

University of West Georgia Association of Retired Faculty and Staff

2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

**Submitted by Meg Cooper, ARFS Coordinating Council Past President
January 23, 2023**

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, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 were submitted to and approved by the Coordinating Council, then sent on to various offices in UWG. This fifth ARFS Annual Report represents November 7, 2021 to October 30, 2022, the period between the completion of the 2021 ARFS Annual Retiree Reunion and membership meeting and the completion of both of these events in 2022.

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. We did, however, begin to emerge from the pandemic and were able to begin in-person events again in 2022. ARFS also continued to struggle with consequences of the administrative transfer of UWG support from Alumni & Development to the Office of Human Resources. Coordinating Council members had to continue taking on many routine administrative tasks previously performed for ARFS, including proposing a new standing committee to prepare materials for the ARFS newsletter (a task previously performed by Alumni & Development personnel) and shouldering a much-expanded role in planning and implementing our major annual retiree event.

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 630 members receiving electronic or hard-copy communications from ARFS (based on distribution of materials in October, 2022).

Officers of the Association include a president, vice-president, past president, secretary, and treasurer who are elected by the membership at the ARFS general membership meeting (part of the Annual Retiree Reunion) held each fall. The officers and at least six at-large members (also elected at the same event) 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. Although not yet revised to reflect change in support from Alumni & Development to Human Resources, the brochure can be found in the Document Center of the ARFS webpage at https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/arfs_brochure_final_2018.pdf.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF RETIREES TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

Bobby R. Painter, Jr., Database Administrator in University Advancement, reported that in Fiscal Year 2022, UWG retirees gave a total of \$35,408.00 in contributions to the University. This was low compared to the previous couple years for which we have data. (Mr. Painter did note that, being new to UWG systems, he had inadvertently miscalculated when the ARFS annual report was prepared last year and that total giving by retirees for Fiscal Year 2021 was \$1,059,790.19 instead of \$1,071,934.72 as previously reported.) Total giving for retired faculty and staff for Fiscal Years 2004-2022 was reported to be \$2,321,651.28.

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 (\$1,200.00) was awarded in 2022 to Jordan Wagner, son of retiree Don Wagner. Information about the scholarship and award criteria can be found at: <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/retiree-legacy-scholarship.php>. (We discovered only recently that a part-year scholarship was given in Spring, 2022 to Laurel Ann Vines, in addition to the awardee we had included in last year's annual report, Nathanael Davis, resulting in a total award last year of \$1,776.00.)

Another way in which retirees contribute financially to the University is through establishment of endowed scholarships by individual retirees or by others in their honor. For example, Coordinating Council At-Large member Frank Pritchett established two endowed scholarships during the past year. Although we are unable to provide a dollar figure at this time, examination of the list of scholarships on the UWG website resulted in a list of at least 66 scholarships established by or in honor of UWG retirees.

Individual retirees continue to be involved with UWG, including serving on University committees and volunteering for activities (e.g., helping with graduation, fundraising, judging competitions). Participation has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, however. Some retired faculty members stay active professionally through writing, presentations, professional organization leadership, and other activities in their fields, representing UWG as they do so. Information about some of these activities can be found in issues of *The Rejuvenator* (the ARFS newsletter), which are available online at <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/rejuvenator-newsletter.php>. 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.

ARFS STRUCTURE

➤ **ARFS Bylaws:**

The ARFS Bylaws can be found in the Document and Resource Center on the ARFS website at https://www.westga.edu/assets/arfs/doc/uwg_arfs_official_bylaws_amended_6-12-20.pdf. We started discussion of some revisions this year, primarily related to the administrative transfer of ARFS support to the Office of Human Resources, but had to put these on hold to attend to other matters. We will be revisiting the Bylaws this coming year.

➤ **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, Lauren Niedringhaus served as the official liaison to ARFS from Human Resources, attending Council meetings when available. Since she also served as the Benefits coordinator working with retirees, this has allowed for more coordination of efforts between ARFS and the Office of Human Resources. Council members serving in 2021-2022 who were elected at the 2021 Annual Reunion were:

Officers, terms beginning in 2020:

- Meg Cooper, President (term 2020-2022), Special Education
- Vice President: Anne Richards (term 2020-2022), Psychology
- Past President: Kathryn Grams (term 2020-2022), Nursing
- Secretary: Francesca Taylor (term 2020-2022), Academic Testing Services
- Treasurer: Sally Roberts (term 2020-2022), Publications & Printing

Members-at-Large with terms beginning in 2020:

- Jimmy Drew (term 2020-2022), Publications & Printing
- Anita Thomas (term 2020-2022), College of Business
- John von Eschenbach (term 2020-2022), College of Education
- Alice Wesley (2020-2022), Graduate School
- Diane Williamson (2020-2022), College of Business

Members-at-Large with terms beginning in 2021:

- Micheal Crafton (term 2021-2023), English and UWG Administration
- Frank Pritchett (term 2021-2023), Alumni Relations
- Nancy Watkins (term 2021-2023), Center for Diversity & Inclusion

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 Bylaws 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. We do suggest that ARFS members and dependent spouses who have lost spouses/partners might be interested in an on-campus group coordinated by Julie Dobbs, the Widows Support Group, and have helped publicize this group through the ARFS newsletter and ARFS listserv.

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*. As part of proposed changes in the ARFS Bylaws, this ad-hoc committee will become a standing committee.

ARFS ACTIVITIES

ARFS supports the University's mission and values and seeks to foster closer relations between retirees and the University. ARFS 2021-2022 activities that meet the purposes of the association are highlighted in this report.

➤ **ARFS Coordinating Council Meetings:**

Four meetings, all in-person meetings on campus, were held during the period of this report:

- January 21, 2022 – 9 retiree Council members and 1 UWG staff member from the Office of Human Resources in attendance
- March 11, 2022 – 10 retiree Council members and 1 staff member from UWG Office of Human Resources in attendance
- May 20, 2022 – 9 retiree Council members in attendance, with 1 staff member from UWG Office of Human Resources joining the meeting via telephone
- August 22, 2022 – 8 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: ARFS participated in UWG's annual Benefits Fair, held on October 18, after two years of not doing so. The ARFS table displayed a variety of items pertaining to ARFS and preparation for retirement, including the ARFS pamphlet, *Steps to Retirement for Faculty/Staff*. (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.) Council members Meg Cooper, Frank Pritchett, Anne Richards, Nancy Watkins, and Alice Wesley took turns staffing the table in pairs.
- Other Information Exchanges: Some ARFS and Council members engaged in peer-to-peer exchanges regarding benefits, supplementing efforts by UWG's Office of Human Resources. Information about benefits also was 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 such 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, was the official UWG representative for GA-HERO during the time of the report. Anne Richards, Council Vice President, is the Secretary for this organization.
 - Anne Richards attended the November 12, 2021 virtual meeting, which included a presentation on “Pre-Retirement Mentoring.” Meg Cooper attended the April 22, 2022 virtual meeting, which included a presentation on “Families and Aging.” Kathryn Grams and Mitchell Clifton attended the in-person November 3, 2022 GA-HERO meet-up at the Georgia Highlands campus in Cartersville. The event included lunch, a business meeting, and a program on the “Historic Train Wrecks of Bartow County,” as well as visits to local museums scheduled for interested participants.
- University System of Georgia Retiree Council (USGRC)
 - During the time covered in this report, Meg Cooper was the official UWG representative to the USGRC; Anne Richards served as the alternate representative and also attended meetings to contribute to note-taking and documentation of meeting content; and Mitchell Clifton, an ARFS member and former president of the ARFS Coordinating Council, served as chairperson of this group.
 - Two USGRC meetings were held during the period covered by this report. Both were held online – on April 1, 2022 and September 30, 2022. ARFS members Mitch Clifton, Meg Cooper, and Anne Richards attended the meetings.
- International Association of Retired Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE)
 - Anne Richards attended an Idea Exchange webinar, “The Annual Report Advantage,” on March 2, 2022 and Meg Cooper attended an Idea Exchange webinar, “Transforming Retirement: A Global Perspective,” on May 25, 2022. As far as we know, no one from ARFS was able to attend the AROHE Virtual Summit and 20th Anniversary Celebration on September 22, 2022.
 - 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. 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 420 retiree members at the end of this reporting period. 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: March 2022 (No. 42); July 2022 (No. 43); and October 2022 (No. 44).
 - The Newsletter Committee, an ad hoc committee added last year, 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, and persons not using email received their copies via postal mail. Issues of *The Rejuvenator* can be seen on the UWG ARFS website at <https://www.westga.edu/hr/arfs/rejuvenator-newsletter.php>.
- Collaboration with the Center for Public History

Alumni & Development facilitated initial interaction between ARFS and UWG's Center for Public History (<https://uwgcph.org/>) in January, 2022. Council members Meg Cooper and Micheal Crafton met with Ann McCleary, Director of the Center, and Keri Adams, the Center's Assistant Director, the next month to find out more about the Center and discuss options for collaboration. Suggestions as to potential retirees to contact were made at this meeting and subsequently at a Coordinating Council meeting. Center activities and requests for involvement of retirees were covered several times in the ARFS newsletter. At the annual reunion and ARFS membership meeting in October of 2022, the Center was represented by Mark Janzen, who spoke to the group, and a couple of graduate students who interacted with attendees. We were told that a number of attendees provided contact information so that they could make arrangements to contribute to the work of the Center.

ANNUAL REUNION AND ARFS GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Programs/Events Committee (Meg Cooper and Francie Taylor) did much of the planning for and implementation of ARFS' big annual event, consisting of a retiree reunion, recognition of recent retirees, and ARFS general membership meeting. This event was held in person for the first time since 2019 and was held at the Campus Center for the first time. Dine West and Print Services did a good job providing their services, and two UWG personnel – MaKena Burns and Tressa Kelly – provided valuable support behind the scenes. Photographs were taken by Steven Broome of Jastesa Photographic Resources, himself a retiree being honored. Three UWG personnel – President Brendan Kelly, Ketty Cusick, and Mark Janzen – spoke to the group. Mark was joined by two graduate students who solicited assistance from retirees in projects of the Center for Public History. The 2022-2023 awardee of the UWG Retiree Legacy Scholarship, Jordan Wagner, attended along with his family and was introduced to the group. Meg Cooper, president of the ARFS Coordinating Council managed the event from the stage with the help of a

powerpoint presentation. All but two members of the Coordinating Council attended and volunteered in various capacities, from posting yard signs to cleaning up. Lauren Niedringhaus, the retiree specialist in the Office of Human Resources and an ex-officio member of the Coordinating Council, also provided assistance in planning and implementation of the event. Several spouses of Council members, as well as Lauren Niedringhaus's husband, were recruited to assist as well.

The event was attended by approximately 65-70 individuals, including speakers and 16 honorees from the last three years. In addition to recognizing 2021-2022 retirees individually, retirees from 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were also honored (in two groups) since they had not had the option of participating in an in-person event following their retirement. During the ARFS general membership meeting portion of the event, the slate of candidates for the ARFS Coordinating Council, both officers and at-large members, was presented and approved. The formal portion of the event was preceded and followed by opportunities for socializing and interacting. All attendees received a copy of the 2022 commemorative tribute booklet, and 2021-2022 retirees were presented their medallions by President Kelly. Retirees and tribute writers who did not attend, as well as pertinent UWG administrators, were sent copies of the booklet, thank you notes, and medallions (as individually appropriate). Photos from the event and the commemorative tribute booklet will be available on the ARFS website.

There were some complications in planning for the event that seem to be consequences of the change to support from the Office of Human Resources. This was the first time that ARFS members have been responsible for planning for this major in-person event. While ARFS was lucky to obtain some support from a couple of UWG personnel and Lauren Niedringhaus in HR was invaluable in securing a room in the Campus Center after our reservation had been canceled shortly before the scheduled event, there were some problematic issues related to communication, coordination, and lack of direct access to UWG support resources. For example, hard copies of the invitations went out only about a week before the deadline to confirm attendance. While those involved have acquired more information about how various processes and procedures now occur on campus, we believe it will be important to have more coordinated support from additional UWG staff to ensure the success of future annual reunions.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The ARFS Coordinating Council decided early in 2022 that we should include financial information in the annual report. We do not routinely handle funds. This was the first year UWG personnel did not handle fees from attendees at the annual reunion, and ARFS Coordinating Council members only see some of the invoices related to ARFS expenditures. We realize that finances get complicated since several UWG administrative offices seem to be involved in finances related to ARFS activities, but we are hopeful we can be in a position to report financial matters in greater detail in subsequent annual reports.

Financial contributions of and related to retirees were addressed earlier in the CONTRIBUTIONS OF RETIREES TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY section of this report. The only other income provided by ARFS to the University was the \$145.00 collected from some

attendees at the Annual Retiree Reunion. (Honorees and one guest each did not have to pay; nor did UWG personnel who were involved in support of the event, such as speakers.)

Combining information provided by Beverly Dittmer, Office of Human Resources, with copies of invoices received by Council members, below is an accounting of the financial contributions made to ARFS and UWG retirees by the University. The total is approximately \$3,270.00, based on all information available to us at the time this report was written.

- *The Rejuvenator* – Three issues of our newsletter were published during the time period covered by this report. Services provided by UWG Print Services related to the newsletter include set-up of the newsletter, hard copies that are mailed out to a portion of the membership, and the addressed envelopes used in mailing. Costs for the March, July, and October newsletters were \$536.64, \$300.50, and \$447.85, respectively. The total expenditure was \$1,284.99. This does not include postage for those mailed out.
- Gifts for departing Coordinating Council members – The cost of a gift selected from McEver’s for each of these three retirees was \$57.00 (for all three).
- Commemorative tribute booklets and medallions – Commemorative tribute booklets are printed for each retiree, each tribute writer, and attendees at the annual reunion and recognition of retirees. Copies are also sent to the UWG Archives and to pertinent administrators, with any extras shared with prospective retirees. Printing Services was paid \$184.45 for the booklets and \$48.92 for the envelopes used to mail out booklets and/or medallions to those not attending the annual reunion. We do not have information about postage costs. Engraving of the medallions by McEver’s cost a total of \$151.50. (We had blanks left over from a previous year.) Total expenditure for these items (excluding postage costs) was \$384.87.
- Annual reunion, recognition of retirees, and ARFS membership meeting – Yard signs from Print Services were \$72.00, and Jastesa Photographic Resources was paid \$350.00 for photography associated with the event. We have invoices from Print Services related to printing and envelopes for the invitations that total \$307.09, but have seen another listing with only \$53.08 paid for printing of the invitations. (There was a lot of confusion related to the invitations and mailing out hard copies this year.) DineWest charged \$815.71. Based on the smaller figure related to invitations, total expenditure was \$1,290.79; based on the larger figure related to invitations, total expenditure was \$1,544.80. This does not include postage.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Cooper, Coordinating Council Past President (President, 2020-2022)
 Association of Retired Faculty and Staff
 University of West Georgia