

UIRA President's Report 2019-2020

Emil Rinderspacher

This was a most unusual and challenging year. We were nearly seven months into the academic year when the pandemic hit and our lives were turned upside down. As the virus surged in March and things started shutting down, the board voted to cancel all in-person UIRA activities for the remainder of the year. Casualties of the pandemic included March and May programs; April and May board meetings; April business meeting, luncheon and election of officers; end-of-year picnic; NeonCRM implementation; and the Big Ten Retirees Association conference that we were scheduled to host in August.

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, however, the work of the organization continued. The Awards and Nominating committees completed their work; a new program committee was formed and started planning virtual programs; we conducted our election electronically thanks to Sue Otto; we held our June board meeting to meet new board members via Zoom; we conducted orientation and onboarding of new board members via Zoom; and our membership team continued to collect and process member dues. Here are some of highlights of the year.

Programs

We continued to offer outstanding programs to our members. In addition to the annual Flu Vaccination Clinic, UI Benefits Program, and presentation by UI President Bruce Harreld, our programs included a visit to the newly restored Kent Park; luncheon and tour of the Kinnick North End Zone; tour of FilmScene; and a program about Seniors and Technology. Programs about Climate Change and the Bur Oak Land Trust and tours of the Iowa City Airport were cancelled due to the pandemic.

Supporting UI Students

Last year during a UIRA board meeting there was some brainstorming about what more UIRA could do to support the University in addition to the two scholarships that we award every year. As a result, this year we sponsored the university Food Pantry (Food Pantry at Iowa) by collecting food/toiletry items and cash donations at our programs. Our goal for the programming year was to collect 500 lbs. of food and \$1000 in cash. Through January, we had collected 218 lbs. of food and \$406 in cash when the pandemic cut short our efforts.

Another initiative to increase our support of students was participating in the *One Day at Iowa* campaign to increase the UIRA endowed scholarship fund so that we could increase the number and amount of the UIRA scholarships we award each year. The campaign was set for March 25 but was indefinitely postponed due to the pandemic.

Organization Workings

The year-long work of the bylaws committee chaired by Sue Otto completed their work in November and a revised set of bylaws was approved in December. In January the board voted

to increase our membership dues effective July 1. However, the dues increase was put on hold in March when UIRA activities were suspended. An analysis of income and expenses for the previous five years revealed that costs/expenses had increased over the years and our income needed to increase in order to support the organization especially with the added cost of the NeonCRM subscription. We discussed sponsorships, event charges and settled on increasing membership dues.

The membership dues discussion led to a broader discussion of membership and how we can be more systematic in our recruitment of new members. Because we rely on University Human Resources for the contact information of new retirees and for marketing UIRA to new retirees, it was agreed that in the coming months we would work to strengthen and formalize our relationship with University HR.

NeonCRM Implementation

In spring 2019, we purchased NeonCRM an organizational management software product to manage our memberships, communications, events, reporting and provide member portals. The implementation process began in the summer and continued throughout the fall. Kay Barron, Russ Lenth, and Lois Lembke worked countless hours on the implementation process. As part of this project, Diana Harris and I were working with University ITS on a new website design which would include more dynamic content and a destination page where members/prospective members go to access/set up their membership account. The membership module work is complete and functioning. However, work on other aspects of NeonCRM implementation was suspended in March.

Final Thoughts and Thanks

Next year will be even more challenging as we adapt to our "new normal". We now know that this virus will be with us for some time and like so many other organizations, UIRA will need to make some changes in how we operate in order to continue to engage and serve our members to protect the health and safety of our members and our community. But I'm confident that as an organization we are up to the challenge.

It's been an honor serving as president during the past year. It has been fun and rewarding, and, for the last four months, unusually challenging. My thanks to the Board of Directors for their commitment, good work, and unending support of UIRA: Lois Lembke, Chuck Dayton, Diana Harris, Diane Martin, Kris Canfield, Billie Townsend, Bennie Hawkins, Richard Saunders, and the late Dean Borg. I want to especially thank president-elect Sam Cochran and past president Sue Otto for their support and wise counsel. And thanks to EFC reps Carolyn Wanat and Deb Cobb and webmaster Phil Klein. It's been a team effort and I've very much enjoyed working with all of you.