

Roundtable part 2: CURAC/ARUCC focus and association concerns

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Discussion in the second set of round tables dealt primarily with the question: What does CURAC/ARUCC do for its member associations and what can it do better?

At two tables, discussion began with a review of CURAC/ARUCC services. These included the biennial benefits survey, which was seen as useful for bargaining, the health policy and pension updates, and the affinity partnerships, including available services and discounts, as well as rebates to local associations when their members avail themselves of the product or service

offered. It was noted that the benefits available through these partnerships were not as well known among individual members as they should be. Delegates were encouraged to review the comprehensive review of the benefits of CURAC/ARUCC members on the website of the Kwantlen Polytechnic University Retirees Association (KPURA) at www.kpu.ca/retirees/report.

The need to continue to explore new avenues of communication was clear, especially with the goal of reaching individual members. It was also suggested that members should be encouraged to make more use of existing avenues, such as the CURAC/ARUCC website and newsletter. While discounts and rebates from affinity associations were considered important, it was suggested that the circulation of advertisements from affinity partners was likely to be controversial.

As with the best practices sessions, there was considerable attention to common problems facing member associations. Recruitment and retention of retiree members was a frequent concern. It was noted that this challenge was exacerbated by the increasingly variable ages of retirement and the varying needs of different retiree groups among both faculty and support staff (as well as among different kinds of institutions). Other challenges noted were the number of retirees moving away from the immediate area, the difficulty of recruiting executive members, and the importance of making local institutions inclusive and welcoming. It was suggested that CURAC/ARUCC could help by doing some research on retiree needs. Research groups on aging and retirement issues that have emerged in recent years at several universities might be able to provide data and general needs assessments. Some data could be gathered by adding questions to the benefits survey. There was particular interest in obtaining more information about the availability of research funding for retired faculty and librarians (in addition to that gathered in the most recent CURAC/ARUCC survey).

Best practices noted included making dues payment easier by using PayPal or some form of direct deposit and scheduling activities in the fall and spring when retirees are more likely to be available. One university with scattered membership has offered free Microsoft Office online.

More generally, it was suggested that CURAC/ARUCC could provide more direct support to member associations, especially smaller associations or those just starting up. This support could include subsidies

for delegates from newly formed or smaller organizations to attend the annual conference and pairing with established associations as consultants. It was also suggested that regional groupings could be helpful, especially with recruiting member associations from colleges. The need for more Francophone engagement was also mentioned.

The recruitment and retention of member associations was also discussed. Suggestions included inviting newly formed organizations to present at a CURAC/ARUCC conference, recording sessions to make them more widely available, and organizing webinars targeted especially at newly formed associations and non-member institutions. These sessions could also be recorded and posted on the website. The practice of offering free memberships for the first year was also supported.

CURAC/ARUCC directors could meet with retiree executives when the opportunity arose. The idea of networks of association presidents, newsletters, and webmasters was popular. The benefits of sharing common problems and responses were an important focus of discussion. It was suggested that pension and benefit information be shared on the CURAC/ARUCC website. Another suggestion was a regular survey of what member associations had accomplished in a defined period (perhaps two to three years). It was also suggested that CURAC/ARUCC could assist associations with software and web management. Among other possibilities, this assistance could take the form of articles and reports on the website or in the newsletter. These could deal with such matters as AROHE's efforts to develop common platforms for member associations.

There was considerable support for a concerted attempt to persuade administrations to be more engaged with retiree groups, at both the institutional and the national level (by meeting with the association of university presidents, for example). A promising strategy would be to point out to administrations the benefits of making retirement more attractive by providing a wider range of practical and symbolic support for retirees (perhaps using comparative data emphasizing best practices). It would also be useful to provide institutions with lists of retiree volunteers and to make sure administrations are aware of the continuing contributions of retirees to their institutions.

It was also noted that CURAC's lobbying activities and affiliations with organizations such as CARP were valuable and not widely known to members. Some areas of lobbying, such as health and travel insurance regulations, were touched on. It was suggested that some form of organized consultation might help to identify specific health issues to focus on.

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URL to article: <https://www.curac.ca/newsletters/curacarucc-nl/nl-summer2018/learning-around-the-tables-opens-the-conference-with-conversation/roundtable-2/>

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