

OHIO COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION RETIREES (OCHER)

NOVEMBER 16, 2016

The meeting was called to order by president Roger Anderson at 9:30 am, after which the minutes of the last meeting and the treasurer's report were accepted. The first order of business was the induction of Dr. Richard M. Hill into OCHER HALL OF FAME (a designation that our own Dr. Ben Yozwick has attained). Dr. Hill was a valued member of OCHER for many years (all of the years that I have attended), particularly for the wealth of information that he presented to us at every meeting.

Michele Hobbs presented the OPERS report:

--Total assets \$77.2 billion

--OPERS is working to resolve concerns centered on the Alternative Retirement Plan (ARP) mitigating rate.

--OPERS is opposed to resolution that would place a proposal on the ballot to prohibit state pension systems and state agencies from investing in companies with business operations in countries designated as state sponsors of terrorism. While OPERS is clearly against terrorism, they want to make their own decisions regarding foreign policy. They reported that "Our current divestiture policy has proven to be successful, decreasing investments in companies with ties to Iran and Sudan from \$659 million in 2007 to \$19 million in 2014."

Ann Erkman (reporting for Marla Bump of the STRS) gave the Legislative Report:

--The standard Part B premium amount in 2017 will be \$134, which is less than feared.

--Regarding Affordable Care (Obama Care) there is no doubt that the election of Donald Trump will have an effect on STRS health care.

--Legislation in Ohio Senate (24 R./9 D.) and House (66 R./33 D.) will doubtless see charter school increase, simplification of tax code, a tight budget, no increase in mitigating rate and no more dollars for universities.

--HPA (Health and Pension Advocate) representative Gerald Newsom reported that things looked pretty grim. With various cutbacks and increasing costs he fears losing teachers and principals. Our assets are just not growing, he said, so perhaps "we need to invest in riskier stocks". He also reports that since other states are ending or contemplating ending defined benefits in favor of defined contributions our state legislators are thinking along similar lines. Newsom asserted that Ohio taxpayers are not "on the hook" regarding pensions as there is no reason to believe that our pension programs need to be bailed out.

--Greg Nickell reporting on STRS Health Care spent most of his presentation explaining the various pathways to solvency for our health care in the wake of longer years of retirement, declining investment returns and decreasing interest in taxpayer expenditures for education.

Reports from State University Retirement groups:

Bowling Green State:

Enrollment up 3.3%, with ACT scores, GPA's, graduate college numbers and diverse freshman class up. U.S. News and World Report ranks BGSU 103 among public universities; 194 among national universities. Recent luncheon had 60 in attendance.

Cincinnati State:

It was reported that there was insufficient demand for a University-Linked Retirement Community adjacent to campus. Emeritus Association Board reached out to explore ways to support efforts of the newly formed Black Faculty Association. Emeritus Board is seeking formal establishment of an Emeritus Center, which would include modest funding for the Center.

Cleveland State:

Former Ohio Lt. Governor Lee Fisher has been appointed interim dean of CSU-Cleveland Marshall College of Law for 2016 academic year. CSU welcomed largest freshman class in their history.

Kent State:

Enrollment is up, with total for this year 29,105, which includes record setting freshman class, higher GPA's and greater diversity. All Regional campuses have enrollment increases also. U.S. News and World Report rank KSU 188th in Best National Universities list. KSURA is changing their constitution to include classified and unclassified staff retirees.

Ohio State:

OSURA has revised their constitution to transition their connection from the Dept. of Human Resources to the OSU Alumni Association. Their annual fall conference was attended by 400 participants; President Drake gave the plenary address. Shirley McCoy assumed the presidency of OSURA in July.

Ohio University:

The Ohio University Emeriti Association welcomed about 10 new members this season; they are also a pretty active group of speakers' programs and parties. They, too, had a record enrollment—over 36,000 students on all campuses, including on-line students. The University's president for the last 12 years, Roderick McDavis, has announced his retirement effective next summer.

University of Toledo:

Enrollment up (267 students) for the first time in six years; total enrollment 20,648. The retention rate is also slightly up (2.2%). President Sharon Gabor received voice support and a \$90,000 bonus. Their retirees program is varied and active-they heard lectures on topics "Stress, Coping and Hope", state of University by President Gabor and "Monarch Butterflies", and at the conclusion hosted a Monarch butterfly release.

Wright State:

They withdrew from hosting the first Presidential Debate due to escalating costs. Wright State is in financial distress and is dipping into its reserve funds. There is also a retirement incentive program to reduce payroll. About one-fourth of retirement eligible faculty and staff took the retirement option. University enrollment is flat. President David Hopkins scheduled to retire; a search (which includes a WSRA representative) is underway.

Respectfully submitted,

George D. Beelen