American Council on Education and the Sloan Foundation
Study on Faculty Retirement Transitions
Prepared by Roger Caldwell, UA Retirees Association, March 6, 2015

Summary of ACE visit two sessions in March 2015.

In 2012 the American Council on Education (ACE) identified 15 universities and colleges to participate in a study of best practices in faculty retirement transitions. The six research universities in the group were George Mason University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Princeton University, University of California- Davis, University of Southern California, and University of Washington. In December 2014 a second set of size major universities were identified by ACE for similar evaluations. The University of Arizona was one of the second set; others include UCLA, University of Minnesota, Carleton College, University of Maryland (Baltimore County), and Cornell University. The ACE will write a report to UA President Ann Hart after they have finished the study.

Some References
A 22 page literature review of faculty retirement transitions (201) is at:
http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Literature-Review-of-Faculty-Retirement-Transitions.aspx

The “best practices” of the original 15 universities and colleges are summarized at:
http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Faculty-Retirement-Transitions.aspx

Discussions Summaries
On March 2 and 3, 2015 two discussion groups were led by the American Council on Education’s Claire Van Ummersen, assisted by Jean McLaughlin, and Helena Rodriguez, UA Human Resources Director of Strategy and Planning. Tom Miller, UA Vice Provost for Faculty attended the second meeting and helped clarify facts and choices for some procedural questions. Claire is a senior advisor to ACE, President Emerita of Cleveland State University and former chancellor of the University System of New Hampshire. Jean is an associate director at ACE.

Claire and Jean, along with Lauren Duranleaux, wrote a book on the first study titled “Faculty Retirement: Best Practices for Navigating the Transition (2014)”. It contains such chapters as 1) redefining faculty retirement, 2) planning a graceful exit to retirement and beyond, and 3) case histories of several universities. (Note: this is a very informative book with relevant examples of “best practices”.

I attended each meeting as an observer and commented that the UA Retirees Association existed and what they did. The moderator (Claire) gave examples from other institutions when certain issues were raised about procedures or options. It was noted at the end of the discussions that there are many programs to aid the transition to retirement. The overarching issue from both discussions was the need for clear, concise, and relevant information from a single source. It might include a series of checklists for various stages of retirement and would be kept up to date. One person noted “I am a professor, how do I retire?” that summed up the lack of single source, clear, and current guidelines/procedures to retire. For the UA faculty, about 40-50% is 65 or older, and the wave of
baby boomers (first turned 65 in 2011) will likely increase the average faculty age as well as increase the number of retirees over the next several years.

The first meeting had 12 UA professors emeritus that had retired in the last few years. The focus of the discussion was on making the transition from active to retired status. The topic that received the most discussion was office space as an emeritus professor (including how often it is used). Other observations included 1) why an emeritus professor cannot apply for university research funds or lead graduate committees (the reason was that they were not longer employees, but could serve on graduate committees); 2) retiring professors make room for younger professors to advance; 3) retired faculty can provide a range of services such as mentoring younger faculty, advising students, giving freshman seminars, and doing special administrative projects. Some of these activities may be at the university level but most can be developed within the department.

The second meeting had 17 current faculty that were thinking about or had made the decision to retire in the next couple of years. The primary issue was how to understand the options available. Guidelines exist but they may be hard to find or a specific aspect of a general policy may not be clear, or, the information sources are spread around different sources and not available from a single source, such as a good website (that is comprehensive, accurate, and unbiased). Some other examples include selecting which type of investment to choose when in the optional retirement system, which medical benefits options are best for their particular situation, Other issues that were raised included 1) phased retirement, where the faculty member might have reduced FTE or different time allocations among teaching and research; 2) optional retirement programs (other than Arizona State Retirement System – few faculty select ASRS); 3) how to participate in university life after retirement (office, teaching, research); 4) some faculty continue teaching and advising and voluntarily don't accept a salary; 5) how to identify a relationship with their old department after retirement; and 6)

During the discussion It was noted that UHAP (University Handbook for Appointed Personnel) was revised and completely rewritten over the last three years and revised July 2014; there were many changes. Emeritus (masculine) and Emerita (feminine) are essentially awarded to tenured faculty if there are no disciplinary issues and the faculty member has been at the UA for 15 or more years.