



MESSAGE *from the* PRESIDENT

Larry Teeter

F all greetings AURA members! It's an honor to be serving as your President this year (2022-23). Last year

was nearly 'normal' (post-pandemic) for AURA and AURA activities, but we still noticed some hesitancy for members to engage in public gatherings, particularly if they were maskless. Hopefully, the need for that level of caution is behind us. So, what does that mean for AURA?

AURA was born as an organization to support political action in 1995. For those of you who arrived at your AU/AUM job since then, I have reprinted a brief history of the beginnings of the organization written by Charlotte Ward elsewhere in this newsletter. AURA was a response from retirees to challenges to the quality and breadth of existing retirement benefits programs including healthcare. Thankfully, AURA's efforts to become engaged in the discussion were rewarded positively for retirees. Several other threats to our benefits have occurred since then, particularly in 2008 and 2015 and in each case it was easy to see the need for AURA members to get involved. But what about all those intervening, relatively unthreatening years (like now)? How do we maintain/increase our membership when our benefits seem pretty secure? In a previous newsletter, Nancy Bernard highlighted our reduction in membership since 2019 (-30%).

We expect that the pandemic had something to do with that decline, but what should AURA be doing now, for members during the good times?

AURA needs to grow so that it can be more effective when times demand it. Our membership is a relatively small percentage of the number of recent retirees from both institutions. In our campaign with AERA last spring, to encourage legislators to support a COLA/Bonus for retirees, it was clear that numbers matter. We were able to secure a bonus for retirees, but there was opposition in the legislature and the result was not as large as we had hoped. Both organizations are working to increase their memberships in order to be more effective at communicating the value of retirees to our legislators.

The AURA board has been at work trying to design programs that are more attractive to potential members than just waiting for the next shoe to drop in the legislature (possibly during a future recession?). The plan that we are currently working with includes hosting more activities, such as the airport tour last spring. Except for a little rain, that event was a total success. Members seem to be eager to learn more about growth and change in the community with people they know (other AURA members). In the future we'll encourage members to bring a non-member friend along and hopefully they will consider joining. Other retirees may be more interested in public service and participating in activities that con-

tribute to community welfare (food bank, animal shelter, parks) and we think we could be a catalyst for that as well. AERA (our umbrella organization) currently has a program to document volunteer efforts of all its members over the course of the year. Just about any kind of volunteer work you can think of can be recorded, such as volunteering at a hospital, school, or a church. AERA uses those reports to obtain a total number of hours (and their value) contributed by retirees for the benefit of communities throughout the state. Then this becomes one more piece of information available to demonstrate the value of retirees to our state legislators. AURA will begin participating in that program this year. If retirees are presented with additional interesting and rewarding activities as part of membership in AURA, we think we can expand our membership significantly over time.

We do not plan to reduce our efforts to monitor the health of our benefit programs. Joe Albree, Chair of our Legislative Affairs committee, has established connections with 'Save Our RSA Retirement' and other groups to make sure we are getting timely information about legisla-

tion that might affect us. We think we're doing what's needed right now but our numbers are low. The next time we need to communicate with our legislators about the importance of supporting education retiree benefits, it would carry much more weight if we could say we represent a larger proportion of Auburn/AUM retirees. Our next steps will focus on maintaining/growing our membership and making sure that members become engaged with the organization. To that end, a friendly reminder that if you have not paid your membership dues for 2022, please do so if you wish to maintain your AURA membership (we need to catch up on those lagging COVID memberships!). Also remember that Membership dues for 2023 are being accepted now and are due January 1. Finally, if you know of someone that might consider membership in AURA, let them know that AURA membership is a bargain, only \$25! Just show them the Membership Enrollment form included in this newsletter or tell them to visit the AURA website for a downloadable copy of the form at - <https://ocm.auburn.edu/aura> and click on 'How to Join'.

This article is reprinted from the Spring 2015 issue of AURA news. Larry Mullins was the editor of that issue.

HOW AURA GOT STARTED

by Charlotte Ward

I retired from the Auburn University faculty in the spring of 1994. Late that summer in 1994, I received a phone call, I think from Mrs. Gay, who had run the office of temporary services. She said that the trustees were considering a change in retirement benefits that would affect us all, and that some retirees were going to meet to consider what might be done about it. I agreed to attend the meeting. Nineteen and a half years is a long time, and I don't remember all who were there, except for some people who became leaders in AURA, the organization that grew out of those early gatherings: Wilford Bailey, Jim Warman, Frances Stevenson, and Leah Rawls Atkins.

After a few meetings, we decided an ongoing organization was needed. I agreed to be the first President because somebody had to and nobody else wanted to. I didn't really want to, either, but I've made something of a habit of doing unpopular things, because in general I never have anything to lose, like pay or reputation or friends. I figured if I helped get things going, people would see the value of an organization to keep an eye on retirees' interests, and so they did.

The organization was immediately effective, thanks to President Muse's support. The proposed cuts were not implemented, at least not retroactively. I believe some new regulations were adopted for future retirees, but they would know and prepare accordingly. Those who came later know more about that than I do.

AURA has flourished under my successors and broadened its scope as a social organization as well. I am no longer active, as I don't get around easily any more or enjoy social activities, but I'm glad to keep up my membership, knowing AURA will be there to stand up for the interests of Auburn University retirees for the years to come.

Editor's Note . The AURA board has been discussing the current role and scope of AURA. Professor Ward's article informs us that AURA was formed in a crucible of political necessity. Thanks to efforts of people like Professor Ward and the other early leaders of AURA, we, as Auburn University retirees, have benefited in our retirements. AURA was the first advocacy organization for university retirees in the State of Alabama.



GREETINGS FROM THE ALABAMA EDUCATION RETIREES ASSOCIATION (AERA)!

The Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA) brings greetings to each of you! AERA is the only association that advocates exclusively for public education retirees, AERA is YOUR professional association. Your support and membership are needed to ensure that retirees issues and concerns are addressed at the Alabama Statehouse. Retiree benefits are not guaranteed. AERA is steady and strong at work preparing for the next legislative quadrennium on behalf of our 22,000 members.

Safeguarding retirees earned retirement and insurance benefits are AERA’s main focus. In addition to providing a robust state advocacy presence for public education retirees, AERA provides member benefits such as quarterly communications, group insurance products, member discounts, and much more. Visit www.aerainc.org to learn more how AERA helps keeps you secure in retirement. Show your support and join in membership by simply clicking the JOIN NOW link at our AERA website. Enjoy your fall and winter, stay warm, and War Eagle!

*Best,
Jill Jackson
Executive Director
Alabama Education Retirees Association*



2022-2023 AURA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Larry Teeter – President (2023) | Jim Killian (2024) |
| Art Chappelka – Vice-President (2024) | Marie Kraska-Miller (2024) |
| Nancy Bernard – Past-President (2023) | Leanne Lamke (2024) |
| Anne Adrian – Treasurer (2023) | Deborah Owens (2024) |
| Furman Smith – Secretary & Membership Chair
(2024) | Paul Hollis (2025) |
| Joe Albree (2023) | Dan LaRocque (2025) |
| | David Moncus (2025) |

*Board members may be contacted by name
(in the subject line of your email) at: auretireeassoc@gmail.com*

*Or by mail at:
AURA
P.O. Box 1436
Auburn, AL 36831*

ANNUAL SPRING BUSINESS MEETING

Auburn University Retiree Association members held the Annual Spring Luncheon Meeting at the Agricultural Heritage Park Pavilion on Auburn's Campus May 25th. Over 60 members attended the meeting to help thank board members rotating off the board following their terms of service including Lynne Hammond, Bob Ritenbaugh, and Kale Hill and to welcome three new board members, Dan LaRocque, David Moncus and Paul Hollis. Jill Jackson, Executive Director, AERA, gave a brief presentation of the work the 22,000 member organization does to protect and enhance the benefits Alabama education retirees receive including the role AERA played in securing the bonus checks we all got last April. She encouraged all AURA members to also become members of AERA. The members were also entertained by an overview presentation of the new Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center. Ana Plana and Nicole Gaillard, College of Human Sciences, provided details of the new Culinary Hospitality Management Program and how it will be integrated with the Center which will include a state-of-the-art demonstration/working kitchen, wine gallery, micro-brewery, a luxury hotel with a rooftop herb/vegetable garden, pool, spa and event space.

Thanks to Nancy, Lynne and Kale as organizers for making the event a big success. Thank you, Anne Adrian, for remembering to bring a camera!





AURA STANDING COMMITTEES and CHAIRS 2022-2023

Legislative Affairs Committee - Joe Albree

Monitors legislative action that impacts RSA pension and health insurance programs and provides updates to the AURA Board and membership.

Nominating Committee - Art Chappelka

Solicits and recommends candidates for membership on the AURA Board of Directors.

Membership Committee - Furman Smith or Anne Adrian

Develops and implements strategies to increase AURA membership and participation with emphasis on recent retirees.

Awards and Recognition Committee – Larry Teeter

Solicits nominations and recommends recipients to the Board for the Wilford S. Bailey Award and arranges appropriate recognition for the outgoing President and AURA Board members.

Media and Communications Committee – Paul Hollis

Assists the AURA newsletter editor in preparing three newsletters annually and additional correspondence electronically and by mail, as needed.

Social and Program Committee – Nancy Bernard

Plans and executes educational and outreach activities of interest to the membership and social events including the Fall Dinner and Spring Luncheon/Business Meeting.

**To volunteer or forward a suggestion to one of the committees above,
send an email to auretireassoc@gmail.com
and specify the responsible board member on the subject line.**



P.O. Box 1436
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AU-AUM Retiree AURA Membership Form

Name: _____ AU _____ AUM _____

Check One: Dr. Mrs. Ms. Mr. Other (*please list*): _____

Spouse's Name (*if applicable*): _____

Check One: Dr. Mrs. Ms. Mr. Other (*please list*): _____

Retirement Date (month/year): _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Spouse E-mail: _____

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Single Retiree.....\$25.00 | Surviving Spouse.....\$10.00 |
| Retiree & Spouse.....\$25.00 | Sponsor (an individual or an entity).....\$25.00 |
| Retiree & Retiree Spouse.....\$25.00 | Gift Contribution \$ _____ |

Please direct questions to Furman Smith or Anne Adrian at auretireeassoc@gmail.com.

Please make checks payable to **AURA** and mail to:

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Auburn, AL 36831-1436