There wasn’t a CUCRA meeting since our last Board meeting, but on November 19, I represented our Retirees Association at the 2nd annual meeting of the Northern California Retiree Organization Consortium, better known by its acronym “Nor-Cal ROCs”, which was hosted and organized by the UC Davis Retiree Center. UC Davis Retiree Center Director Sue Barnes serves as President of ARDHE (Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education), a national organization, and I believe Nor-Cal ROCs is Sue’s attempt to help strengthen and develop retirement organization in higher educational institutions in Northern California.

The meeting provided an opportunity to make connections and learn from retiree organizations at a host of other higher educational institutions in Northern California. The eighteen attendees represented faculty and staff associations, and retiree centers at three California State University campuses (Sacramento, San Jose, and Sonoma); two private schools (Santa Clara and University of Pacific); two community colleges (Cosumnes River and Sonoma); and all four Northern California UC campuses.

Initial 5-minute introductions by representatives of the 11 participating campuses brought to light a great variation in retirement program development and services, from UC Davis, with a retirement center staffed by two, full-time professionals and active staff and emeriti associations, to a private university with no programs, services, or even a database. I learned that some campuses have emeriti associations but none for staff, and that some associations that call themselves “Emeriti Associations” represent staff as well as retired faculty.

Director Barnes made a presentation titled: “Retired Faculty and Staff—Adding Value to Academic Institutions.” using PowerPoint and a video to illustrate noteworthy examples of programs involving retirees at universities and colleges throughout the country. One reason we are important, Sue pointed out, is the fact that there are more and more of us, with baby boomers reaching retirement age and living longer. The US Census Bureau, Barnes stated, projects 80 million of us by 2050, and she said as of 200, we live an average of 20 years post retirement. A good birthday quote she passed along: “Birthdays are good for you! The more you have the more you are likely to have.”

A series of round-table discussions followed, and then we all regrouped to share and discuss the highlights that emerged from the discussions. With consensus to reconvene next year, Sue Barnes, has scheduled the 3rd Annual for Wednesday, September 17, same time (9 am – 2:30 pm) and place (Buehler Alumni Center, UC Davis).

I came away from the meeting feeling good about the relative strength and vitality of our Association, and full of ideas for the future, which are listed below, in no particular order. Some, like the first one, may be beyond our current capacity, but it doesn’t hurt to dream…

RETIREES RESOURCE FAIR
This is an annual mid-July event at UC Davis; draw for retirees is free food, ease of getting everything you need: new parking permit, id card, talk with Fidelity rep., talk with Frank Trueba, get planned giving info; and learn about campus and community activities and events. Invite all campus and community organizations wanting to recruit volunteers to set up a table at the fair. Have Association membership applications, collaterals, visors, t-shirts, etc. Can get local business to help sponsor with the food, and handouts.
FOR NON-LOCAL RETIREES

- Always include something of interest for non-local alumni in newsletters and emails
- Connect out-of-state retirees with regional alumni groups
- Have webinars

ADVICE RE OUR NEW OFFICE

- Be sure to get a sign for the door
- Know that people aren’t going to just drop in
- Use for storage
- Use for arranged meetings: volunteer mentoring appointments, Fidelity Rep meetings, etc.
- Use the larger spaces in STARS area for other, larger meetings where appropriate

NEW RETIREE RECEPTION IN JUNE

See Events Task Force for information about this idea. At UC Davis, Sue says they get a lot of retirees in lower levels who don’t get recognized any other way. They – literally – get the red carpet treatment, stars with their name on it – Sue has template – presented by Chancellor with photo taken; given a Retiree mug and a calendar, invited to bring a guest. Recruit sponsors and volunteers to defray cost of food and music.

COMMITTEES CREATE A BOARD LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

Developing committees with non-board members with short-term, smaller, defined tasks (as proposed by the Events Task Force) are a way to recruit and develop new Board leadership.

DEVELOP A PAGE ON WEBSITE AS A VOLUNTEER CLEARING HOUSE

Invite campus and community groups to list their volunteer opportunities, the organization’s contacts and web link (see UC Davis website) Can push out info about new or seasonal opportunities in emails

WAYS TO INCREASE VISIBILITY

- Share our Annual Report beyond the Chancellor
- Get articles in news media on and off campus
- Develop online videos
- Invite a campus leader (VC and other high administrators) to join us before each of our Board meetings for coffee or whatever to update us on their bailiwick.

LAPSED MEMBER STRATEGY

Email; if no response, mail; if no response, make a personal call (can be developed with new database system and staff assistant.)

SOCIAL MEDIA

With younger retirees may want to set up a Facebook page. UC Davis puts pictures on Flickr and links to event on website so people can view all the pictures.

AROHE

Has a new website with online discussion groups, blog that is open to all. Paid members can have up to 8 users who can access website stuff. Next conference is August in Minneapolis.

VIDEOS AND ORAL HISTORIES

Some organizations and centers are involved in oral history projects, interviewing and taping new retirees. Some centers are creating them on an ongoing basis as people retire. Others may take on projects in conjunction with founders days, such as UCSC’s 50th year celebration.