

Annual Report

Towson University Retired Faculty Association (TURFA) 2022- 2023

Submitted by

Lawrence Shirley, TURFA President 2022-2023

The **Towson University Retired Faculty Association (TURFA)** had a successful year for 2022-2023. TURFA has several objectives, all that relate to serving the needs of TU retirees and helping them maintain contact with the place that had been their career home for several decades. In some ways, it is like an alumni association, or more age-appropriately, the AARP.

The most visible part of TURFA is a variety of events and activities organized especially for retirees. This year, we have had monthly *happy hours*, monthly gatherings to discuss *non-fiction books* (11 books were read), to analyze *films*, and, with more physical vigor, to take several *bike rides*, usually in and around northern Baltimore County. We are always looking for new kinds of activities but depend on volunteers to make suggestions—and to implement such ideas.

The most dedicated TURFA volunteers are the members of the Executive Committee and Leadership team. The following is the list of the members of the Executive Committee for 2022-23, followed by the chairs of the various committees and the other leaders.

TURFA 2022-23 ELECTED OFFICERS

President- Larry Shirley (Mathematics; Graduate Studies)

Past President- Jane Wolfson (Environmental Science and Studies)

President-Elect- Doug Ross (Management); Annette Chappell (English)

Secretary- Janet DeLany (Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science; Graduate Studies)

Treasurer- Ray Castaldi (Accounting)

Member At-Large- Tom Maronick (Marketing)

Member At-Large- Pat Alt (Health Science)

Senate Representative- Martha Siegel (Mathematics)

Alternate Senate Representative- Bill Smith (Management)

FACET Representative- Precha Thavikawat (Management)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND OTHER LEADERS

Program and Events Committee Chair- Thomas Maronick (Marketing)

Benefits and Privileges Committee Chair- Martha Siegel (Mathematics)

Outreach Committee Chair- Jane Wolfson (Environmental Science and Studies Program)

Oral History Project Committee Chair- Don Forester (Biological Sciences)

Library Liaison- Ellie Hofstetter (Cook Library)

Online Information Co-Coordinator- Peg Benner (English) and Howard Kaplon (Mathematics)

Legislative Affairs- Tracy Miller (Early Childhood Education; Academic Advising)

CLA Commemorative Moments Representative- Jo-Ann Pilardi (Philosophy and Women Studies)

SPECIAL TURFA ACTIVITIES

Every fall, TURFA holds our *Fall Forum*, a public address, which is open to the community, featuring a speaker or panel discussing current issues. In October 2022, our speaker was Dan Rodericks, the popular columnist for the *Baltimore Sun*. His talk featured the history of news reporting in Baltimore, including his own long participation.

In December, TURFA members gathered just across the Pennsylvania border, at the home of Janet DeLany (TURFA Secretary) and Pat DeLany for a TURFA holiday potluck dinner, with much good food and conversation, plus scenic views of northern Baltimore County and southern Pennsylvania.

TURFA organized *tours* to interesting sites in the area—some recent visits were to the Guinness Brewery, the Maryland Public Television Studios, some art exhibitions, and, earlier, the Mormon Temple in Washington. Again, we are always open to suggestions of new places to go.

The Office of the Provost hosted its annual Brunch for all Towson faculty retirees on June 26, 2023, especially welcoming new retirees. This event was held in South Pavilion and featured remarks from Interim President Melanie Perreault, with updates on campus news. The featured speaker was the Associate Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies, Professor Sidd Kaza. He spoke on the University's new efforts to move to the Carnegie classification of R2, with a greater emphasis on research and doctoral programs. Also new retirees were recognized, and the newly elected TURFA Executive Committee leaders were introduced.

Less visible though of value to the University and the community, TURFA members served as tutors to students, and mentors to faculty. As part of its Outreach initiative, TURFA disseminated information about volunteer opportunities within community service groups and other retirement organizations.

TURFA INTERACTION WITH TOWSON UNIVERSITY UNITS

The coordinator of the *Spotlight* series and the at-large members of the Executive Committee worked to strengthen TURFA's connections with various campus units. They invited the College Deans, Library staff, University administrators, and faculty to update TURFA members about their

units' activities and goals through virtual seminars and written reports that were published in TURFA's semi-annual newsletter, *The Advocate*.

At the Departmental level, TURFA noted that as faculty retired, their names sometimes were dropped from departmental email lists. We asked the Chair of the Council of Chairpersons to request the chairpersons to keep the names of retired faculty on their departmental lists unless those faculty opted out. Doing so enables retired faculty members to be aware of and attend department events such as scholarly presentations by guest speakers and by former students and colleagues.

Since the quality of life of senior citizens is often the focus of courses within the Gerontology Department, TURFA has a special connection to that department. For the past few years, TURFA members have offered to participate in interviews with students as part of their class assignments or research projects. We also contacted other programs in the College of Health Professions to see if their students would be interested in engaging with TURFA members.

TURFA informed its membership of two annual no-fee faculty conferences that were sponsored by the Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson (FACET), and that they were welcome to attend. These were the MultiFACET Faculty Research Conference at TU, held in October 2022, and the Educator's Summit, held in January 2023.

SURVEYS OF TURFA MEMBERS

Besides contacting the administrative units of the University, TURFA also reached out to its members to determine their interests and issues via surveys. One survey asked members about how they had handled issues and restrictions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Negative factors included increased isolation and lack of opportunities to travel. On the positive side, participants in the study were able to volunteer more, explore new interests, complete professional objectives, and

have more time with family and friends. The results of the study were presented at the annual conference of the American Society for Public Administration. Another survey directly addressed TURFA programs and services. It explored types of preferred TURFA activities, so the organization could more effectively tailor programs to member interests.

BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES FOR RETIRED FACULTY

The Benefits and Privileges Committee was formed in response to the bylaw changes approved by the TURFA membership in 2021. The Committee collaborated with the Office of the Provost, the Vice President of Operations, and Parking Services to clarify the parking privileges for TURFA members and the procedures for procuring parking passes.

The Committee is working with the Cook Library staff to monitor TURFA members' access to library collections. A huge shift has occurred in the way in which the University gets its periodicals and research journals. The Cook Library staff has assured TURFA that retirees will have full access when the new system is put in place.

OUTREACH

The new Outreach Committee coordinates TURFA's efforts to connect with offices and departments within the University and agencies and organizations outside the University for two primary purposes. The first is to bring TURFA to their attention so that we receive important information from them which we can share with our members. The second is to build partnerships and identify opportunities of interest and value to TURFA members. Our activities are intended to support TURFA members as they engage with the community both in their discipline and beyond.

Outreach developed two new pages on the TURFA website which present opportunities for TURFA member engagement with the local community. One page addresses volunteer opportunities while the other highlights personal enrichment. Most of the listings were consulted prior to their inclusion on the webpages.

The Outreach Committee is working to develop mechanisms to connect retired faculty more effectively to their colleges. It is working on finding ways to engage in campus events more actively and to increase faculty awareness of and knowledge about TURFA prior to retirement. It is also exploring ways in which the community can access and benefit from TURFA members' skills and knowledge.

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Research and scholarship responsibilities are now a part of the new Outreach Committee. To date, there have only been two requests for funding. The Executive Committee agreed that a TURFA member now can request up to \$500 to support research and scholarships. It is hoped that a higher level of support will encourage more applications for funding.

STATE RETIREE PRESCRIPTION BENEFITS

Members of the TURFA Executive Committee remain actively involved in efforts to get the state prescription benefits, promised to TU employees hired before 2011, reinstated. We are working with retirees from other state universities and engaging members and leadership of various committees at TU and the State System of Maryland about these issues.

According to the State, it is too expensive to move forward with the promise to provide those state employees hired before 2011 and now retired with the same drug prescription benefits as those currently employed. According to the State, though such a benefit may have been promised, there

is not a legal contract to which the State is bound. The benefit was to be rescinded in 2018. The court injunction that had been in effect has recently been lifted. Members of an inter-institutional task force are trying to get copies of the actuarial files the State compiled so that they can be reviewed by an actuarial scientist at Towson University for accuracy of and analysis of the data. Two of the factors being questioned are the accuracy of the number of state employees that are being counted and the life expectancy of these individuals that have been used in the State's actuarial tables. Both factors affect the cost of continuance of the benefits. Finding a way to spread information to state employees who may be affected by this issue is challenging.

ASSISTING PRE-RETIREMENT FACULTY

When we learned that some faculty were seeking more guidance about retirement, TURFA collaborated with the department of Human Resources to identify more resources. Expanding upon Human Resource's focus on financial issues surrounding retirement, TURFA initiated the first steps of a mentoring project that provides opportunities for those considering retiring and those already retired to discuss the social, political, family and living issues associated with retirement considerations. The discussions might occur in small groups or in one- to- one meetings with a mentor.

RETIRED TOWSON UNIVERSITY STAFF

Recently, some retired TU staff have formed a task force to discuss organizing a retiree group for staff that is similar to TURFA. Meetings have occurred with various University administrators who are seeking additional information from other institutions that have active retired staff associations. TURFA is offering our support and several TURFA Executive Committee members are serving on the staff task force.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The long-term chair of the Oral History Project, Don Forester, moved out of the community. TURFA thanked him for his service and appointed two new co-chairs. They are Ronald Matlon, Department of Communication, and Margaret 'Peg' Benner, Department of English. The most recent oral history interviews feature three COFAC retirees; those videos will be added to the university archives soon.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION

In March, Annette Chappell, accepted the appointment to serve in the role of President-Elect, when the former President-Elect resigned. In July 2023, Annette Chappell, became the President for 2023-2024.

Thanks to the TURFA members who participated in the 2023- 2024 elections. There was a 60% turnout of voters. Welcome to the TURFA Executive Committee for 2023-2024.

President- Annette Chappell (English, College of Liberal Arts)

President-elect- Jim Roberts (Political Science)

Past President- Lawrence Shirley (Mathematics, Graduate Studies)

Treasurer- Rodney Stump (Marketing)

Secretary-Janet DeLany (Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science, Graduate Studies)

Representative-at-Large- Patricia Alt (Health Sciences)

Representative-at-Large- Virginia Thompson (Geography and Environmental Planning)

BASIC ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Membership for 2022-2023 as of June 20, 2023, = 148.

Lifetime members = 41; Annual members = 107

Treasurer's Report as of June 20, 2023

---TURFA Cash Account Balance = \$12,123.46

---TURFA OHP Fund Balance = \$7,455.00

---TURFA Research and Scholarship Fund = \$1,755.00

TURFA WEBSITE <https://www.towson.edu/retiredfaculty/>