

In this issue:

- [The President's Letter](#)
- [Four RFA Leadership Award Recipients](#)
- [Nicholas Law: Are We Alone?](#)
- [Meet Jan Johnson Yopp](#)
- [Friday Center Daytime Enrichment Courses](#)
- [Reports from Faculty Council](#)



RFA Newsletter

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2023

[View this email in your browser](#)



The President's Letter

The RFA Wants Your Ideas – Please Respond

Your Retired Faculty Association is asking for your input, whether you are currently an active member of it or not.

The RFA exists to serve and represent the interests of *all* UNC's retired faculty. We have valid email addresses for more than 1,000 emeritus and emerita faculty members, all of whom receive this newsletter. Of these, we have more than 150 dues-paying members; and of our members, some 30 to 50 attend our bimonthly luncheon meetings with guest speakers at the Friday Center. To see some of what we are already doing, or to become a member, see <https://uncrfa.web.unc.edu/>.

We would like to know from you, how can we more fully serve our members – and more broadly, how can we best serve *all* the UNC retired faculty community who are our constituency, and whose needs and concerns we represent to the Faculty Council?

We know that each of us has many other activities to occupy our time and contribute our talents in retired life. But we also know that the RFA provides a unique opportunity to continue to share in an intellectual community with other faculty members, and to voice our needs, concerns, knowledge, and values as continuing members of UNC's active faculty community.

What would make the RFA more valuable to you personally, and tempt you to consider participating more actively in it?

Would regular monthly luncheon meetings with good speakers attract you, rather than just every two months (every third Thursday, for instance, or some other predictable date)?

Are there other activities you would like to participate in, if the RFA were to organize them? A few examples, but please suggest others that would interest you as well:

- Discussion groups on common interests of retired faculty members?
 - Mentoring and hosting visiting faculty members and foreign scholars?
 - Day trips for retired faculty to visit interesting university programs, museums, or other interesting sites in the local region?
 - Additional educational opportunities?
 - Additional volunteer opportunities, either within or beyond the University?
 - Other activities with fellow faculty members that would interest you?
- Please tell us.

The RFA can be as attractive, influential and effective as our members' ideas and participation make it. The Executive Committee is about to embark on a strategic planning process to set priorities for its future. Please help us brainstorm what we could be doing that would most attract your participation! (**Respond to rfa@unc.edu, preferably by Monday, March 13**). And thank you in advance for sharing your ideas and suggestions with us.

– Pete Andrews

SAVE THE DATE: The next RFA general meeting will be held on **Thursday, April 20, 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.**, at the Friday Center. At this meeting we will present the 2023 RFA Leadership Award to four distinguished leaders among our colleagues, as well as the report of the Nominating Committee for next year's Executive Committee members (nominations may also be made from the floor). See below for details.

Four RFA Leadership Award Recipients to be Honored at Our April 20 Membership Meeting

The RFA Executive Committee is pleased to announce the selection of four outstanding recipients of the 2023 RFA Leadership Award. Originally established to recognize those who provided leadership to the Retired Faculty Association, eligibility was expanded in 2013 to include additional individuals whom the RFA wished to honor for their distinguished service to the university (Bill Friday in 2013, Tom Ross in 2015, Shirley Ort in 2018). The award is given in alternate years.

This year's recipients are Professor Emeritus **William Andrews** (English); Professor Emeritus **Tom Clegg** (Physics and Astronomy); Professor Emeritus **Jack Evans** (Kenan-Flagler Business School); and Professor Emerita **Jan Yopp** (Hussman School of Media and Journalism). All four will be recognized and be presented the award at the RFA general membership meeting on April 20 at the Friday Center. All RFA members are encouraged to attend and to join us in honoring these distinguished colleagues.

Voting Process for RFA Officers

Per our bylaws, at our April general membership meeting on April 20 the Executive Committee will present the report of its Nominating Committee for officers for 2023-2024. Additional nominations may be proposed from the floor (with advance permission of the nominee). The final vote will then be conducted by email, to allow all RFA members (not just those present) to vote.



Our February Speaker: Nicholas Law (Associate Professor of Astronomy)

Are we alone?

“Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known,” predicted Carl Sagan in a Newsweek profile nearly 50 years ago.

As RFA members learned from our February luncheon address, experimental astrophysicist Nick Law and his lucky graduate and undergraduate students in UNC’s Phillips Hall are building innovative astronomical instruments in search of that something, right here, right now.

One such is the Evryscope, a pair of telescope arrays based in California and Chile that cover the entire visible sky in each exposure, every two minutes – in effect, it’s a movie. They recently detected the first optical superflare seen from Proxima Centauri, the nearest star to our sun and also the nearest potential habitable exoplanet host star.

Planets are ubiquitous in the habitable zones of Sagan’s “billions and

billions” of stars, Law told us, but there’s a catch if you’re hoping they’ll find life elsewhere in the universe.

That superflare from Proxima Centauri was 100 times greater than the flares we see from our own sun. What that would mean for a “rock in the right place” would be that if it had a protective ozone layer (as the Earth does), it would be blown away by the enormous amount of ultraviolet radiation emitted by such a superflare, and subsequent flares could destroy the planet’s atmosphere. Maybe that’s what happened to Mars, Law conjectured.

Undaunted, Law and his students are soldiering on, now developing the Argus Array, the next-generation super scope with larger lenses that will allow us to look at the sky as it was never possible before.

The James Webb telescope, which has recently produced such extraordinary images from deep space, nonetheless only looks at a very narrow part of the sky at a time, potentially missing many other phenomena that are happening in other regions of the sky. The Evryscope and Argus Arrays, in contrast, produce video images of the entire sky showing any changes as brief as a single second apart, which can then inform decisions about where the Webb and other telescopes should look to explore them in greater detail. “That excites me,” Law said. “There will be surprises.” They’ve already built the Argus prototype and it’s being tested in the Pisgah National Forest.

Meanwhile, what keeps Law awake nights is “making the hardware work,” he said, and raising the funds to build the Argus Array. A major practical plus in its favor is that because it uses high-quality off-the-shelf telescopes, its cost is estimated as just \$20 million compared to the \$1 billion or more required for other systems that have been proposed. – Bob Lauterborn



Meet one of our Leadership Award Recipients: Jan Johnson Yopp

Jan Yopp earned her bachelor's degree in Journalism in 1970 at UNC-Chapel Hill, followed by a master's degree in Communications in 1971 at the University of Florida in Gainesville. After several positions as a working journalist, she joined the UNC faculty in 1977 and was appointed the Walter Hussman Term Professor before being named the Walter Spearman Professor in 2005.

During her 41-year career at UNC, Jan taught writing and editing courses, including more than 100 sections of MEJO 153, "Writing and Reporting." She co-authored six editions of the textbook that continues to be used as the core book for that course (*Reaching Audiences: A Guide to Media Writing*, 6th edition 2013) as well as in journalism programs at universities across the country. She also co-authored *Introduction to Reporting* (2004). For her outstanding teaching she was awarded the David Brinkley Teaching Excellence Award in 1995 and the Favorite Faculty award from the Class of 1995.

Jan served as associate dean for undergraduate studies and senior associate dean in the Journalism School before becoming dean of the UNC Summer School in 2008. Within the School she was a member or chair of numerous committees, including the Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure

Committee.

In particular, Jan helped guide the Carolina Association of Black Journalists as an adviser for almost 30 years. For four years she was co-director with Professor Chuck Stone of the Freedom Forum Rainbow Institute, a national diversity program that selected 15 high school students each year to study journalism in a three-week intensive summer program. She was instrumental in creating the Chuck Stone Program for Diversity in Education and Media in 2007 after Professor Stone retired in 2005. After retirement, she continues to serve as chair of the program's advisory board and to work with the summer workshop.

As Dean of UNC's Summer School, Jan supported initiatives to help students thrive at Carolina, building successful partnerships to launch new summer transition programs for incoming first-year and transfer students and underrepresented students. In addition to supporting the Summer Bridge and Chancellor's Science Scholars programs, she partnered the Summer School with other offices to launch the Transfer Student Program and Start Strong, two new summer transition programs that especially benefited nontraditional, underrepresented, veteran and first-generation students as they began their academic careers at Carolina. In 2018 she was recognized for her work with the University's Unsung Heroes Award.

Her service to the profession of journalism and the academy ranged from media relations workshops for local government to membership on the Executive Committee of Faculty Council. As dean of Summer School, she served on the Regions Task Force of the North American Association of Summer Sessions and regional vice president for NAASS and several terms as president of the North Carolina Association of Summer Sessions. She also received leadership awards from each of those organizations.

Beyond her documented record of achievement, leadership, and service, those of us who know her as a colleague can testify to numerous experiences of her effectiveness as a leader. As co-chair of the UNC-Chapel Hill Faculty

Legislative Liaison Committee, for example, she met with legislators to build understanding of UNC and UNC-Chapel Hill as essential and valuable to our state, and her tact coupled with sharp intelligence and practical knowledge was crucial in gaining support by legislators of various backgrounds.

In short, in the words of Susan King, former dean of the Hussman School of Media and Journalism: “Jan is a leader with every bone of her body. If there is a need within the school, she fills it. If there is a question about our values, she is able to articulate them clearly. Jan doesn’t talk about what needs to be done, she makes it happen. That kind of a leader is hard to find.”

[Note: Another of our Leadership Award recipients, Professor Emeritus Bill Andrews, was profiled in our previous newsletter; our other two recipients, Professors Jack Evans and Tom Clegg, will be profiled in upcoming issues.]

Friday Center Daytime Enrichment Courses

The Retired Faculty Association is a partner in the UNC Friday Center’s commitment to lifelong learning, both digital and in person, and both as instructors and participants. Registration for the Friday Center’s Spring 2023 Daytime Enrichment Courses is now available.

Courses this spring include a new offering of “Ethics, Smethics!” by RFA’s own professor emeritus Ned Brooks; “The Faces of Poverty in North Carolina,” by law professor Gene Nichol; “Voices of Mississippi, by renowned Southern folklorist Professor Bill Ferris; an art appreciation course on the ancient gods and goddesses; a history of the Green Spaces in Paris; the history and archaeology of Masada, the site of the first Jewish revolt against Rome; an

introduction to the diverse, and often dazzling, “supporting cast” of countless lesser, unappreciated living things – insects, fungi, amphibians, and plants – without which the natural world as we know it would not exist; and a financial education course for current and prospective retirees.

Please join us in enjoying and supporting these informative offerings by our partner organization, the Friday Center.

<https://register.fridaycenter.unc.edu/curriculum/programArea/pagePersonalEnrichmentMain.jsp>.

Carolina Public Humanities

Carolina Public Humanities sponsors many stimulating educational programs on timely topics throughout the academic year, and offers a 50% discount to dues-paid members of the Retired Faculty Association for participation in any of its programs except its Great Books conversations (call for discount)..

Program offerings still ahead include sessions on “The Great Battles Against Germany During 1943” (Professor Emeritus Gerhard Weinberg); “The Book of Revelation” (Professor Bart Ehrman); “Democracy and the Rule of Law in America;” “American Empire in the 19th-Century Pacific;” and “France’s World War II: Division, Defeat, and Denial;” and a series of “Humanities in Action Wednesdays” offering discussions on current issues in cooperation with Flyleaf Books (in person or by Zoom).

Like the Friday Center, please join us in enjoying and supporting the programs of another of our partner organizations, Carolina Public Humanities! Its Spring

2023 brochure is available at <https://humanities.unc.edu/programs/>

Peer Learning Opportunities

You're never too old to learn...or to teach! The Legend of King Arthur...Reading Shakespeare...American Beginnings...Hollywood in the 1940s...The Irish Identity: A Cultural History...Appreciating Opera...Art Meets Literature...Climate Change: What Does the Science Tell Us?...WWII in the Pacific Theater...Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition.

That's just a random sampling of the more than three dozen courses available from the two Chapel Hill senior learning groups: Shared Learning and Peer Learning. The courses are taught by retired people who are experts in their fields or who have a deep interest in the subject, either in person or on Zoom or in a hybrid form. The fees are nominal, and in both cases you can take as many courses as you like in a semester for one fee. Both are also eager to hear from you if you'd like to propose teaching a course on a subject dear to your heart. Check them out at <https://sharedlearning.us> and <https://peerlearningofchapelhill.com/index.html>, or for further information contact Professor emeritus Bob Lauterborn (lauterprof@aol.com).

Reports from Faculty Council (*from Professor Lynne Vernon-Feagans*)

January 20, 2023

Update on COVID-19 pandemic Prof. Amir Barzin (Family Medicine) and Prof.

David Weber (Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology) gave an excellent presentation on the current state of Covid 19, especially in Orange County (Prof. Weber's [Slides \[PDF\]](#)) COVID 19 cases are dropping overall in the US and in Orange County; Flu and RSV cases are also trending downward. They both recommended wearing masks inside whenever people are meeting in large numbers. UNC now has a clinic for people with Long COVID since 10% to 30% of COVID sufferers will develop Long COVID. UNC has seen over 1500 cases in their Long COVID clinic and the clinic is considered one of the best in the country.

Presentation of the 2022 Thomas Jefferson Award Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz and Prof. Marc Lange (Philosophy) presented the Thomas Jefferson Award to Professor Geoff Sayre-McCord (Philosophy). It is presented annually to “that member of the academic community who through personal influence and performance of duty in teaching, writing, and scholarship has best exemplified the ideals and objectives of Thomas Jefferson,” whose complex legacy includes the values of democracy, public service, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Chancellor's remarks. Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz announced several new initiatives, including a new Career Development Committee that examines student life beyond UNC. The chancellor also announced a new initiative on innovative schooling led by the School of Education, including a new Carolina Community Academy elementary school located in Person County.

Provost's remarks. Provost Christopher Clemens discussed academic freedom and a new online app called ChatGPT which has recently been banned from schools and universities because this sophisticated app can write quite impressive term papers on almost any topic. Clemens sees that this app may

be a future challenge here at UNC.

Introduction of Vice Chancellor for Communications Kamrhan

Farwell. The new vice chancellor will be in charge of increasing the quality of messaging about what is happening on campus, especially related to issues like race and equity as well as innovations and initiatives of the faculty.

February 17, 2023

The meeting was focused on a recent resolution by the Board of Trustees ([resolution \[PDF\]](#)) requesting that the UNC-CH administration accelerate development of a proposed new degree-granting School of Civic Life and Leadership as a division within the College of Arts and Sciences, employing at least 20 faculty; the resolution was accompanied by a budget request proposing more than \$30 million in state funds for it over its first four years ([memo \[PDF\]](#)).

Proposals for new academic units or degrees are normally the responsibility of the faculty, but according to Chair of the Faculty Professor Mimi Chapman and others, no faculty members had participated in or even been briefed on this proposal: the resolution was given to the *Wall Street Journal* before it had even been shared with UNC administrators and faculty. In contrast, the recently created School of Data Science emerged from a ten-year process with many meetings and input from students and faculty, leading to a final approval by Faculty Council and Administrators as well as the Board of Trustees.

From language in the trustees' budget memo, they apparently envisioned this school as a degree-granting upgrade for the Program for Public Discourse, which was created in 2019 to "support a culture of robust public argument through curricular and extra-curricular engagement." They also proposed to use it to staff the "Communication Beyond the Campus" course required by the new IDEAS in Action General Education curriculum that must be implemented in

2024. Statements by some trustees to the news media, however, suggested an that it was intended to remedy a perceived gap in “right-of-center” faculty members.

Dr. Harry Watson then presented a proposed Faculty Council resolution in response to the Board of Trustees’ resolution. After discussion, the initial resolution was divided into two resolutions:

The first resolution ([Resolution 2023-1](#)) reiterated the faculty’s support for the new IDEAS in Action General Education Curriculum, including its emphasis on strengthening students’ ability to think critically, work collaboratively and communicate persuasively, and its need for adequate resources in order to be implemented on its agreed timeline. The resolution also emphasized that funding this curriculum is a separate issue from the School of Civic Life and Leadership proposed by the trustees.

The second resolution ([Resolution 2023-2](#)) recommended that since there had been no faculty involvement in the proposal for a new school, and it would potentially compete for resources against under-funded existing programs teaching the same subject matter, no further action should be taken on the proposed school until a faculty proposal for such a unit was developed and appropriately discussed.

The Faculty Council voted to approve both resolutions.

Updated Faculty Retirement Planning Guide

An updated, downloadable version of the ***UNC Faculty Retirement Planning Guide*** was recently posted on the UNC Human Resources website at https://hr.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/222/2022/08/OHR21_Retirement_Guide_08.19.22.pdf . Its most extensive new text appears under ***Retired Faculty Privileges***. This reflects a May 2022 UNC Faculty Council Resolution supported by the RFA that clarifies

rights and privileges of faculty retirees, especially about how emeritus/emerita status should be granted.



Copyright © 2023 UNC Retired Faculty Association, All rights reserved.

You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website.

Our mailing address is:

UNC Retired Faculty Association
Campus Box 1020
Friday Center--Rfa
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-1020

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

Grow your business with  **mailchimp**