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Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
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University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
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May 4, 2022

**MICHAEL DRAKE, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

Re: Report on Faculty Retiree Experiences with RASC

Dear President Drake,

At its April 27 meeting, the Academic Council endorsed the attached report from the UCSC Committee on Emeriti Relations summarizing faculty concerns about their experiences with the UC Retirement Administration Service Center (RASC). The report identifies three main areas of concern at the time of their consideration of the matter: 1) an unacceptably slow processing of new retirement applications; 2) disruptions to the health insurance coverage of eligible retirees; and 3) poor overall experiences with RASC customer service. The report also makes recommendations for addressing the problems, including hiring local campus retirement facilitators with access to the RASC system.

While it is clear that some retiring employees and retirees have not been receiving the level of service they need from RASC, we understand that progress on these concerns is being made under the leadership of new RASC Executive Director Bernadette Green. UCFW and TFIR have been encouraged by their productive working relationship with Executive Director Green, who they agree is the right person for this job. We are also encouraged by UCOP's recent announcement that it is augmenting the RASC budget to support 16 additional retirement counselors for deployment on the campuses, as well as additional phone center staff.

We encourage more communication about these efforts to the faculty at large and look forward to UCOP's continued work with UCFW and TFIR on plans for deploying the new RASC staff, and monitoring progress in addressing the problems. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Horwitz".

Robert Horwitz, Chair
Academic Council

cc: Vice President Lloyd
Executive Director Green
Academic Council
Chief of Staff to the President Kao
Senate Executive Director Baxter

February 22, 2022

David Brundage, Chair
Senate Executive Committee

Re: Report on UCSC Faculty Retiree Experience with RASC, 2021 Update

Dear David,

I am writing to request that the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) discuss and consider endorsement of the attached Committee on Emeriti Relations (CER) report update on the UCSC faculty retiree experience with the UC Retirement Administration Service Center (RASC). Like the original report that was completed in fall 2020¹, the report update was endorsed by the Committee on Faculty Welfare (CFW) on February 17, 2022, and will be shared with the University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) in March 2022 . The report will additionally be shared with the Council of University of California Emeriti Associations (CUCEA), and with the UCSC Emeriti Association and UCSC Retirement Association.

As you are aware, the 2020 CER report on RASC was endorsed by SEC and forwarded to the Academic Council. The report was effective in bringing system-wide awareness to wide spread problems at RASC that need to be addressed. This report update unfortunately shows that little has changed in how retirees experience the retirement process and their interactions with RASC, despite major changes in leadership and personnel. If endorsed by SEC, CER would like to request that this report update be forwarded to the Academic Council.

I am available to consult with SEC if you would like me to attend to provide additional context and answer questions. Please feel free to contact me at judith@ucsc.edu.

Sincerely,



Judith Habicht Mauche, Chair
Committee on Emeriti Relations

Enclosed: UCSC Faculty Retiree Experience with RASC, 2021 Report Update

cc: Matthew Mednick, Director, Academic Senate

¹ Committee on Emeriti Relations Report on UCSC Faculty Retiree Experience with RASC, 2019-20

UCSC Faculty Retiree Experience with RASC, 2021 Report Update
UCSC Committee on Emeriti Relations
November 5, 2021

As a follow up to the December 9, 2020 Committee on Emeriti Relations (CER) report on recent faculty retiree experiences with the UC Retirement Administration Service Center (RASC)¹ Chair Judith Habicht Mauche sent an email to all 15 emeriti faculty who retired between January 1 and July 1, 2021 asking them to report on their experiences with the retirement process and the Retiree Administration Service Center (RASC). Given recent reported changes in RASC leadership and organization, CER was interested to find out if faculty experiences with the retirement process had perceptibly improved since our previous report a year ago.

Chair Habicht Mauche received eight replies to her inquiry for a 53% response rate. Everyone who responded reported having a generally negative experience negotiating the retirement process and interacting with RASC. These responses suggest that contrary to recent assurances from UC administrators, RASC continues to be plagued by persistent and systemic problems that are negatively impacting the lives and livelihoods of emeriti faculty and staff retirees.

Some of these continuing concerns include:

- 1) The processing of retirement applications continues to be unacceptably slow, resulting in many retirees not receiving their first pension check or other benefits for months after their retirement date. Reportedly, a number of retirees received a form letter email from RASC Interim Director Bernadette Green on July 29, 2021 stating that they would not be issued their first pension payment on August 1, even though they had submitted all of the required paperwork promptly. No date was offered for when their first payment would be made. The information that CER has received from recent faculty retirees suggests that it routinely takes RASC six to seven months to process any individual's retirement application, no matter how simple or complicated. Yet, faculty and staff cannot apply to retire until three months before the expected retirement date. In other words, failure is built into the system from the start.

"I still haven't gotten my first retirement check, but I've been told it should come on October 15."

"I haven't gotten any pension checks. Retired July 1. Colleagues told me this was a problem for them as well a few years ago. Expecting back checks on Oct 22."

¹ Committee on Emeriti Relations Report on UCSC Faculty Retiree Experience with RASC, 2019-2020, December 9, 2020

“my pension payment was delayed for two months”

“I also received some form to fill out to assure being paid regardless of whether RASC was late, but I was paid late anyway-but sounds like earlier than some. I received my first bonafide check October 1...”

“I’ve finally received from RASC a confirmation letter for my monthly retirement income. It states, however, that my first regular monthly payment is expected to be issued on 10/1/2021 (instead of 8/1/2021).”

“My retirement date was in Feb 2021 and it took 6 whole months and at least 7 follow-up calls to RASC before things finally wrapped up.”

“I applied for and was accepted into the estimated pension program, so have been receiving pension payments since August 1, but as of October have yet to receive my final retirement paperwork.”

- 2) Several respondents reported problems and/or disruptions with their health insurance coverage. Thankfully, UCSC retirees have access to an excellent campus Health Care Facilitator, Marianne McIvor, who has actively interceded with RASC on behalf of many recent retirees to resolve these issues. It is the general consensus of those who have experienced these problems that without Ms. McIvor’s active assistance, these issues would have been much more difficult to resolve, as RASC was often hard to contact, slow to respond, and provided inaccurate information.

“Marianne and Tess saved my bacon multiple times.”

“I also received misinformation from RASC about SSA/Medicare that ended up costing me \$1500 unnecessarily.”

“Marianne also saved the day for me.”

“I had to work with Marianne Mc Ivor to get my health insurance set up, because RASC got it wrong (claiming I was staying on HSA, which isn't even legal). Marianne got it fixed, and we were only without insurance for 2 weeks at the beginning of August.”

“Furthermore, I went to see my dentist earlier this month and then received a letter from Delta Dental stating that the claim was denied because I was not covered when the service was done—apparently because the premium was not paid on time.”

“RASC mysteriously deactivated my health and dental insurance on October 1, for reasons that no one can explain (I had been on the retirement plans since August 1). I only found out that my health insurance had been canceled, two weeks later, when doctors and the pharmacy started notifying us that our claims were not being accepted for payment. Thanks to the intervention of an Anthem representative and Marianne McIvor my insurances were reactivated after three frustrating days with no response from RASC. I didn’t even know my dental insurance had been canceled until I was told by Marianne that it had been reactivated!”

- 3) In general, recent retirees remain extremely frustrated with their overall experience dealing with RASC. They report that representatives are difficult to get ahold of, phone wait times are long, and responses to messages slow. Representatives often do not follow through to resolve issues. Mistakes are made or inaccurate information is provided that slow the retirement process and result in unnecessary delays.

“RASC seems to be almost impossible to deal with—no email, long holds on the phone, and many days to respond to their "secure communication" on the web (and then with incorrect information).”

“I have a lot of tolerance for the difficulties and complexities inherent in large bureaucracies, but the whole retirement process with RASC was pretty much an exercise in frustration. In fact, in 42 years of serving on university faculties, I don’t think I ever encountered a university service office that seemed less organized and made so many glitches.”

“Among the faculty and others I know who have retired in the past few years, not one has been through the retirement process without problems created by RASC, and then solved only slowly.”

“It was extremely stressful as RASC was difficult to get a hold of, did not always return calls from the phone tree, did not do the things they said they would, and were generally unresponsive. It was a shameful experience in my opinion...”

“It was frustrating and shockingly unprofessional. I did finally begin receiving my benefits and did receive back-pay but, oh my, was the whole experience unpleasant.”

Summary:

CER understands that RASC is currently undergoing a major restructuring, has hired new administrators as well as front line employees, and is undertaking an internal review of its processes. Nevertheless, based on the comments of UCSC emeriti who retired during 2021, it appears that virtually nothing has changed in terms of how faculty (and presumably staff) experience the retirement process or their interactions with RASC. There has been absolutely no perceivable improvement in the timeliness or quality of service provided by this unit of the University in over a year. These problems are wide-ranging and systemic and remain deeply embedded in the processes and culture of the organization. They continue to impact the lives of retirees and their families in concrete and serious ways. Imagine going without income for more than three months with no clear knowledge of when payments will start. Or, not being able to fill prescriptions or being denied medical coverage because your health insurance has been cancelled for no reason other than bureaucratic incompetence. These are things that are routinely happening to UC retirees; people who have loyally served our institution in some cases for over 40 years. While we appreciate that institutional change is difficult and that RASC administrators and employees are sincerely and actively seeking improvement, measurable changes and improvements are not happening fast enough.

Therefore we end by reiterating the recommendations made by CER in 2020, which as far as we have been informed, have not yet been implemented.

- We recommend that the UC President commission an external review of RASC.
- RASC should extend the retirement period from three months to six months. Previously, CER recommended an extension to four months. However, it appears that even straightforward cases now take six months or longer to process.
- RASC must make good on its stated commitment to provide retiring employees with a designated retirement counselor whose name and email address will be made known to employees and who will be available to answer questions and will know how to resolve problems.
- All RASC personnel who interface with employees (ideally the retirement counselors that RASC has promised) should possess basic knowledge about the retirement process. At the same time, there need to be some RASC personnel with knowledge pertaining to specialized issues, for example, rules around contingent annuitants, issues related to CAP balances and IRS 415 limitations; issues related to QDRO's. And finally, supervisors need to know to whom to forward specialized questions.

And finally, we would like to add one additional recommendation for UC campuses.

- We recommend that if they have not already done so, each UC campus should secure a local campus retirement facilitator. This person could work individually with prospective retiring UCSC faculty and staff to help them navigate the retirement process and intercede with RASC directly as problems arise.

Respectfully submitted;

UCSC COMMITTEE ON EMERITI RELATIONS

Linda Burman-Hall

Lisbeth Haas

Ingrid Parker

Carl Walsh

Nico Orlandi, *ex officio*

Judith Habicht Mauche, Chair

November 5, 2021