

On the Relationship between UBC and Professors Emeriti

Introduction

The Executive of the UBC Association of Professors Emeriti¹ has examined the current status of the mutually beneficial relationship between the University and its Professors Emerita and Emeritus², coming to the conclusion that there would be substantial benefits to both if the activities of the Association were enhanced. This study was inspired by the end of mandatory retirement of faculty at UBC and recognizes the changed relationship between the University and its Professors Emeriti. The latter group now includes those who have elected to retire with this number inevitably expanding over time.

Faculty, program directors and others eligible for membership in the Association are distinguished by virtue of their long years of service to the University and the considerable institutional memory this represents. Their years provide extensive historical and current wisdom as to the University's scholarly, educational and administrative programs, as well as substantial disciplinary expertise. Upon retirement, the majority of UBC faculty members remain engaged in activities consonant with the University's mission, whereas others withdraw from academic life, choosing to pursue alternative roles with their families and the community that are independent of the University's mission, albeit their lives as UBC faculty continue to be recognized and reflected in these activities. Professors Emeriti earn their titles through long years of meritorious commitment to the University and typically are recognized as senior and often distinguished in their contributions; hence, valued for their wise understanding of the University and its numerous roles. This paper is designed to describe the

¹ The UBC Association of Professors Emeriti has a membership varying around 500 of the better than 1000 retired faculty, program directors and librarians eligible to join. It is a division of the UBC Alumni Association. References are made in this document to both the Association and those retired faculty with Professor Emeritus and Professor Emerita status who may or may not belong to the Association.

² For convenience, I will refer to this group as Professors Emeriti, although we have long recognized the Latin basis of this term is questionable!

ongoing relationship between the University and those who remain engaged in varying degrees and to generate proposals for changes that would enhance the benefits enjoyed by both the University and Professors Emeriti by actively planning and facilitating retired faculty in these activities.

Continuing Activities of Professors Emeriti

The following is based upon informal surveys of Professors Emeriti who were asked to describe their continuing activities as scholars, educators, and active participants in the life of the University and the communities it serves. We have not had the resources required to systematically survey and carefully document the extent to which Professors Emeriti engage in these activities; however, examples are readily generated and experience suggests the contributions are considerable. Professors Emeriti are often valued because they provide institutional memory—they “know how to get things done”, they know where to get information, they have worked with the people involved in various decisions, and understand the organizational supports and networks that work. Their social networks extend well beyond the University to include other universities, government officials and agencies, and professional, academic and scientific organizations in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and around the globe.

1. Scholarly work

- a. Professors Emeriti continue to contribute to the fabric of scholarly, scientific and artistic achievements through preparation of papers, participation in scholarly meetings, and pursuing activities currently described as knowledge transfer (contributions to popular media, public education, business and industry, health care systems, etc.).
- b. This often includes active participation in scholarly societies, with the seniority of Professors Emeriti typically leading to recognition as officers and in executive roles.

2. Scientific work

- a. Again in varying degrees, Professors Emeriti continue to engage in original research, sometimes through seeking and using research grants, others by collaborating with ongoing faculty, and others mining data and concepts generated over the years. Substantial grants earned by Professors Emeriti bring the University considerable funds directly in support of research, as well as indirect funds in general support of the University. Given their retired status this almost invariably is undertaken without payment and for the most part without support (i.e., using one's own time to do secretarial and research associate work).
- b. This expertise sometimes leads to major appointments on Research Councils and Boards.
- c. Many participate on grant peer review panels for external agencies (NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC, MSFHR, etc.).
- d. Professors Emeriti also are well qualified to provide peer review for scholarly journals, and many serve as journal editors and on editorial boards.
- e. They also participate as officers or on executives and committees of scientific and professional organizations.
- f. Their substantial scholarly and scientific experience often leads to participation on Awards Committees of these various organizations.

3. Educators

- a. Course instruction. The University has policies permitting hiring of Professors Emeriti as course instructors and actively does so. Professors Emeriti are often engaged as continuing education instructors. Others contribute by teaching

classes, conducting seminars for other instructors, clinical teaching, and doing talks in various Departments and programs. Professors Emeriti often do locums because they represent an immediate resource should illness or leaves lead to Departments requiring their services.

- b. They often provide supervision of postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, honours students and undergraduates. These services are rendered across the broad range of scholarly disciplines at the University.
- c. Mentoring is a big role. Professors Emeriti bring expertise and skill to mentoring young colleagues on career development, mentoring senior colleagues on retirement, and working with ongoing faculty, either through continuing involvement in research laboratories, participation on research networks, collaboration on grants as co-investigators or collaborators, and informal interaction with colleagues. An example would be undertaking review of research grant applications in cooperation with the Health Research Resources Office (HeRRO).
- d. Professors Emeriti often serve on committees reviewing programs in Department and Faculties at UBC and at other universities.
- e. Professors Emeriti often contribute by serving as educators in developing countries. Many Schools or Departments have affiliations overseas and people continue to contribute or begin contributing after retirement.

4. Service to the University

- a. Service to the University includes Chairing and serving on committees, ranging from those in the President's Office to those in Faculties, Departments, Institutes

and other administrative units of the University. Examples include Chairing the Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Chairing Final PhD Examinations for the Faculty of Graduate Studies, service on President's Office Student Discipline Committees, and contributing to University convocation. Reflecting the experience Professors Emeriti bring to their work, many have contributed histories for Departments, Faculties and disciplines at the University. A further good example would be the PACCE group, a committee of Professors Emeriti established to advise the President.

- b. Fund-raising and development is enhanced by Professors Emeriti. We note for example that Professors Emeriti are acknowledged as providing strong support and participation in the University's United Way campaign, including a significant number of leadership donors (\$1,000+). They also are actively involved in the Wesbrook Society.
- c. As a division of the UBC Alumni Association, the Association of Professors Emeriti participates actively in its affairs, for example, through contributions to the development of plans for the new Alumni Association building, the Alumni Awards Committee, and participating as experts in its program of cruises and trips for alumni.
- d. The Association developed an information program in cooperation with UBC Human Resources and other administrative units of the University designed to assist faculty in preparation for retirement, including consideration of continuing roles contributing to University activities. The recently developed report addressing Preparation for Retirement provides an excellent illustration of what

can be accomplished by cooperation between the University and the Association.

<http://www.ubcemeriti.org/Preparation.html>.

- e. Professors Emeriti have actively participated in fund-raising for the University. Personal wealth, long-standing contacts with alumni, and the willingness to actively engage as scholars, scientists and professionals in fund-raising can create wealth for the University.

5. Service to the Community

- a. Professors Emeriti actively serve the broader community in important roles as members of community boards (e.g., the Vancouver Foundation, the McCreary Centre Society), thereby raising the profile of the University in these settings.
- b. Service as consultants to business, government agencies and courts. Professors Emeriti can be counted upon to provide reflective, analytic, and policy expertise when writing for professional groups, institutions and governments.
- c. The Association serves the University as a communication medium with retired faculty. For example, the Association sent invitations concerning the dedication of the Nobel Laureates' gardens to approximately 500 persons. It distributes notices concerning activities of the Alumni Association. It provides links to a number of programs including "Giving to UBC" and a number of retirement associations.
- d. Professors Emeriti often serve to translate scholarly perspectives on issues of importance to the community through the various communications media. They are often profiled and provide opportunities for University/community interaction through the media.

- e. The Association maintains a database of retired faculty that is tapped by the University. This includes a continuing record of deceased faculty.
6. Participation in the university community bringing vitality and richness to its activities includes.
- a. Attendance and contributions at scholarly, scientific, and professional meetings.
 - b. Organization of disciplinary and Faculty groups of Professors Emeriti. Some Departments, Schools, and Faculties have their own Emeriti organizations that support UBC in many ways (e.g., Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Medicine). By way of illustration, the Faculty of Medicine group has become very active in developing ways to enhance and use Professors Emeriti in mentoring, fundraising, teaching, etc. We are eager to see development of additional Emeriti groups within Faculties and Departments.
 - c. Involvement in the University Town development of a senior's resident, now culminating in Tapestry in the Westbrook development.

This considerable activity can be construed as a very valuable University resource. These are ongoing services to the University and its mission through voluntary contributions without compensation. The economic value of these extensive voluntary activities is difficult to estimate, but it must be very considerable. The magnitude and nature of contributions is no doubt related to the number of years of retirement.

The University does provide some regular benefits. This includes appreciated library access, parking, continuing recognition of achievement through awards, negotiation of medical and dental benefits, and access to physical space resources for scholarly, research and artistic endeavours by some

Professors Emeriti. Access to office, laboratory and studio space is quite variable and for some not available. This document does not contrast UBC with other Universities in British Columbia and across Canada. Informal survey indicates many Universities provide substantially more services and recognition to retired faculty.

Continuing challenges to full engagement of Professors Emeriti

There is a real or perceived disinterest on the part of the University in maintaining and enhancing the level of involvement described above, both with respect to individuals, although not entirely so, and with respect to the collective group of Professors Emeriti. This perhaps was a consequence of forced retirement in which discrimination against faculty by virtue of their age carried forward into a need to dissociate and a sense of grievance. It is not difficult finding Professors Emeriti with a strong sense of lack of appreciation, loss of social contact, and disenfranchisement. With the end of mandatory retirement there is an opportunity to ensure goodwill towards faculty will continue into retirement. This would encourage prospective retirees to understand they will be valued and recognized for years of service to the University as well as encouraging prospective retirees to think about their possible ongoing interests in the University.

The UBC Association of Professors Emeriti has limited resources. It is almost fully dependent upon the contributions of members who serve as volunteers on the Executive Board of the Association to ensure its activities are fully executed. A modest income from member dues provides for purchase of some services and in return for a modest payment to the Alumni Association we gratefully receive some limited support, including financial services and assistance in booking facilities for our various programs.

The Association lacks office space and services as well as clerical assistance with routine tasks, including maintenance of membership records, financial systems, other databases, preparation of our

various means of communication, including Newsletters and our website, and assistance with program development. As the size and complexity of the organization grows, there is increasing demand for technical consultation and proficiency, primarily available through experts. If office space were available, the Association may be in a position to share the costs of clerical support and to provide volunteers to maintain the office.

Recommendations

1. Formalize and publicly recognize the important contributions of Professors Emeriti.
2. Expand opportunities for Professors Emeriti to participate on University committees.
3. Develop a program for providing office and research space to Professors Emeriti when warranted on an as needed basis.
4. Actively pursue provision of office and social space for the Association and Professors Emeriti. This is an active concept in development of the new alumni centre on University Boulevard.
5. Assist in developing and executing a methodologically sound survey to establish the breadth and depth of contributions of Professors Emeriti to the university. Without this information the University has no means of recognizing or evaluating the contributions.
6. Assist in recognizing the importance of the contributions of Professors Emeriti. As a modest proposal, an award that recognizes the best scientific, professional or artistic contribution of Professors Emeriti over the age of 65 would be very well received. It also would not be unreasonable to consider Professors Emeriti eligible for all UBC awards on a merit basis, save those dedicated to younger faculty.

7. Revise contracts for Professors Emeriti returning to teach courses. They presently are given “post-retirement contracts” rather than ‘sessional’ status and therefore are not covered or represented by Faculty Association agreements.
8. Review benefits available to Professors Emeriti. UBC has declined to provide benefits to Professors Emeriti that are available at other universities in Canada. Retirement would be a more attractive option for Professors still in the system if a better benefits package and other financial incentives were available to Professors Emeriti.
9. Provide opportunities for Professors Emeriti to participate in policy development concerning submission of research grants (e.g., NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC, internal university competitions). Professors Emeriti are discriminated against in competitions for research grants and University awards even though their distinguished careers and continuing high levels of competency would make them highly competitive. A number of illustrations have come to our attention. a) The HSS grants have been an important source of research funding for small projects in the Faculty of Arts. Professors Emeriti are excluded from entering this competition. There may be comparable situations in other Faculties. b) Provision of secretarial support in the development of research and other grants would make them more competitive, with the University directly enjoying financial benefits of success. c) Conference travel funding is terminated upon retirement. Yet many Professors Emeriti remain very active in contributing to scientific, professional and cultural organizations at their own, often considerable, expense.
10. Several illustrations of opportunities for enhanced services to the University are available. With growth of graduate education at UBC, the Faculty of Graduate Studies has an increasing need of senior scholars able to Chair final doctoral examinations. The

Professors Emeriti represent an excellent resource; an efficient system for recruiting able and interested Professors Emeriti is needed. The Office of the Vice President Research and International operates a number of programs that would benefit from contributions of Professors Emeriti; for example, participating in internal constructive review of grant applications, mentoring new faculty at the University, participating on adjudication committees for awards, planning and research grants (e.g., the Martha Piper Research Fund). The various Research Ethics Boards of the University would benefit from the expertise of highly experienced Professors Emeriti. This list of ad hoc arrangements could continue. What is missing are the administrative systems necessary to make this happen in an organized and efficient manner.

11. Consider additional incentives for retirement. It seems likely that faculty would more actively contemplate retirement if they were able to remain active in those dimensions of their careers they particularly enjoy. There are considerable psychological benefits to being able to do this. The incentives need not be monetary, although one's worth is often evaluated in these terms in our society.