

# The Association of Retired Rice University Faculty Annual Report for 2019-2020



Submitted: April 25, 2020

Prepared for  
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## SUMMARY

ARRUF's principal objectives are to

- **Smooth faculty members' transition from "active" to "retired" status, maintaining a close, beneficial connection between retirees and the university community**
- **Support intellectual and scholarly activities, service, and collegiality among members with a wide range of backgrounds.**

This report describes ARRUF's record during the 2019-2020 academic year and the organization's future potential for supporting these objectives. The pages of the report discuss ARRUF's accomplishments and potential (1) as a nexus for collaboratively exploring issues related to aging; (2) as a hub for interest groups; (3) as a catalyst for a comprehensive university community. It features many ways that ARRUF, individuals, and the university might collaboratively respond to a worldwide trend: increasing longevity.

ARRUF experienced the 2019-2020 academic year as two distinct parts: a period offering its members a varied program of intellectual, social, and service activities lasting from September until early March, followed by a period in which actions to limit the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus stopped all direct person-to-person contact. Both periods, however, offered emerging evidence of the organization's potentials and limits. Although a sizable number of U.S. colleges and universities have created retired faculty organizations, there is little consensus about their function and purpose. The unexpected changes this academic year have afforded time to refine plans and reimagine ARRUF's future.

At the spring 2019 half-day conference, Dr. Paul Irving, Chairman of the Milken Institute's Center for the Future of Aging, spoke on "Purposeful Aging and the Longevity Economy" and described major effects of the ever-increasing lifespan on the economy, institutions, and society in general. No unit at Rice now specializes in this area. ARRUF devoted substantial effort during the 2019-2020 academic year to better understand how longevity will influence housing, employment, transportation and healthcare.

Individual members continued to publish research, scholarship, and new creative work. Scientist Neal Lane, art historian William Camfield, and photography professor Paul Hester each gave talks to members on their major projects. In the second period, the successful Academic Memoir Writers Group continued to meet on-line, producing accounts for the University archives and for publication. Truckloads of books discarded by members were collected and donated for shipment to libraries and schools in developing countries. Analysis of participation suggests that (1) fewer members come to on-campus events when scheduled too close to peak traffic times; (2) discussion groups work quite well on ZOOM; and (3) the Holiday Luncheon and the Provost's Reception for New Retired Faculty are important opportunities for re-establishing and expanding collegial relationships. Election of a new director was postponed. Communication, which has become crucial throughout the university in the crisis, was maintained by newsletters sent directly by email and information posted on ARRUF's website [ARRUF.rice.edu](http://ARRUF.rice.edu).

Conclusion: three policy changes could expand ARRUF's ability to serve the University and its members:

1. Representation on the Faculty Senate and the Benefits Committee.
2. Inclusion in information chains about University projects, such as the ION Center Project, and
3. Expanded administrative and communication technology support.

More activities now occur on-line—whether managed through ZOOM, Skype, or other technologies. Photos or images are central to maintaining a sense of identity and community, making support for web and on-line communication crucial. We believe that participating in the President's division's specialized technologies for photography, the Web, and on-line communication is essential to ARRUF's future. The excellent help ARRUF has received this year from the Associate Provost's staff is much appreciated.

## REPORT

### Background on the Association of Retired Rice University Faculty

During the 2016-2017 academic year a steering committee appointed by Provost Marie Lynn Miranda and led by Emeritus Professor Ron Sass planned the Association of Retired Rice University Faculty (ARRUF), which was formally announced at a reception in May 2017. Membership in ARRUF is automatic for tenured and nontenured faculty who meet university criteria for retirement. Nonfaculty spouses/partners automatically become nonvoting associate members. ARRUF reports to the Provost through the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Oversight of its budget and limited administrative assistance are provided by staff of the Provost and Vice Provost respectively.

ARRUF's principal objectives are to

- 1) Smooth faculty members' transition from "active" to "retired" status, maintaining a close, beneficial connection between retirees and the university community
- 2) Support intellectual and scholarly activities, service, and collegiality among members with a wide range of backgrounds.

Three Directors elected by the membership to three-year staggered terms lead ARRUF. Officers for 2019-2020 were

C. Sidney Burrus, Professor Emeritus of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Director  
Ahmad J. Durrani, Professor Emeritus of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Director  
Clarence A. Miller, Professor Emeritus of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Director

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## Discussion

This report is organized to demonstrate ARRUF's accomplishments and potential

- As a Nexus for Collaboratively Exploring Issues Related to Aging
- As a Hub for Interest Groups
- As a Catalyst for a Comprehensive University Community

A section on changing communication modes and three recommendations conclude the report.

### ARRUF as a Nexus for Collaboratively Exploring Issues Relating to Aging

Because it is desirable that most of those living to older ages remain healthy and productive, particular attention was given this year to technologies for remediation of significant hearing impairment, which occurs in most individuals as they age. During the fall semester ARRUF joined with Professor Rob Raphael of Rice's Department of Bioengineering in submitting a proposal to Rice's Creative Ventures program for support of a one-day conference at Rice on "The Public Health Challenge Posed by Hearing Loss: Scientific Aspects and Technological Solutions." Although the first proposal was not funded, a revised version in the spring semester was approved. The conference is planned for the fall semester of 2020. It is expected to further Professor Raphael's objective of establishing a hearing research center in Houston and to inform members of the Houston community about the substantial improvements in the capabilities and design of modern hearing aids and devices.

ARRUF programs may also explore how social stigma affects the willingness of the hearing-impaired to use hearing aids and how these social and psychological factors can be overcome. An ARRUF program in early March 2020 also featured a presentation explaining how new technologies affect diagnosis and treatment options and improve social engagement and satisfaction.

Implications for the Future: Because Rice is a small but excellent research university, it has no single department that focuses on aging and its consequences for the whole of society, nationally and socially. However, it would be a boon to individual scholars and researchers to have an entity that provided a place for collaboration and multidisciplinary projects. Proposals to funding agencies could highlight ARRUF as a location for collaboration, especially in mixed methods research. ARRUF members could participate as study subjects or as co-PIs, as Emeritus Professor John Anderson of Earth Sciences does.

### **ARRUF as a Hub for Interest Groups**

With a membership representing the whole range of university disciplines, it is not surprising that members have a wide variety of interests. Spouses who pursued careers outside of academia also bring other perspectives to issues such as aging. On-line discussions and collaborations can facilitate the work of small groups that meet to pursue projects such as identifying materials in the University archives.

One of ARRUF's most successful interest groups is the Academic Memoirs Writers Group, which is coordinated by Dr. June Ferrill, an ARRUF member living in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Monthly meetings over the last two academic years have been held in ARRUF's room 412 Fondren. Dr. Ferrill joins by ZOOM except during her semi-annual visits to Houston. At each meeting excerpts from a few members' accounts of important experiences in their academic or personal lives are read aloud and discussed. Gratifying outcomes: Two of the writers intend to publish book-length memoirs, and some pieces have been submitted to the Fondren Library for the Rice University Archives. These academic memoirs can assist as resources for interpreting other devices, materials, reports, and photographs in the collections.

### **ARRUF as a Catalyst for a Comprehensive University Community**

Community Catalyst: ARRUF as Sponsoring Collaborator. ARRUF plans a fall 2020 conference on hearing loss with faculty member Rob Raphael, mentioned earlier. ARRUF has already collaborated with groups such as the Jones School, the School of Continuing Studies, the Rice Women's Club, the Office of International Students and Scholars, and Rotary International's Books for the World project.



In the latter, ARRUF collects books no longer needed by retirees and transports them to Rotary, which receives books from a variety of sources, packs them in containers, and ships them to developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Rotarians in the receiving countries assure that the books reach suitable destinations such as libraries, schools, and universities.

Community Catalyst: ARRUF as Rice Representative in the Greater Community. The Houston area has nearly a dozen colleges and schools with many retired faculty who live nearby. None has a retired faculty organization, although most have alumni organizations. ARRUF would like to foster the creation of similar retired faculty organizations with which ARRUF could share projects that exceed its size and strength. ARRUF invited representatives from other universities to its conferences on what other universities across the country are doing (2018) and successful aging and the longevity economy (2019).

ARRUF's Directors worked with Associate Provost C. Fred Higgs III in fall 2019 to encourage high level administrators at other Houston Universities to establish retired faculty groups there. The associate provost and the directors met with a representative from University of Houston's Central Campus in the fall; they also attempted to schedule a meeting with an administrator from Prairie View A&M, but the meeting did not occur. Representatives from University of Houston Downtown and from St. Thomas

University who attended ARRUF's half-day conferences were encouraging. Efforts to interest upper level management at other schools have been only partially successful, and perhaps other approaches should be tried. The long-term benefits, especially for large-scale projects, would be considerable.

Community Catalyst: Uniting Status Groups. The Membership Committee Co-Chair Priscilla Huston foresees ARRUF's potential to engage both former faculty members and spouses, given that after retirement, faculty and spouses collaborate closely in life activities. Further, members of a professor's family devote years of effort on behalf of the University and deserve to be appreciated and treated as contributors to the University's success. Longer term, she hopes that senior staff will be included in also.

Top priority is a project to update the membership lists and to identify spouses of deceased faculty members. A second project is to work with the Activities Committee to sponsor small events to encourage people to get to know one another, such as attendance at Rice sporting events, plays, and monthly on-line meetings. A third project to be done in collaboration with the HR Department requires interviewing ARRUF members to prepare guidelines for spouses after the death of a faculty member.

Community Catalyst: ARRUF as a Way to Extend Capabilities in Other Rice Projects. ARRUF could be involved in various projects that other groups, Institutes, and Centers conduct. Full-time faculty members' time could be leveraged through limited participation of retired faculty and their families, as occurs with the Office of International Students and Scholars. ARRUF members might serve as interviewers, data analysts, coaches, and so on.

ION Project: In response to Rice University's ION Project Initiative, a group of ARRUF members met at the Rice Faculty Club with Professor Tom Killian (Rice's point person on the ION Academic Partnership Network) and the CEO of Station Houston, which was managing the project at the time. An ARRUF team visited the offices of Station Houston. In the photo below, taken during the visit, those who represented ARRUF are (l to r): Sidney Burrus, David McStravick, Mark Kulstad, Ahmad Durrani, Bob Curl, and Clarence Miller. Mallik Putcha (on the far right) represented the retired engineers of NASA.



ARRUF members could be useful in community liaison and negotiations to ensure community interests are understood and represented. Some ARRUF members had experience during their teaching careers working with design teams and might be useful to the ION venture start-ups. Others have taught negotiation, management communication, and project management in the Jones School. These members' skills could be useful in the workshops and seminars offered through the Academic Partnership Network that includes nearly a dozen regional institutions. Because Rice students have recently become active in defending the interests of communities around the ION Project location, some ARRUF members could also be useful as negotiators and community liaisons. Further, Station Houston has since been replaced as the entity managing ION ventures. It would be helpful for ARRUF to be included in communications about the ION Project so that it could contribute to its development.

## What We Learned by ZOOMing

ARRUF has been using videoconferencing for some meetings and events since Fondren 412 was dedicated in May 2018. Via ZOOM, local memoir writers have met in Fondren 412 and interacted with June Ferrill in Santa Fe, displaying their work. They also were able to talk with former Rice Vice President Tony Gorry, who was unable to leave his apartment during his illness, and access a poem and memoir he had recently published. The Spanish language learning group used it to talk with Mexican experts, who discussed practices such as the Day of the Dead. Committees have met using ZOOM. Video meetings seem a good way to conduct events that will not require in-person interaction and can include people who could not otherwise attend because of where they reside or for health or other reasons. Some members no longer drive their own cars. A mix of important on-campus events such as conferences and receptions plus on-line discussions and collaborations are a way forward, consistent with members' needs and inclinations.

## Communication in a “Distributed Organization”

Members' communication practices in the organization depend largely on how they communicate in other parts of their lives. Members who do not use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter are unlikely to open messages sent via those media. Others who have abandoned email in favor of instant messaging allow email to accumulate unopened. Those who use computers infrequently will resist downloading ZOOM. However, the corona virus pandemic has motivated people to do what they refused to do earlier; this is a time when communication forms can be upgraded or altered and introduced with new programming. If the management at tele-meetings companies deal swiftly with their security issues—and the millions of new users who are becoming acclimated to their product certainly would motivate them to do so—the mix of in-person and on-line activities seems likely to be successful for ARRUF.

Competing for attention. Today's communication milieu includes frequent newsletters with photos, videos, and interactive features from various parts of the University—the Alumni Association, the Shepherd School, and the Suzanne M. Glasscock School of Continuing Studies—to name a few. Departments also are picking up these practices. While the administration circulates letters from the President, it is imperative that other administrative offices, especially the Provost's Office, the Associate Provost's Office, the Vice President for On-line Learning and International Collaboration, and others in this sector implement their vision for the University during this period with IMAGES and other electronic communication easily read on computers, iPads, iPhones, and more. Print communication will likely soon be restricted to reference documents and things that require a verifiable signature. The Provost's related offices will need the services of their own photographer and web specialists in order to maintain status and regard in the University community. Technical staff from the Vice President's office for Global and Digital Strategy must be in high demand in this period. The Association of Rice University Alumni already has this kind of staff. As a part of the Provost's Office and the Associate Provost's Office and related offices, the Association of Retired Rice University Faculty needs to share in the services of these specialists. ARRUF's functions need to be imagined as part of the work done for the Provost's offices and the comprehensive University community, broadly considered.



## Recommendations for University Action

Specific policy changes could expand ARRUF's ability to serve the University and its members:

1. Representation on Faculty Senate and the Benefits Committee. ARRUF sent a proposal to the Faculty Senate to revise its by-laws and include a representative from ARRUF on the Faculty Senate. In the fall, the directors also met with the leaders of the Faculty Senate for lunch at the Faculty Club to discuss the proposal. No reply to the proposal has been received.
2. Inclusion in communication about projects such as the ION Center Project. ARRUF must rely on press releases from News and Publications, articles in the local press, and anecdotal information to learn about the ION Center Project. We need better information and access to decision processes to contribute to this effort and to other University projects. A lack of information reduces ARRUF's ability to create value for the University.
3. Continued or expanded administrative and communication technology support are recommended. Excellent help from the Associate Provost's staff has been much appreciated; more is needed. Managing the efforts of a membership distributed, both locally and internationally, requires timely communication. When the communication activities—newsletter and website—are the responsibility of one person, absences for illness or travel can interrupt the whole organization, especially as many activities move to on-line meetings and events. This year ARRUF lost the services of the person responsible for communication for nearly eight months, and the interruption was damaging. Today we rely on images—photographs and FaceTime, Skype, ZOOM, and other applications to secure our identities and achieve our goals. Appointment of a person with web skills and communication experience is vital to ARRUF's achieving its potential.

ARRUF's leaders intend to maximize the benefit of experienced, engaged retired faculty for the University community and for members' well-being and satisfaction. Comments from members and University leaders can help ARRUF's directors and committees sharpen the focus of its activities and achieve mutual goals. Send comments to [ARRUF.invites@rice.edu](mailto:ARRUF.invites@rice.edu) or to the Directors:

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C. Sidney Burrus [csb@rice.edu](mailto:csb@rice.edu)

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*Please view the Appendix, A Dozen Ideas for Using ZOOM in ARRUF Activities 2020- 2021, on page 8*

## APPENDIX: A Dozen Ideas for Using ZOOM in ARRUF Activities for 2020-2021

The University's decisions in the current health crisis have resulted in cancellation of all of ARRUF's in-person, face-to-face activities for April and May 2020. In light of these changes, the March-April newsletter indicated that the executive committee would propose new on-line activities that could be conducted through ZOOM. ARRUF has a Zoom account, ready to go, but ARRUF may need a "ZOOM Master," similar to a Web Master as additional activities move on line. Below are some ideas that could be adopted and implemented via ZOOM. With ZOOM, an activity can be quite successful with a half-dozen participants or with 50. Size is not quite the problem ARRUF experienced with in-person events requiring that people come to the campus.

### A Dozen Possible ZOOM Activities



#### 1. **A Session on Rice Photos in Our Own Albums**

Remember this photo of Ron Sass and Ron Magid at Rice's first Beer/Bike Race? No doubt there are equally interesting ones in members' albums. Perhaps we could get Geoff Winningham, who published a book of his own Rice photos, to lead the discussion.

#### 2. **A Monthly "Get Together" to Foster Members' Social Interaction and Cohesion**

What are we learning now that can contribute to ARRUF's planning for creating stronger bonds among members? Meeting on ZOOM each month can help us understand one another's goals and priorities. A mix of planned news and freedom to pose topics should keep all engaged.

#### 3. **A Session Discussing Rice Photos Selected by the University Historian**

If Melissa Kean would select a set of photos, a group of ARRUF viewers could identify participants and talk about the context for the photos. It would be interesting and draw on our history at the University.

#### 4. **Travel Photos from Our Favorite Destinations**

ZOOM makes it easy for the "host" to give all the participants the power to display documents or photos. We could have a series of exciting travel shows—either focusing on a single region each time or inviting people to submit their items in advance. Someone who loves to travel could be the host each time.

#### 5. **More Discussions on *The 100-Year Life***

*The 100-Year Life* (Gratton & Scott, 2016) was celebrated as a comprehensive effort to examine the MANY ways individuals might need to rethink their identities and companies and countries might need to rethink their policies and practices when the average person lives to be 100. A small group of ARRUF members discussed some sections in 2018, but there's much more to imagine and there are recommendations to make.

#### 6. **Choosing Retirement Residences: Recommended Processes**

What's ahead for you? A high-rise apartment, a year abroad, a live-in caretaker, or a full-campus continuous care location? A workshop approach helps participants figure out how to evaluate their dreams and realities. A post-pandemic environment may make this important for ARRUF.



**7. Research on Hearing Loss: Its Causes and Social Impacts**

Discussions continue leading up to a collaboration with Rob Raphael on a conference on recent and future research on physiological and social aspects of hearing loss. Using ZOOM to convene discussions over the next several months with faculty in multiple departments who are likely to be interested in research related to aging and hearing loss could expand interest in longevity.

**8. Reports on Research and Scholarly Projects**

Several retired faculty are still engaged in research and scholarly projects heading for publication. ZOOM discussions could convene small groups interested in hearing what progress is made and what new issues are emerging. We hope some of these inquiries could be related to hearing loss or the longevity economy. A new interest group might form.

**9. How Responses to the Pandemic Should Cause Change in Education**

The use of ZOOM and on-line instruction will dramatically increase experience with on-line learning, both among faculty and students. ARRUF could hold ZOOM discussions with both groups to find out what they have noticed and what they recommend. Do any of their insights help us think about the topic of intergenerational learning? Could this lead to an article for a Rice publication?

**10. Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Impacts of the Pandemic**

ARRUF members come from many fields. What do people in our fields think about how the pandemic will affect these fields? Bring back what we've been reading and hearing. And will disciplines or disciplinary associations' conferences be the thing of the past?

**11. Multigenerational Learning**

The pandemic is affecting people from ALL generations, which have to participate in a societal response. What implications does this experience have for foregrounding the notion of intergenerational learning, in which people of different age groups come together to fashion plans, interrogate evidence, and cooperate in action?

**12. Thinking Big for ARRUF's Future: What's Our Most Valuable Role?**

Keeping in mind the latest report from the Center for the Future of Aging, what could ARRUF become if philanthropy can be inspired to support ARRUF and its projects? Why should California have the edge?

And, of course, we could have sessions of the rest of the interest groups, including birdwatching, cooking, and "book club" type discussions!

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