

UWG ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FACULTY AND STAFF (ARFS)
Coordinating Council Meeting MINUTES
Neva Lomason Memorial Library
March 21, 2025

Present: Micheal Crafton (presiding), Meg Cooper, Rolanda Farmer, Lisa Ledbetter, Cecilia Lee, Mike Renfrow Anne Richards, Francie Taylor, Trish Wells, Ex-Officio Member MaKena Burns

Guests: Haley Jackson (Advancement), Ashwani Monga (Interim President), Zoë Smith-Owenby (Advancement)

Absent: Ann McCleary, Jerry Mock, Patricia Pinkard, Clois Reese, Sally Roberts

Call to Order: Micheal Crafton called the meeting to order at approximately 10:12 am.

Visit by Interim President Monga: After introductions, Dr. Monga made some remarks to the group; this was followed by a question-and-answer session. In his remarks, he thanked the group (ARFS) and retirees for their service to UWG over the years. He outlined his role at the USG, which included responsibility for academics, athletics, and archives/library for all 26 institutions and the system as a whole. He described his experiences at UWG: “It has been a wonderful, wonderful experience.” Specific topics related to UWG he discussed included overall enrollment, need to enhance undergraduate enrollment, financial needs of students in relationship to retention and graduation (including recent improvements), the Division 1 elevation in athletics, and degree-program recognition. He encouraged retirees to make use of community connections to help with financial support of UWG, especially for student scholarships; we can let Advancement know if we encounter possible donors, and Advancement will follow up.

The following topics were addressed in the question-and-answer session:

- Communication – Meg Cooper brought up issues related to access to information and ability to communicate with UWG entities. She noted that many times retirees felt excluded and that they are missing information that could be helpful. Cybersecurity issues have played a role in changes in information-sharing. Dr. Monga indicated that he will look into this, that there is a need to share information. Zoë Smith-Owenby can be our general contact person for addressing communication-related issues – e.g., identifying roadblocks, sharing issues with the UWG website, requesting information. (We can also communicate directly with a specific person if we know who that is – e.g., MaKena would be the one to handle room reservations and event-related aspects.)
- UWG Presidential Search – Mike Renfrow asked about rumors related to the identity of the new UWG president. Dr. Monga noted that he may apply for the position. Standard procedures are being followed, although in the past few years these have changed to be very confidential (e.g., no in-person campus visits). We may know something by July 1st.

- Ramifications of Changes to the US Department of Education – Trish Wells asked what the system is doing to prepare for these changes, especially those related to financial aid. While Dr. Monga expressed his opinion that financial aid aspects of the DOE may move to another agency, he felt there is not a direct threat at this time to Pell grants, for example. There is concern, however, about getting federal services when fewer people are working on those. Nothing has been announced related to financial aid. He noted the USG has good staff and “We will be ready.”
- Student Quality – Cecilia Lee asked about possible changes in UWG student quality. Dr. Monga noted that while student quality can always be improved, incoming student quality is not down (based on comparisons). UWG has an 80% acceptance rate. Our role is to take students in the region (although not those who can’t succeed in college) and add value. Graduation rates are lower than they should be, however, Greater engagement from both students and faculty is needed.

In addition, Dr. Monga was thanked for sending in a letter to be used in the 2024 annual commemorative tribute booklet, especially considering that it was due at the end of his first week at UWG.

Approvals:

- July, 2024 Coordinating Council minutes were approved (M-Anne Richards, S–Francie Taylor).
- January, 2025 Coordinating Council minutes were approved (M-Anne Richards, S-Trish Wells).
Meg will request that the ARFS website be updated to include recent minutes.
- The 2023-2024 ARFS Annual Report was approved with some additional minor corrections to typos (M-Meg Cooper, S-Cecilia Lee). Anne will prepare the final report and distribute it.

Update from Human Resources: Lauren Niedringhaus was out, so there was no report. Meg Cooper will contact her regarding an update on recent/upcoming retirees since the last communication about this came to Meg in mid-November and we will be starting to contact this year’s retirees in May.

Update from Alumni & Constituent Engagement: MaKena Burns reported on the following items:

- Alumni Weekend Events – Saturday, April 26th: Some information about this already went out. We could join other groups and have a tent (with table and chairs) on Wolf Walk from 12 to 3 pm. We could publicize ARFS and our Annual Reunion – e.g., have Spanish and English language ARFS brochures to handout. A yard sign would be made for us, and we could use the ARFS tablecloth. Our representatives would be invited to lunch at “the big tent.” There is a form to use to register (link sent out via email) or we could email MaKena. We need to let her know by the end of March/beginning of April.

Micheal will send something out to the listserv and will ascertain interest in participating. The College of Education's 50th anniversary also is being celebrated that day (2-4 pm). Meg has been trying to get information about that event and will share that when available.

- Mentorship Program: More UWG mentors are needed to advise and assist students with multiple aspects of college life. Activities depend on the specific needs of the student. Those who volunteer to mentor are matched with students. Students currently looking for mentors are majoring in Psychology, Marketing, Biology, Accounting, Computer Science, Art & Sculpture, and Health & Community Wellness. More information is available on the UWG website – the Alumni page and the Career Services page.

Retiree Legacy Scholarship: Jerry Mock was out, but discussion included a need to encourage applications from eligible persons. Zoë Smith-Owenby noted that the priority application deadline is February 1st (these applicants will be looked at first), but that's not a cut-off date.

Annual Reunion Planning

- We decided on Saturday, October 11th in the Campus Center Ballroom. (Note: Hall of Fame football game is at 2:00 pm that day.)
- Programs/Events Committee members are MaKena Burns, Meg Cooper, Micheal Crafton, Anne Richards, and Francie Taylor. We will plan to open up the planning meeting to others who may wish to attend. We do need to work on clearly allocating responsibility for specific aspects and communicating clearly about those aspects. Many logistical issues can be handled by MaKena and colleagues, while retirees concentrate on communication with retirees and encouraging attendance. Meg will work on setting up the initial in-person planning meeting.
- We are not restricted to Dine West for catering. We will check out community options, and MaKena can discuss options with Dine West. We need to keep the cost low for attendees and would like to continue not charging honorees and their guests (one free guest each).
- We do need information related to budget. Although we have worked to keep costs down, we don't really have any parameters. Micheal will work more with Advancement (MaKena, Kate Perry, Allyson Brecht) regarding a budget for ARFS and specifically for the reunion event.

Associated Organizations

- GA-HERO – The Valdosta meet-up is still in the planning stage. GA-HERO, which includes both private and public institutions, wants to encourage retiree get-togethers.
- USGRC – Anne and Meg are attending the April meeting at Clayton State.
- AROHE – Anne has been working on getting UWG back on the website (unclear why we were removed – dues have been paid).

Newsletter: Meg Cooper, Rolanda Farmer, Ann McCleary, and Anne Richards met as a committee to discuss content and responsibilities for the next issue. We hope to have an issue out in April. Micheal will ask via the ARFS listserv about content requests/suggestions and information about what individual retirees are doing in retirement to include in the newsletter.

The next meeting will be scheduled for July. Micheal will check on possible dates.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meg Cooper, Secretary