



OCHER OUTLOOK

The Ohio Council of Higher Education Retirees

The **OCHER OUTLOOK**, a periodic publication to share information pertaining to OCHER, ORTA, STRS, OPERS, SERS, Governmental, and campus information pertaining to The Ohio Retirement Systems.

SPRING 2011

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Ohio Council of Higher Education Retirees

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Two years ago on May 19, 2009, OCHER held a conference at the State Teachers Retirement System entitled "Engagements and Actions for Public Retirement Systems". At that time, we focused on the theme of defined benefits on the national scene and heard Beth Almeida give a presentation "A Better Bang for the Buck – The Economics of Defined Benefits". She was representing the National Institute of Retirement Security. The upshot of the talk was that defined benefits makes financial sense for all concerned, especially tax payers which includes public pension recipients. The plan for the March 15, 2011 OCHER Conference was not too dissimilar from 2009. The timing for the conference could not have been better. It was a joint effort by STRS Ohio and OCHER. Dick Hill and I are appreciative of the contributions of Laura Ecklar, Director of Communication Services, and Terri Bierdemann, Director of Governmental Relations.

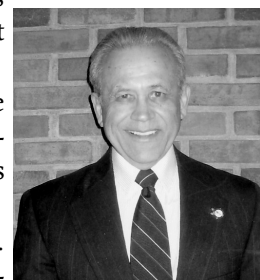
Three main issues were addressed 1) The rationale for defined benefits, 2) The funding of Ohio's public pension plans, and 3) the action that could be taken to present our case to various groups especially legislators. Terri Bierdemann presented the Ohio scene on funding proposals from Ohio's public pension systems. As is common knowledge now, STRS's funding proposal called for no new tax dollars (no increase in employers' contributions) and met the 30-year unfunded liability stipulation. However, we now are aware that the governor has changed the rules and is asking for a 2% increase for employees and a 2% decrease for employers – the 12%-12% budget proposal. The disposition of the budget is not known at this writing. Actuarially, this is not a sound proposal for the system for it will not meet the 30-year funding stipulation.

Tom Lussier from the Coalition to Preserve Retirement Security gave an overview of what is happening in other states and identified the opponents of defined benefits nationwide. There is no doubt there are moves to go from defined benefits to defined contributions pension plans.

The afternoon sessions focused on the nuts and bolts of taking action. Registrants were divided into four groups, two working on national pension issues and two on Ohio's. The first task was to identify the top four talking points, the second to state the rationales for them, and third was to determine the actions that could be taken. The four top talking points are: 1) DB pensions provide financial protection for both plan members and taxpayers; 2) DB's are both efficient and economical; 3) DB pensions provide a stable source of revenue for Ohio's local economies; and 4) DB pensions play a critical role in reducing the risk of poverty and hardship among older individuals. The action plan included identifying target audiences – legislators, committee chairs, relevant committees, legislative staff, blogs, twitter, newsletters, the media, e-mails, editors, general public, personal contact, face book, rallies demonstrations, special days, fellow retiree, and a few others. The timing for this action to take place is NOW - as soon as possible for the current legislation. A summary overview of the afternoon session was prepared by Roger Anderson and Tom Sweeney and sent to all conference participants.

LOU DIORIO

APRIL 11, 2011



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OCHER Hall of Fame

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OCHER ADVOCACY REPORT

DICK HILL

Don't Reinvent The Wheel . . . Instead, Get It Rolling

On March 15, 2011, at OCHER's conference "**A Call for Action**", we heard two excellent speakers: Terri Bierdeman, on the "Current Political Landscape and Its Relationship to Pension Reform", and Tom Lussier, who gave an "Overview of What Is Happening in Other States". Both emphasized the sweeping challenges to Defined Benefit plans at both the national and state levels. They further emphasized the urgency for action, most particularly to inform the public of facts showing clearly that defined benefits is the best long-term choice for the tax-payer as well as the retiree.



In the break-out sessions following, four working-groups (two at the national level, and two at the state level), started with 14 already well-defined and tested statements from the current literature. Due to time constraints, they each focused their attentions on just four of those statements, and discussed, debated, and eventually settled upon, the inherent strengths of each. Each working-group chose a sub-set customized to their perspective, but all 14 are reproduced again here as talking points for immediate use (not in any preferred or priority order):

- A. Defined Benefit pensions provide financial protection for both plan members and tax payers.
- B. Defined Benefit pensions are both efficient and economical.
- C. Defined Benefit pensions provide a stable source of revenue for Ohio's local economies.
- D. Defined Benefit pensions support Ohio workers.
- E. Defined Benefit pensions support the services provided by local, state and federal governments through the taxes paid on these pensions.
- F. Defined Benefit pensions play a critical role in reducing the risk of poverty and hardship among older individuals.
- G. Retirement systems remain a small portion of state and local government budgets.
- H. Public pension plans are not in crisis.
- I. State and local governments are already taking steps to secure their pensions for the long-term.
- J. Public employees share in the financing of their pension, which in many cases is in lieu of Social Security.
- K. Pension dollars help the economy of every jurisdiction,
- L. Long-term investment returns of public funds continue to exceed expectations.
- M. State and local government retirement systems do not require, nor are they seeking, Federal financial assistance.
- N. State and local employees are compensated less than comparable private counterparts.

In short, we have a wheel (this one with 14 spokes). Let's get it rolling

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OHIO COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION RETIREES VISION and MISSION

THE VISION:

The Ohio Council of Higher Education Retirees will be an effective organization enabling it to share ideas for the improvement or establishment of individual university retirees' associations and speak on issues important to its members. It will be recognized by other major retirees' associations throughout Ohio.

THE MISSION:

Serving as a forum, the Ohio Council of Higher Education Retirees will strive to enhance existing Programs and help other Ohio higher education institutions establish their retirees' association and, in consensus, take positions on benefit issues and other matters that concern the welfare of the group as a whole.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Now that the conference is well over, hopefully participants in the conference went home to alert their constituents to take action. The OCHER representatives know what they have to do in order to let identified groups, especially legislators, become aware of higher education's retiree position on these bills – House Bill 69 and Senate Bill 3. This is a call for action.

THE 2011 OCHER/STRS CONFERENCE

THE MORNING REPORT

VELMA POMRENKE

“A Call for Action”

“A Call for Action” was the theme for a conference sponsored jointly by OCHER and STRS on March 15, 2011 in Columbus, Ohio. Approximately 60 people from across Ohio attended. The conference was planned and chaired by Lou DiOrio and Dick Hill.

The goal of the conference was to empower attendees to make the case with legislators and others that the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan represents a “responsible retirement” that helps the economy and preserves tax payer dollars.

Executive Director, STRSOhio, Michael Nehf, welcomed the attendees and stressed again that we need to work toward preserving our pension system “for the good of its members” as opposed to the state’s notion of “for the good of the state”.

Speaker Terri Bierdeman, Director, Governmental Relations Department, STRS, spoke about “Current Political Landscape and its Relationship to Pension Plan Reform.” In the struggle between Defined Contribution (DC) and Defined Benefit (DB) plans there are potential winners and losers. Winners for the DC plans are the vendors (Brokers, Bankers, Money Managers, etc.); those opposed to labor unions and those whose ideology favors DC. The losers in the DC plan are the Taxpayers, the Economy, Employers, and Employees. (For details of these key points contact Robert Gandee for Terri’s Power Point slides.) Speaking to the issue of where the bill to reform STRS pension is, she stated it is currently in the Government Oversight and Reform Committee (SB3) chaired by Keith Faber and in the Health and Aging Subcommittee on Retirement and Pensions (HB69) chaired by Kirk Schuring. It is critically important, she concluded, that we keep talking to our legislators.

The second speaker of the morning was Tom Lussier, Coalition to Preserve Retirement Security, on the topic “Overview of What is Happening in Other States”. (His Power Point slides are also available from Robert Gandee). His presentation emphasized the threat we face which is the movement to dismantle and privatize state pension plans and their public funds held as investments for retirees. This threat is centered in the zealotry of Grover Norquist, president of

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The 2011 OCHER/STRS Conference

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Americans for Tax Reform; the academic research of Professor Joshua Rauh of Northwestern University and Federal Legislation by Congressmen Devin Nunes (R-CA); Paul Ryan (R-WI); and Darrell Issa (R-CA) who have introduced the “Public Employee Pension Transparency Act”. (Please Google these gentlemen for biography and ideology.) Mr. Lussier emphasized that we must make our case to counteract this threat since we seem to be losing the case in the media. The strongest message on the federal level should be: Everyone, public and private workers alike, deserve a real pension and it has been the greed of Wall Street that has gotten our states and cities into the current financial mess, not public employee pension plans.

Organizations that are working to counteract these threats are: National Association of State Retirement Administrators (www.nasra.org); National Council on Teacher Retirement (www.nctr.org); and National Institute on Retirement Security (www.nirsonline.org). Please become familiar with these organizations on the web.

As the conference adjourned for lunch, facilitators and recorders were instructed about the afternoon session on “Development of Action Plans: What We Can Do Back Home”.

THE AFTERNOON REPORT

ROGER ANDERSON

Bowling Green State University

THOMAS SWEENEY

The Ohio State University

The 2011 OCHER/STRS Conference

Summary of Talking Point Comments and Selected Action Plans

In the afternoon of the conference, participants were divided into four groups, two nationally focused action groups and two state focused action groups. The goal was to empower those attending to make the case with legislators and others that the Defined Benefit Plan represents a “responsible retirement” that helps the economy and preserves taxpayers’ dollars. Individuals in each of the four groups were asked to rank four of the fourteen listed talking points (see Dick Hill’s article on page 2) that were most important to them. Then each group discussed and identified the four most important to them providing the rationale for each.

Talking Point Comment Summaries

A. The two State focused groups identified six talking points as among the most important.

1. Defined Benefit pensions provide financial protection for both plan members and taxpayers (A in Hill’s list on page 2). Preferred by both groups.
 - a. The vast majority of educators do not have the time and expertise to invest for their pension on their own.
 - b. DBs provide long-term financial protection with a steady income at retirement. Seniors therefore avoid falling into poverty and becoming a burden on their relatives and state and local governments.
 - c. Costs of DB plans are a small portion of state and local government costs, if any. Taxpayers pay little if any of the costs.
 - d. Lifetime sustaining benefits are provided in DB plans. Pensioners will not outlast the benefits.
2. Defined Benefits are both efficient and economical (B in Hill’s list on page 2). Preferred by the Red Group.
 - a. Investing and asset allocation is done by experts over the long run for a small fee so that returns are greater over time and more stable with less risk than with DC plans.
 - b. DB pension costs were not the cause of the recent economic recession.
 - c. State pension plans are not seeking nor do they plan to seek federal and state subsidies or payments.
3. Defined Benefit pensions provide a stable source of revenue for Ohio’s local economies (C in Hill’s list on page 2). Preferred by both groups.
 - a. Pension fund recipients provide a long-range source of stable income for state and local economies.
 - b. In periods of economic downturn, pensions provide a stable source of income for local economies.
 - c. DB pension plans help in the recruitment of highly qualified candidates for K-12 and higher education positions and for attracting businesses to states (Ohio).
 - d. 86% of STRS retirees remain in Ohio and spend their monies in Ohio.
 - e. 75% of the monies for pension payouts come from long-term investment income.
4. Defined Benefit pensions play a critical role in reducing the risk of poverty and hardship among older individuals (F in Hill’s list on page 2). Preferred by the Blue group.
 - a. DB pensions provide a steady source of income for retirees over time, most of whom do not receive social security benefits.
 - b. DB pensions provide sufficient income for recipients who historically have had lower wages than those in the private sector, given the education, training and preparation time needed to obtain a job in education.

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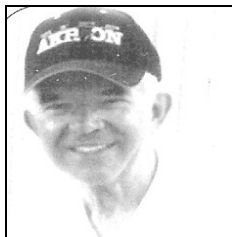
5. Public pension plans are not in crisis. (H in Hill's list on page 2). Preferred by the Red group.
 - a. Since the maximum thirty year period for payout of pensions is required in Ohio, the STRS pension reform proposal addresses this problem and seeks to achieve that goal.
 - b. STRS pensions receive funding from members, employers, and investments and not directly from taxpayers.
 - c. The STRS DB plan is designed to have sufficient assets over time to provide for participants without cost to the tax payers.
6. Public employees share in the financing of their pension, which in many cases is in lieu of Social Security (J in Hill's list on page 2). Preferred by the Red group.
 - a. Most STRS pensioners do not have social security benefits so they depend on the STRS DB plan.
 - b. Educators have lower salaries over time compared to private sector employees, given the expenses, training, education and experience of the educators.
- B. The two National focused groups identified seven talking points as most important.
 1. Defined Benefit pensions provide financial protection for both plan members and taxpayers (A in Hill's list on page 2). Preferred by the Green group.
 - a. There is stability and predictability with a DB pension plan.
 - b. Pensioners are taxpayers.
 - c. The statement "Defined Benefit Pensions are both efficient and economical" supports statement one.
 - d. DB funds are exclusively for pensioners.
 - e. DB plans are cheaper than DC plans.
 - f. DB plans protect taxpayers from the costs of poverty programs and poverty itself.
 2. Defined Benefit pensions are both efficient and economical (B in Hill's on page 2). Preferred by the Yellow group.
 - a. Good research demonstrates the truth of the above statement.
 - b. Pooled investments equal better management and lower costs.
 - c. The cost averages twenty four cents for every 100 dollars invested.
 - d. DB pension plans historically have been well run over time. DC plans are generally offered in the private sector by private companies where the greed factor comes into play.
 3. Defined Benefit pensions play a critical role in reducing the risk of poverty and hardship among older individuals (F in Hill's list on page 2). Preferred by the Yellow group.
 - a. Sufficient funds are guaranteed for retirement.
 - b. DB pensions reduce the risk of falling into poverty after retirement which is a major national problem.
 - c. DB plans provide long term commitment for sufficient income
 - d. The information in item 3 is backed by research.
 4. Public Pension plans are not in crisis (H in Hill's list on page 2). Preferred by the Yellow group.
 - a. Actuarial data backs up the statement.
 - b. Include data to prove the point.
 5. Public employees share in the financing of their pension, which in many cases is in lieu of Social Security (J in Hill's list on page 2). Preferred by the Green group.
 - a. The media is misinformed about statement five.
 - b. Employees share substantially in funding their pension plan (Ohio).
 - c. We should be alert to proposed increases in employee contributions.
 - d. Ohio is a non Social Security state for state employees.
 - e. Eliminating STRS Defined Benefit pensions will not eliminate the need for a replacement.
 - f. STRS members pay more for better benefits than they would for Social Security.
 - g. Statement five is readily understood but an unknown fact among the public.
 6. Pension dollars help the economy of every jurisdiction (K in Hill's list on page 2). Preferred by the Green group.
 - a. The title of statement six should be modified to say "DB pension dollars..."
 - b. There is global applicability since pensioners travel and move to other states.
 - c. Most DB pensions returns are dollars gained from investments, not from taxpayer dollars.
 - d. Stable income equals a stable economy.

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OUR FEATURED INDIVIDUAL

HENRY “HANK” NETTLING

THE DEFINING MOMENT



The “Voice” of OCHER’S financial reports speaks to us with great authenticity, for Henry “Hank” Nettling, OCHER Treasurer, brings to his task over 39 years of experience in higher education accounting and finance. Nettling’s rise in the financial management of the University of Akron began in 1964 as Assistant to the Controller, then moved through a number of title changes, eventually retiring as the University’s Vice President for Business and Finance in 2003. This was not a “Cake Walk” for many of these years were very turbulent as the University endured its share of “migratory Presidents” and their entourages of questionable middle managers. However, Hank, as he does for OCHER, maintained “a steady hand” on the organizational financial rudder.

The Nettling influence was not limited to the University of Akron; upon arrival at UA in 1964, Hank noticed that the annual financial reports from sister schools in Ohio were not comparable. With the blessing of the Auditor of State and the Inter-University Council of Fiscal Officers, he formed a committee to research the differences and evaluate what changes each school had to make. It was during this time, Hank met past OCHER Treasurer Tom Ridenour who was then the Controller at The Ohio State University. The Committee’s efforts spearheaded by Hank eventually led to the Auditor publishing a Uniform Manual of Accounting for Ohio Public Higher Education Institutions. A few years later, the National Association of College and University Business Officers took up a similar project for national compliance which led to their manual being published. Hank served on this project as well. While there may have been small differences remaining, one could make reasonable comparisons among universities across the country.

Much different from many of ours, the Nettling Story has its beginning in a distant land during a very different time. Hank’s grandparents came to America from Hungary in 1907 to work and save money and returned to Hungary in 1914, intending to return to America at a later date; however, world events intervened preventing their return to America. Yet, during this sojourn to America, Hank’s father was born in Akron, Ohio giving his father United States citizenship. Unknown at that time, this was to become a defining moment in the life of the Nettling family, particularly Hank.

Living in the backwoods away from the carnage of World War II, Hank observed the movements of the opposing armies from afar. However, the drone of the warplanes flying overhead and the family’s scrambling to hide during those precarious moments in the summer kitchen which had been dug into the hill side behind their home are forever etched in Hank’s childhood memories.

As the iron fist of Communism closed and took control of Hungary during August 1947 in the aftermath of World War II, the family’s home and land was confiscated motivating Hank’s father to begin negotiating to move the family out of the country. While waiting through the many bureaucratic delays, the members of the Nettling family along with the many other individuals of German descent living in the neighboring enclaves were herded together for deportation to East Germany. After traveling for three days aboard a cattle car train presumably bound for East Germany, Hank’s father managed to escape at a refueling stop and contact the American Consulate Office in Budapest (for by his birth in Akron, Ohio he remained an American citizen). The next morning a guard came along the train calling, “the Nettling family, the Nettling family”; once located, the family was placed on another train heading in the direction from which they came. The scene in Dr Zhivago where the doctor and his family were being deported to Siberia reminds Hank of his deportation experience except that his family was traveling during the summer.

By November 1947 with everyone’s papers in order, Hank and his family were placed on a train bound for Vienna where they boarded a Pan American Clipper flight headed for New York. In New York and unable to speak the language, the family was placed on a train to Akron, Ohio by a Travel Aid. Shortly before his 12th birthday, Hank stepped from the train in Akron. He later came to realize that as he stepped from the train, he was only a few short blocks from his father’s birth site and the University of Akron.

After settling in their Akron home, Hank entered the Akron Public Schools as a student at Leggett Elementary School attending several of the lower grades because he spoke no English; he attended summer classes to enhance his math skills. After graduating from the former Akron South High School, Nettling entered the University of Akron as an engineering student, but chemistry made him reconsider his major changing to business where he found his forte in accounting under the direction of Mary Slusher, professor of accounting, and Mr. Gordon, professor of taxation.

Working in various administrative capacities in his career at the University of Akron, Hank was not just a counter of the beans, for he has had many fulfilling and positive interactions with the faculty, students, and staff members involving deferred annuities, payroll deductions, saving plans, as well as student loan applications and payment counseling. Nettling often comments on the positive culture of the University and the many dedicated individuals who were totally committed to the institution through-out their working careers; foremost among those to whom he expresses his admiration and whom he calls his “Great, Great Mentor” was the late Wayne Duff, former Vice President of Finance. Friendship and loyalty are synonymous with Hank; of his many working acquaintances, he continues in retirement to maintain close relationships with countless numbers through his activities with the Akron University Retirees Association and the Saturday Morning Balcony Bunch at Acme #1, particularly, Dr. H.K. Barker, former dean of the College of Education.

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7. State and Local Government retirement systems do not require, nor are they seeking, Federal Financial assistance. Preferred by the Yellow Group.
 - a. This is not quite true.
 - b. Most states are pursuing pension reforms and taking steps to improve the financial stability of their plans.
 - c. There is no current federal bailout plan.
 - d. The statements "Retirement systems remain a small portion of state and local government budgets and "Long-term investment returns of public funds continue to exceed expectations" support statement seven.

Selected Individual Action/Application Plans

Individuals in each group were asked to develop an Individual/Action Plan listing the target audience(s), the activities, and the timing. Each group then discussed and provided a sampling of the individual action plans.

A. State focused plans.

1. The target audience is the local state legislators, the committee chairs and relevant committees, legislative staff, and the Governor. Individuals are to meet personally and/or write letters, participate in rallies, protests, and demonstrations as soon as possible. Recommended by both groups.
2. The target audience is the active and retired members of STRS. Retirees are asked to explain and defend DB plans and the STRS reform bill at retiree and active meetings, through blogs, twitter, newsletters, and personal contact as soon as possible. Recommended by both groups.
3. The target audience is the media. Letters to the media, e-mails, with special focus on reporters and editors as soon as possible is encouraged by both groups.
4. The target audience is the general public to be contacted personally, through facebook, the media, twitter, blogs, rallies, demonstrations and protests as soon as possible. Recommended by the yellow group.

B. National focused plans.

1. The target audience is fellow retirees, actives, friends through newsletters, mass mailings, e mails, as soon as possible. Recommended by the yellow group.
2. The target audience is pension-less folks through confronting CEOs and educating private sector employees, as soon as possible. Recommended by the yellow group.
3. The target audience is the legislators Brown, Portman, Boehner, and Sutton through letters both individual and group as soon as possible. Recommended by the yellow group.
4. The target audience is friends, social contacts, colleagues, fellow church members, faculty associations, the faculty senate through programs presenting information and promoting support for DB and through newsletters as soon as possible. Recommended by the green group.
5. The target audience is retirees by sending an e-mail. Recommended by the yellow group.
6. The target audience is legislators on the House Ways and Means Committee to oppose mandated Social Security but support Social Security reform, to change WEP/GPO by e-mailing retirees. Recommended by the green group.

Henry "Hank" Nettling

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Hank equally relished the faculty characters such as the one who some years after taking a teaching position with the University went over the edge wearing strange ear-rings and driving a very strange looking old Ford. He frequently would visit Hank's office talking by the hour, purporting to be a Marine vet and elaborating on the number of people he had killed in combat. While experiencing that twilight between reality and delusion, he staged a duel at "high noon" on Buchtel Avenue in much the same manner as the Gary Cooper movie of the same name. Of everlasting patience and understanding is Nettling.

Hank met his wife, Arlene, on a blind date while they both were students at the University of Akron and they married following graduation. They have one daughter, Kim, who is a Math Specialist in the Stow-Monroe Falls School District working with teachers to perfect new/effective ways to teach math. Both Hank and Arlene are avid fans of the Akron Zips, holding season tickets for football and basketball for over forty years. In recent years being a football fan has become several degrees more comfortable during those blustery, rainy, and chilling fall game days, for the Nettlings are now members of a small group sharing a loge in the new football stadium. The Akron blue and gold flows true and their commitments remain forever strong even during this latest season.

Defining moments have been many in Hank's life, but the most life-changing was that call of the guard for the Nettling family and their subsequent return train to Budapest and eventually back to their village; the rest is history. In the absence of that call of the guard, what might have been?

Hank Nettling, the Exchequer Extraordinaire!

THE OPINION

Henry Barlow

Who Are We And How Can We Be More Effective Advocates?

Asking the question, who are we, may seem trite but occasionally it may be appropriate for us to take stock of where we are and how we perceive ourselves. I want to argue that we live in a social environment replete with negative images of older people. Just begin with the demography of aging where older people are seen as part of the dependency ratio. The total dependency ratio for society includes the number of children and older people in relation to the productive population which is typically defined as those age 18-64. Never mind that the concept is a bit imprecise. The crucial point is that the word dependency shapes how we are perceived and much of the negative sentiment toward older people.

Older people are depicted in terms of economic dependency and in this state, they constitute a drain on societal resources for income, health care, social and emotional support.

In addition to the master status of older person, what are the other components of our identity? I want to list those that I see as most significant.

1. We are retired university faculty and staff and members of our university retiree association as well as OCHER.
2. We are citizens in our home communities, the State of Ohio, the U. S. and some may also think of ourselves as members of a world community.
3. We are members of families with spouses, children, and grandchildren.
4. We are members of professional, social, civic, and other organizations.
5. We are professional people who tend to support professional norms and value the scientific approach generally as well as having pursued our careers with reference to doing scientific work.
6. We have pursued careers in the public sector and as such we may be attuned to a concept of the common good.
7. We are beneficiaries of public sector pensions including STRS, PERS, and Social Security as well as other systems such as TIAA/CREF.
8. We are linked to Medicare and other health care systems.

If we see ourselves in terms of these characteristics, how can we be more effective advocates for preserving and perhaps enhancing our retiree and health care systems?

I begin with the observation that we must be political actors and, in fact, any position we take has political consequences. Being apolitical is not an option. So, how can we be more effective advocates? Being committed to a scientific perspective and motivated to support the common good, we have a special opportunity and obligation to provide leadership with reference to the factual basis of our position as older citizens and retirees. If one accepts the dependency image we fail to meet our obligations to ourselves and others. Moreover, I argue that we should see ourselves as having a unique opportunity to be creative, committed, citizens who are willing to advance our cause without reservation in every important venue. Unfortunately, the most serious challenges we may face is the inertia of some colleagues, the commitment of others to ideology rather science and an inability to appreciate the significance of a commitment to the common good.

OPERS UPDATE

The information found in this OPERS UPDATE is provided by Sara Baker with the OPERS Office.

OPERS recently launched a new social media communication initiative, which includes a presence on Facebook and Twitter, a weblog (blog), increased e-mail correspondence and the continued use of the opers.org website. As our membership's use of digital communication grows, we intend to reach out to our members through multiple communication channels.

PERSpective - The first step in our social media initiative was PERSpective, a blog we're employing to share our viewpoint on important pension-related issues. Our goal for the blog is to share our perspective with you and, in turn, listen to your thoughts on issues impacting retirement. We will bring you regular updates on such topics as legislative efforts to reform pensions, the performance of our investment fund, and health care. Subscribe to PERSpective by clicking on the RSS feed logo on www.oper.org, or read it regularly at: <http://perspective.opers.org>.

Facebook and Twitter - Once the blog was established, we created a Facebook page, which uses the name "Ohio PERS," and started "tweeting" via the microblogging service Twitter, using the name "ohiopers." Facebook and Twitter messages are used in tandem with PERSpective as a way to keep people informed of news, events and items of interest. We encourage you to follow us on Twitter by searching @ohiopers. Be sure to "Like" us on Facebook in order to receive updates from OPERS within your newsfeed. You do not need to have a Facebook account to read the news and comments on the OPERS page. Simply use the link from our website to access the Facebook page at any time.

eNewsNow - As part of our efforts to increase electronic correspondence with our membership, OPERS has launched a mass e-mail capability, eNewsNow. This capability allows us to provide members and retirees with timely information more efficiently than ever before. The first eNewsNow message was sent to more than 200,000 OPERS members and retirees in

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THE VIEW FROM THE CAMPUS

THE UNIVERSITY of AKRON

Sport was the big news on campus during the fall and winter. The UA soccer team won the 2010 NCAA National Soccer Championship, the first time any UA sport has won a national team championship, with a record of 22-1-2. Victories over No. 4 North Carolina and No. 3 Wake Forest started the season and continued with a victory over Louisville to win the NCAA title. Seven student athletes went on to sign with Major League Soccer teams. During the winter, the UA basketball team won over rival KSU to take the MAC Tournament title and was seeded No. 15 in the Big Dance's Southwest Region second round game against Notre Dame. UA lost that game 69-56.

Academically, UA law School students were ranked #1 for first-time takers of the Ohio Bar Exam with a pass rate of 94%, above the statewide rate of 84% for all takers.

UA became one of seven charter member of the National Academy of Inventors (NAI) which was founded at the University of South Florida. The University has 60 individual inventors who will be inducted into the Academy. UA has nearly 200 active U.S. patents. Other charter members were USF; Auburn; Georgetown; Cincinnati; Embry-Riddle and China Medical University.

UA received a \$2 million grant from the Third Frontier funding for a public-private corrosion-control collaboration with MesoCoat inc. of Euclid. The effort will focus on developing and commercializing advanced inorganic metal coatings to potentially reduce corrosion's \$400 million annual cost to the U.S. infrastructure economy.

The American Psychological Association (APA) presented a "Best Practices" honor for 2011 workplace best practices. UA was recognized for its conflict resolution program which promotes employee growth and development.

Finally, UA retirees had well-attended monthly luncheons with various interesting guest speakers and will wind up their annual activities with a Lobster and Suds event.

Hank Nettling

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

The Bowling Green State University Retirees Association has had an active winter and spring. On January 19 over 80 attended a luncheon and presentation by Dr. Montana Miller, Associate Professor of Popular Culture. In addition to speaking on her academic interests, internet research ethics, she also described her life in the French circus in her teen years as a trapeze artist and her most recent avocation, sky diving.

The March 23 BGSURA luncheon and program featured Patrick Fitzgerald, retired director of WBGU Public Television, who spoke on the history of the television station.

A number of BGSURA members attended the annual joint luncheon of University of Toledo and B.G.S.U. at the Toledo Club. Speaking was Dr. Richard H. Putney, Director of Art History for the University of Toledo, who gave a fascinating illustrated lecture on selected Gettysburg National Park monuments relating to Pickett's charge.

In other news, on March 22 the B.G.S.U. Board of Trustees announced the appointment of Dr. Mary Ellen Mazey as the University's eleventh President effective July 1, 2011. Dr. Mazey is the current Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Auburn University. She started her academic career in 1967 in the Geography Department at Wright State where she later served as Chair of the Department of Urban Affairs and Geography. From 2005-2009 she served as Dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences at West Virginia University. Dr. Mazey will replace Dr. Carol Cartwright who is retiring June 30, 2011.

The B.G.S.U. Women's Basketball team won the MAC tournament and competed in the NCCA tournament. The new Stroh Athletic and Event Center will open August 1 and house the varsity basketball teams and the women's volleyball and gymnastic teams.

Construction is progressing on two new campus residence halls and a new dining facility scheduled to open in August. In 2012 the new Wolfe Center for the Performing Arts will be dedicated.

Roger Anderson

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

The Kent State University Retired Faculty Association has been meeting on the third Wednesday of each month during the Spring 2011 Semester in the Manchester room (room 122) on the first floor of the University Main Library. Each meeting begins at 3:30 p.m. for coffee, tea, cookies and socializing with the program taking place from 4:00-5:00 p.m. After the program, the speaker and all of those in attendance are invited to dinner for further discussion and conversation.

The Spring 2011 Program is as follows:

February 16, 2011— "Why Our Stories Matter: Writing the History of a Community Through Oral History", Sandy Perlamm Halem, President, Kent Historical Society.

March 16, 2011— "Traveling Stanzas: Encouraging New Voices in the Community", David Hassler, Director of the Wick Poetry Center, Kent State University.

April 20, 2011— "Town and Gown: Improvement Plans for the Campus and the Community", Tom Euclide, University Architect, Kent State University.

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THE VIEW FROM THE CAMPUS

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May 5, 2011—"Senior Honors Thesis", Students in the Honors College, Kent State University. This is a Thursday meeting.

June 1, 2011— Annual Picnic at the Fred Fuller Park Shelter House. Gather at 11:30a.m., lunch at noon. Bring a dish to pass.

Myra West

OHIO UNIVERSITY

The Emeriti Association at Ohio University continues with its monthly luncheon program with programs on a variety of topics ranging from an overview of the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Policy to Christmas music, to an award winning playwright. Members of the association volunteer for gardening in the O.U. Emeriti Park as well as two local art institutions -- The Dairy Barn and The Kennedy Museum. On May 21 the university will celebrate Emeriti Day with a panel discussion on changes over the past 40 years and a reception.

On campus the big news involves budget cuts (as is true of all state-assisted universities and colleges in Ohio) and getting ready for the switch from quarters to semesters in the fall of 2012.

Ed Baum

SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Celebrating the past. Educating the future. SSU is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year as we look at the accomplishments of the past, spotlight the unique role that higher education plays in our society, and look forward to the future. Many people in our state and in our region made an investment in higher education 25 years ago by supporting the creation of Shawnee State University. While other universities are celebrating major milestones like 100 years or 125 years, Shawnee is the youngster of the group of 13 state institutions of higher education in Ohio. Being the youngest provides some interesting opportunities. SSU was recently approved to offer its third master's program and is looking forward to adding more in the future. The campus has been growing, the student population has reached an all time high and continues to climb, and additional student housing continues to be built and then filled.

Since 2008 the Shawnee State University Retiree Association has been growing and making its presence known. One of the purposes of this organization is to offer opportunities for continuing service to the University. This past spring SSURA members served as volunteers for the annual Celebration of Scholarship undergraduate conference, assisting with registration, judging the poster session, and serving as moderators for some oral presentations on April 7 & 8th. The following day retirees were honored at the SSU men's baseball game. Retiree Billy Graham threw out the first pitch and retirees and their guests were treated to free food and given 25th anniversary t-shirts. All of this was the kick-off of a year-long anniversary celebration for SSU and the retirees are looking forward to helping celebrate this year and those in the future.

Marcia Tackett

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

WSU Faculty and Academic Advisors are putting the final touches on course preparation and student preparedness for the transition from the Quarter calendar to the Semester which will occur for the Fall Term, 2012.

Acknowledging budget cuts to higher education of 10.5% will inevitably mean a tuition hike. This will be an offset of about \$15,000,000. A 3.5% increase to WSU's current tuition of \$7,797 for in-state students would add about \$272 to tuition bills.

The University has become home to the National Center for Medical Readiness Tactical Laboratory. The facility is located on 54 acres at the site of a former cement plant; it is just minutes to WSU research labs and the Wright Patterson Medical facility. The area is called Calamityville. The project of the Department of Emergency Medicine in the Boonshoft School of Medicine at WSU is the state of the art collaborative training and research facility that will provide unique training opportunities for the world's medical, public health, public safety, civilian and military disaster responders and decision makers. The Facility offers a unique combination of classroom training with realistic simulated environments such as confined spaces, underground tunnels, and flood situations, just to name a few.

Louis Falkner

OPERS UPDATE

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late January. If you did not receive a message from us via e-mail, you are either not registered for My Benefits System (MBS) or your current e-mail address is not on file with OPERS. To begin receiving these important e-mail alerts, register for or log-in to MBS and update your contact information.

OPERS will continue to utilize our website and printed newsletters to communicate important messages, but social media allows us to reach our retirees immediately when something important or newsworthy happens between scheduled publications.

You can access our social media outlets by going to the front page of the OPERS website, <https://www.opers.org>.

We also have direct links to the sites:

PERSpective: <http://perspective.opers.org>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/OhioPERS/189641364396921>

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/ohiopers>