We might assume that when faculty members retire, they ride off into the sunset and into a rosy retirement. That’s far from the truth when it comes to Cal State Fullerton emeriti professors, who individually and as a group provide CSUF with varied scholarships, mentoring, leadership and support long into their “retirement” years.

Retired since 2004, Nelson Woodard, emeritus associate professor of history, came to the University in 1968 and now is in his third year serving as president of the Emeriti of California State University, Fullerton. Woodard notes that retired faculty members remain active and alert by socializing with their fellow retirees – but also offer the University the distinctive benefit of longtime connections and inside knowledge about how the institution works.

"We have the institutional memory. We are guardians of that continuity," agreed P. June Pollak, emerita professor of English and comparative literature, who came to Fullerton in 1961 and retired in 1990. "It's a rare experience to be able to build an organization from the beginning, and remaining involved allows me to be in touch and socialize with people I've known and worked with all these years."

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs José Cruz said emeriti provide both vital service and important perspective to Cal State Fullerton. "The thickness and richness of our University's narrative is directly proportional to the talent, energy and time that our emeriti have invested in forging our reality," Cruz said. "Our emeriti have helped shape our present, and we can only hope they choose, through their continuous engagement, to have a hand in driving our future."

Emeritus Professor of History Lawrence de Graaf, who came to CSUF in 1959 and retired in 1997, said that newer faculty members and students look to retired professors for the history of their departments, as well as the University. "Emeriti can bring back a sense of what departmental activities were like in past years," de Graaf said. "Faculty were expected to counsel students on overall college requirements, majors and futures, as well as participating in campus governance through committees at several levels. Some programs, such as oral history, were ones in which CSUF was a leader for several decades."

Emeritus Professor of Theatre Jim Young, who came to campus in 1960 and retired in 1986, believes that emeriti have a rich background and can be put out to pasture too early. "Emeriti, having worked through the educational system, have seen the..."
changes in the University and the community and have reached the richest time in their lives," Young said. "We have tremendous pride in the University. It's one of the most wonderful institutions in the country, and that's what we always want it to be."

CSUF emeriti meet regularly during the academic year for luncheons and other events; appear frequently as guest speakers in topics of interest; assist as volunteers in special projects, including the It's Our University donor campaign; memorialize deceased faculty members with donations; and in partnership with Patrons of the Library, staff the Pollak Library's Book Sale Center.

Emeriti also fund the installation of campus sculptures, offer lecture series, attend campus athletics and arts events, deliver lectures to Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) audiences, visit Southern California museums and gardens, and, perhaps most important, provide scholarship assistance to deserving students, including the Guardian Scholars. Some emeriti continue research and teaching long into their emeritus years.

Linda Andersen, emerita professor of French, taught at CSUF from 1970 to 2002 and now serves as chair of the emeriti Scholarship Committee. Andersen said the emeriti provide one graduate and one undergraduate CSUF student each year with $1,000 scholarships to continue their education. "I doubt students are aware of emeriti faculty, because the link is not that direct other than through the scholarships," she said. "But emeriti represent a growing number of people who've dedicated their lives to the University and still care about it."

Leland Bellot, emeritus professor of history, came to the University in 1964 and retired in 2001. Bellot said emeriti faculty try to make themselves available to whomever in the CSUF community might benefit from their experience. "We add an institutional memory in a youth-oriented world," he observed. "We get together and it's a great reward to be able to talk about things we did and how we might contribute to carrying it on."

In 1998, Dorothy Heide, emerita associate dean of the School of Business Administration and Economics (now Mihaylo College of Business and Economics) and professor of management, joined her husband in retirement to travel the world, visiting more than 130 countries. Then a friend asked her to consider serving on the Patrons of the Library Board, which led to much greater involvement in campus activities, including the OLLI (formerly known as CLE) Board and the Emeriti Board. "The University's social connections for all emeriti are a great benefit to the campus and to the emeriti themselves," Heide said. "Emeriti bring an institutional memory with them as they work with colleagues on campus issues helping to make the University a better place for students, faculty and staff."

Emeriti offer a variety of backgrounds and expertise, which enrich community life as well as academic life, noted Jim Friel, past president of the emeriti organization and emeritus professor of mathematics, who arrived at CSUF in 1973 and retired in 2004. "We are trying in every way possible to further the life of the institution and support it," Friel said. "It's a new University in a lot of ways, with a new way of looking at how an institution functions. The amount of support from the state has decreased so much that it's a whole new ball game. We help expand community and support possibilities."

Students who notice emeriti on campus are impressed, said Herb Rutemiller, emeritus professor of management science. "They get the feeling that CSUF is like a family," Rutemiller said. "Teaching is such a great profession, and you want to be back here talking to people who are still teaching."

Vince Buck, emeritus professor of political science, joined the faculty in 1974 and retired in 2009. Buck is a trustee of the Fullerton Public Library, sits on several other local boards and represents emeriti on the Academic Senate, providing perspective on campus issues and shared governance. "I'm glad to use my expertise in a way that I feel is useful, doing my small part to help make the University and local community better places."

As webmaster of the CSUF emeriti organization, Emeritus Professor of Physics Mark Shapiro – who came to the campus in 1970 – is a member of the California State University Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association, which represents the interests of emeriti and retired faculty from all 23 CSU campuses and supports local affiliates. Not only do emeriti provide input on critical statewide issues, such as pensions and health care, but they sometimes take stands on nonpartisan issues in support of faculty members and fellow emeriti, Shapiro said. "We have a keen interest in campuses remaining healthy, and because we're an independent group, we bring credible, objective arguments to the issues."

Of course, emeriti tend to be the University's most loyal contributors to fundraising, and also serve as volunteers, he noted. "They tend to offer wisdom and advice to new faculty members just joining departments and support the campus quite strongly. At Fullerton, emeriti are a real benefit to the campus."

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