

TOWER TALK

[Become a Member](#) | [Make a Gift](#) | [Articles](#) | [Events](#)

Remembering Kathy Blondel

By Andy Plumley

In May, we learned that Kathy Blondel, the UCRRA Secretary for this year, passed away on May 5, 2025. Kathy worked at UCR for 30 years, retiring in 2013 as Document Services Manager for Printing & Reprographics. Once retired she became an active member of the UCR Retiree Association.

Kathy was born in Los Angeles on December 31, 1949, to Charles and Jane (Patty) Blondel. She is survived by her three siblings Ron, Judy and John; her three children Teri, Alan and Patty; her eight grandchildren Priscilla, Alyssa, Chaz, Zach, Zane, Zoey, Tori and Peyton; and her three great grandchildren Keira, Logan and Maliha.

Kathy was always known to brighten any room with her smile and kind personality. At work she always took care of her customers. Kathy led a very happy, active life with family, friends, her beloved dogs and many activities such as singing in the Raincross Master Chorale and St. Patrick's choir, membership to the Elks Lodge, traveling, and gardening.



Retiree and Emeriti Happy Hour



Save the Date

Join us for a get together at the UCR Barn Stable! Whether you're newly retired or enjoying your golden years, we invite you to connect with fellow retirees and emeriti for an afternoon of great conversation, laughter and community. This is a wonderful opportunity to relax, socialize and build new friendships. We hope to see you there!

Thursday, September 18, 2025 from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.
In-person at the UCR Barn Stable

This is a no-host event and refreshments will be available for purchase. Please view the UCR Barn Stable menu here: <https://dining.ucr.edu/the-stable>



Table of Contents

Announcements - P. 1-3

- Presidents' Messages
- In Memoriam

Upcoming Events - P. 3-4

- Free Use Days at SRC in July
- Master Gardner Program, 8/14
- Mystery Book Club, 9/9
- UC Retiree Travel Trip Preview, 9/16
- Fall Luncheon, 10/10
- Reception, 11/14
- Meditation at the Botanic Gardens, 10/24

Articles - P. 5-8

- Spring Luncheon
- Graduate Student Travel Award
- Lawn Bowling at Fairmount Park
- Malcolm Baker Dickson Presentation
- R'Garden Tour
- Outstanding Retiree Award



✓ **Annual Members: Renew Your Membership**

Retirees' Association Officers

President

Andy Plumley, andy.plumley@ucr.edu

Vice President

Sheryl Hayes, sherylucr@gmail.com

Treasurer

Mike Donovan, mike.donovan@ucr.edu

Secretary

Mitch Boretz, mitchboretz@gmail.com

Events & Programs Director

Patricia Smith-Hunt, patricia.smith-hunt@ucr.edu

Communications & Outreach Director

Jorge Sanchez, jorge.sanchez@ucr.edu

Immediate Past President

Mary Johnson, maryjohnson1954@gmail.com

Emeriti Association Officers

President

José Wudka, jose.wudka@ucr.edu

Vice President

In Recruitment

Treasurer

Bradley Hyman, bhyman@ucr.edu

Secretary

Dallas Rabenstein, dallas.rabenstein@ucr.edu

Retirement Center

Director

Cristina Otegui, retirees@ucr.edu
(951) 827-5008

Office Hours: Mondays through Thursdays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (currently working remotely)



UCR Retirees' Association

Andy Plumley
UCRRA President

Hello UCR Retirees' Association Members!

I write this summer message after finally taking my retirement trip to Scotland! It was wonderful visiting all the places for which many of our student housing and dining buildings were named: Aberdeen-Inverness, Lothian, Pentland Hills, Dundee, Glasgow, Glen Mor, Bannockburn, and Oban. It is the time of year that many participate in trips and family gatherings, although as retirees we can do this all year long!

UCRRA has had a productive and active year, and the following are some highlights of 2024/25:

- Awarded \$16,000 in scholarships to five UCR undergraduate students.
- Participated in two UCR fundraising events, raising over \$14,360 for our undergraduate scholarship endowment fund.
- Hosted four quarterly luncheons and the annual retiree and emeriti reception.
- Represented UCR at the semiannual meetings of the Council of UC Retiree Associations, with UCR hosting the spring meeting
- Continue to work with the campus for a physical space for the UCR Retirement Center.

It was great seeing so many at our Spring Luncheon and Business Meeting, where we elected our 2025/2026 Officers. I am grateful to continue serving as your President, and please join me in congratulating our 2025/2026 Executive Board:

- Sheryl Hayes, Vice President
- Mitch Boretz, Secretary
- Mike Donovan, Treasurer
- Patricia Smith-Hunt, Events & Programs Director
- Jorge Sanchez, Communications & Outreach Director

In the fall, we will be recruiting members for our standing committees: Nominating Committee, Membership and Outreach Committee, Events and Programs Committee, and Scholarship Committee. If you are interested, please contact Cristina Otegui, the Retirement Center Director.

As always, I hope you explore this publication and get involved in anything that interests you. And if you don't find what you're looking for, let us know. Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Andy



UCR Emeriti Association

Darleen DeMason and Raymond Russell
UCREA Co-Presidents



Dear UCR Emeriti Association Members,

Spring Events 2025

Our Tech Tips series and Mystery Book Club held interesting monthly sessions throughout the Spring Quarter. At our annual Spring Luncheon on May 16, UCR Dance Professor Anthea Kraut told us about the fascinating world of "dance-ins," the professional dancers who participate during the rehearsal of musicals before the movie stars are filmed in the actual Hollywood musicals. On May 22 interested emeriti and retirees were treated to a tour of UCR's R'Garden. On June 3, Professor of Art History Emeritus Malcom Baker gave us the final Dickson Lecture of the year, a learned discussion of the mix of academic and curatorial motivations that go into the production of books about sculpture.

Emeriti Association Graduate Student Travel Award

Since its inception in 2021-2022, the UCREA Graduate Student Travel Award has played an increasingly significant role in supporting graduate students who have been advanced to candidacy at UCR. For students who need to travel for research purposes or to present a paper at a professional meeting, the award pays \$1,500 for domestic travel and \$2,000 for foreign trips. By May 2025, the current use fund that supports this award had grown to over \$19,088, and another \$41,450 had been accumulated in its endowment fund. This funding made it possible to make five travel awards in Winter and Spring 2025, and we hope to fund two awards per quarter in 2025-2026. To support future Graduate Student Travel Awards, emeriti and friends are encouraged to make gifts to the current use fund or to the endowment fund that support this award.

Emeriti Association Leadership

At the Spring Luncheon on May 16, the UCR Emeriti Association held a brief Annual Meeting. The most important business conducted at the meeting was the election of officers for 2025-2027, with terms beginning July 1. Professor of Physics Emeritus Jose Wudka was elected to be our next President, Professor of Biology Emeritus Brad Hyman was elected Treasurer, and Professor of Chemistry Emeritus Dallas Rabenstein was elected as our next Secretary. We extend our best wishes to all of these officers. It has been an honor and a pleasure for us to serve as your Co-Presidents for the past four years.

Sincerely,

Darleen and Rusty



In Memoriam

We recognize and honor those who have passed that have been reported this 2024 - 2025 academic year.



Saul Alvarado, retired in July 2021
Jo Ann Anderson, retired in October 2017
Alan Beals, retired in July 1991
Lucille Breckenridge, retired in November 1992
Kevin Bianchi, retired in September 2005
Borden Bizelle, retired in November 1992
Linda Hunt Bunnell, retired in June 2009
Edgar Butler, retired in July 1994
Richard Carroll, retired in August 2003
James Conrod
Beverly Cox, retired in April 1991
R. Deviny, retired in October 2009
Donald Edwards, retired in November 1989

Janet Fast, retired in August 2006
Le Baron Ferguson, retired in January 2010
Philip Gericke, retired in July 1994
Anthony Ginter, retired in July 1994
Margery Grant, retired in April 1983
E. Mark Hanson, retired in July 2006
Carol Harvey, retired in April 2003
Juana Heredia, retired in January 2024
Carl Lentz, retired in March 2005
Janet Loftus, retired in January 2001
Ardath Ludtke, retired in January 1997
Rosary Marietta, retired in April 2006
Ramon Mayo, retired in April 1999

Donald McCollum, retired in January 1993
Toshio Murashige, retired in July 1991
Albert Page, retired in July 1994
Edward Perez, retired in November 1992
Isfendar Ramadan, retired in April 1991
Elmer Rasmussen, retired in April 2010
Anna Richwine, retired in October 1988
James Smith, retired in March 1999
Darlynn Snell Gregory, retired in March 2009
David Stevens, retired in February 2013
Fred Stickler, retired in July 2007
Judy Valdez, retired in May 2012
Mary Williamson, retired in April 1991

Free Use Days to the Student Recreation Center in July

The UCR Student Recreation Center (SRC) is offering free membership for the month of July beginning on Tuesday, July 1, 2025 through Thursday, July 31, 2025. UCR retirees and emeriti can take advantage of this great opportunity. Take part in SRC's group exercise classes, swim in their awesome pool, join the lap swim & stay fit pool workouts, climb The Rock, receive a CHAIR MASSAGE, get to know more about Outdoor Excursions, play basketball and indoor soccer in their MAC gym, serve it up on the tennis courts, and explore their entire facility for no added costs for an entire month! Interest emeriti and retirees must register to gain free access and complete a required liability waiver.

Tuesday, July 1, 2025 through Thursday, July 31, 2025



Register on the Student Recreation Center webpage at: https://events.ucr.edu/event/free_use_days_at_the_src_2470

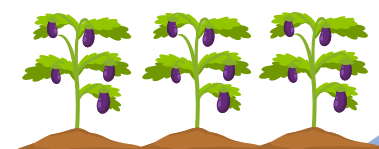
Planting Warm Season Vegetables

An expert from the Riverside Master Gardeners Program will be sharing best practices on planting warm season vegetables.

Thursday, August 14, 2025 from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. via Zoom

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage at:

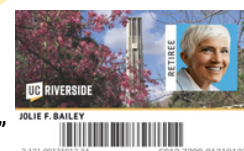
https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7TLn3fvdn2tIJGS



Strengthen your Belonging with a Retiree or Emeriti R'Card

UCRRA and UCREA members who have not received their Retiree or Emeriti R'Card may request one by completing the R'Card Benefit Interest Form at: https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3F8XtK5dEs9x45U

- 10% discount at the UCR Bookstore
- Updated R'Card design, new UCR logo, and option to upload a new photo
- Ability to validate status when visiting the library and be eligible to purchase UCR Athletics "All Sports Pass"



Uncover the Clues: Join the Mystery Book Club!

UCRRA and UCREA members who enjoy getting lost in a good mystery are invited to join the Mystery Book Club. The group meets monthly via Zoom on the second Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. to engage in lively discussions and share personal perspectives on each book. The reading list is selected collaboratively by the group, with members rotating as discussion leaders.



Fall Book Activities

**COMING
SOON**

September Book Activity

When: Tuesday, September 9, 2025

Time: 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Book Activity: *American by Day* by Derek Miller



Details: Interested retirees and emeriti who wish to join the book club may contact the Retirement Center by email with the subject line, "Mystery Book Club" at: retirees@ucr.edu.

UC Retirees Travel Trip Preview Webinar

Learn About our Upcoming Adventures



UC Retirees Travel offers worldwide group tours for retired UC staff and faculty as well as their friends and family. UC Retirees Travel volunteers will preview upcoming trips, including adventures to the Galapagos, Patagonia, Japan/South Korea, Portugal/Spain, Sicily/Malta, Amalfi Coast/Tuscany, Namibia/South Africa, Ireland, Finland/Sweden/Norway, Java/Bali, Peru, New Zealand, Egypt, a Douro River cruise, and a Danube Xmas Markets cruise. This webinar is hosted by the UC Riverside Retirement Center, and everyone is welcome to register. See details about upcoming trips or join the UC Retirees Travel mailing list at <http://cucra.ucsd.edu/travel/>.

Tuesday, September 16, 2025 from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. Pacific Time

Delivered via Zoom

Register on the UC Retirees Travel Program webpage at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/0irP5WUaSxeCxD1h99c4Q#/registration>



Fall Luncheon



"Particle Physics and Dark Matter"

Ernest Ma, UCR Professor Emeritus of Physics and Astronomy

Friday, October 10, 2025 from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

In-person at the UCR Alumni & Visitors Center



Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0rHBNqI8kUXI35Y

Emeriti and Retiree Reception



A celebration to honor years of service.

Friday, November 14, 2025 from 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

In-person at the UCR Alumni & Visitors Center

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6XPzuLgijw8EQG

Walks, Talks & Tours: Meditation at the Botanic Gardens

Learn how meditation—through simple breathing techniques—can quiet the mind, reduce personal attachment and worry, and enhance mental clarity, memory, and emotional balance. Explore its role in preventing conditions such as depression, dementia, insomnia, and high blood pressure. Join us to explore why meditation might be the simplest yet most powerful habit you can adopt for lifelong health.

KimDzung Pham, UCRRA Member and Former Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature and Language

Friday, October 24, 2025 from 10:00 - 11:15 a.m.

In-person at the UCR Botanical Gardens Conference Room

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3CrDxtfREQ8674y



Spring Luncheon 2025: Annual Business and Guest Speaker Report

By Linda Tomko



The May 16 Spring luncheon celebrated the activities and events of the Retirees' Association (UCRRA) and the Emeriti Association (UCREA). Gathering in the Alumni and Visitors Center's garden-level meeting room, attendees first socialized and enjoyed beverages and complimentary wines. During the meal service, each association conducted its annual business meeting. UCRRA President Andy Plumley gave the financial report and presented the slate of nominees for election. By unanimous vote of UCRRA members present, Andy was elected again as President; Sheryl Hayes as Vice-President; Mitch Boretz as Secretary; Mike Donovan as Treasurer; Jorge Sanchez as Communications & Outreach Director; and Patricia

Smith-Hunt as Events & Programs Director. Andy reported the association's growing membership, currently 443 strong, and the substantial Give Day campaign results totaling \$14,360 raised. He announced receipt of one nomination for the Mary Johnson Outstanding Retiree Award, with evaluation still in process. He also elaborated on the recent meeting of the systemwide Council of UC Retirement Associations (CUCRA) and Council of UC Emeriti Associations (CUCEA), hosted at UCR in April by our two associations. Held in hybrid format, the two days of meetings also gave attendees opportunities to take a walking tour of the campus and a tour of the California Museum of Photography. Escorted by a bagpiper to UCR's Barbara and Art Culver Center of the Arts, where Norm the Navel made an appearance, attendees savored a delicious dinner in the atrium. Andy credited Retirement Center Director Cristina Otegui with superior organization of the event, supervision of technical support, and coordination of volunteers from the UCRRA and UCREA memberships. He happily shared the many expressions of thanks received subsequently from attendees.

Co-Presidents Darleen DeMason and Rusty Russell opened the UCREA annual business meeting with flowers, chocolates, and expression of deep thanks to Retirement Center Director Cristina Otegui for her expertise in planning the recent systemwide meetings. Brad Hyman gave the UCREA Treasurer's report and noted the nearly \$6,000 increase this past year in the UCREA's endowment fund for its Graduate Student Travel Award (GSTA) program. Dallas Rabenstein presented the slate of nominees for election. By unanimous vote of UCREA members present, José Wudka was elected President; Brad Hyman as Treasurer; and Dallas as Secretary. The Vice-President post was unfilled at that time. Darleen introduced Adriana Aguilar, one of two winners in the Winter 2025 competition cycle for the GSTA award, who spoke briefly about her journey to graduate study at UCR's School of Education. With GSTA support, she traveled in April to the American Educational Research Association conference in Denver to present her findings on the advising of DACA students. Rusty concluded the business meeting with mention of UCREA upcoming events.

The luncheon then turned to the presentation by featured speaker Dr. Anthea Kraut, Professor in UCR's Department of Dance. Titled "Hollywood Dance-Ins and the Production of Bodies," Kraut's talk drew from her forthcoming book to explore some of the history of Hollywood professionals who stood in – but literally danced in – for movie stars during time-consuming lighting rehearsals and other processes while movie musicals were being recorded. In addition, dance-ins rehearsed the stars in the dance sequences created by film choreographers such as Hermes Pan and Billy Daniels, and the dance-ins also contributed to the choreography. Well-known stars Betty Grable, Debbie Reynolds, Vera-Ellen, and Gene Kelly, for example, routinely worked with dance-ins like the white chorus dancer Angie Blue, the Mexican American jazz dancer Alex Romero, and with the African American dance coach and dancer Marie Bryant. Yet, the dance-ins remained invisible; the films did not credit them for their paid labor. Still, the movement materials, energies, and aesthetics contributed by the likes of Blue, Romero, and Bryant indelibly shaped the idealized bodies and images of masculinity, femininity, and whiteness that movie musicals presented. Kraut's generous responses during the Q&A that followed her talk raised the example of current-day publicity which touts Tom Cruise's performance of his own stunts in the latest installment of Mission Impossible films. Why are we so concerned with the authenticity of Cruise's stunts? she asked the audience. Her presentation opened the way for attendees to ponder which bodies count as privileged bodies in U.S. culture today, and whose bodily labor goes unseen or uncredited.

Concluding the luncheon, the floral arrangements on each dining table were raffled off, accompanied by much humorous banter. Proceeds from the raffle support the UCRRA's Undergraduate Scholarship Award.



Graduate Student Travel Awards for the 2024-2025 Year

By Darleen DeMason

The UCR Emeriti Association had two competitions for Graduate Student Travel Awards this academic year, which were in February and May. The Travel Award Committee, consisting of Linda Tomko, Dallas Rabenstein, Byron Adams and me, as chair, was very impressed with the quality of the student applicants and their projects. It was difficult to make our selection among the 14 applicants in Winter Quarter and 12 in Spring. Although we had agreed to fund four students this year, we ended up funding three in Winter and two in Spring. This is the fourth year that the Emeriti Association has been giving out awards. Our first recipient received an award in Spring Quarter 2022. We provide \$1500 for travel within the continental US and \$2000 for international travel. This year's recipients are:

Winter Competition:

Eloy A. Neira de la Cadena, a Ph.D. candidate in the Music Department, is using his award to study New Andean Pop music and musicians in Lima and Ayacucho, Peru to determine their influence on diversity and politics in that country. He is a dual American and Peruvian citizen and an accomplished musician in his own right.

Ariana Aguilar, a graduating Ph.D. student in the School of Education, has been studying how DACA students are advised and protected on campuses. She used her award to make a presentation of her dissertation research at the American Educational Research Association Annual meeting which took place in Denver, CO in April of this year.

Marissa Cartee, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology, used her award to travel to the International Stock Center for Livebearing Fishes, to obtain data on an additional ten species of livebearing fishes extending her research on reproductive morphology to understand placenta evolution in this group.

Spring Competition:

Hasin Us Sami, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Engineering, is studying how to protect privacy of original data during hacking of visual files. He used his award to present his research findings at an International Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers/Computer Vision Conference in Nashville, TN in June. He expects to finish his degree in September, 2025.

Julia Torres, a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department, is studying interracial relationships and laws that regulate interracial marriage in the Central Valley of California. She is using her award to travel to the California State Archives and Center for Sacramento History in Sacramento in September.

Pictured above, Ariana Aguilar was able to attend our Spring luncheon in May to receive her certificate. We hope to meet the other four winners in the fall.



Lawn Bowling Fun at Fairmount Park

Thanks to the Riverside Lawn Bowling Club Leaders, a group of 10 retirees and emeriti received exclusive lessons and played several games applying the skills that they had learned. Another fun lawn bowling day in sunny Riverside.



UC Retiree Travel Program

View all 2025-2026 planned trips on the Council of UC Retiree Associations (CUCRA) website at:
<http://cucra.ucsd.edu/travel/>



UCR Osher Program

UCRRA and UCREA members receive a \$20 discount on the Osher Annual Membership. Details on the Osher webpage at:
<https://palmdesert.ucr.edu/welcome-ucr-osher>

Dickson Lecture: Reconfiguring the Sculptural Catalogue

By Raymond Russell



On June 3, an in-person and livestreaming audience of about 50 heard a learned discussion by Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History Malcolm Baker of the mix of curatorial and academic concerns that go into the shaping of books about sculpture.

Few speakers are better qualified to address this topic than Professor Malcolm Baker, given his decades of experience both as a curator and as an academic. Baker spent 25 years at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, where he headed the team that shaped the Medieval and Renaissance galleries, effectively forming a whole wing of the museum. After retiring from the V&A in 2005, Baker became Professor and Chair in the Department of Art History at USC, before moving in 2007 to UCR, where he taught Art History until 2019.

Baker began by pointing out that over the past forty years academic art-historical writing has moved away from a traditional "life and works" model incorporating a catalogue. In a classic 1966 study of Bernini by Rudolf Wittkower, three-quarters of the book consisted of a detailed catalogue. But since the 1980s, academic art-historical studies have abandoned the catalogue in favor of more discursive studies in which the social history of art and the interpretation of a work's meaning have taken precedence. An outstanding 1986 study of the French sculptor Carpeaux by Anne Wagner of UC Berkeley is, for example, entirely devoted to relating Carpeaux's work to its context and is devoid of anything resembling a catalogue. Increasingly, the catalogue has been seen as the work of the curator, not the university-based art historian.

With his formidable knowledge as a curator and a scholar, Baker recognizes the divergence of practice between the museum and the academy. But he sees the new engagement with materiality within the humanities as an opportunity to re-think the catalogue raisonné, or systematic catalogue - especially the sculpture catalogue. Baker mentioned several authors whose works provide a model - the art historian Jennifer Montagu's *Algardi*, for instance - that might be developed in the light of new approaches to materiality. Having earlier written a discursive study of the portrait bust and the statue as sculptural genres, Baker is now working on a catalogue raisonné of the busts and statues of the eighteenth-century English (but French-born) sculptor, Louis-Francois Roubiliac (1702-1762). Drawing on writings by Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht about the relationship between materiality and meaning, he seeks to develop a new mode of catalogue with entries that are both discursive and descriptive, attentive both to the material "presence" of works, and to their meaning.



Tour of the R'Garden

By Darleen DeMason

On May 22, UCRRA and UCREA members were given a tour of the R'Garden by Angel Canales, R'Garden Fellow and California Climate Action Corps Fellow. There were seven attendees and Retirement Center Director, Cristina Otegui in the group. Angel started the tour by reviewing the history of the R'Garden. UCR students started discussing the possibility of the campus providing land for a student-run community garden in 2009 and it was established in 2012 as the R'Garden. The garden consists of eight acres, of which there are six acres of row crops, one acre of Valencia Orange trees, and a half acre of 40 community garden plots. These plots are available for free to UCR students, clubs and community members to grow their own gardens. Water is made available and it comes from the Gage Canal that runs through the property.

Angel first showed us the community garden plots and how the irrigation system works to water the plantings. Then we walked to the native plant garden which is used to attract bees for pollination. Beyond the native plant garden we saw an area of row crops and nearby "warehouse" that contained a walk-in cold room, a citrus juicing machine, a table for meetings and other tools. Subsequently, we walked across the Gage Canal and into a grove of avocado trees. Beyond this we could see another area of row crops, date palms and the Valencia Orange trees.



Tour of the R'Garden continued

Angel described how the R'Garden is run using organic and sustainability principles. Burrtec Waste Industries supplies all the compost used by the garden for free. The R'Garden staff, which consists of Angel, one other CA Climate Action Corps Fellow, one staff member and four students, gives tours for public-school students and provide the opportunity for these students to learn about local food systems and the importance of access to fresh produce. The students can also grow plants. In addition, over 30,000 lbs. of crops are produced each year and they are given away to the University Community every Wednesday at the Belltower.

The members of our tour were offered fresh produce to take home that was available in the cold room. Cabbages, broccoli, cauliflower and kale were available.

Just before the tour, we were informed about the bad news that due to a failed student referendum, the R'Garden was scheduled to close at the end of June. However, due to support from across the University and monetary promises from Provost Watkins and CNAS Dean Atkinson, it will continue until another referendum vote can be taken.



The Mary Johnson Outstanding Retiree

UCR Staff Assembly presents the “Outstanding Staff Awards” annually, and UCRRA is proud to partner with them to honor an exceptional retiree as part of this tradition. The Mary Johnson Outstanding Retiree Award recognizes retired staff who have shown exemplary volunteer service to the campus and surrounding communities and who remain actively engaged in campus programs and activities during retirement. This year’s recipient is Jorge Sanchez. Jorge was nominated by Mitch Boretz, UCRRA Member and former Contract and Grants Analyst for BCOE’s Deans Office and below are highlights of his thoughtful nomination:



It is a true honor to nominate Jorge Sanchez for recognition of his outstanding service to the University of California, Riverside (UCR) retiree community. Jorge has demonstrated unwavering dedication, creativity, and generosity – not only since his retirement but well before it.

As a former HR Data, Program, and Communication Analyst in UCR’s Human Resources Department, Jorge began serving retirees and emeriti while still an active employee. In 2016, he took on the role of publisher for Tower Talk, UCR’s retiree and emeriti newsletter – a role that allowed him to merge his expertise in communication with his deep care for the retiree community.

Since his retirement in July 2022, Jorge’s contributions have only grown in impact. He became an integral member of the UCR Retirees Association (UCRRA) board and quickly emerged as a creative and strategic force. One of his most impactful accomplishments was leading the complete redesign of the UCRRA website in 2024. This redesign not only modernized the site’s look and functionality but also aligned its visual identity with the broader UCR brand, drawing on Jorge’s deep institutional knowledge and experience in web design.

Jorge didn’t stop there. He created a suite of branded templates for UCRRA communications – including posters, fliers, and brochures – that have elevated the professionalism and reach of UCRRA’s initiatives. His graphic design talents have become a signature of the organization’s outreach materials, helping to amplify its visibility and engage a broader audience. (...) Jorge Sanchez embodies the spirit of service, collaboration, and excellence. His work continues to enhance the lives of retirees, support the UCR mission, and strengthen the UC community at large. He is richly deserving of this award and our deepest appreciation.

Jorge was honored at the UCR Staff Assembly Outstanding Staff Awards ceremony on May 28, 2025. UCRRA will also celebrate his achievements at their Fall Luncheon on October 10. Congratulations, Jorge!