Gardner), and granddaughter Freya, who was born in October 2020. The regents named the plaza to the west of Northrop Pfutzenreuter Plaza in honor of his service and contributions to our University.

—Kathleen O’Brien, UMRA Cares Committee

UMRA Cares supports members
For assistance and support in the event of the death or serious illness of an UMRA member or family member, please email umracares@umn.edu or call 612-626-4403 and leave a message for UMRA Cares.

Family History group to meet March 10
You’re invited to the next Family History interest group meeting on Wednesday, March 10, from 10 to 11 a.m. Unlike past meetings that had a particular focus, this meeting will be a time for a broad range of questions, answers, and discussion.

We will also welcome suggestions for future meetings and would love to hear about what individuals have done/are doing regarding their family history.

Go to umra.umn.edu/events “Your Family History” to find the link to join the meeting on March 10.

See umra.umn.edu/content/family-history to find video recordings and handouts from our past presentations.

Please join us on March 10. And save the dates for our spring Family History sessions on April 28 and June 16, both Wednesdays from 10 to 11 a.m.

—Lynn C. Anderson and Craig Swan

Welcome to UMRA’s new Fourth Friday Book Club
The Fourth Friday Book Club (aka UMRA Book Club II) is new, and we welcome new readers. We meet at 2 p.m. on the fourth Friday of every month except December, currently online via Zoom.

We expect this club will be eclectic readers of fiction and nonfiction, although we are just learning what we will be.

Maggie Catambay will lead the discussion of A Gentleman in Moscow by Armor Towles when we meet on Friday, March 26.

Contact Dorothy Marden at marden@umn.edu to learn more.
New U of M regents should be nonpartisan, accomplished

The following is excerpted from a commentary published in the Community Voices section of MinnPost on February 11. The entire commentary can be found on MinnPost and at umra.umn.edu.

By Frank Cerra, Robert Bruininks, and William Donohue

The Minnesota Legislature will soon choose four regents to serve on the 12-member University of Minnesota Board of Regents. It is an election that will set the path of one of Minnesota’s most important institutions.

As retirees from the University of Minnesota and members of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association who have devoted our professional lives to the University, we hope the Legislature will choose nonpartisan people of substantial accomplishment and great integrity who can work successfully with University President Joan Gabel.

The University needs the best people we can find. People who will put partisanship aside, leave personal agendas at the door, and effectively cooperate with others in leading the university in the coming years.

Our citizens and government have created an entity that is among the best higher education institutions in the United States and the world. We need to preserve and foster this incredible public asset.

Duty is solely to the university

The Legislature must choose regents whose primary objective is to help and promote the University. The Board of Regents should not be a political prize or enclave. The duty of each regent is to the University, not to a political party or special interest. The goal is to choose individuals who have demonstrated good judgment in their work and lives and who have shown the ability to respect the views and opinions of others.

We are fortunate that there have been many such regents. The task now is to find more. The future of the University depends on it.