

## THE UNC-Chapel Hill RETIRED FACULTY AND PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION (RFPA)

### SUMMARY RESULTS OF THE 2024 SURVEY

A fall 2024 survey of retired faculty and senior professionals was designed to guide the UNC-Chapel Hill RFPA's efforts to best address the interests and needs of retirees. Despite the timing of the survey during a very active election season, a total of 492 respondents responded to an online survey, 163 of them current members and 184 non-members, with the remainder being former members or not recalling their membership status. This represents nearly 40% of those who were sent the survey. However, potential errors in email addresses and some duplicate emails make rigorous assessment of a response rate impossible. The full survey report will be posted soon on the [RFPA website](#).

**Current activities of retirees:** As shown in the table below large numbers of respondents reported continuation of scholarly activities (research, publishing, creative works, peer review); teaching and mentoring students and junior faculty; and both professional and community volunteer work as shown in the table below. Retirees actively contribute to their professions, the university, and communities for many years after leaving formal employment.

#### Activities Retirees are Engaged in at Present, n=424

Activity	n	%
Publishing scholarly journal articles, chapters or books	191	45%
Conducting research (as PI, collaborator, or consultant) at UNC or elsewhere	170	40%
Peer reviewing for journals and/or serving on editorial boards	156	37%
Volunteering in other capacities (e.g., political groups, docent in a museum, literacy program)	144	34%
Mentoring younger faculty or professionals at UNC or elsewhere	122	29%
Giving professional presentations (e.g., at conferences or online)	122	29%
Teaching students in degree granting programs (undergraduate, graduate, professional) or professional training (e.g., health care residents/fellows)	112	26%
Mentoring undergraduate or graduate students at UNC or elsewhere	111	26%
Volunteering related to professional activities (e.g., professional societies)	99	23%
Reviewing faculty for promotion at this or other institutions	72	17%
Teaching/tutoring in other capacities (e.g., HS students, older adults, continuing education, ESL, literacy)	61	14%
Doing administrative work	51	12%
Creating works of art (e.g., visual arts, theatrical arts, music)	46	11%
Conducting program or institution reviews	27	6%
Performing (e.g., theater, music, dance)	26	6%
Other types of professional activities	99	23%

**Interests in potential offerings of the RFPA:** When asked about likely participation in activities or opportunities that the RFPA might offer, there was great interest in many of the items as shown in the table below. The full report provides breakdowns according to membership status, time since retirement, and how far respondents live from campus. A number of individuals expressed desire to engage but inability to do so due to living too far away, mobility issues or family care responsibilities.

**Indication of likely participation in select activities and opportunities if offered, n=393**

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Obtain access to all UNC-CH library resources and information systems (i.e., collections and journals, including online) (n=393)	331	84%
Have access to IT services for routine computer support (n=393)	323	82%
Be eligible for discounts for computer purchases through UNC-CH bookstore (n=383)	270	71%
Learn new technologies (n=366)	220	60%
Meet other people who share my academic interests & experience (n=365)	193	53%
Receive retiree rates to UNC-CH recreational facilities (e.g., Fetzer gym, FARM, golf course, pools, Wellness Center) (n=384)	198	52%
Attend courses (live or virtual) just for retirees (n=384)	199	52%
Attend monthly RFPA lunches with guest speakers (n=386)	184	48%
Learn how to access University news (e.g., Well, Daily Tar Heel) (n=364)	171	47%
Learn about UNC retirement process and benefits (e.g., emeritus status, parking, insurance, unused sick/vacation days, etc.) (n=371)	139	38%
Audit courses at UNC-CH (n=380)	146	38%
Learn about opportunities to be a study subject (e.g., medical, public health, social science, opinion polls) focused on retiree age group (n=368)	135	37%
Meet with and/or mentor UNC-CH students (n=371)	125	34%
Join organized outings (e.g., museums, concerts, lectures) (n=379)	121	32%
Participate on a committee within the RFPA organization that fits my skills and interests (n=360)	105	29%
Mentor junior faculty (n=360)	104	29%
Participate in a book group (n=364)	102	28%
Participate in a speakers' bureau for area community groups (e.g., colleges, K-12, senior centers, CCRCs) (n=373)	87	23%
Teach a course in your subject area for other seniors (e.g., through Shared Learning) (n=358)	77	22%
Engage in artistic endeavors with other retirees (n=360)	60	17%
Engage in sports endeavors with other retirees (n=354)	55	16%
Have access to shared office space on campus (n=351)	52	15%
Seek competitive small grants to support work/travel related to your continuing scholarly pursuits (n=352)	50	14%
Serve as a local host for international students or post-docs (n=359)	44	12%
Participate in a writing group (n=356)	40	11%

**Membership and participation in RFPA:** The primary reasons given for participating in the RFPA were: “continuing involvement with the institution,” “having friends and peers who are members,” “guest speakers at RFPA lunches,” and “engaging in ideas and learning.” However, 61% of respondents noted that being “too busy” was the major deterrent to participation. The fact that 45% of non-members endorsed the statement “I have not been clear about the benefits of joining” indicates a need to both consider and also clarify the benefits of membership.

**Communication:** We also sought input on ways to improve the [RFPA website](#) and readership of the newsletter. Results revealed that the newsletter is well read but that the website is not well-known or visited often. These results signal the need to make improvements in our communication strategy so as to be clear about what the benefits are of joining RFPA and what sorts of services are available.

**Moving forward:** The survey results document the incredible wealth of resources that these highly active retirees provide by continuing to serve the institution, their professions, and the larger community. RFPA provides a mechanism through which to facilitate recognition of this productivity.

The results also suggest a number of opportunities for RFPA to better identify and reach out to retirees in ways that best address their interests and needs. The need to upgrade and publicize the website is clear and already in progress to ensure that it is accessible and appealing and contains the kind of information most useful to retirees. The survey suggests the need for wider distribution of the newsletter and engagement with other media outlets to share the accomplishments of retirees and of the organization.

The [UNC-CH Faculty Retirement Planning Guide](#) has been revised in recent months with additional ideas for expansion being reviewed. Similarly, enthusiasm by survey respondents for the Retirement Seminar offered through the Institute for Arts and Humanities signals the importance of continuing to coordinate efforts to maintain and possibly expand this resource so that even more retiring faculty and professionals are aware of and can benefit from the seminar.

The desire to participate by those unable to travel to monthly lunches suggests that we should make available selected web-based offerings such as informational sessions (e.g., about technology updates); seminars (e.g., highlighting new scholarly work by university faculty and retirees); and/or topical discussion groups (e.g., providing a chance to discuss advances in one's own field or related fields).

In the coming months RFPA leadership will be considering further the results of the survey as we set the agenda for the coming year. We will be determining what new activities to offer as we try to meet the needs of retirees at different stages of retirement and in varied locations. Expansion of the scope of RFPA offerings will depend to a great extent on volunteer efforts by members and administrative support from the institution.

The 2024 survey was conducted and the report prepared by Carol Runyan (President-elect) [Carol.Runyan@unc.edu](mailto:Carol.Runyan@unc.edu) and approved by the RFPA Executive Committee for distribution. We welcome further input from all quarters. To all those who responded to the survey, THANK YOU!