

**The Association of The University of Akron Retirees (AUAR)  
Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes  
Held in person and Zoom**

**I. Call to order.** The Board meeting was called to order on September 28, 2023 by President Harvey Sterns at 10:00 am.

**II. Welcome & Announcements:**

Members attending: Harvey Sterns, Rita Klein, Cathy Edwards (Zoom), John Heminger (Zoom), Mary Verstraete, Linda Sugarman, Mary Schadle, Richard Steiner, Robert Gandee, Dan Sheffer, Ali Hajjafar, Richard Milford, Kathy DuBose, Tom Vukovich, Diane Vukovich, Tom Nichols

Absent: Carl Lieberman, Mel Vye, Martha Vye, Mary Schadle, Connie Heldenfels

Harvey suggested that we add a tab to the website to include volunteer opportunities for our members. The Board agreed they could be posted as we receive them without going through any approval process.

**III. Approval of Minutes:** Two corrections were requested : Ali Hajjafar’s name was missing his last name and the date for the next meeting should be September 28. Bob Gandee moved to approve the minutes as corrected, Ali Hajjafar seconded the motion. Approved.

**IV. Treasurer’s Report.** John Heminger reported that communications with the University have improved a bit. He now receives a Journal Report that includes every transaction. Workday doesn’t generate smaller account reports. He also noted that deposit slips have changed.

**August 2023**

UA Account income: membership dues \$525.00

UA Account expenses: OCHER dues \$100.00

Petty Cash income: \$0.00

Petty Cash expenses: to D. Sheffer for recognition award purchase \$75.00

	UA Account	Petty Cash	Totals
Initial balance	\$12,720.33	\$235.38	\$12,955.71
Income	\$525.00	\$0.00	\$525.00
Expenses	\$100.00	\$75.00	\$175.00
Final balance	\$13,145.33*	\$160.38	\$13,305.71*
Final Balance			
August 2022	\$9,416.09	\$69.74	\$9,485.83

\* These include dues payments for future years.

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**Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes**  
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**V. Corresponding Secretary.** Linda Sugarman reported that she sent the following:

A "Get Well" card to Bill Beyer and "Sympathy" cards to the family of Ken Mast and to the family of Mary Jenkins

**VI. Committee Reports.**

**A. Programs:** Tom Vukovich began his report by thanking Martha Vye for her outstanding work on the newsletter.

Tom has ensured with Food Services that costs for the luncheons will remain at \$15 and there are nine menus to rotate through. He felt that Dr. Steve McKellips gave a good presentation on Enrollment Management at UA for the last luncheon. The next speaker is Mark Gerberich. Tom mentioned that the Summit County Teachers Association had recently toured the Ohio Star Theater and Amish Country at a cost of \$130 and perhaps we could offer something similar.

We were contacted by Cristina Oickle from StoryPoint Senior Living in Medina to provide a talk on understanding senior living options and by Claudia Kaerberlein, Senior Director of Development, to provide a program on estate planning, tax planning retirement planning and planned giving. Concerns were raised about having non-biased speakers.

The Board discussed these topics in conjunction with the previously discussed OCHER/STRS sessions. A committee was formed to discuss the development of a mini conference in the spring to include all of the aforementioned topics. Harvey also suggested something on ageism.

Diane reminded the Board that Soup & Chili was coming up on Thursday November 2<sup>nd</sup> and we need to have people volunteer to bring soups and chilis.

Bob Gandee mentioned again his disappointment in last year's Founder's Day event, specifically the lack of people attending, especially Deans. It was suggested that we invite Paul Levy, VP & Chief of Staff at UA, attend a Board meeting to discuss this and the loss of retiree benefits.

**B. Membership.** Chair Mel Vye was absent and thus there was no report

**C. Political Action.** Bob Gandee and Dan Sheffer attended the OCHER meeting last Tuesday and reported that Jerry Newsome's report indicated that there is an attempt to get employers to pay more into retirement accounts. Currently both employees and employers pay 14%. Nationally, this is very low for employers. Obviously there will be a lot of push back from school boards and such. There is also continued concern over the loss of COLA and about how much is being paid to the Investment Consultants for the retirement accounts.

**The Association of The University of Akron Retirees (AUAR)  
Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes  
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Dan passed out a flyer summarizing the new Healthcare benefits. AETNA will replace Medical Mutual and CVS Caremark will replace ExpressScripts.

**D. Benefits.** Linda Sugarman indicated that she had no report and that hearing aids will be added to the health benefits.

**E. Faculty Senate.** The report from Ali is attached. There were no questions.

**F. University & Community Service/Website.** Dan will be ensuring that all updated meeting minutes are posted.

**G. Scholarship.** Mary Schadle was absent. Rita indicated that we have only received one Thank You note from a student awardee.

**H. Newsletter.** Harvey and the board sincerely thanked Martha Vye for her hard work on the newsletter.

**VII. Old Business.**

Recruitment of a President-Elect – The Ad Hoc Reference Committee has not yet met to review the By-Laws to determine whether we should have a VP versus a President-Elect, currently a 6 year commitment.

**VIII. New Business.**

Tom mentioned that he was disappointed at the attendance at the last luncheon and was concerned that an “Opt-Out” of e-mail from the Development office may be affecting who receives our lunch e-mails from Development. This should be investigated with Claudia.

**IX. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 am.

**Respectfully submitted: Mary Verstraete, Recording Secretary**

**The next meeting of the 2023-2024 year is scheduled for October 26, 2023 at 10:00 am at the Infocision Board Room**

**The Association of The University of Akron Retirees (AUAR)**  
**Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes**  
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Faculty Senate Meeting September 7, 2023

Chair Budd called the meeting to order. In her remark, she said:

Welcome to the first meeting of the Faculty Senate for academic year 2023/24. The Senate is the legislative body of the faculty at the University level. Its meetings are relatively formal and are conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order. Senators who wish to be recognized should hold up their name card, be sure to hold it above the head of the person sitting in front of you. Use the mics on the tables when you speak, you will need to press the button to turn on the mic and then press the button again to shut the mic off when you are finished speaking. Those attending virtually should type "request" into the chat window and wait to be recognized. When we vote, I'll ask those present to say "aye" and those online to raise their "hands" to be counted. Don't forget to sign in on one of the attendance sheets circulating the room before you leave. Please be aware that both senate meetings and minutes are part of the public record, and members of the media are in attendance. Keep discourse civil, and address comments to the chair to de-personalize any contentious issues. And if I mispronounce your name, let me know the correct pronunciation so I can do better next time. I welcome Luke Smith, with us today from the Board of Trustees.

It is good to see you all here in person; I hope you had an excellent summer and have plenty of energy for the new school year. Welcome to returning, newly elected and re-elected senators. Thank you all for your willingness to serve on faculty senate. Shared governance is a passion of mine. As some of you know I was involved in the leadership of the Akron-AAUP for twelve years. As I've transitioned from union to academic leadership, I've gained even more of an appreciation for the importance of the faculty perspective early in the decisions that affect our students and programs. New senators, and possibly seasoned ones, too, may be wondering how senate functions, and how shared governance works within this structure. All senators are required to serve on at least one senate committee, or serve as senate representatives to other bodies such as the Graduate and University Councils. Senate committees are where most of the work to craft policy, make recommendations on matters relating to academics and provide curricular oversight is done. Committee chairs forward recommendations and proposals to senate. Individuals who wish to have items placed on the agenda should contact the secretary in writing at least two weeks prior to the senate meeting. The week before each senate meeting, senators are sent the agenda, minutes, reports, and any motions requiring a vote. Please review these carefully so that you are prepared to participate in the meeting. Your input is vital to a good process, senate was never meant to function as a "rubber stamp". If you see a potential problem with the matter under consideration, please speak up. Proposals can always be returned to committee for further consideration. As representative as senate committees are, your engagement at this level ensures we pass legislation that works for all of our disciplines. Approved curriculum proposals are forwarded to the provost, all other legislation requiring further

**The Association of The University of Akron Retirees (AUAR)**  
**Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes**  
**Held in person and Zoom**

action is forwarded to the president for review and appropriate action. Note that all items forwarded from senate take the form of recommendations. As you engage in your senate service, remember that communicating and collaborating with all stakeholders early in the process when forming policy or proposals will help to address all of our needs. Committees include representation from most if not all of the colleges and many include staff, contract professionals and the administration, so working together should occur naturally. Also know that I'm happy to direct you to the best person to include in your work. But please be on the lookout for ways to build better shared governance structures into all of our processes. For example, to facilitate a better process for those making proposals for a new academic program (not courses, programs), the curriculum review committee (CRC) is introducing a new step. Previously, new academic program proposals were entered by the faculty into the curriculum system to go to the department and college curriculum committees. If approved, they went through the Graduate School as necessary, then the CRC, then on to be approved by senate before forwarding to the Office of Academic Affairs. It was only after all those other approval levels had been passed that the relevant dean or OAA were able to view the proposal. They were then in the position of having to approve or reject, as is. To create a better process, the CRC are requesting that basic information about proposed new academic programs be submitted to the relevant dean and OAA for informal feedback before entering into the system as before. The administration has information on state level directives and nationwide trends. They also have access to data that will help determine the viability of a particular program in this region. Seeing a proposal before it goes into the system will help them to help faculty address any potential weaknesses early on and increase the likelihood for approval at every level. It will also save the time of everyone involved - another passion of mine. Given how painful it can be to close a program, we must be as certain as possible that there is demand for every new program. Another important role senators fulfill is to help the senate executive committee provide advocacy for our constituents to the upper administration. If there are matters of concern to you or your colleagues, please bring them to myself or any other EC member so we may bring them to the appropriate individual for resolution or at least clarification as quickly as possible. You may also use the senate-EC contact form on the senate home page. We depend on you to help us represent your needs and concerns with the many changes happening across campus. I know that you all have many demands on your time, and that senate is just one of them. I hope you see the importance to your students and the university of this work, and I thank you in advance for your service. If you are interested in being more involved, we are holding elections today for two at large members on the senate executive committee, plus representation to the Graduate and University councils and the Ohio Faculty Council. Please consider self-nominating or nominating somebody else for these important positions. I'm happy to

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**Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes**  
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end with some good news, Provost Wiencek has shared with me that retention numbers are strong. Retention is the faculty and academic advisor superpower - I know how hard you all work to ensure the success and well being of our students and it's gratifying to see the results in our retention numbers. Thank you for making a difference, and for making sure our students know they belong here.

Secretary of the Executive Committee reported:

The summer work of the Senate Executive Committee included the following items. In May, the committee met with Chair Gingo, President Miller, and Provost Wiencek to end the academic year.

We received updates on debt reduction strategies from President Miller.

At our meetings with the provost and senior vice provost, we discussed enrollment, plans to revise the university rule on workload, the Workday implementation and the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action in the admissions process.

The EC discussed the senate attendance policy, Section C of the Shared Governance MOU, changes to campus parking, graduate assistant funding and state legislation impacting higher education.

Senate committee assignments were made.

Senate ratified the actions of the Executive Committee made on behalf of the Senate during the summer. Accordingly, the Summer Graduation list and Program and course proposals from CRC were approved.

President Miller in his remark said:

thank you and welcome back to the university, or welcome to the first meeting of FS. Thank you for your work here. Also want to acknowledge Luke Smith, here with us today.

Exciting start to semester, much greater activity on campus than in the past, enrollment is encouraging, no standard way to report enrollment but seeing traction. Retention of 72.5% is the highest I have ever seen in a public university. BOT members asked which programs were contributing to that, only real explanation is the deep commitment of our faculty and staff to students. Appreciate that and admire you for that. Residence halls are full. 5,000 students have signed up to use the Rec Center and we hope they don't all show up at once. They will continue to be a high priority for us. The first meeting is a good time to reaffirm to you on behalf of myself and provost to principle of shared governance. Work continually to improve that. Think we've made a lot of progress. Worked over the summer with Kate, Toni and Tonya.

Have a few things in place this fall to put a few things in our hands, no longer a legacy from the past. Work hard with shared governance to accomplish this. Taking large scale steps to reduce the debt load of the university, have some successes and more to come. Will put us in a position to use our revenue for what matters. Thank Dallas Grundy and his team and some outside folks for their help with things over the summer. Will have to decide on how to spend those dollars and that is squarely in the arena of share governance. Change the way we do things, it's important for you to know that

**The Association of The University of Akron Retirees (AUAR)**  
**Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes**  
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provost has my full support of the conversations he is having with faculty, they are a change from how things were done in the past, but we are open to having those conversations with you. We have to acknowledge that higher ed in Ohio and across the country is changing faster than ever before, we have to acknowledge that there is a lot of inertia in that. Things that we have been doing and are comfortable doing may not be the best way to do it moving forward. We have reached a point where we have reduced the workforce to the point that we can't anymore, and we will work with those who are here to talk about work and in advance I appreciate your work with the provost and courage in taking on issues that are comfortable to us and we have an opportunity to come out of the financial situation we have been in.

Provost Wiencek in his remark said:

Welcome back. This is a good year. I've been telling everybody. I came here with my eyes wide open knowing there were many things to do that were not pleasant or fun. In life we all have to do hard things, so we should strive to do hard things well. I want to echo the president that things are encouraging on enrollment front. The comparison date is next Wednesday but there is expected good news in the data. Continuing students expected a decline based on history but have seen a resounding rebound and that metric has turned, and enrollment is positive as of today. Students drop out for a number of reasons, but the numbers look good. This is mainly driven by all of you. Many who played a large part. Students have followed our guidance and we're glad they are doing that and are back. Share that with all of your colleagues.

MAC conference does have an academic leadership group. Congratulations to those who have entered. We are hosting the conference this semester. Thank you to Aimee DeChambeau who does this every year and it's a very important. Kudos to Walter and Zhang.

Want to take a moment to provide context, have a team and want to recognize that they are shouldering the load. Kudos to Messina and Bausch. I think people get the sense that we are not coordinated, and decisions being made without my knowledge. I want to assure you I'm aware and a big proponent of communication. Every time I get called out, I apologize if I'm wrong and appreciate being called out. Continue to learn and also help our students to learn. Part of my responsibility is to manage the finances of the university, including academic affairs, student affairs, and research. The reality is our financial woes are getting better, but still in a moment when we just don't have the funds to feed into every department. We grow up and live within the constraints of our budgets. Email went out today that deals with the nuts and bolts of the finances here. Changes the way of you productive. We want to know about that and try to find solutions but assure you I don't have a pot of money to hand out to solve problems. Even in the harshest times, the more you come back to the table the more likely you are to succeed. Keep coming back, please keep telling us. AIC is heavily involved in this issue. See the final report and recommendations provided by AIC. With the letter, happy to dig into a Q and A, conversation that happened last year. There was clear representation of FS and what was lacking was recognition of the need to make this work financially.

**The Association of The University of Akron Retirees (AUAR)**  
**Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023 Minutes**  
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Grad asst budget is going forward. There is a blurry line of what students do and titles. Investments are divided into teaching and research assistants. There are a lot of requests for new investments from colleges and we could not honor that due to budget constraints. Key point is that we budget remissions and waivers as if they are real dollars, it is real dollars, we converted that into positions that we pay for. A lot of difficult messaging about how we're managing graduate assistantships and fellowships. Won't close door on it but means if lines could be repurposed to allow graduate assistants to return to former levels. Hard to justify but maybe I haven't thought it through enough. Decisions about money being made with myself in consultation with you the Senate. The way out is to grow revenue, enrollment news is good, financial aid will assist as well, but need to go after new markets. Demographics point to a decline in incoming HS students. We are pushing for new ideas; We go and look for folks with a lot of accumulated credit and life experience and with the faculty, look at equivalencies that would match curriculum. Not trying to give away degrees, trying to make opportunities for people to complete. Credit for prior learning, lot of military folks have a lot of technological training and can translate into a degree, getting them into the program can get them to complete a degree.

We're going to need to work with Senate and about current policy and how to make it more broadly embraced and encourage colleges to come to with actual degrees that can be awarded and a population of folks who are interested in completion. CORSERA has a lot of other credits that people can put on their resume. We're going to be able to offer this to students at no extra charge. As far as the key way to market it is to have our students continue to speak highly of our faculty, whatever we can do to improve the experience. Course evaluations process needs to be revamped, more faculty involved in Brightspace, so we're going to move into that direction. But don't want to disrupt how faculty do their jobs. We have lots of resources on campus to improve how you do what you do, you're already doing a great job, need to have a community-based approach to help people improve their lives. Have demonstrated that this is way for the university to operate.

There was no report from Committees.

GSG representative reported:

We started off semester with successful kick out event, 200 students came by to get information about us. Grad students are excited to be back on campus.

USG representative reported:

We are excited to get started on USG work, For Rubber Ducks event, 110 students came. Also 200 students visited art museum. Tonight, new senators will be sworn in.

Senate elections were performed:

Two positions for EC Committee, one position for Grad Council Representative, one position for Ohio Faculty Council Representative, and one position for University Council Representative.

Akron AAUP representative reported that union has continued work in summer, including monitoring SB 83. Information to come from me. Discussions about parking changes with administration, worked on FAQ, membership event at Duck Club, we receive grant money to do those type of events, look for something at end of semester.



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**Executive Board Meeting September 28, 2023Minutes**  
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Our secretary left us so did our VP. He left us for something non-academic. We lost Second VP. It's not me. Sent out an email about vacant positions. If you are interested let me know. VP is two years, Secretary is one. Apologies for If you received multiple emails from me.

University Council Representative reported:

This past summer UC worked on a strategic plan as led by provost fellows, various topics through shared governance process with FS and AAUP. UC website has a way to submit topics of interest, to be addressed by UC. The awards committee is a special committee of UC, if interested please contact Kris Kraft.