**UIC CHAPTER, STATE UNIVERSITIES ANNUITANTS ASSOCIATION (SUAA)**

**President’s Annual Report, Michele Thompson**

**June 29, 2021**

In the past 16 months, like so much in our world, our chapter of SUAA has encountered some uniquely complex challenges. Mainly, these have been about how we conduct the business of UIC SUAA. These challenges ignited the creativity of several involved with our chapter, notably **Merrill Gassman**, the chapter’s webmaster, and several staff members at the UIC campus in adapting technology that we had not previously used for our meetings. We also owe great thanks to SUAA Executive Director **Linda Brookhart** for assisting us in offering programs such as our Annual Assembly. We have held our Board meetings via Zoom since March 2020, and today we are conducting our second Annual Assembly via Zoom. I am grateful to all Board members for nearly perfect attendance at Board meetings during this time and for very good discussions about how to proceed with chapter business. With a lot of hard work and patience, we have managed to transcend the limitations presented by online meetings. In September 2021, we look forward to resuming some in-person Board meetings. What we learned from Zoom meetings is that it is good to have the ability to meet virtually at times, such as in winter months in Chicago. For the year ahead, we plan to have five in-person meetings on campus and five that are online only. This combination of meeting modes will make it possible for Board members to join meetings when other commitments make it impossible to be on campus. Even for our in-person meetings, we will offer the option of attending Board meetings via Zoom.

The Board continues to meet 10 times per year (every month except August and December). At each Board meeting, we review the chapter’s budget with Treasurer **Lawrence Kloc** and receive

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updates on legislative matters from **William Peterman**, Legislative director. Secretary **Arlene Norsym** is superb in carefully recording all aspects of discussions and decisions in whatever format we conduct meetings. **John Prochaska**, the chapter’s first Parliamentarian, has helped us understand *Robert’s Rules of Order for Electronic Meetings* and how to implement them. Recently we added two new Board members, **Anne Burkhart** and **Cynthia Herrera-Lindstrom**. Both bring unique and needed skills to the Board. **Brenda Russell**, a past President of our chapter, has now concluded her service on the Board. With deep gratitude as well as a sense of loss, we thank her for extraordinary service over many years to our chapter and Board. In addition, our Board member **Elliott Dudnik** was recently elected President of the SUAA Foundation. The main activity of the SUAA Foundation is to offer scholarships for our members and their family members and professional development grants for employee members. More detail is available on the SUAA Foundation website.

In my role as President of the chapter, I have been extremely fortunate to have had the experience of working with a very impressive group of Board members. I have immense appreciation for the colleagueship and service of all members of the UIC SUAA Board. In addition to those I have already mentioned, I thank Board members **Christopher Keys**, **Debbie Matthews**, **John Palmatier**, **Meena Rao**, **Karen Scherman**, **Ashish Sen**, and **Kathleen Stauffer**. All of the Board members gave me good advice and assisted the chapter in many ways during my term. They are all devoted to making life better for annuitants of the state universities in Illinois by protecting the benefits promised to us.

I am pleased to report that the chapter added 82 new members since January 2021. We also lost 46 members for various reasons. Currently,

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our membership totals 1,477. We look forward to continuing to recruit more members in the year ahead. As you know, a larger membership helps communicate strength for our organization as we contact policy makers to defend and protect our pension and health care benefits. Please help by encouraging others to join UIC SUAA.

You might be interested in knowing that we attribute the recent increase in members to at least two things. One is a letter the SUAA statewide Board and Executive Director Linda Brookhart sent to all state university employees who are within five years of retirement which encouraged them to join a chapter of SUAA. The second is a webinar, which the UIC Board presented with the help of Linda Brookhart and the SUAA staff in February 2021, titled: *WILL THE STATE KEEP ITS PROMISE? ARE OUR PENSIONS AT RISK?* In this program, Professor **Ann Lousin** of the UIC Law School (formerly the John Marshall Law School) and **Eric Madiar**, a specialist on the Illinois Constitution, made excellent presentations. Over 1,000 attended this webinar which was very well received and may be viewed on the chapter’s website, suaa.uic.edu. We plan to offer more webinars to our members and hope to present one or two in the year ahead. An attractive feature of programs presented virtually is that our members all over the U.S. as well as in other countries can participate in them. We will notify you of future virtual programs.

Also, please remember that all members are welcome to attend any Board meeting via Zoom or to attend any in-person meeting on campus. Please notify Merrill Gassman at [suaa@uic.edu](mailto:suaa@uic.edu) the day before the Board meeting that you wish to attend. The schedule of Board meetings for the period September 2021 – July 2022 will soon be posted to the chapter’s website.

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In closing, we should all be pleased that the State retirement systems were funded by the State’s budget for FY 2022, but we also must continue to be vigilant in pressing for this to continue. This involves explaining to Illinois citizens and to our legislators that we have paid for the pension and health care benefits the State promised throughout our employment at the University. To be apprised of proposed and pending legislation, I urge you to read the Mini-Briefings emailed by Linda Brookhart frequently during the year.