

UT Retired Faculty-Staff Association Ad-Hoc Committee to Revisit “Table Topics”

The RFSA Advisory Panel, created in April, 2022, was charged with looking at the future of RFSA. The Panel recommended going directly to the membership for their feedback on our current activities and programs, as well as where we should go in the future. To obtain the greatest participation from our members, we decided to hold small-group discussions during the October 18, 2022, Luncheon. RFSA facilitators took detailed notes on everything discussed at their table (“table topics”), and those were compiled by Advisory Panel chair Sharon Justice. That list is available in the full report of the Advisory Panel on the RFSA website.

In June, 2024, RFSA President Bob Lawrence created an ad-hoc committee to review the feedback gathered at that luncheon session. Members of this committee were:

- Tany Norwood, Chair
- Robin Fradenburgh
- Sharon Justice
- Susan Kessler

These members had served on the original Advisory Panel, so were very familiar with the topics discussed and member feedback.

Our first task was to assess progress on all the items on the list, and we were pleased to note how many items had been completed or were in process. Attached is the list of items and the status of each. For this report, we will focus on recommended action items.

Recommendations

1. Members appreciated the opportunity to give feedback and suggestions. This should be a regular event for RFSA members, even if the format changes.
2. Technology is challenging for many of our members. A regular opportunity to learn more would be welcome at our luncheons. “5 Minutes for Tech” or something similar could also be included in our monthly email blast to members, website and Facebook page.
3. Many members appreciate providing service to our campus community in addition to the financial gifting opportunities we already provide. Service to “UT Remembers”, the minority graduation events, and the student food and clothing bank are good examples. We should continue to offer these and seek out others.
4. The Project Manager should maintain the original list of ideas from the October 18, 2022 Table Topics session, and update it with any future feedback sessions. The list should be reviewed with the Executive Officers on the RFSA Board at least twice per year.

Submitted by Tany Norwood
January 15, 2025
Revised January 21, 2025

RFSA Advisory Panel
Recommendations Submitted on February 1, 2023
Summary of Progress Compiled on January 15, 2025

Membership

*All the information about membership should be shared with the membership committee.
Complete. The Membership Committee Co-Chairs should be reminded to review all the ideas.

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.
Holly Thompson is now website coordinator. Some trainings have occurred, this should be an ongoing process.

*Some members felt our membership process was confusing. Should they sign up for one year or three, when would they learn that they were now members, how would they know when it was time to renew?

Complete, will need monitoring. A long-term goal of RFSA was to add a lifetime membership. That became a reality in December 2024, when the Legacy membership went live as an online option. We also changed the setup of the membership level choices and hope it will be less confusing. Will follow up next spring after members have used the new format.

*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.

As noted above, some tech training sessions have occurred and this should be an ongoing process.

*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.

Ongoing –Every new RFSA leadership team should address this.

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

Complete; should be continuously monitored.

*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.

Tabled. Costs for an ad in Alcalde are prohibitive, but we should pursue other options.

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, 2024, with RFSA, Development and OSFS to discuss this issue.)

Complete. The scholarship amount was increased from \$2500 to \$3000, and number of recipients went down from 25 to 24. This should be periodically revisited as our scholarship fund continues to grow.

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.

Ongoing. We have partnered with OLLI, but are there other collaborations we can explore?

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?

Partially complete. Peggy Mueller agreed to serve as the Special Programs Coordinator, but we need to explore other possible events. RFSA members did participate in the minority graduation events in May, 2024.

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

Postponed due to organizational restructuring which closed this office.

Activities

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

Ongoing efforts in this area, for luncheons and other RFSA events.

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

Ongoing. RFSA President can decide to convene this group.

*Conduct oral histories of our members.

Pending. Sharon Justice had offered to coordinate this project.

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.

Complete. Tany Norwood agreed to serve as the Project Manager.

The following ideas did not fit neatly into any of the above categories. The Project Manager will continue to update progress and decisions on these items and report semi-annually to the Executive Officers of the RFSA Board.

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?

*RFSA members as mentors:

- 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.

- *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.
- *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."
- *Identify members who have unique skills or topics they might like to discuss.
- *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 students do not know?
- *Is there some way they can ask questions – perhaps by email or the RFSA website?
- *It was frustrating trying to get 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"