Departments and programs often inquire about honoring a faculty or staff member who is retiring, and soliciting private gifts in the process. It is a wonderful gesture to commemorate someone’s service to the University and include alumni in the celebration. Here are some things to consider in your planning:

**Format of the celebration**
It’s best to start planning at least 2 months in advance of the event. You will want to give people at least 4 weeks’ notice so they are available to attend, and the communication pieces will take some time to finalize.

Retirement parties can range from an informal reception to a day-long academic symposium ending with a banquet. The type of event depends on your budget, estimated attendance, and the personality of the honoree. Please note that the UW Foundation is happy to consult on invitation text, guest lists, and format ideas, but we do not have the capacity to provide logistical or financial assistance for events honoring faculty/staff.

People to invite include colleagues from on and off campus; former students and graduate advisees; local alumni and friends of the department; and family and friends of the honoree.

**How many gifts to expect**
Keep in mind that gifts in honor (or memory) of someone are typically one-time and at smaller levels. You can usually expect to generate $1,000-2,000 maximum from this kind of campaign – not enough to establish a new fund. It’s simplest to ask donors to give to the department’s discretionary fund in the person’s honor.

Occasionally, a department has identified a few people who will be willing to make lead gifts ($3,000-5,000 each) to establish a separate, endowed fund, which requires at least $10,000. Again, the UW Foundation is available to consult, but it is the department’s responsibility to follow through on making asks.

**Making an ask**
You can include donation information on the event invitations. For example, one department held a dinner for a retiring faculty member. Guests were asked to pay $50 to attend; half that amount paid for the dinner, and half was donated to an already established fund. Some invitees sent a gift even if they could not attend. If you pursue this option, it is important to consult with the UW Foundation regarding the correct text to use on invitations so that gifts are properly receipted.
At the event, someone should announce that the honoree would appreciate gifts to XX fund. You can have handouts with giving information at the event and your UW Foundation liaison can attend as well.

Even if you are not planning an event, please let your UW Foundation liaison know if you are soliciting gifts. We can provide text for your communications and make sure the gifts are correctly coded and designated.

**Getting the word out**
Not everyone will be able to attend the celebration, so it’s important to let people know about the retirement and efforts to honor your colleague in other ways. You might consider doing a special mailing to a specific list of colleagues and alumni. You also could include a story in your newsletter or other alumni communications. If you create a section on the website, include information about the honoree’s career, and instructions how to make a gift. You might consider soliciting stories to post on the webpage.

Beyond the department, the Letters and Science Dean’s Office can include an article in its monthly News & Notes e-newsletter (contact Megan Costello at 890-0470 or LSNews@ls.wisc.edu). If the honoree has had an especially significant career, University Communications might also release a story.

You can contract with the Wisconsin Alumni Association to produce communication materials and provide event management services. Get in touch with Kevin Check at 262-9599 or kcheck@waastaff.com.

The UW Archives and Records Management division can assist you in commemorating and preserving your event in a variety of ways. Archives staff also can help you research the history of a person, department, building or event on campus. Contact Vicki Tobias at 265-6381 or vtobias@library.wisc.edu.

**Wrapping up**
The UW Foundation will notify the honoree of all gifts received (donor name and address, but not amount). It’s also important for the department to acknowledge each gift and communicate how it will be used. In your next alumni newsletter, consider including a story about the celebration and an update on the difference made by the donations.

**Who to call at the UW Foundation**
When you are ready to get started, please contact Ann Dingman at 265-9954 or ann.dingman@uwsupport.org, or your UW Foundation liaison.