

## SJSU ERFA History - Part 1

Nancie Fimbel; Fall 2021

On September 17, 1985, seven emeritus faculty members met in the Alumni Room at San Jose State University to decide whether to try to form an Emeritus Faculty Association. The seven were Dwight Bentel (Journalism), Jim Brown (Education), Norm Gunderson (General Engineering/Cybernetic Systems), Walt McPherson (Human Performance), Ed Minium (Psychology), Lowell Walter (Counseling), and Mel Wright (Business).<sup>\*</sup> They met because an organization called The California State University Emeriti Faculty Association was forming and had requested the support of local emeritus groups. Eight CSU campuses—Dominguez Hills, Fresno, Los Angeles, Northridge, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and Stanislaus—had already established organizations with a total membership of about 1,100 out of the 2,000 or so emeritus faculty in the Cal State System at the time.

Based on a survey of SJSU emeritus faculty that Lowell Walter and others conducted, the men decided to forge ahead with the establishment of a local organization. They divided into committees and gave themselves a month to formulate purposes and possible activities, write a draft Constitution and By-Laws, and determine the level of support the University was willing to provide. They needed a mailing list of emeritus faculty, help with mailings and perhaps a newsletter, and they wanted to know how enthusiastic President Fullerton and Academic VP John Gruber might be.

The men had done their homework before the meeting, but, even so, Lowell Walter brought them a surprise. He had discovered that a system-wide survey conducted by Donald Shelton of San Luis Obispo indicated that the SJSU Academic Senate had approved a policy (F80-1) defining emeritus status, enumerating emeritus faculty privileges, and encouraging the establishment of a voluntary Emeritus Faculty Association. President Fullerton had approved the policy on Feb. 20, 1981.

In late 1985 after this exploratory meeting, the President remained supportive of the formation of a SJSU Emeritus Faculty organization, and the Academic VP was also enthusiastic about it. On January 7, 1986 the organizers, now working with another seven interested faculty, sent an invitation to more than 350 emeritus SJSU faculty to discuss the establishment of the SJSU EFA. The expanded committee included Mary Bowman (Human Performance), Ardith Frost (Recreation), Betty Prange (Human Performance), Marshall Miller (Education),

Dolores Spurgeon (Journalism), William Sweeney (Education), and Mildred Winters (History), Twenty-five people attended the February meeting, electing Mel Wright as President; Mary Bowman as Vice President; James Brown, Secretary; and Mary Gilbert, Treasurer. Three Members-at-Large were also elected: Norman Gunderson, William Sweeney, and Mildred Winters. The initial standing committees were Membership, Financial, Benefits and Services, Public Relations and Publications, and Activities. Within a year or two, there were also committees focused on Projects, Communications, and Amenities.

The purposes of the organization, as stated in the Constitution, have remained the same through time. They are to:

- Help emeritus and retired faculty members to maintain a continuing and fruitful association with the University
- Keep emeritus and retired faculty informed of University affairs and develop means to facilitate their participation in the life of the University
- Secure and enhance the status, rights and privileges of the emeritus and retired faculty of San Jose State University
- Encourage and facilitate the emeritus and retired faculty to continue their scholarly and professional activities (teaching, research, writing, consultation) as contributing members of the academic community of the University
- Provide social, recreational and educational programs for emeritus and retired faculty
- Contribute to achievement of the University mission by such means as may be determined by Association members.

From the start, the EFA had representation on the Academic Senate, an office, and bulk mailing privileges for letters and flyers. It also had 170 Charter Members (before counting any associate members).

\*Also invited, but not in attendance were Peter Buzanski (History), Vergil Hughes (Education), Gerry Wheeler (History), and Pete Zidnak (Business).

SJSU ERFA History - Part 2  
The Flourishing of ERFA After its Founding  
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The Emeritus Faculty Association of San Jose State University was one of the last such campus organizations to form in the CSU. Once it was established (in 1985-86), however, it flourished immediately. University records indicated that there were 335 eligible faculty, 72% of whom lived in Santa Clara County. By the end of the first year, half of those eligible for membership (173 to be exact) had become charter members. In addition, a spring luncheon and general meeting had been held, and the newsletter had been started with Mildred Winters as the first editor. By a vote of 214 in favor to 27 against, the EFA gained representation on the Academic Senate with voting rights. President Fullerton sent her congratulations on this achievement, reiterating the importance she and Academic Vice President Arlene Okerlund thought the Association would have. By the following fall, the first directory, containing names and addresses of retirees from 1970 to 1986, was published. Dues were \$10.

At first, the fall and spring EFA luncheons for members and their guests were held on campus in the cafeteria. The Board held its meetings at the University Club on Eighth St. (through Benton White's connection and with coffee). When the club was sold, Wayne Savage arranged for the organization to have an office in MacQuarrie Hall. Mailings used the Academic Senate office as a return address at first.

Within two years, emeritus librarians were added to those eligible for membership. Associate Membership was adopted for professors holding emeritus status at other joined the Association as the first associate members. They had to pay dues, but they could not vote on EFA business. The Vice President/President Elect served also as the representative to the Academic Senate in 1988, but the positions were divided when this arrangement proved untenable. The Board informally adopted the tradition of selecting male and female presidents in alternate years; this continued almost without exception until well into the 2010s.

As early as 1987-88, the Executive Committee financially supported campus programs; that year it donated \$100 to the campus journal San Jose Studies. A gift of \$300 would be given in 1994 to the CSU- ERFA Emergency Fund after the Northridge earthquake destroyed the statewide office and its contents. More recently, the Association has made gifts to the Choraliers and other campus

groups as well as more substantial awards since 2014 to faculty for research and creative activities. Once (1997) it funded a beautiful book of biographies of the retired faculty.

Over the years, adjustments were made to the composition of the Executive Committee of the board, the committee structure, and membership. The Bylaws of 1993 grant associate membership to “spouses of deceased SJSU emeritus faculty members, faculty participating in the Faculty Early Retirement Program, counselors, lecturers, and members of the SJSU administration.” By 2006, spouses of regular members of EFA were permitted to become Associate Members of the organization. At this time, Associate Members were also given voting privileges and the right to serve as committee chairs and members. A major revision of the EFA Constitution came in 2009-10 while Bobbye Gorenberg was President. EFA became ERFA: Following the lead of the statewide emeritus organization and several other CSU campuses, all faculty retirees (not just emeritus faculty), librarians and academic administrators who are CalPERS annuitants became eligible for membership. FERP faculty were dropped from the associate membership category because they are eligible for regular membership. The Executive Committee was renamed the Executive Board and was expanded. The Treasurer was no longer required to present an annual report and budget at the annual meeting. Chairs of committees were no longer required to file written reports with the Secretary, and the chairs were invited to all meetings of the Executive Board. The position of Webmaster was added.

Currently, we continue to adjust the Constitution and Bylaws to enable us to operate electronically and to bring you, our members, programs and activities that you will find both educational and interesting. From the start, the Newsletter contained a column with member news; it was first called Personals and is now called Chat Room. As then, so now we ask that you send us news that will help your colleagues keep current with your activities and accomplishments. This is one of the ways we can achieve our mission to help faculty members “maintain a continuing and fruitful association with the University.”