UAEC Presidents Message

2020 is finally over – a year that no one will soon forget! 2021 promises to better with the development of a COVID-19 vaccine and the hope that life will eventually return to some semblance of normal.

Given the pandemic, the Emeritus Center switched to a remote format and offered all our fall 2020 programs as webinars. The topics focused on the two largest issues of the year – the pandemic and the November election. Highlights included talks by Provost Kim on how the pandemic has affected UAlbany, Dean Holtgrave on COVID-19 research done by the School of Public in collaboration with the NYS Department of Health, and Professors Malbin and Miroff of Political Science on their perspectives before and after the November election, respectively. This issue of the newsletter includes brief summaries of all seven talks, and recordings are posted on our website.

Another highlight was the biennial meeting of the Board of Directors and the membership at large in November 2020. The keynote speaker was President Rodriguez who spoke about the accomplishments of the University despite the pandemic (see summary elsewhere in this issue). I also gave a talk summarizing the work of the Center over the past two years. For example, we offered 27 programs, funded 12 small grants totaling $17,000 through our Three Voices program, and published five issues of our newsletter the Emeriti Voice.

We also held elections for positions of at-large members of the Board. I am happy to announce that Sorrell Chesin, Bonita Sanchez, Carol Whittaker, and Grayce Burian were re-elected. Robert McFarland, who had previously served on the Board, was also elected as an at-large member. We also welcomed David Wagner and Donna Canestraro as representative members who were appointed by their dean and vice-president, respectively. Teri Harrison and Robert Jarvenpa resigned from the Board after completing their two-year terms. Many thanks for their outstanding service to the Center.

I encourage all emeriti to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible and to stay safe.

Ed. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
IN MEMORIUM

RAM L. CHUGH

1935 – 2020

Prepared by Edward Fitzgerald

It is with great sorrow that I announce that Ram L. Chugh, our dear friend and long-term member of the UAlbany Emeritus Center Board of Directors, passed away on October 2, 2020, at age 85.

Ram was born in India. He served in the Indian Air Force from 1951 to 1963 and earned a master’s degree in economics from Panjab University while still in the military. He emigrated to the United States in 1966 with his wife Seema and completed his doctorate in 1970 at Wayne State University in Michigan. In 1976, he was named a Distinguished Service Professor in recognition of his long service to the state and the university. Upon his retirement in 2002, Ram moved with Seema to Albany to be closer to their daughter who lived in New York City at the time. He later worked at SUNY System Administration in Albany, where he volunteered on several projects and later initiated and then headed the SUNY Retiree Services Corps for several years. In 2018, Ram left the SUNY educational system, but he continued to remain involved in retiree-oriented projects, including serving on the Board of Directors of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE). In his role as a member of the UAlbany Emeritus Center Board of Directors, he served as the founding editor-in-chief of our newsletter Emeriti Voice, which has been published three times annually since 2017. This issue is the first to be published since Ram’s passing.

Ram published several books. In “The Power of SUNY Retirees” he highlighted how retirees are an asset for their communities but remain largely underutilized. He advocated creating a retiree-campus-community partnership at every SUNY campus to harness the power of SUNY retirees for the greater public good. Ram’s 12-year stint in the Indian Air Force and his immigration to America are chronicled in his memoir, “Against All Odds”. Another book, “Living to Learn and Learning to Live” describes his life in the United States. His final book “Letters to My Grandchildren” is a guide to living a well-balanced and meaningful life, relevant not only to his grandchildren but to all of us.

Ram was also a member of the Albany Hindu Temple, where he was instrumental in reforming its election process, revising its constitution, developing the governance policies for its cultural center, and compiling the Bereavement Support Guide. Ram’s hobbies included gardening (roses were his specialty), music, reading, traveling, and socializing with family and friends but he enjoyed helping others the most. He felt blessed and grateful for the opportunity to give back to his university and the community. Ram loved his family and was deeply devoted to Seema, whom he married in 1966. He greatly enjoyed frequent visits from his daughter Pooma Clayton and her husband Jemal and their children Mosi, Jai, Tyee, Kush and Eloh. He was a good friend, an active member of the Emeritus Center, and in my opinion lived a life that we all would do well to emulate.

Ram was the founding editor of the Emeriti Voice and served as its editor-in-chief for all 10 issues. He was a good friend and is sorely missed.
President Rodríguez was the keynote speaker at our biennial meeting of the Board of Directors and the emeriti on November 24, 2020. He began his remarks by thanking all of us for attending, adding that he hopes we are all staying safe and well. He has been proud of the University’s response to the pandemic. For example, the School of Public Health and the RNA Institute led development of a saliva COVID-19 test so that the University does not need to go out for testing. At Governor Cuomo’s request, the University is leading an investigation of disparities in health care and the impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. He emphasized that this is a broad, interdisciplinary effort. Closely related, President Rodríguez convened a task force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

As expected, there has been a huge focus on COVID-19 and developing and implementing a COVID-19 plan. The pandemic has had a notable impact on all aspects of the University, including budgetary. Recently he and VP Todd Foreman released a statement on some of these impacts but noted that there were notable bright spots. The graduate population has grown to its highest level ever. The first year to second year retention rate has grown from 79% to 83%. Capacity in the residence halls is at 56%, great for social distancing but with a negative revenue impact. Our fund-raising campaign, which is ongoing, has already reached its $150 million goal.

President Rodríguez closed with the comment that while a great deal of attention needs to be given to day-to-day operations, we need to look to the future with forward facing programs and efforts such as that requested by the Governor on disparities of impact from COVID-19 and in health care for minority communities. He wished us all a safe and happy Thanksgiving and holiday season.

Q&A

**Being optimistic about vaccines and the campus opening up in the fall, what is your top priority?**

**President Rodríguez:** We are planning for a full fall program next year building on what we have learned this year and new developments in vaccines and therapeutics. The number one concern here and elsewhere is the mental health and well-being of our students. We have a very diverse community, with 40% being students of color, a third from the lower income bracket, and a third first generation in college. We need to care for all these communities.

**Has experience with the pandemic revealed new policies or tools?**

**President Rodríguez:** The crisis has revealed many campus strengths, with an advisory group restructured based on what was learned. We are constantly reviewing what worked and what did not and comparing notes with other schools.

**What are your plans for vaccinating 20,000 or more people on campus?**

**President Rodríguez:** The Incident Management Team is focusing on this. The distribution of vaccines will be governed by rules at the federal and state level, and I believe we are equal to this task. The response to first developing and then administering more than 35,000 tests attests to the University’s capability, just as it responded recently when we saw what looked like a small spike, went virtually overnight to a universal outbreak, and then decided to go remote. (continues next page)
When newly appointed Provost Carol Kim spoke for the first time at the Emeritus Center in early March, 2020, we learned about her groundbreaking past research and ambitious goals for the academic mission at UAlbany. Six months later on September 14, Provost Kim spoke again at the Center, but on this occasion the focus was squarely on the COVID-19 pandemic. She began by commenting on how impressed she had become with faculty, staff and students’ responses to the pandemic. While immensely challenging, the pandemic has highlighted UAlbany’s strengths in public health and public policy, as well as our faculty’s research expertise in minority health disparities. All this was reflected in Governor Cuomo’s request last spring to President Rodriguez for UAlbany to take the lead in recommending ways that New York could better understand and reduce the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 suffered by individuals in communities of color.

Provost Kim described the many strategies undertaken to safeguard the health and well-being of the University community, while at the same time maintaining an excellent and rigorous student experience. Some of these strategies include changes in the academic calendar (classes ended this semester before Thanksgiving and do not begin again till February), extensive and repeated virus testing through the use of innovative pooled surveillance testing required for on-campus students, faculty and staff; reduced density in campus spaces such as the libraries, classrooms, residence halls, and the Campus Center; resuming on-campus research with instructions for safe lab functioning; course delivery using multiple formats; and continuous reassessment of conditions with the possibility of pivoting back to fully remote courses if needed.

President Havidán Rodríguez Speaks to the Emeriti (continued)
Prepared by Tim Lance

What are the differences between remote and in-person learning?

President Rodríguez: Early on at the University I pushed for more remote programs, which served us well in the pandemic. Moving forward, most classes will be in person, but I anticipate a richer mix of in-person and remote based on our now considerable experience.

Many parts of the surrounding community are still struggling. How can the University engage to help?

President Rodríguez: Community Engagement and Support is one of our five core principles in our strategic plan, an active effort that now will grow. Specific efforts, such as testing, has immediate community use. The University recently received the Carnegie classification “Engaged University.”

What is the status of capital money for some of our new programs?

President Rodríguez: The Ed Tech building is going ahead and we expect to be using it in the fall. The estimates of work on the old Albany High School building have gone up but, with NYS having a $16 billion deficit, we are looking for alternate resources and also for proposals to do half the building.

President Rodríguez closed by thanking us all again for all we do and wished us a Happy Thanksgiving and a wonderful holiday.

Click here for the University’s 2019-20 Annual Report

Provost Carol Kim Kicks Off Emeritus Center Speaker Program for Fall 2020
Prepared by Teri Harrison

When newly appointed Provost Carol Kim spoke for the first time at the Emeritus Center in early March, 2020, we learned about her groundbreaking past research and ambitious goals for the academic mission at UAlbany. Six months later on September 14, Provost Kim spoke again at the Center, but on this occasion the focus was squarely on the COVID-19 pandemic. She began by commenting on how impressed she had become with faculty, staff and students’ responses to the pandemic. While immensely challenging, the pandemic has highlighted UAlbany’s strengths in public health and public policy, as well as our faculty’s research expertise in minority health disparities. All this was reflected in Governor Cuomo’s request last spring to President Rodriguez for UAlbany to take the lead in recommending ways that New York could better understand and reduce the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 suffered by individuals in communities of color.

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The University has set out a “multi-layered” approach to health safety consisting of requiring face coverings by everyone with a presence on campus as well as reporting online for a daily health screening in which individuals are asked about symptoms. The importance of hygiene is reinforced through recommendations for hand washing, ubiquitous hand sanitizer and health kits issued to each student, and anti-bacterial coatings on frequently touched surfaces. Physical distancing has been supported using furniture reconfigurations in classrooms, libraries and the Campus Center along with designating which seats can and cannot be used in lecture centers.

Provost Kim described in detail the procedures for pooled surveillance testing using saliva samples, which are carried out by the RNA Institute and the School of Public Health. Those individuals whose saliva tests produce a positive outcome receive a diagnostic COVID-19 test and quarantine until the outcome is produced 48 hours later. A positive diagnostic test is followed up by contact tracing, carried out through a collaboration between the Albany County Department of Health, State officials, and the University.

Following the presentation, emeriti pursued some related questions. One addressed the extent to which campus is off-limits. While individuals who are not part of the pooled surveillance testing should not generally be on campus, it is ok to make a quick non-interactive visit to campus offices to obtain books or do quick errands. Some wondered about quarantining conditions for students who test positive (260 beds have been set aside; volunteers deliver meals) and under what conditions the campus would revert to remote instruction. In the fall, SUNY Chancellor Malatras established a rule that requires moving to remote instruction given the presence of 100 positive cases within a two-week period. The conversation ended with a Provost Kim’s hopes for a safe and effective vaccine soon, and a request she made of all in the meantime to receive a flu vaccine this year.

“We can not solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them” — Albert Einstein

"Condemnation without investigation is the height of ignorance" -- William Paley
University at Albany to be Commended for Pandemic Response

The following letter to the Editor was published by the Times Union on February 13, 2021

The University at Albany’s Emeritus Center is an organization of retired faculty and staff, and its Board of Directors wishes to highlight the unprecedented challenges faced by the University over the last nine months, and publicly acknowledge the faculty, staff, administrators, and students who have worked tirelessly to maintain the mission and high standards of the University.

Almost overnight faculty created instruction models enabling students to complete their studies and receive a rich, comprehensive experience and continued their important research during the shutdown, including development of a COVID-19 saliva test by the RNA Institute.

University staff and contractors kept essential spaces and services operating for the faculty and students to do their work. Implementing expanded cleaning protocols and testing, expanding technology services, altering food service and residence hall services required extraordinary staff ingenuity and commitment.

President Rodriguez and his senior staff provided extraordinary guidance and support. They ensured that the safety of our three campuses was the highest priority. Leadership is most important during challenging times and they have shown commitment and skill in ensuring the University continues to excel.

Manufacturing face shields, delivering meals to seniors, providing campus space for testing and vaccinations, and investigating the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on minority populations are just a fraction of the activities demonstrating the University’s commitment to the broader community. We feel honored to see how the base we built is being so nobly expanded.

Sincerely,
Edward F. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
President, William L. Reese II Emeritus Center
Latham

Link to letter:
2020 Emeritus Center Fellows Announced

The University at Albany Emeritus Center recently elected Eric Block and Gary Kleppel as William L. Reese Fellows. Named after our founding President and benefactor Bill Reese, the Fellows program is designed to confer appropriate honor to UAlbany Emeriti for sustained, consequential, and exemplary post-retirement professionally related contributions and achievements in scholarship/creative productions, teaching, or service, in or outside the University.

Since retiring from the Department of Biological Sciences in 2017, Professor Kleppel has continued his scholarship, teaching and service focusing on sustainable and environmentally regenerative agriculture. Regenerative agriculture promotes the use techniques that produce healthy food, while simultaneously restoring soil health, mitigating the impacts of farming on natural resources, and reducing the contribution of agriculture to climate change. It is the subject of a multi-year project he has initiated called Eden 2.0, which was funded in part by one of our Three Voices grants in 2018. Professor Kleppel has also given guest lectures post-retirement and is active in town and county agricultural programs.

Professor Block retired from the Department of Chemistry in 2018 and has actively continued his research on sulfur chemistry. He has relocated to Southern California for part of the year, where he has served as a Visiting Professor at UCLA and the University of California at Irvine. He continues to publish articles in peer reviewed scientific journals and has presented his work at international symposia. In 2020 he was awarded a Three Voices grant to help support his travel as a co-chair of a session at Pacifichem 2021 in Honolulu. He has been named “An Ambassador of Excellence” by the American Chemical Society for his work on the editorial board of Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.

Edward Fitzgerald, President of the Emeritus Center, says “that the Board is very impressed with the work that both Professors Kleppel and Block continue to do after retirement and that they exemplify the Center’s goal of encouraging emeriti to stay actively engaged with their profession and the University”. William Hedberg, Senior Vice Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and the administrative liaison for the Center, says “I have always thought of the scholarly life as a life-style. The opportunities the Emeritus Center offers for support and recognition of continued meaningful participation in the scholarly life are substantial, and unusual I think in the SUNY system and perhaps beyond. I thank Prof. Reese for his vision and resources to make these opportunities possible, and I congratulate Profs. Kleppel and Block on their selection and thank them for being exemplars of how the scholarly life continues after retirement”.

For more information about the Emeritus Center and the Fellows Program

CLICK HERE

Professor Eric Block

Professor Gary Kleppel
Dean David Holtgrave of the School of Public Health Speaks on COVID-19: What Do We Think and What Do We Know

Prepared by Edward Fitzgerald

On December 7, 2020, Dr. David Holtgrave, Dean of the School of Public Health, and a SUNY Distinguished Professor, concluded our Fall, 2020 theme of COVID-19. He is an expert on COVID and instrumental in helping to design and implement the University at Albany’s response. He has also published several important research studies in collaboration with the NYS Department of Health and has been interviewed by national media outlets regarding their results.

He began by describing the wide reach of the pandemic with 65 million cases and 1.5 million deaths globally. The USA is leading the world in both categories, with 200,000 cases, 100,000 hospitalizations, and 2,700 deaths each day. For 2020 COVID was cumulatively the third leading cause of death in the USA after cancer and heart disease, and by the end of the year became the single most common weekly cause. In NY, there are currently 200,000 persons tested each day, of whom about 10,000 are positive, and there are about 100 deaths/day.

Effective treatments for COVID include monoclonal antibodies, remdesivir, and dexamethasone, and are administered as the disease progresses for mild to severe. Other treatments such as hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin have not been shown to be effective in a study co-authored by Dean Holtgrave and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Vaccines have been developed by Pfizer and Moderna, and the clinical trial data indicate that they are 90 - 95% effective with relatively few side-effects. After approval by the FDA, it is expected that they will begin to be made available to the public.

Racial and ethnic disparities in COVID are another major public health concern. For example, antibody studies conducted by the SPH and the NYS Department of Health have shown that 29% of blacks and 20% of Hispanics have been infected with COVID compared to only 8% of whites. Similarly, if infected, blacks and Hispanics are 2x more likely to be diagnosed with COVID, 4x more likely to be hospitalized if diagnosed, and 4 to 6x more likely to die if hospitalized. The guidelines to prevent COVID are also often more difficult for minority populations. Staying at home if ill assumes that you have paid sick leave, stocking up on food and supplies implies that you have the funds to do so, and remote schooling requires that parents can work from home.

The presentation was followed by a spirited Q and A session. Issues discussed included the role of animals in transmitting disease to humans, the availability and timeline for the vaccine, the policies likely to be implemented by the incoming Biden Administration, and how lessons learned from COVID may help deal with future pandemics.

At the time of this writing, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have received EMERGENCY USE AUTHORIZATION (EUA) by the FDA and a national vaccination program is underway but demand greatly exceeds supply. Tragically the disease has now claimed nearly half a million American lives.

FACT SHEET FOR RECIPIENTS AND CAREGivers

EMERGENCY USE AUTHORIZATION (EUA) OF THE PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE

https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download

EMERGENCY USE AUTHORIZATION (EUA) OF THE MODERNA COVID-19 VACCINE

https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download
Professor DeeDee Bennett Gayle of the College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity spoke to the emeriti on September 28, 2020 regarding her work on COVID-19. Her expertise is how to leverage technology during disasters for socially vulnerable populations. Socially vulnerable populations are those who based on characteristics or situations are at higher risk during response, recovery, preparedness, and mitigation of a large-scale disaster. She estimates that at least 50% of the US population falls in this category.

COVID-19 falls between a disaster and a catastrophe and has impacted social events and been a disruption to our normal way of life. If we can reduce vulnerability among our most at-risk populations, we can increase our resiliency as a country. The primary impacts of fatalities and cases, and the secondary impacts of health and economy have affected our at-risk populations of black, indigenous, people of color, low income, and those with disabilities. The impacts are predictable as these populations have a history of being underserved in prior disasters.

Older adults are one such group and Dr. Bennet Gayle has surveyed older adults on a small scale about COVID-19 messaging through a SUNY seed grant. Emeriti were included in this survey. The survey sample size was 187 respondents who were asked questions related to messaging from various sources (social cues, government, social media, television, etc.) and the impact of this messaging. Demographics were collected related to age, lifestyle, employment, education, income, gender and race. Those responding were skewed in terms of income (high) and education (graduate degree earned). Most reported receiving messaging from TV news and the most trusted sources were the Centers for Disease Control, NYS Governor Cuomo briefings, and the World Health Organization. Interestingly, President Trump briefings were rated very low as a trusted source. The data showed that a high percentage (97%) adjusted their behavior based on the messaging by wearing masks, staying indoors, and wearing gloves to touch objects outside. In terms of when behavior changed, it seemed the largest number indicated after the Governor’s stay at home order. After such a long time under this pandemic, it would be interesting to know how these data might change if surveyed again more recently. The data analysis for this research is still in progress and the results will be used for future applications for grants from the National Institutes for Health.

Dr. Bennet Gayle also reported on a working group which has completed three publications so far based on elements of the research agenda: the impact of individual behaviors related to employment and education; how do employment technologies impact productivity; impact of digital services on health-related behaviors; how will current technology help in planning for future disasters; what can be learned from human/computer interactions which are in use for almost every function of our lives. The publications are: (1) The Coronavirus Pandemic Accessible for Education, Employment and Lifestyles; (2) Information Communication Technologies and Emergency Management, and (3) The Impact of COVID-19 on Lifestyle Changes of Human Behavior in the United States.

Dr. Bennet Gayle raised many more questions and impacts which need study. Impact on minority communities, how to change our response and communication to be more effective with future disasters and the lasting impact of this pandemic on our lifestyle, education, etc. going forward.
One of the most concerning results of the Covid-19 pandemic is the increase in hunger among those who have faced the worst economic toll caused by the virus. Nightly we watch as cars line up to receive boxes and bags of staples at food distribution sites and people visiting local food pantries to supplement their empty cupboards. Those who never counted on food banks or food pantries before have had to turn to them recently to feed their families. To support these measures and to build innovative and dynamic models for increasing food access, Dr. Beth Feingold and her team have received a $100,000 grant from the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR).

Professor Feingold is an Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the School of Public Health. She is an interdisciplinary environmental health scientist with a research interest in global environmental health and a focus on food, the environment, and the health nexus both globally and locally. When the pandemic hit close to home, her research was rapidly adapted to the needs of the day. She is the lead investigator on a four-year community-engaged project called FRESH aimed at modeling the environmental, nutritional, and human health impacts of the produce recovery and redistribution system of NYS’s Capital Region. The FFAR grant is a two-year supplement to this work which allows her and her team to consider the impacts that the pandemic is having on the local food system. She presented some of her findings to the Emeritus Center on November 23, 2020.

When, at the beginning of the pandemic, we saw the headlines and stories of milk being dumped by dairy farmers and produce rotting in the fields while long lines appeared at food banks, Dr. Feingold’s FRESH (Fresh produce Recovery and Redistribution for Environmental Sustainability and Health) research was well underway. They already knew that 52.4 million tons of produce were being sent annually to landfills and another 10.1 million tons remained unharvested in fields. The impacts were environmental and economic as well as nutritional. 12% of those living in the 11 counties that comprise the Capital Region are food insecure. This is one of the top-producing agricultural regions of the country: how can this be? Steps needed to be taken and Governor Cuomo’s 10 Point Plan to confront Covid-19 included overcoming disruptions in the food supply chain among other efforts involving transportation, jobs, household income, schools, and social and farm engagement.

Food insecurity is defined as a condition in which households lack access to sufficient nutritional foods. Those households most severely affected by job loss and unemployment due to Covid-19 are also those experiencing high food insecurity and, in households with children, this can have devastating impacts. Feeding America, the leading organization fighting hunger, says in 2020 more than 50 million Americans including 17 million children may be food insecure. Black and Hispanic children are more often and more severely impacted. Surveys of local families demonstrate a number of strategies that are being employed to keep children and their families fed: buying food that won’t go bad and can be stored; stretching meals; buying cheaper foods; using food pantries and other food distribution opportunities; and depending on families and friends. Innovative approaches helped at the beginning: school districts that switched to remote education made food deliveries to needy students and farmers helped by preparing and distributing food boxes. But as the pandemic drags on into a second year, “Covid-19 fatigue” is feared to take a toll; support for efficient food recovery and distribution must continue, not only during these fraught times but into the future. We look to efforts like those of Dr. Feingold and her team to help.
If one of your new hobbies during the pandemic has been watching the weather -- perhaps in search of a time to walk outside that avoids rain, snow, and derecho -- then you will be very happy to learn about the MesoNet, the topic of Prof. Chris Thorncroft's presentation to the Emeritus Center on October 12, 2020. Prof. Thorncroft is the Director of the University's very well-respected Atmospheric Sciences Research Center as well as Director of the NYS Mesonet, a network of 126 automatic weather stations that make key weather observations across the entire New York State in order to protect life and property.

One need only think for a minute about the past 10 years to appreciate Prof. Thorncroft's observation that NYS gets its share of extreme weather. The derecho that took place on October 7, 2020 cutting a 320-mile swath of damage and Hurricane Sandy's $66 billion pricetag in damages come immediately to mind. Access to more and better information makes it possible to mitigate the economic and human impact of extreme weather by improving the possibility of making better decisions.

The MesoNet stations are positioned between 3 and 100 miles apart across the State, although one is never more than 10 miles away from a site. The stations rest largely on the ground except in New York City where they are situated on rooftops; they are all solar-powered. Championed by Governor Cuomo, initially for emergency management, this $30 million project began construction in 2014 and completed the network by 2018, a remarkable feat given the fact that every site was a separate building project that required significant bureaucratic paperwork. For example, the project had to clear both archeological and historical legal hurdles at every location, ensuring that the station did not destroy archaeological artifacts or obscure historically significant sites.

MesoNet weather stations collect observations every 5 minutes on a variety of conditions: rainfall, temperature, humidity, wind speed, of course, but also surface pressure, soil temperature, snow depth, solar radiation, and air quality sensors. These kinds of observations make it possible to monitor droughts, carry out rescues during floods, and watch how snowstorms are evolving in real time, in addition to answering other questions of general or personal interest. As Prof. Thorncroft mentioned, the data are accessible to the public, so if you’re a weather geek, you can occupy yourself for hours.

Who else benefits? Agriculture, commercial applications, utilities, energy industries, and many other enterprises use Mesonet data to answer questions as lofty as where to situate wind turbines and to undertake activities as essential to the sweet tooth as monitoring the health of maple trees. Because the data is used to issue earlier weather warnings, U.S. National Weather Service Director Louis Guilini has called MesoNet a “game changer.”

Can the MesoNet tell us anything related to the COVID-19 pandemic? Most recently, Prof. Thorncroft and collaborators from the NYS Department of Health’s Wadsworth Center are addressing this question by exploring ways that weather may impact the transmission of COVID-19. Reasoning that the longer COVID-19 droplets are in the air, the more chances there are of virus transmission, the research team is asking how wind, temperature, and humidity may comprise probabilistic environmental conditions that favor the longevity of droplets and thus transmission. The unprecedented quality of MesoNet weather data, and the excellence of NY’s health data compared to other states, make it possible for the research team to discover some fascinating and potentially critical relationships that would otherwise remain hidden.
Looking Ahead to November 3: An Election Preview
Prepared by Scott Birge

On **October 26, 2020**, as the 2020 Election Day neared, the UAlbany Emeritus Center presented an election preview, featuring Professor Michael J. Malbin of the Political Science Department, who is also a reporter, think tank scholar, and nationally known expert on campaign finance. Professor Malbin’s recent work on federal and state elections has included research on participation by small donors, political parties, and interest groups.

The talk initially outlined the presidential race, reviewing the 2016 electoral vote map and projecting possible party vote shifts that could affect the results. Scenarios of change could come in the areas of increased democratic voter registration in several swing states (notably Georgia, Arizona, Florida, and Pennsylvania). Scenarios dealing with early and mail-in balloting changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic were covered in depth.

Campaign financing comparisons were discussed. For the presidential race, influx of campaign funds would better presage voter enthusiasm than the standard name recognition factors seen in state and local elections. Professor Malbin's expertise in this area gave a unique perspective not usually covered in the national media.

A second focus highlighted the NY state races and what the potential for a Democratic veto proof legislature could affect. A mere addition of 2 legislative seats could provide the Democrats that status, if unified. Although unlikely that potential vetoes might be overturned, a noted effect on the bargaining process might well occur. State and local elections are increasingly ignored in the media, and Malbin gave clues for gauging implications of NY state election results on areas of interest, like SUNY's budget allocation.

Finally, the question-and-answer period covered topics of disputed presidential results and Supreme Court involvement, the disparity of vote count and possible its impact of the results. It was evident that access to Dr. Malbin’s unique expertise was appreciated and the dialogue was enjoyed by the participants via Zoom.

At the time of this writing, it is apparent that his predictions that early and mail-in balloting would impact the results in swing states such as Arizona, Georgia, and Pennsylvania were indeed accurate, as was his prediction of a veto-proof Democratic majority in the NYS Legislature.

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**Useful Links for Retirees**

- Medicare Information
- NY State Commission on National and Community Service
- TIAA-CREF
- NYSUT Retirees and Retirement
- UUP
- AROHE

**FOR FUN:**

- Think like a 94 year old genius
- 50 Ways to live longer
- How to live to 100 and enjoy it

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“A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep.” — **Saul Bellow**
Prof. Bruce Miroff on the 2020 Presidential Election
Prepared by Teri Harrison

Although the past 4 years have had their fair share of events that dismayed, frightened, and shocked us, the aftermath of the presidential election of 2020 will stand out as unforgottably appalling. Prior to recent developments, on November 9, 2020 and with results barely a week old, political science Professor Bruce Miroff joined us at the Emeritus Center to reflect on the recent election and ponder an uncertain future. An experienced political analyst, having written often on topics including leadership, liberalism, political parties, the presidency and democracy, Prof. Miroff helped us make some sense of the situation and advanced some interesting predictions.

Like so many, Prof. Miroff was surprised by the dismal performance of pollsters in accurately projecting voting outcomes. One of the most famous polling firms, 538, gave Joe Biden 9-1 odds of victory, and many others predicted margins as high as 8-10% in favor of Biden in battleground states. Although Biden won the popular vote by a substantial margin, the results in many battleground states were considerably closer. Perhaps those contacted by pollsters today are less inclined to respond or to give honest responses, but since this is the second presidential election in a row to yield poor performance, one cannot help but wonder if, and how, the polling enterprise can be repaired.

Although Democrat Joseph Biden has won the election, Prof. Miroff observed that the victory was not reassuring. Four states won by President Trump in 2016 flipped to Biden in 2020, but the margin of victory in them was less than 1%. Further, the Biden victory lacked the normal congressional coattails, as only 2 Senate seats flipped from Republican to Democrat, while Democratic seats in the House and Senate were lost. Indeed, Senate seats expected to be Democratic victories in Georgia were subject to runoffs scheduled to take place in early January 2021. Only by winning both seats would it be possible to put the Senate into Democratic hands. Even if that happened (and it has as of this writing), hopes for ambitious legislation are likely to be curtailed as the Democratic majority will be slim.

While few of us could have foreseen the extent to which this turned out to be true, Prof. Miroff has proven 100% accurate in predicting that President Trump would never give up his claims of a stolen election. However, will soon-to-be-former President Trump continue to exert a powerful hold on the Republican party and in so doing diminish the prospects for more collaborative governance? Few of us could have predicted the insurrection that took place on Jan 6, 2021, but its aftermath is likely to have lasting effects on our political future.

On a more hopeful note, Prof. Miroff was bullish about President-elect Biden’s personal prospects for governance. Biden’s reputation as a decent and moderate politician of good will, as one who knows the intricacies of Congressional bargaining and negotiations, and one who is willing to work across the aisle to find areas of agreement all sow a bit of optimism. In spite of past divisiveness, many Republicans are open to constructing legislative initiatives with broad and inclusive appeal. But perhaps the most critical task for 2021, and years beyond, will be finding ways to forge a more unified political culture that brings together those historically left out of the American dream as well as those that appear to have lost faith with it.
Greetings, fellow Emeriti!

My name is Jim Utermark and I just joined your ranks in July of 2020. I am enjoying learning about the Emeritus Center, particularly the very interesting Zoom events scheduled this Fall. I was asked to write about how it felt to retire during a time of wrenching change – namely the COVID-19 global pandemic.

First, a bit about me. I guess I have SUNY, and particularly UAlbany, in my blood. My father worked for the University for 31 years, and both my sister and brother-in-law earned degrees here. Same with me. I was awarded Master’s and Bachelor’s degrees in Political Science from Rockefeller College. My time as a student also included working a series of jobs on campus – painting dorm rooms during summers, working for UAS in the Indian Quad cafeteria, and working at both the Computing Center and the University Library. At the latter, I met my wife, Carol. So, UAlbany means a great deal to me.

After grad school, I served in a fellowship at the NYS Senate and began a career in public service, working for both the Legislature and the Executive. For the final half of my 33-year career, I worked for SUNY – mostly for UAlbany. For most of this period, I served as the Deputy Director (and occasionally Acting Director) for the Center for International Development. Originally part of SUNY, CID transferred to Rockefeller College in 2007. For more than three decades, the Center worked with governments and legislative bodies around the world to develop institutions facilitating good governance.

Way back when in grad school, I wanted a career in international relations. Once I started with the Legislature, my focus shifted to state government policy. I count myself extremely lucky that my time with UAlbany brought me full circle to a rewarding position that kept me in Albany while allowing me to work on international governance challenges.

Okay, enough about my background. On to retirement during a pandemic.

My wife and I started exploring when we might retire several years ago. Originally, we estimated the earliest time would be when our daughter graduated from college (she is currently a junior at SUNY Geneseo). As we took stock of our finances, health, and lifestyle, it became clear that we could move that date up some. In early 2019, we focused on retiring in early 2020 when I turned 56 and my wife turned 55. We could both start collecting our pensions at that point.

During the course of 2019, I talked with CID’s Director and ultimately decided to retire at the end of June 2020, mainly to coincide with the end of the Research Foundation’s fiscal year. That seemed a perfect time to step out and transition to the retired life!

Little did I know what 2020 had in store for us all.

While contemplating when to retire, my wife and I also spent a good deal of time thinking about what we would do in retirement. I even drafted a bucket list of things I wanted to do. At the top of our lists were travel and volunteering. On travel, we both enjoy visiting new and unorthodox places. Given my work in international development, I have traveled extensively throughout Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. That was work, though. wearing suits, going to meetings with officials shortly after 14-hour flights, working 16 to 20-hour days. Usually, I did not get to see much in the places I visited. Now, I would have the opportunity to relax, spend time seeing all the many things that interest us – museums, parks, historic sites. We looked forward to traveling the US, Canada and much of the world. 2020 put the kibosh on that real quick!
Retiring during a pandemic (continued)

James Utermark

We also hoped to do some volunteering to give back to our community. We had not yet zeroed in on anything in particular, but it quickly became apparent that direct, in-person volunteer work was not going to mesh with our pandemic bubble.

So, with two main activities by the wayside for now, we had to get creative about how to use our time. One area we both quickly agreed on was the need to get outdoors and exercise. We both love nature, and my wife is an avid outdoor photographer. So, we dove into hiking and biking. We have dabbled in both over the years, including doing the BikeNYC 5-Boro bike tour several times. BikeNYC was cancelled this year, but we took to biking in a big way – finding new rail trails and other places to ride. The new Albany–Hudson Electric Trail from East Greenbush down into Columbia County has been a blessing. It is close to our house and a very interesting ride. And our favorite place to ride is the Saratoga National Historic Park. The Battlefield has an 11-mile loop road with varied terrain and beautiful views. We usually ride around the road twice to get a good workout in. During the summer when it was more crowded, we would get up early – sometimes 5am – to get there before the masses.

We also enjoy day hikes around the area and did a backpacking trip to the Adirondacks in mid-October (see photos). Between biking and hiking, we wound up putting hundreds of miles in this summer and saw many wonderful sites. The health benefits of all this exercise are just icing on the cake. We are now winding down our summer and fall excursions, although we hope to ride until the snow makes it impractical. When that happens, we have a treadmill and snowshoes. We will find a way to keep going!

On top of these adventures, we are also engaged in more mundane things like home improvements that we neglected for far too long and adapting ourselves to a pandemic routine. As with many of you, I am often asked how I am adjusting to retirement. I reply that while the pandemic brought drastic and unexpected changes, we found ways to enjoy ourselves and enrich our lives. It has not turned out the way we envisioned, but we are glad we went ahead with retirement and we are not looking back.

2020-2021 Three Voices Grant Program Awardees

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Applicant</th>
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<td>Eric Block</td>
<td>Sulphur Rush: Organosulphur Frontiers</td>
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<td>Eloise Briere</td>
<td>Africana: Fictional Women and Forms of Power</td>
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<td>Lindsay Childs</td>
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<td>Martha Rozett</td>
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<td>Roberta Spencer</td>
<td>Grandparents Academy</td>
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<td>Dir Sml Bus Dev Ctr</td>
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<td>Ann Marie Murray</td>
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<td>Asst VP &amp; Cntrl</td>
<td>David Mason</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/1/21</td>
<td>Lead Prgmr Anlst</td>
<td>James Costello</td>
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Welcome to Donna Canestraro, Newly Appointed to the Board of the Emeritus Center

Over the course of her 30+ year career, Donna has worked across the globe, working on public sector and not for profit innovation efforts. She is a speaker and facilitator, who has delivered over 200 thought-leadership and strategy development sessions for organizational leaders all over the world. Donna is instrumental in leading organizations towards meeting their goals and focuses on building capability in each organization that she works with.

She is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) with large-scale project management experience applied in a variety of complex business and technical environments. She is the owner of DSC Leadership Consulting, LLC specializing in thought leadership seminars, project management consulting and strategic planning and governance. She is also an adjunct professor in Government Information Strategy and Management, a nationally ranked academic program offered by Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy at the University at Albany. Her project-based course is highly sought after for it provides graduate students with an interdisciplinary, experiential learning opportunity within government and not for profit organizations focused on project management and business analytic skills.

Donna recently retired as Program Director at the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany/SUNY. She received the prestigious Presidents Excellence Award in Professional Service in 2015.

In her capacity at CTG, Donna lead multi-sector and multi-disciplinary teams from the U.S. and around the world to produce new knowledge and actionable results. Her portfolio included working with New York State government, United States federal government, New York County governments and Associations, United Nations Secretariat, UN Department of Economic and Social Development and many others.

She has published numerous research and practice articles detailing how organizational capabilities, information policies, management practices, and technology choices intersect to shape organizational operations and services. She is currently a Government Fellow at the Center where she is focused on continuing with collaborative writing projects with her colleagues.
The William L. Reese II, Ph.D. Emeritus Center at the University at Albany
Spring 2021 Program

(Professor in the School of Business and Director of Research at the New York State Center for
Information Forensics and Assurance at the University)
February 15, 2021

Amy Klein: “Why Good Food Shouldn’t be a Privilege?”
(CEO Capital Roots)
March 1, 2021

Dean Robert P. Griffin: “A Mirror into Our Soul: What reflections of January 6th says about the
State of America”
(Dean – College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity)
March 15, 2021

Dr. Don Levy: “Understanding 2020 Pre-Election Polling and the Road Ahead”
(Director Siena Research Poll)
March 29, 2021

Gretchen Moore Simmons: “It’s OK to Get old!”
(Assistant Executive Director at Senior Services of Albany, now LifePath)
April 12, 2021

JoAnne Malatesta: “Building a Coordinated Student Success Model”
(Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies)
April 26, 2021

Corinna Ripps Schaming: “The University Art Museum: Contemporary, Artist-Driven, Student-
Centered”
(Director and Chief Curator of the University Art Museum)
May 10, 2021

*For additional information, contact Neil Murray, UAEC program director HERE
A little something to ponder...

I asked one of my friends who is just a bit closer to 80 than I am what sort of changes he is feeling in himself. He sent me the following very interesting lines, which I would like to share with you ....

#1 After loving my parents, my siblings, my spouse, my children, my friends, now I have started loving myself.

#2 I just realized that I am not “Atlas”. The world does not rest on my shoulders.

#3 I now stopped bargaining with vegetables & fruits vendors. A few pennies more is not going to burn a hole in my pocket but it might help the poor fellow save for his daughter’s school fees.

#4 I pay my waitress a big tip. The extra money might bring a smile to her face. She is toiling much harder for a living than I am.

#5 I stopped telling those older than me that they’ve already shared that story many times. The story makes them walk happily down memory lane & relive the past.

#6 I have learned not to correct people even when I know they are wrong. The onus of making everyone perfect is not on me. Peace is more precious than perfection.

#7 I give compliments freely & generously. Compliments are a mood enhancer not only for the recipient, but also for me. And when receiving a compliment, never, NEVER turn it down, just say "Thank You."

#8 I have learned not to bother about a crease or a spot on my shirt. Personality speaks louder than appearances.

#9 I walk away from people who don't value me. They might not know my worth, but I do.

#10 I am learning not to be embarrassed by my emotions. It’s my emotions that make me human.

#11 I have learned that it's better to drop the ego than to break a relationship. My ego will keep me aloof, whereas with relationships I will never be alone.

#12 I am doing what makes me happy. I am responsible for my happiness, and I owe it to myself. Happiness is a choice. You can be happy at any time if you just choose to be!
Volunteer Opportunities at UA

The University welcomes expressions of interest in volunteer service from emeriti faculty and staff. There are a variety of opportunities for mentoring, sharing your experience through guest presentations, and participating in campus activities. Please contact Willam Hedberg in the Provost's Office whedberg@albany.edu to discuss your particular interests.

UAEC Board Members

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Grayce Burian, | M.A. - Professor Emerita Theatre Schenectady County Community College

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Carol A. Whittaker, | M.A., MPA - Founding Director, Center for Global Health and Clinical Associate Professor Health Policy, Management and Behavior School of Public Health UAlbany

Find out MORE: http://www.albany.edu/emerituscenter/