

Proposal for an Emeritus College at Emory

Introduction

In recent studies on aging, longer life expectancy has been shown to inaugurate for most retirees a period during which they can continue to be useful and productive contributors to their own occupations or professions, and to society at large. As the percentage of Americans over age 65 increases each year, there is new concern to develop options for this graying but still active segment of the population, options that will allow them to persist in making effective use of skills and experience developed in some forty years of employment in their fields, and even to explore new directions of intellectual endeavor that professional responsibilities may previously have prevented them from pursuing.

In higher education these developments have been reflected in efforts at a number of Emory's sister institutions to redefine the status and role of emeritus faculty by organizing the cohort of retired professors into an association with official university status and some continuing university duties, responsibilities, and privileges. At institutions like Cornell, Vanderbilt, and the Universities of Arizona and Southern California (and numbers of others as well), such emeritus centers are already well established, providing institutional affiliation for those retired faculty who wish to continue their intellectual and social involvement with collegial life.

The need for such a center at Emory at this point in her history seems clear. The 1998-99 Emory University Campus Directory lists approximately 250 retired faculty, most of whom still live in Greater Atlanta, many quite close to the University. A questionnaire circulated in fall, 1998 to all faculty over age 55, both regular full-time and emeritus, indicated widespread enthusiasm for founding such a center at Emory: most respondents said they would join it, make use of its facilities, and participate in its activities. More important, even though retirement from regular-faculty status at Emory has carried with it a number of important perquisites, for many professors, unfortunately, retirement has meant, as one retired respondent to the questionnaire wrote, "instant marginalization." Usually deprived of significant contact with a former department or school, the retiree is cast into an isolated individual role, no longer in any direct way a beneficiary of the sense of communal endeavor that regular faculty status had afforded.

To combat such atomization of its retired faculty; to help sustain and cultivate for the academic community as a whole the talents of our retiring professors; and to gain for itself a number of significant institutional advantages; Emory should establish an Emeritus College. Such an entity would function as an interdisciplinary research institute, somewhat along the lines of a miniature All Souls' College at Oxford University; as a social focal point, providing emeritus faculty the opportunity for collegial interaction; as a locus for intellectual exchange and productive scholarly activities; and as an administrative clearing-house for service functions performed by emeritus faculty on behalf of other schools and divisions of the University.

Some general advantages to the University of an Emeritus College

- ! An Emeritus College would provide an institutional site, "a local habitation and a name" in which, and under whose institutional aegis, retired Emory professors could continue to teach, write, consult, and fill the role of public intellectuals. Its existence on the Emory campus as an integral part of the life of the University might prove an incentive for retiring faculty of most value to the University to remain resident in Atlanta.
- ! An Emeritus College would likely increase the amount, and enhance the quality, of the scholarly research and writing and consulting done in their maturity by emeritus professors within its precincts, thus benefitting the general reputation of the University. Such faculty would still be directly identified with the University, their work seen as proceeding from within the University's research community, rather than from private individuals in distant and scattered venues.
- ! An Emeritus College would answer to two of the principal issues outlined in *Choices and Responsibility*: building a stronger sense of intellectual community and promoting interdisciplinary dialogue. Itself by definition an interdisciplinary community, such a group of emeritus faculty assembled from across the University could promote these two initiatives under its sponsorship, while at the same time modeling them in its makeup.
- ! Through a series of periodic (bi-weekly or monthly) seminars, organized by its faculty, and patterned to some degree on the Luce Seminars once conducted by Professor of Religion James Gustafson, the Emeritus College would provide, both to its own membership and to regular faculty members in the University at large, the opportunity for serious, ongoing interdisciplinary exchange of the kind many veterans of the Luce Seminars fondly remember.
- ! An Emeritus College could serve as an agency through which the University might extend its intellectual reach and penetration into issues of national and international concern. For example, at periodic intervals the Emeritus College might for one academic year reconstitute itself into a kind of "think tank" in order systematically, and in interdisciplinary fashion, to address compelling issues and problems through its sponsorship of speakers, seminars, lectures, film presentations, even a nationally publicized symposium.
- ! At some future date an Emeritus College might institute an "emeritus-scholar-in-residence program" for a dozen outstanding retired professors with established national reputations, offering them a modest stipend and living allowance for a "sabbatical" stay at Emory in exchange for relatively modest teaching, mentoring, and consulting duties (somewhat in the way the University has engaged the services of Archbishop Desmond Tutu).

! Finally, and of no small importance, are some financial considerations. The existence of a highly visible and active Emeritus College would likely provide an incentive to more than a few regular faculty to retire earlier than they might otherwise, thus relieving the University of a portion of its heavy financial obligation to senior faculty in terms of both salary and fringe benefits, and allowing it to open up new lines for entry-level positions. Furthermore, Emory's providing for an Emeritus College would build the kind of good will among retired faculty that might well inspire reciprocal generosity in the form of gifts and bequests.

Specific services an Emeritus College could offer . . .

! *To the College:*

Occasional substitute teaching on short notice for regular faculty.
Guest lectures or presentations in undergraduate courses.
The teaching of Freshman Seminars, offered by select retired faculty in their areas of research expertise.
Tutoring of students with special needs.
Participation in the Freshman Advising Mentoring Experience (FAME).
Participation in recruitment efforts with the Admissions Office.

! *To the Graduate School:*

Informal or perhaps sometimes formal mentoring of graduate students.
Service on examination and dissertation committees by request.
Employment of graduate students as research assistants and/or co-authors.

! *To the University:*

Service by invitation on University committees and panels.
Lending of members' expertise to the development of programs at Emory.
Interchanges with retired faculty at other institutions in America and worldwide.
Advising of regular faculty and staff on financial and other retirement issues.
Consultantships to agencies and universities under the Emory "letterhead."
Service as external examiners at other universities.
Aiding in the University's efforts to internationalize programs and curricula.

! *To the Career Center:*

Counseling of students in emeriti's special areas of expertise -- business, law, economics, medicine, foreign languages, and so on.

! *To the Alumni Office:*

Coordination of emeritus-faculty participation in Alumni events.
Sponsorship of special events at reunions and homecoming celebrations.

! *To the Office of Development:*
Assistance by emeritus faculty in public relations and fund-raising.

! *To the Senior University:*

Coordination of Emeritus College programs with Emory's Senior University.

! *To the Atlanta community:*

Acting as a resource and clearinghouse for consulting by emeritus faculty with industry, government, education.
Coordination of volunteering efforts by emeritus faculty.
Acting as agents of University outreach to the Atlanta community in numerous ways.
Affiliation with SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives.

Specific benefits an Emeritus College could offer its membership:

- ! An institutional affiliation (in addition to one's former department) from which to apply for grants, including from the University Research Committee.
- ! A permanent location on campus for continued professional activities, convenient to libraries, food service, and parking, and comprising: administrative office space, a Senior Common Room, a seminar room, plus a number of small private offices or studies equipped with telephone, filing space, bookshelves, and computer with Internet access.
- ! Programs to foster continuing intellectual growth among the membership: book clubs, seminars, organized group travel, small stipends to support research activities.
- ! A regular schedule of social occasions -- lectures, panel discussions, dinners, luncheons-- to insure opportunities for collegiality.
- ! Representation in the structures of University governance and public ritual, especially in the University Senate and at Commencement ceremonies.
- ! Publicity of Emeritus College news and events by such means as a newsletter, a home page on the Emory Website, perhaps a Distinguished Emeritus Service medal awarded at Commencement.

- ! Free short-term accommodations in members' homes for visiting "corresponding" members (those not resident in Atlanta) who return to Emory for visits.

Administration of the Emeritus College

The administrative structure of the Emeritus College should include a *Board of Trustees* consisting of seven emeritus faculty, plus one member each from the University administration, the regular faculty, and the alumni/ae. The seven emeritus-faculty members would be elected by the whole membership; the three additional members would be appointed by an appropriate superior officer.

A "Dean" of the College will be an emeritus-faculty member; he or she will be nominated by the board of trustees and appointed by the President of the University for a three-year term.

An *Executive Director* of the College will be a permanent salaried employee appointed by the President of the University upon the recommendation of the "Dean" and the Board of Trustees. This officer will be the full-time coordinator of all the College's activities, and therefore ought to have previous experience in programming, budgetary matters, and public relations, preferably in a university context.

Membership in the Emeritus College would be offered for a term of five years, renewable upon review of evidence of continuing scholarly activity, to all regular full-time faculty whose service at Emory ended in good standing.

Thoughts on the location and physical facilities of an Emeritus College

- ! The College should be as close to the center of campus as possible, ideally within easy walking distance to libraries and other university facilities. A location on the far periphery of the campus (the new Emory West campus, for example), runs the risk of sending the wrong message to retiring faculty by locating them far from the center of the daily life of the University. The ideal site would be a suite of rooms and offices in a renovated Candler Library. A second possibility might be a new building on a site along Fraternity Row. In any case, the Emeritus College should be fully integrated into the on-going Campus Master Plan.

- ! With an anticipated membership of more than 100 members, the Emeritus College would have need of the following facilities at the site chosen (approximately in the order of priority indicated in the survey of older faculty who would be candidates for membership):

1. A set of small offices or studies where emeritus-faculty members of the College actively engaged in scholarly research could each have sole use of an office for up to one year. These offices would be available on a rotating basis, like present faculty studies in the Woodruff Library. Each would be equipped with furniture (desk, chairs, bookshelves), computer (with

Internet and e-mail access), and telephone.

2. An adjacent "Very Senior Common Room," or lounge, for social interaction, equipped with comfortable furniture, mailboxes, small lockers, coffee service or modest kitchen facilities, small refrigerator, current periodicals, newspapers, and so on.
3. A seminar room, spacious enough to accommodate at least 16 persons gathered around a large table, for the use of a number of Emeritus-College-sponsored seminars and events.
4. An administrative suite, housing the offices of an Executive Director and assistant, and a room for photocopy and fax machines, supplies, and so on.
5. Men's and women's restroom facilities.

Funding of the Emeritus College

- ! Outside funding should be sought, preferably from a single founding donor whose name the Emeritus College might bear. A gift or bequest might cover start-up costs (e.g. renovation of a wing of the Candler Library), with any remaining amounts to be placed in an endowment whose proceeds would help fund the College's annual budget.
- ! The Development Office might also approach grant-giving agencies in the areas of adult education and gerontology, which might be inclined to support creative initiatives like the Emeritus College.
- ! The Development Office might initiate a campaign specifically aimed at raising small contributions to the Emeritus College from alumni on the occasion of faculty retirements: these could go to the Emeritus College as a suitable way to honor retiring faculty members whom many alumni might have fond memories of from their days as undergraduates.
- ! The Emeritus College would charge modest annual dues of perhaps \$75 per annum, in the manner of a faculty club, plus special fees for the use of the limited office space (e.g.\$100 for one year). (With 100 members and 10 offices to "rent," the total income would be \$8500, which would help cover overhead and basic operating costs.)
- ! Those emeritus faculty still generating grants from outside funding sources would assign at least part of their "overhead" costs to the Emeritus College.
- ! It is hoped that the University might contribute an amount to cover the salary of the Executive Director of the Emeritus College, especially if the College proves to be an incentive for earlier retirement than would be the case normally and allows the University to realize substantial savings in salary and fringe benefits. (If in a given year just one of a hypothetical ten faculty

retirements occurs a year sooner because of the existence of the Emeritus College, the University stands to realize a net gain of approximately \$50,000.)

Respectfully submitted by . . .

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