The Changing Meaning of Retirement
Trends, Issues, Innovative Practices
Implications for Individuals and Institutions
What does retirement mean to you?

• Write a brief/one-sentence definition (anonymously) we can share.
Consensus on what retirement means is disappearing.

- **Conventional view**: Retirement is a time of no work, full-time leisure?
- Traditional view of retirement is evolving.
  - For many retirement is a new phase of life with many new opportunities
  - One’s relationship to work may be modified but often is not terminated entirely.
  - Many people continue to work in retirement but in different ways.
Why is retirement changing? What is causing many people to rethink the nature of retirement?

• Economic uncertainty
• Longer lifespans
• Healthy, energetic retirees
• Desire for structure, social interaction, sense of meaning and purpose work provides
• Evidence productive engagement has many physical, intellectual, health benefits
• Society cannot afford a large leisure class not contributing to economy and social welfare for 30+ years
How is retirement changing?

• Do you know anyone who has taken a different path into retirement? Not just stopped working entirely?

• What variations on traditional retirement have we seen?
How is retirement changing?

• Previously structured by mandatory retirement legislation.
  • Highly regulated by government and institutional policy.
  • Retirement was a fixed and predictable transition out of work
  • Institutions controlled retirement; individuals followed a fixed path
• Abolition of mandatory retirement, shift from defined-benefit to defined-contribution plans have put individual in charge of their retirement plans

• Retirement no longer a fixed, predictable transition
Source: Merrill Lynch (2013) Work in Retirement: Myths and Motivations
Personal Implications of Changes in Retirement?

• Timing: When we will retire?
• How we will retire?
  • Complete retirement
  • Phased retirement
  • End of principal career but continue working in some capacity
  • How and where we wish to live in retirement
• Responsibility for planning retirement: Shift from institution to individual
  • Retirement planning becomes a complex process involving many challenging and important decisions
Considerations for employers/higher education institutions?

- How to maintain a steady flow of talent (facilitate retirement)
- Effective utilization of employees (faculty & staff) at different career stages
- Predictability of staffing changes/Succession planning
- Continued access to valuable resources when faculty and staff retire
Innovative retirement practices emerging across the U.S.

- Retirement transition workshops & websites
- Capstone projects to bring career to positive conclusion
- Retirement pathway models to increase transparency and aid planning
- Retirement liaison to support retirement negotiations
- Phased retirement programs
- Bridge and encore retirement employment opportunities
- Recall work agreements
- New titles to facilitate continued engagement (e.g., research professor instead of emeritus)
Rise of Higher Education Retirement Organizations

• Maintain connection between retirees and institution
• Intellectual engagement
• Service opportunities
• Promote Wellness
Like a finely-tuned engine, Retirement has many moving parts

- Fulfilling retirement requires careful planning and preparation, a strategic transition
- Support from employer
- New structures and policies to support purposeful engagement in “retirement” phase of life
What’s the Bottom Line?

• Retirement today is a very fluid phenomenon with little consensus on what retirement should be/look like.
  
  • Some are questioning use of the term retirement as many people continue to work in some capacity.
  • Do we need new terminology for this next phase of life?
  
  • Any suggestions for alternatives to retirement label?
Retirement is a relatively new social construct

- Product of industrialization and development of Social Security.
- Concept of retirement is negotiable as new circumstances emerge.
Fasten your seat belt

• In time of dynamic change, retirement too is evolving.
• **We have a role to play in defining this capstone phase of life.**
  • We should not be passive and let events dictate how long-time faculty and employees live this culminating phase of their lives.
• We need to define and design what a productive and fulfilling retirement will be in the future
Comments? Questions?

• Thoughts about how retirement should change?
• What an ideal retirement would look like?
Thank You

• Best wishes for a fulfilling retirement!
• Whatever that means to you.