

# University of West Georgia Association of Retired Faculty and Staff

## 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

**Submitted by Meg Cooper, ARFS Coordinating Council President  
March 15, 2022**

### **INTRODUCTION**

On March 22, 2019, The University of West Georgia (UWG) Association of Retired Faculty and Staff (ARFS) Coordinating Council amended its Bylaws to state that the President of the Council should “prepare a report of ARFS activities to submit annually to the Vice President of Advancement and other administrative offices as appropriate.” (Article 5, Section 2, (h)). Annual Reports for 2017-18, 2018-2019, and 2019-20 were submitted to and approved by the Coordinating Council. This fourth ARFS Annual Report represents August 22, 2020 to November 6, 2021, the period between the 2020 and 2021 ARFS Annual Reunions.

Throughout this reporting period, we all experienced continuation of the worldwide pandemic of SARS-CoV-2, commonly referred to as COVID-19, affecting ARFS members and activities. Notations regarding how the pandemic impacted ARFS activities are identified as appropriate. Another major challenge for ARFS was the administrative transfer of UWG support from Alumni & Development to the Office of Human Resources. Some specific aspects related to this change are discussed below.

### **ARFS OVERVIEW**

The purposes of the UWG Association of Retired Faculty and Staff are to:

- promote the well-being of its members
- support the University of West Georgia retiree community
- foster continued involvement of retirees in the mission of the university
- facilitate communication between the university and its retirees
- seek to promote the scholarly, social, and cultural interests of the retiree community
- address matters related to benefits and resources for retirees

Active membership includes faculty and staff who have retired from UWG and meet the established Board of Regents retirement criteria. There were approximately 610 members receiving electronic or hard-copy communications from ARFS (based on newsletter distribution in March, 2021). Officers of the association include a president, vice-president, past president, secretary, and treasurer who are elected by the membership at the ARFS Annual Reunion held each fall. The officers and at least six active members (elected at the Annual Reunion) comprise the Coordinating Council, which provides leadership for the association and directs its activities on behalf of the members.

An ARFS brochure was prepared in fall 2018 to provide information about what ARFS is, how

one becomes a member, and the activities and benefits of membership. It can be found in the Document Center of the ARFS webpage at [https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/arfs\\_brochure\\_final\\_2018.pdf](https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/arfs_brochure_final_2018.pdf).

## **ARFS AND UWG ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING**

In September, 2020, a meeting was held on the Campus Center patio to inform ARFS personnel about a change in support from Development & Alumni Relations to the Office of Human Resources as part of general restructuring of UWG and to discuss related issues. Attendees were Meredith Brunen, Vice President for University Advancement; Meg Cooper, ARFS Coordinating Council President; Annemarie Eades, Vice President for Information Technology Services; Kathryn Grams, ARFS Coordinating Council Past President; Anne Richards, ARFS Coordinating Council Vice President; and Terri Walthour, Director of Human Resources. Anne shared a packet of information about ARFS with attendees. Some of the specific topics discussed in the meeting were related to the ARFS listserv and contact information for retirees, technology issues, Campus Directory listings, the ARFS newsletter, the ARFS website, retiree access to UWG e-mail, and pictures for the commemorative tribute booklet. ARFS Council members attending were told UWG would continue supporting a similar budget for ARFS and HR personnel were going to be working with Denice King-Perdue (ARFS' primary support person in Alumni & Development) to learn more about tasks to be done and, going forward, would handle all the functions previously performed by Denice and colleagues. A subsequent e-mail from Terri Walthour addressed some immediate plans more specifically – e.g., Therese Dingle was identified as the liaison (primary point of contact) between HR and ARFS, Terri Murphy was to continue as the Benefits contact in HR for retirees and was reaffirmed as the individual coordinating the ARFS newsletter, and some plans were put in place to address technological issues. As would be expected, there was mention of a need for possible adjustments depending on how things worked out in the transition.

Moving ARFS from Advancement to Human Resources along with some of the other changes in UWG structure and organization have affected the way ARFS functions as outlined below.

### ➤ **Communication with Retirees:**

- **Website:** The Office of Human Resources worked with other components of UWG to move the ARFS website to HR, a complex process since the existing ARFS website was located outside of the UWG main framework and a major update of the UWG website was scheduled to be done. Once the ARFS website was established as part of HR, ARFS personnel were able to get materials posted, although not necessarily in a timely fashion (e.g., a 7-month gap with nothing updated in one case).
- **Listserv:** HR personnel have coordinated with ARFS Vice President Anne Richards related to retiree contact information.
- **Newsletter:** HR personnel were not able to take on the tasks of writing major portions of, assembling, and producing the ARFS newsletter as was anticipated and as Alumni & Development had done in the past. HR personnel did approve ARFS content and arrange for payment for printing and distribution of hard copies by Printing Services, however. The first issue of *The Rejuvenator* after the transition to HR was written by

ARFS members but assembled and produced by Denice King-Perdue, who had worked on it in the past. This gave the ARFS Coordinating Council time to gear up to create an ad hoc committee responsible for coordination of the newsletter.

- Parking Permits: HR personnel coordinated parking permits for retirees this year due to changes in procedures in Parking & Transportation. ARFS helped to publicize the changes and answer questions of retirees.
- Coordinating Council meetings: HR personnel arranged for meeting space for in-person meetings. The ARFS-HR liaison and/or the Benefits Coordinator working with retirees attended portions of Coordinating Council meetings.

➤ **ARFS Expenses:**

Therese Dingle and Sharon Seneca, who became the ARFS-HR liaison in March of 2021, have coordinated with University Advancement and have seen to it that ARFS expenses were covered while having to work through a lot of budget issues. Coordination with other UWG divisions is needed, for example, since ARFS' major annual activity most years has involved an in-person reception that included refreshments, and funds for food must come from the Foundation.

➤ **Benefits Management:**

Benefits Coordinators (Terri Murphy and then Holly Mostrom) continued to work with UWG employees making the transition to retirement and shared information with ARFS members through the ARFS listserv, the ARFS newsletter, and Coordinating Council meetings. Sharon Seneca acknowledged issues answering benefit questions from retirees and suggested that a community group or peers may be a better resource; this is something ARFS will be considering in the future.

A major project for ARFS this year involved administration and analysis of a survey of post-65 UWG retirees about the Health Retirement Account that is a major benefit from the University System of Georgia. (Additional information about this project is provided later in this report.) The Coordinating Council acted almost completely on its own (except for budgetary support, routine support from Printing Services for newsletter/document production and distribution, and approval of content by HR personnel) in developing, implementing, analyzing, and reporting results of the survey. HR personnel also assisted by passing on completed surveys from a few retirees who erroneously returned them to HR.

➤ **Annual Reunion:**

The Annual Retiree Reunion that is held in conjunction with the ARFS Annual Meeting and includes recognition of each year's new retirees was negatively impacted by several factors this year. In the past, the event had been planned and implemented by Alumni & Development, with ARFS members providing assistance and presiding at the meeting. Alumni & Development (in conjunction with University Communications and Marketing)

also coordinated and produced the virtual equivalent of most of this event in 2020. In 2021, however, the ARFS Coordinating Council was basically on its own in trying to arrange initially for an in-person event and then, subsequently, for a video similar to the one produced for us the year before. Some issues were due to UWG restructuring (e.g., UCM no longer has the same role it did in previous years) and to staffing issues apparently related to restructuring and staff shortages due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Council personnel working on this project also ran into logistical issues -- for example, only active employees can access online request and reservation options. The Council ended up setting up a Zoom meeting and working almost totally independently from the University in planning and implementing this event in 2021. HR personnel did continue to arrange for and obtain the medallions given to new retirees, validate lists of new retirees and deceased retirees, and approve the content of the annual commemorative tribute booklet that was part of the annual recognition.

➤ **ARFS By-Laws:**

The ARFS by-laws include the following related to support:

“The Division of Development and Alumni Relations has, since the inception of the Association, provided staff liaisons for administrative support and advocacy for the Association. At least one of the staff liaison persons takes attendance at meetings of the Association, organizes agendas, produces and mails out the Rejuvenator newsletter, and requests volunteer support from the Association’s Coordinating Council to complete tasks needed for publicizing, coordinating, and carrying out retiree events. Staff liaison employees work with campus departments and the UWG administration to promote the interests of retirees, including through the use of electronic media.”

The ARFS Coordinating Council has already discussed the need to modify this section of the By-Laws and will plan to consult with our HR liaison person regarding appropriate wording to reflect the changed circumstances.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF RETIREES TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY**

Bobby R. Painter, Jr., Database Administrator in University Advancement, reported that in Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021), UWG retirees gave a total of \$1,071,934.72 in contributions to the University. Many retirees give and continue to give generously to UWG. Total giving for retired faculty and staff for all gift dates through June 30, 2021 was reported to be \$4,237,706.04.

Individual retirees continue to be involved with UWG, including serving on University committees and volunteering for activities (e.g., graduation, fundraising, judging competitions). Participation has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, however. Many of the activities specifically sponsored by ARFS, which are outlined later in this report, also serve to support UWG and/or the surrounding community.

## **ENDOWED RETIREE LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP**

ARFS created and endowed the UWG Retiree Legacy Scholarship to benefit for perpetuity deserving University of West Georgia students who are direct descendants or an immediate family relation of retired faculty or staff members. The scholarship was awarded in 2021 to Nathanael Davis, grandson of retiree Van Davis. Information about the scholarship and award criteria can be found at:

<https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/retiree-legacy-scholarship.php>.

## **ARFS STRUCTURE**

### ➤ **ARFS Bylaws:**

The ARFS Bylaws can be found in the Document Center on the ARFS website at [https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/uwg\\_arfs\\_official\\_bylaws\\_amended\\_6-12-20.pdf](https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/uwg_arfs_official_bylaws_amended_6-12-20.pdf).

### ➤ **ARFS Coordinating Council:**

The Coordinating Council is composed of elected retirees and representatives from relevant UWG administrative areas who serve as ex-officio members. During the time covered by this report, Therese Dingle and then Sharon Seneca served as the official liaison to ARFS from Human Resources, attending Council meetings when available. Benefits coordinator Terri Murphy or Holly Mostrom also attended portions of some meetings to present information related to retiree benefits. 2020-2021 Council members elected at the 2020 Annual Reunion were:

Officers with terms beginning in 2020:

- Meg Cooper, President (term 2020-2022)
- Vice President: Anne Richards (term 2020-2022)
- Past President: Kathryn Grams (term 2020-2022)
- Secretary: Francesca Taylor (term 2020-2022)
- Treasurer: Sally Roberts (term 2020-2022)

Members-at-Large with terms beginning in 2019:

- Bonnie Bar (term 2019-2021)
- Bobby Powell (term 2019-2021)
- Frank Pritchett (term 2019-2021)

Members-at-Large with terms beginning in 2020:

- Jimmy Drew (term 2020-2022)
- Anita Thomas (term 2020-2022)
- John von Eschenbach (term 2020-2022)
- Alice Wesley (2020-2022)
- Diane Williamson (2020-2022)

Current members of the Council are identified on the ARFS website at <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/coordinating-council.php>.

➤ **ARFS Coordinating Council Committees:**

The ARFS By-Laws establishes the following standing committees:

- *Nominating* – prepares a slate of officers and members-at-large for election
- *Programs/Events* – organizes the annual reunion and prepares the Tribute Booklet
- *Scholarship* – oversees the awarding of the Legacy Scholarship
- *Widow/Widower Surviving Partner* – currently inactive; must be chaired by a non-UWG-retiree who is a widow/widower/surviving partner of a retiree and is charged with enhancing the relationship of persons in this group with ARFS and UWG

In addition, an ad hoc committee was established in April, 2020. The *Newsletter Committee* is charged with coordinating and producing the ARFS Newsletter, *The Rejuvenator*.

## ARFS ACTIVITIES

ARFS supports the University's mission and values and seeks to foster closer relations between retirees and the University. ARFS 2020-2021 activities that meet the purposes of the association are highlighted in this report.

➤ **ARFS Coordinating Council Meetings:**

Six meetings were held during the period of this report. Due to the pandemic, all were online meetings except for one on-campus meeting that was held outside. Anne Richards, Council Vice President, hosted the online meetings. Meetings were held as follows:

- September 18, 2020 - online (10 retiree Council members and 2 UWG staff members, one from Alumni & Development and the other from the Office of Human Resources, in attendance)
- January 22, 2021 - online (8 retiree Council members and 2 staff members from UWG Office of Human Resources in attendance)
- April 30, 2021 – online (10 retiree Council members and 2 staff members from UWG Office of Human Resources in attendance)
- June 18, 2021 - online (11 retiree Council members and 2 staff members from UWG Office of Human Resources in attendance)
- August 27, 2021 – outside on campus (10 retiree Council members and 1 ex-officio member from UWG Office of Human Resources in attendance)
- October 18, 2021- online special called meeting (7 retiree council members in attendance)

The meeting minutes are available online on the Document Center of the UWG ARFS webpage at <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/document-center.php>. (Minutes are posted only after they are approved by the Council at a subsequent Council meeting.)

➤ **Coordinating Council Projects Related to Benefits:**

- UWG Benefits Fair – Changes due to COVID-19 pandemic: While ARFS personnel have routinely participated in the UWG Benefits Fair and had hoped to do so again as part of the 2020 and 2021 fairs, this event was changed to a virtual Benefits Fair operated by the University System of Georgia. UWG's Office of Human Resources reported that

participation by ARFS was not possible in the new format. The Council hopes ARFS can participate in this event in the future, however. Human Resources personnel continued to use the ARFS pamphlet, Steps to Retirement for Faculty/Staff, when working with prospective retirees. A copy of the pamphlet is available in the Document Center of the ARFS webpage at: [https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/arfs\\_brochure\\_steps-to-retire.pdf](https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/arfs_brochure_steps-to-retire.pdf).

- Health Reimbursement/Your Spending Account Survey: In March of 2021, ARFS distributed a survey to UWG retirees regarding use of the HRA/YSA. This was in response to discussions at the state level regarding assessment of the benefit provided to post-65 USG retirees who obtained at least one insurance policy through the Aon Health Exchange. The survey was adapted slightly by Meg Cooper and Anne Richards from one administered by Clayton State University. It was distributed along with Issue #40 of the ARFS newsletter, *The Rejuvenator*. A variety of return formats were accepted (e.g., respondents could call and complete the survey via phone) and results were manually tabulated. The survey, the accompanying cover letter, and an initial report are all available on the ARFS website under the “Health Reimbursement Account Survey and Information” heading at <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/document-center.php>. Although this project involved a lot of work, Council personnel involved believe the information ARFS could subsequently provide at the state level was helpful. More importantly, about one-quarter of respondents had issues, problems, or questions. Most of these have been addressed, although Meg Cooper and Anne Richards are continuing to try to work with a few respondents and referred some to the USG and/or the Aon Health Exchange for more extensive assistance. Positive feedback came in from many survey respondents who received assistance and/or information. The needs for assistance for retirees in relationship to this benefit and insurance benefits in general remain of concern to ARFS, especially for retirees who may be less technologically adept and/or literate. Work is continuing on a final report that will include analysis of the comments provided by survey respondents.
- Other Information Exchanges: Some ARFS and Council members engaged in peer-to-peer exchanges regarding benefits. Information about benefits was also distributed through the ARFS listserv and ARFS newsletter, often based on information shared by Human Resources personnel. (See information below on activities related to communicating with retirees.) A lot of positive feedback has come in from ARFS members to whom we provided assistance and information.

➤ **Interface with National and State Retiree Organizations:**

ARFS is an official voting member of the Georgia Higher Education Retiree Organizations (GA-HERO) and the University System of Georgia Retiree Council (USGRC) and is a member of the International Association of Retired Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE).

- Georgia Association of Higher Education Retiree Organizations (GA-HERO)
  - Kathryn Grams, ARFS Coordinating Council Past President, is the official UWG representative for GA-HERO. Anne Richards, Council Vice President, is the Secretary for this organization.

- Kathryn, Anne, and Meg Cooper attended the November 16, 2020 meeting of GA-HERO, which included a presentation on “Armchair Travel: Steps on How to be a Successful Armchair Traveler when Real Travel Is Impossible” and the April 23, 2021 meeting, which included a presentation on “Aging in Place and the Impact of COVID-19.”
- University System of Georgia Retiree Council (USGRC)
  - Meg Cooper is the official UWG representative for the USGRC. Anne Richards serves as the alternate representative and also attends meetings to contribute to note-taking and documentation of meeting content. Mitchell Clifton, an ARFS member and former president of the ARFS Coordinating Council, is currently serving as chairperson of this group.
  - Three USGRC meetings were held during the period covered by this report. All were held online – on October 9, 2020; April 9, 2021; and October 8, 2021. Meg Cooper and Anne Richards attended the meetings. Anne’s notes and materials from the first two of these meetings are available under the “Meeting Minutes” heading on the ARFS Document Center webpage (<https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/document-center.php>).
- International Association of Retired Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE)
  - Meg Cooper and Anne Richards attended the 2021 AROHE Virtual Conference (“Reimagining Retirement – Let Us Boldly Go...”) on October 12-14, 2021. Anne and a colleague made a presentation about GA-HERO in a Concurrent Session focusing on consortial models.
  - Some resources provided by AROHE (e.g., webinars, information on the *AROHE Matters* newsletter) are shared with ARFS members through the ARFS listserv.

➤ **Activities Related to Maintaining Communication with Retirees:**

- ARFS Website: UWG’s Office of Human Resources hosts the ARFS website (found at <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/>). This contains a lot of information about ARFS and its components, including copies of *The Rejuvenator*, some information about retiree accomplishments, meeting minutes, and resources.
- Email Listserv: Inclusion on the ARFS listserv provides retiree members with important reminders and university news (when available to us). Obituaries are also shared when those contributing to the listserv know of UWG retirees passing. During the period of this report, lots of information was shared regarding local availability of COVID vaccinations, an important issue for the vulnerable group of individuals who are members of the listserv. ARFS members may also use the listserv to send information, questions/concerns, and announcements. The Coordinating Council Vice President, Anne Richards, maintains and updates listserv membership. The listserv had approximately 435 retiree members at the end of this reporting period. While one person who now lives out of state was concerned that the listserv included too much content related to the local area, extensive positive feedback has been received consistently throughout this reporting period.



- Newsletter, *The Rejuvenator*:
  - Three issues of the ARFS Newsletter, *The Rejuvenator*, were published and distributed to retirees via electronic and regular mail during the time period covered by this report: November 2020 (No. 39); March 2021 (No. 40); and July 2021 (No. 41).
  - The Newsletter Committee, an ad hoc committee added during this reporting period, wrote and assembled the newsletter content. Formatting, printing, and distribution of hard copies of the newsletter were handled by UWG's Print Services. Individuals on the ARFS listserv received the newsletter electronically. The issues can be seen on the UWG ARFS website at <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/rejuvenator-newsletter.php>.

## **ANNUAL REUNION AND GENERAL ARFS MEETING**

The Programs/Events Committee (Meg Cooper, Frank Pritchett, Francie Taylor, and Alice Wesley) initially planned extensively for an in-person event and then a virtual event like the one held in 2020. The 2021 Annual Reunion subsequently was held virtually via Zoom on November 9, 2021. A PowerPoint presentation honored the 27 new retirees who wanted to be acknowledged at the event, as well as retirees who had passed away during the year and outgoing Coordinating Council members. The slide show is available on the ARFS website at [https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/Retiree\\_Slideshow\\_2021.pdf](https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/Retiree_Slideshow_2021.pdf). This presentation was integrated into the Zoom meeting, which also included a welcome and highlights from ARFS Council president Meg Cooper; presentations by Jess Lassetter, Director of Annual Giving; and an appearance by Nathan Davis, the 2021 awardee of the Retiree Legacy Scholarship. The slate of candidates for the ARFS Coordinating Council, both officers and at-large members, was presented and approved. The meeting was recorded, except for two periods of social time before and after the formal meeting. The video of this event should be available through the ARFS website soon.

At past in-person annual reunions, each honored retiree received a medallion and a Commemorative Tribute Booklet, which included individual tributes. Copies of this booklet are also maintained in the UWG Archives. The *2020 Tribute Booklet* and medallions for 2019-2020 retirees were distributed in June, 2021 after a decision was made not to hold the hoped-for in-person event in spring, 2021. The *2021 Tribute Booklet* and medallions were distributed to 2020-2021 retirees in early November, 2021. The commemorative tribute booklets for both sets of retirees may be accessed under the "Previous Reunion Documents" heading on the Annual Reunion page of the ARFS website (<https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/annual-reunion.php>).

ARFS has missed the opportunity for an in-person annual reunion and general meeting event for the past two years and hopes to be able to hold an in-person reception in 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Cooper, Coordinating Council President  
 Association of Retired Faculty and Staff  
 University of West Georgia