

February 1, 2023

Dear RFSA Board:

The RFSA Advisory Panel, commissioned by Past President Tany Norwood, is composed of the following members: Karrol Kitt, Karen Harrison, Bob Lawrence, Liz Hastings, Robin Fradenburgh and John De La Garza. President Susan Kessler, President-Elect Charles Roeckle, Past President Tany Norwood and Carol Barrett also attend. I served as Chair for 2022-23.

Our charge was to look at the future of RFSA and consider what new programs and services would interest our membership. One of our goals was to think outside the box.

Our plan of action was to gather information from our membership. We began by brainstorming ideas as a panel and then agreed to have table discussions at the fall luncheon. We believed this would give us a good overview of what RFSA could implement as well as give a voice to our membership.

Our report is attached. The first section includes all suggestions and comments that were made by our members who attended our Fall Luncheon, as compiled by the RFSA Advisory Panel. The second section is recommendations from the Advisory Panel to RFSA leadership.

As chair I would like to thank the advisory panel for their hard work, their energy and enthusiasm, and their commitment to this project. We hope that these recommendations will provide insight, ideas and inspiration as RFSA moves into the future.

Sincerely,

Sharon

Sharon Justice

# **Retired Faculty-Staff Association of The University of Texas**

## **Part I**

### **Member Comments & Suggestions from Table Discussions at October 18, 2022 Luncheon**

#### **Membership**

- \*Who is the target group we are trying to recruit?
- \*Look at the breakdown of faculty and staff membership – what is the gap?
- \*Who continues after the first free year? Why or why not?
- \*Work with Human Resources to meet new retirees.
- \*Tap into overall faculty/staff committees such as academic advisor group, ethnic groups, staff council.
- \*Connect with a staff person in each school/college/department who is responsible for Human Resources.
- \*Coordinate a panel of RFSA retirees to talk with those staff members who are contemplating retirement; use the faculty model.
- \*Consider partnerships with other entities such as the UT Club, which is trying to encourage membership among retirees. Might they be willing to sponsor a reception for both UT Club and RFSA to attract potential members from among faculty and staff nearing retirement?
- \*Could RFSA sponsor a luncheon for employees planning to retire?
- \*RFSA needs to find ways to increase the membership of people of color to better represent the University.
- \*What perks can we offer members such as tickets to athletic events? Could we work with Athletics to have the recognize an RFSA member at their various events?
- \*What are the membership requirements? Can the widow of a staff member join?
- \*Is there a plan to notify us of our membership status? Can this be done on-line?
- \*Follow up with new retirees who attended the luncheon.
- \*Attend a meeting with both the Faculty and Staff Councils to acquaint them with RFSA and our programs and services.

#### **Communication / Technology**

- \*How members receive information from RFSA: Very few use Facebook and only a few more use our website. (Some didn't know we had a website.) Most don't use Snapchat or Instagram and overwhelmingly the group prefers emails.
- \*RFSA Magazine: Content is good. Some members would like more information about travel, love the photos, like the member profiles and reports of the group activities. Overall great satisfaction with the magazine and most everyone reads it. Suggestions: A bigger font. Could we send it virtually?
- \*How do we gather information from our members? Overall, there was positive feedback from those at the luncheon regarding the table discussion experience and some members expressed hope that we could continue it.
- \*Mass mail coordination (The mail system seems to be dropping some member emails. Mary Knight has volunteered to assist with the immediate mass email issue and will convene a meeting to identify and resolve the issues with UT IT and Texas Exes staff.)

## **Scholarships**

- \*The scholarship program is phenomenal!
- \*Consensus at one table is that we should consider raising the amount due to inflation. Maybe we could reduce the number of scholarships to allow us to raise the amount.
- \*Can OSFS give an analysis or make a recommendation about the amount?

## **Service / Volunteerism**

We need a volunteer coordinator. Members were familiar with UT Remembers and Orange Santa. What about Mooove In and UT Halloween? In the past, RFSA volunteered with Commencement. Explore other volunteer activities such as other all-university events. What about museums, ushering possibilities, docents, LBJ? Parking can be a problem. Could we use a golf cart? Members might know of service and volunteer opportunities in their former offices/departments, perhaps during peak periods.

While most were not familiar with UT Outpost, they were pleased we participate. Let's build bridges with the community, such as OLLI, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

## **Activities**

- \*Bring back UT student music ensembles (to our luncheons) and take advantage of UT's talent.
- \*Convene interest groups chairs to discuss ways in which they can collaborate.
- \*Conduct oral histories from our members.

## **Technology**

As stated earlier, our membership is not familiar with and does not use Facebook or other social media, or even our RFSA website for information.

Suggestions: Include a link to the website and maybe Facebook in each email RFSA sends out and educate us about Facebook and the website at a future luncheon.

## **Interest Groups**

Some expressed their love of all the interest groups and that's one reason why they joined RFSA. Some don't participate because of time constraints. Should there be an umbrella interest group such as wellness, combining health and exercise and possibly more? For example, let's go zip lining, learn pickle ball, play mahjongg, explore new and different activities for play. Perhaps have an Interest Group Chair to convene all the Interest Groups?

## **Travel**

Suggestions and questions: Some people said they joined RFSA because they enjoyed the trips. Those who have traveled liked the variety of trips. RFSA trips are expensive. Are single travelers accommodated and is it affordable? Could tours of Austin, the UT campus and other local communities be included in travel? Could travel and other interest groups such as Foodies provide joint programs such as the trip to Fredericksburg? Or perhaps local outings don't/shouldn't fall under the "Travel" group.

## **Exercise**

Why don't they participate in our exercise program? Too early in the morning, or they have to come to campus and find parking. In general, members are more interested in Silver Sneakers.

## **Bridge**

Great group of people and enjoy tremendously.

## **Foodies**

Haven't participated, but it sounds like fun.

"I enjoy this group. Could we have more lunches rather than so many dinners?"

## **Health**

The webinars for the Health Group were wonderful! Now that Health and general speakers are combined, will webinars continue and can they be in person?

## **Luncheon Meetings**

Overall a positive response and another reason why people joined RFSA. Great speakers. Suggestions for speakers: Admiral Inman; Craig Champ, recent retiree who volunteered to speak about new developments in hearing aids, lower costs and greater usefulness; Alan Freidman; coaches, and others who would be attractive to the membership. Let's make use of the University's talents.

## **Random Ideas**

\*Have a speaker day. Combine interest groups with speakers for each topic or have a speaker from one of the interest groups talk after the luncheon.

\*Ex Students: Could they have a link to our website? Could they have an occasional article about RFSA in the Alcalde?

\*Establish a mentorship relationship with those who are planning on retirement. Establish a center for mentoring faculty and staff. Faculty and staff can be sources of advice for students such as career paths.

\*Work with UFCU on basic investment and banking skills.

\*Identify members who have unique skills or topics they might like to discuss.

\*Take oral histories of RFSA members.

\*Let's have a book club and a movie group.

\*Provide office space for faculty retirees who are continuing to work on projects, but no longer have office space.

\*Pursue more opportunities for events like "Come From Away" with Kevin Tuerff.

\*From a facilitator: "My two cents inference from the general reluctance to return to campus for activities is that more virtual options should be made available. I think that online participation is a lasting legacy of the pandemic, and one that has benefits for retirees who may prefer not to drive to lectures, book clubs, and other events."

\*Set up phone trees as a way to communicate with current and future members.

\*They were very unhappy about two email changes:

1. Members who retired with an "@utexas.edu" Google email account felt inadequate to deal with the loss of their email storage and getting a new email address.

2. UT's decision to limit the number of emails we can send to members.

\*Bring back UT student music ensembles and take advantage of UT's talent

\*Group outings: Tour the stadium (can do this for \$10.00); tour the new Moody Center; visit the Briscoe History Center; visit the Bullock Museum.

\*From a facilitator: “I think we should look more inside RFSA for people for the speaker series, which I have thought about for some time. There is a lot of expertise within RFSA. Examples from (the luncheon): Bobby Inman, Alan Friedman or the new member who mentioned speech and the communications college.”

\*One member misses the opportunity to attend student performances for free. Staff members in Fine Arts were offered free tickets to attend rehearsals of student productions. The production was not a polished finished product, but rather a work in progress. Having an audience is a learning opportunity for the students.

\*Would it be helpful to have some on-campus parking options for any RFSA activities or group meetings on campus.

\*Facilitator: “A broad conclusion—people really enjoyed the opportunity to be asked what they think. We might consider doing this on a regular basis at our luncheons, perhaps as a pre-lunch or post-lunch activity.”

\*Are there ways the RFSA can inform and encourage students about programs, activities, events, and opportunities student do not know?

\*Is there some way they can ask questions – perhaps by email or the RFSA website?

\*A late comment, after the tables disbanded, was a response to the insurance and email information provided by UT. Many do not understand the QR technology and would welcome a tutorial on that and other technology questions. A related comment was frustration getting clear information from UT. “It is encouraging that the Benefits Office and IT have reached out to RFSA to help disseminate their information, more can be done with this”

## **Part II**

### **Recommendations of the Advisory Panel to the Board**

#### **Membership**

\*All the information about membership should be shared with the membership committee.

#### **Communication/Technology**

\*Ask Miles Abernathy or Holly Thompson to educate members about how to use Facebook and the RFSA website. It could be during or after a luncheon or at a special meeting. We think one of the reasons our members don't use this technology is because they don't know how.

\*Discuss ways to gather feedback from our members. Suggestions from members included having table discussions on a regular basis (bi-annually), using Facebook or our website for a "Questions & Answers" section.

\*Include the RFSA website and Facebook links on all our communications.

\*Explore ways we can have a presence in Alcalde and the Texas Exes website, such as an occasional article and a link to our website.

#### **Scholarships**

\*In collaboration with OSFS, discuss the possibility of reducing the number of scholarships and increasing the amount of each one or, if funds are available, maintaining the number of scholarships and raising the amounts.

(Note: A virtual meeting was held on Tuesday, February 14, with RFSA, Development and OSFS to discuss this issue.)

#### **Service / Volunteerism**

\*Ask someone to volunteer to serve as the service coordinator. Members were familiar with UT Remembers and Orange Santa. Are there other on-campus events such as commencement, serving as docents, Mooove In, UT Halloween, among others?

\*Contact UT's Office of Community Engagement to explore options.

#### **Connecting with UT**

\*Build bridges with our community such as OLLI, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and share our membership list with them so our members can learn of those opportunities.

#### **Activities**

\*Bring back UT student music ensembles (to our luncheons) and take advantage of UT's talent.

\*Convene interest group chairs to discuss ways in which they can collaborate.

\*Conduct oral histories of our members.

#### **Program Coordinator / Project Manager**

\*Many of these ideas did not "fit" into our current organizational structure; therefore, we recommend appointing a member to serve as program coordinator or project manager. The responsibilities would be to follow through on determining viability and implementation of the Random Ideas and other suggestions listed in the report and to assist Carol Barrett with RFSA programs and projects.

*Thank you to our members! We listened!*