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CUCRA Meeting, Berkeley, Thursday, 21 March 2002

Richard Frost and Anne Gray represented UCDRA at the meeting of the Council of University of California Retiree Associations (CUCRA) at Berkeley on 21 March 2002. The lengthy agenda included the following items.

Joe Lewis, Customer Service Manager for OP Benefits Office, outlined plans for improving service to faculty, staff and annuitants. He hopes to make the web site more attractive, thus reducing the volume of calls, and to enhance call treatment protocol. CUCRA members commented that improving the web site is a laudable long-term goal but of limited value to the current annuitant constituency, many of whom do not have access to computers.

Lily Pang of OP Benefits announced that the UC CARE point-of-service plan, the High Option/Supplement to Medicare and Core Plans have been sent to public bid. UC has also requested proposals for the Preferred Provider Option (PPO) plan and consumer model alternatives. The HMO plans are not part of this bid process. UC proposes changing UC-Care from a 3-tier to a 2-tier plan and providing new PPOs for those in remote areas. The effective date for any new plans will be 1 January 2003. Premiums are likely to increase considerably with more "cost-sharing".

Ms Pang provided details on the TRICARE entitlement for Medicare-eligible Uniformed Services retirees, eligible family members and survivors, known as TRICARE for Life, which began on 1 October 2001. UC will allow annuitants to "suspend" UC health coverage if covered by TRICARE.

Deborah Lloyd gave a brief history of the Health Care Facilitator Program, which is now funded for all campuses. The Davis Facilitator was appointed on 1 March. Experience so far shows that most inquiries are in the medical area, with provider disruption an issue of particular concern, and that consumer education is urgently needed.

UC will hold a Senior Health Care Symposium at Irvine on 7 October 2002. Topics will include: healthy aging; policy issues in health care, especially those of interest to seniors; UC health benefits. Representatives will be invited from the emeriti and retirees associations on each campus.

CUCRA agreed to review the association's purpose, goals and services in light of the changing political climate of the University. What should the primary points of advocacy be? Each campus is to develop a list.

APG, 30 March 2002