

CURAC
ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2016

The University of Saskatchewan Retirees' Association hosted the annual conference and meeting of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada May 25-27, 2016. The harmonious Tyndall-stone campus of the University of Saskatchewan provided a fresh, peaceful environment only ten minutes' walk from the conference hotel. As the representative of WURA, I was privileged to join delegates from universities and colleges across the country. Datta Pillay was very disappointed to have to cancel his attendance due to health issues.

"The Changing Post-Secondary Education Landscape" was the conference theme this year. As always, the opportunity to socialize was a major benefit of the occasion. Coffee breaks, meals, an opening reception, an elegant gala banquet at the Hotel Delta Bessborough all contributed to warm hospitality amid a well-organized conference.

The meeting documents and reports are available on the CURAC webpage at:

<http://www.curac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/5/AGMreports.pdf>

Delegates renewed acquaintances and met new members at Wednesday evening's Mixer/Reception, held at the conference hotel, the Parktown.

Thursday was given over to the presentations growing out of the conference theme.

Dr. Michael Atkinson, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy of the U. of S. spoke on "The Evolution of the Corporate and Research University". Beginning with the first communities of scholars known as the "acropolis", separate (and above) the marketplace below, he contrasted this with the concept of public management, developed in the 1980's, in which citizens became clients, demanding accountability. A top-down concept of governance developed, deriving managerial practices from corporate models. Adding a layer of complexity to this model was the growth of research institutions in the university, entities with autonomy, yet which administrators wanted to be responsive. The practice of decentralizing revenue and expenditures had strengths in transparency and accountability. On the other hand, two problems accompanied: 1) collaboration was more difficult as units compete with each other, and 2) it was difficult for leaders to steer outcomes to the central mission.

Dr. Atkinson felt that the business model, in which the degree became an investment by its clients, is not working. Establishing accountability ("what are students learning?") is a challenge. One aspect of the resistance to change is the lack of concern in the professoriate for quality of teaching. However, most universities in his opinion balance market demands and mission goals.

In the panel discussion following, the issue of marketing forces influencing the universities' mission led to the conclusion that strong leadership is a must, rather than allowing it to be diluted. Atkinson warned however that the "pool of academic leaders is not as deep as one

might think.” Interdisciplinarity is complicated and not easily achieved. He felt that most academics don’t have enough knowledge to see what is needed in an interdisciplinary initiative to make it successful. In answer to the question, “how do the humanities and social sciences make their case for support?”, he advocated that universities must hire senior leaders who value these disciplines, seeing that their value transcends revenue. Another concern was the perceived aloofness of boards of governors, their distance from the academic community making them less responsive to the mission of the university. He called for more shared governance practices between the board and the president.

Next, Deborah Meyers of Saskatchewan Polytech gave greetings from President Larry Rosia, and followed with her presentation, “The Metamorphosis of the Saskatchewan Polytech and the Community Colleges and ‘Innovation Place-University Business Partnerships’”. With a current enrollment of 27,000 students on several campuses, offering 170 programs leading to degrees, diplomas, certificates and apprenticeships, the institute was founded as a vocational training school in 1941. It serves to meet the demand in the province for technical programs, preparing graduates for immediate entry to the workforce. Many faculty approaching retirement continue as “encore teachers”, maintaining contact with students. The school’s reach extends beyond its campuses to regional colleges in remote locations, including international ones in India, Nigeria and several countries.

S. P. (Van) Isman, President of Innovation Place, spoke of the institute’s function and makeup. One of 26 research and technological parks in Canada, and situated on land leased from the University of Saskatchewan, it bridges university programs with entrepreneurship, extending into business, through networking and the sharing of facilities and services with the university. Areas included are agriculture (one of the central programs at U. of S.), life sciences, resources extraction, and so on. Between them, the three campuses (Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert) host over 150 tenants and some 3,500 employees. Van Isman outlined four environments at Innovation Place:

- 1) Technical. Offers technical services such infrastructure with high speed data network and processing utilities;
- 2) Business. Offers services such as management consulting, industry accoc (???), venture capital. Meeting places and food services facilitate these services;
- 3) Social. Park amenities and programming of events foster social interaction;
- 4) Physical. High quality supports recruitment and marketing .

Since 1993, Innovation Place has helped 143 new technical businesses get started; of these 108 are still in business. university business partnerships, with reference to Saskatchewan Polytech and the U. of S.

A panel and open discussion followed.

Luncheon was held at the new Gordon Oaks Red Bear Student Centre, a striking building designed by Douglas Cardinal. The undulating-shaped edifice, wrapped in walls inspired by a buckskin blanket with fieldstone beads inset, highlights the location of the U. of S. on territory

of the people of Treaty 6 and the homeland of the Métis. It serves as a vibrant centre for intercultural learning.

This led into the second major theme of the conference, “Indigenization of Post-Secondary Education”, especially given national impetus by the Truth and Reconciliation Final Report of December 2015.

Ms. Candace Wascase-Lafferty of Aboriginal Initiatives of the U. of S. set out two contexts: 1) Building Reconciliations, and 2) Future Strategic Directions. Under 1), she spoke of eliminating the education gap, and reported on the National Forum held November, 2015, with impacts on teaching and learning, research, student experience and discovery. Under 2), Ms Lafferty gave a striking insight from her own background in a Ukrainian-First Nations family: an ability “to see out of both her eyes”. Comments from the floor observed that, 1) while reconciliation is not easy, mutual respect can be made a doable first step; 2) the lack of a definition of indigenization should stimulate conversation about what it is; and 3) the best approach for reconciliation is to have indigenous and non-indigenous students in the same class, rather than holding classes with a direct ethnic component.

Dana Soonias, the CEO of Wanuskewin Heritage Park, spoke of the centre’s aim in providing culturally themed workshops in order to share indigenization knowledge with all universities and colleges across the country. 13% of students at the U of Regina are from First Nations. The University of Winnipeg now requires 3.0 hours in indigenous-related courses in their undergraduate programs.

The third theme, “Older Adult Initiatives in Saskatoon and at the University of Saskatchewan”, began with a presentation by Dr. Murray Scharf, of the Saskatoon Council on Aging. With 2,000 members the council works to have seniors’ issues placed on the agenda of city council, in areas such as individual services, group services and education and advocacy for the community. The growth of the number of people in retirement and the increase in life expectancy (25% of babies born in 2012 are expected to see their 100th birthday). He outlined the implications of these statistics in the need to build new familial, community and institutional infrastructures. Seniors must be engaged in the processes associated with these developments.

Donna Goodrige, from the U. of S. College of Medicine, presented on “Older Adults and the Benefits from Changes in Technology. In maintaining the goal of cognitive well-being, she spoke of health apps (some 150,000) that are available on the mobile phone, which can address the many chronic illnesses that seniors live with. Factors that figure in maintaining independence are physical health, availability of transportation, appropriate housing, help in maintaining the home, and financial sustainability. A US survey of what seniors want cited self-care tools, wearables (to monitor vitals and symptoms), accessibility to online communities, assistance in navigating health needs and finally, tools to access health records. A comment from the audience spoke of the pressing need for integrated health records, but also spoke of its cost.

After the banquet, these awards were presented:

Contributions to CURAC/ARUCC Award:

Joan Cunnington

Ontario Colleges Retirees' Association and Seneca Retirees' Association
Outstanding among her many contributions was the editorship of the CURAC/CARUCC Newsletter from 2010 to 2014.

Tribute Awards:

Jane Barske

University of Winnipeg Retirees Association
A founding member, Jane was central to the association's constitution, served as its first President, as editor of its Newsletter (2006-2014), and in many other positions in the association.

Margaret Jones

Simon Fraser University Retirees Association
Recognized by the President's 40th Anniversary Award for dedicated service to the university, Margaret was instrumental as a volunteer in the founding of SFURA and in its administration over some 20 years.

John Meisel

Retirees' Association of Queen's
A founding member of RAQ and its first President, John was instrumental in establishing a long-running lecture series bridging the gap between Queen's and the wider Kingston community.

Roch Meynard

Association des professeures et professeurs retraités de l'Université du Québec à Montréal
Central to the development of APR-UQAM, Roch has served as Treasurer, Registrar, Editor of the Bulletin and founder and Manager of the website. He co-organized the 2008 CURAC Annual Conference at Concordia University and at UQAM.

Geraldine Thomas

St. Mary's University Retirees' Association
A former President of SMURA, Geraldine played an important role in raising the level of benefits for St. Mary's University retirees.

CURAC/ARUCC Association Award:

University of Saskatchewan Retirees Association

CURAC thanks USRA for hosting the 2016 Annual Conference and AGM, And for its support over many years.

Friday's sessions centred on CURAC, in "News and Views".

Several institutions are in the time frame of celebrating 50 years since founding. Maurice Gibbons of Simon Fraser University spoke enthusiastically of the daunting challenges of editing the fine book celebrating Simon Fraser University's golden anniversary. Reminding everyone that "you are the history", he urged all member institutions coming up on that marker to consider commemorating it. Several copies of WURA's 25th anniversary celebration were made available for delegates to take.

As a background to the report of the Pensions Committee, Randy Barkhouse, Chair of the committee, gave a primer on Canadian university pensions, their organization, development and governance.

The committee's annual report may be seen on at:

<http://www.curac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/5/AGMreports.pdf> .

See page 39 and following.

Bev Stefureak, chair of the CURAC Benefits Committee, presented the comprehensive report, "Benefit Survey Results", arising from the questionnaire conducted in 2015, to which some of our members responded. The survey compared benefits offered to members of retiree associations of colleges and universities of Canada. 36 questionnaires were distributed to universities and 1 to the Ontario Colleges Retirees Association. 28 universities associations and 6 colleges responded.

Results are tabulated under two main questions: 1) Is a sponsored extended health plan offered, and, if so, is it subsidized; and 2) does the plan include hospital coverage, prescription drugs, home nursing, ambulance, equipment prosthetics, paramedical services, vision, dental and travel insurance. Bev Stefureak thanked her committee members (Paul Marantz of UBC Association of Professors Emeriti; Ron Cooper of St. Mary's Retirees Association; and Robert Drummond of York Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians) for this major report.

Reports and data are posted on the CURAC webpage at:

http://www.curac.ca/?page_id=2732

Next, the CURAC/ARUCC Annual General Meeting followed.

Elections resulted in this personnel on the Board of Directors:

President: Kenneth Craig, (British Columbia)

Vice-President: David Swayne (Ontario)

Secretary: Edgar Williams (Newfoundland and Labrador)

Treasurer: Jim Boyd (British Columbia)

Directors at large:

Fred Fletcher (Ontario)

Mary Johnston (Ontario)

Kohur Gowrisankaran (Québec)

Linda Kealey (New Brunswick)

Beverley Stefureak (Ontario)

Michel Tousignant (Québec)

Ed Unrau (Manitoba)

Mary Margaret Walton (Ontario)

Two sessions followed lunch: “Retiree Outreach and Engagement”, present by Andrew Dunlop, Director Community Engagement and Outreach, U. of S.; and a session of discussion groups. I was not able to attend these, regretfully missing two concurrent tours as well, and an evening dinner cruise.

It was very informative to attend the conference, and gratifying to meet the many retirees from across the country who work intensively to provide background and ideas on maintaining our status in a changing world in academe. It also confirmed my estimation of the excellent work that your WURA executive and members have accomplished over 26 years.