

Southern Oregon University Retirees Association
Membership Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2014

1. Announcements

Carol McNair asked for contributions to newsletter.

John Engelhardt reminded those present of memorial event for Sheldon Rio to be held at 3 p.m.

2. Call to Order

Co-President Dave Hoffman called the meeting to order at 12:33 p.m. in the Rogue River Room at Stevenson Union on the SOU campus.

3. Meeting Place

Dave said turnout (33 including spouses and others) was below what was expected since many more attended last meeting at the new Hawk dining hall and SU has better parking and meeting facilities than the Hawk. Also, he pointed out that cost of individually ordered lunches such as today's is below that of catered lunches we previously got at the SU. He asked if anyone felt catered way was better; no one spoke in favor of that option. Helping pay the higher cost of the catered meals was a drain on the association's budget, he said.

4. New Staff Liaison

Dave introduced Rob Casserly, who is replacing Anya Neher as SOU staff liaison to the association.

5. Membership

Dave mentioned that increasing membership in the association is difficult because of the combination of older members passing away and a low number of new retirees each year. He asked for ideas on how to create more interest in the organization.

6. Retiree Council Election

Seven association members have been nominated for membership on the Retirees Council, according to Dave. Bob Riehm, Barbie Breneiser, Belinda Melendez, Glenda Wood, Lavelle Castle and Frank Lang would serve three-year terms if their nominations are approved by the membership, while Tom Pyle, if approved, would serve one year as a replacement for Don Reynolds, who has resigned for health reasons. The slate of nominees was approved without any dissenting votes.

7. Council Size

Dave indicated that a proposal to reduce the size of the council would be on its May 28 meeting agenda. It has been suggested that there be seven or nine members instead of the current total of 15, largely because of the difficulty in getting such a large group together for meetings. He asked that association members let him or other co-president Ralph Fidler know if they had any thoughts on the matter.

8. Email Addresses

Dave said OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) is interested in getting list of association members' email addresses so that it can promote its classes and teaching opportunities to the group. Frank suggested people be given chance to opt-out of such an agreement. Various methods of doing so were discussed. It was agreed to offer OLLI the list of addresses and inform our membership via email that they have option to opt out of receiving emails from OLLI. Ralph agreed to send out the email.

9. Dues

Association treasurer Lorraine Skaff-Winger asked members to please pay their 2014-15 dues and to donate to newsletter and scholarship funds if possible.

10. Scholarship

Dave announced that council members Herman Schmelling, Barbara Irvin and he had been charged with selecting a recipient of the association scholarship for next year. He indicated that there were 32 applicants, nearly all of whom were quite deserving, making the choice very difficult.

11. President Cullinan

Guest speaker SOU president Mary Cullinan said this year has been "the most difficult in my professional life," but that there are "a lot of wonderful things going on" at SOU. She cited as positives a graduating class of 1,100, the opening of the new residential and dining hall, approval of renovations of three buildings (theatre arts, science and McNeal) and plans for a new student recreation center, the new academic honors and "Houses" programs and the "PEAK" (jobs) program. She said the university is trying to "heighten a sense of community on campus" to help retention. She added that SOU had racism as a "campus theme" this year with Cornell West as a featured speaker. Other positives she mentioned included nearly \$1 million donated toward scholarships and development of new budget and governance plans for smaller universities, including SOU, in the state. She called the latter "a highly important step for us" in that there will be "a board that advocates for SOU, which has not been the case with the state board of higher education."

On the negative side, president Cullinan said collective bargaining with staff and faculty was very tough, that OSBHE accounting changes hurt all seven universities financially, enrollment was down 175 students, the university got \$13 million less from the state in 2013-14 than in 1999 despite having 1,000 more students. Retrenchment, she said, was a result of all the budget problems and, after first restructuring and reducing staff, the university was forced to look at making academic cuts, including majors in physics, art history and French and several certificates, etc., programs. Despite what she called "tremendous uncertainty," she said SOU is moving forward, citing the new budget plan and governance system coming in the near future. The president added that Oregon ranks 48th in the nation in funding of higher education. We are "broke," but "we will be here, we will be successful," but we have to show students our value."

In response to questions from the floor, Dr. Cullinan said:

SOU's top five majors in terms of enrollment are education, business, psychology, criminal justice and theatre arts; the university is making extensive use of social media to help potential students discover the "hidden gem" that is SOU; applications are up despite negative publicity about budget/retrenchment; departments are not "going away," but chairs are under reorganization that creates divisions under which there are different partnerships and wherein budgets will be more tightly managed; she is addressing "no confidence" vote by (among other things) having "event" today at which students, faculty and staff will discuss issues and how to move forward, understanding that "you can't do things the same way" as in past; now vacant Cascade residence hall will house science and then theatre classrooms, offices, labs, etc., while those programs' buildings are being renovated but, eventually, it will "come down" since it uses 75 per cent of the energy on campus; word about outstanding students is spread to potential donors, through press releases, etc., but ideas on possible additional avenues are welcome (Karen Gernant suggested email campaign, Sabra Hoffman said video loop ads at airport), Dave suggested highway signs). Regarding news media reports that she may be leaving the university, the president said her future here is "in flux" but that "I do like it here" and "I am not jumping ship," adding that SOU is "on a path to be sustainable" and that it will "continue going forward."

12. Adjournment

Dave adjourned the meeting at 1:32 p.m.