

Why would all professors who want, be able to retain their university email account upon retirement?

Jože Gričar, 06.06.2024

The question raised in the [Letter to Professors Emeriti to Support the Retention of the University Email Accounts of All Professors Upon Retirement](#) does not refer to professors who have the title of emerita/emeritus. At all universities for which we have some data, there is a general practice that professors emeriti are granted the privilege of having a university email account for life. Regardless of their further activity.

The problem is with all other professors who were stripped of their university email account upon retirement. There are many more of them than emeriti. Here we mean only those professors who wish to continue researching and using university eTechnology in an unchanged way. How many are there, we don't know, because the data on this is not available, since "they left". No one asked them what they wanted in this regard. There are series of responses about how individuals are hurt and offended by the loss of email account. However, they don't want to beg for themselves. After all, they recognized that "the matter was closed".

Some universities don't post anything about these things on their websites, so future retired professors don't know what to expect when their account is terminated upon retirement. When they retire and realize the consequences, they are no longer active, so their voice cannot be heard. Such non-transparency of procedures creates conditions in which many people "throw up their hands" and give up the opportunities brought by possible use of eTechnology in the following years.

We know of no cases in Europe where a retired professor could simply apply for emerita/emeritus status upon retirement in order to obtain the associated rights to maintain her/his account. Professors emeriti are elected at the university level on the proposal of the faculty, so their number is limited. This honorary title includes lifetime use of a university email account and office (if available).

Replacing one's university email account with "gmail.com" is not comparable. Because with the loss of a university account, access to two important things is lost: One, e-services that professors could use before retirement. Two, a possibility of having professional assistance (help desk) for installing and using new technologies. This is why some talk about digital discrimination.

An example of [what "university account" means](#), clearly shows the Fordham University, New York definition:

Fordham username provides access to files, software, wireless, access control, and payment systems throughout the University. IT Resources include computing, networking, communications, application, and telecommunications systems, infrastructure, hardware, software, data, databases, personnel, procedures, physical facilities, cloud-based vendors, Software as a Service (SaaS) vendors, and related materials and services.

The Covid pandemic has taught the whole world a lesson about what accessibility to eTechnology means and what it means to be able to use e-services. And yet, several universities insist that access is being abolished by the authority of "university autonomy". On the other hand, some universities emphasize that their retirees keep the account as a *thank you* for their contribution to the university. It is not clear how much does this contribution compare to the cost of the respective license fees for annual use of the software. Data on costs saved per retiree are not available, only the need to reduce costs is talked about.

It is hard to justify that universities, which are the carriers of development, do not see that the world has changed also for their retired colleagues. Therefore, it's right time to ask a question what is fair and ethical that professors emeriti do for their retired colleagues.

Silver economy can be defined as everything related to people over 55 years of age. There is a lot of this and there will be even more in a long-lived society. However, the silver economy will not arise by itself, it needs to be organized. Retired professors play a big role in this. To contribute to silver economy development, they need to have access to digital technologies and be trained to use them. Universities play a big role by supporting retired professors by allowing them to use the university eTechnology. Those universities are age friendly. A clear sign of such friendliness is retention of university email account upon retirement. Not as a gift, but as a tool for generating additional contributions after retirement.

Retaining email accounts for retired professors helps maintain their involvement in academic and institutional activities, enhances the university's reputation, supports alumni relations, and fosters a respectful and connected academic community.

This is a big thing that will require the cooperation of many.

There may be some additional arguments in the short articles by ChatGPT:
[Is a university age-friendly that cancels the email address of professors upon retirement?](#) ChatGPT 24/05/2024.
[Is it ethically correct that a university does not allow a professor to use the university email account after retirement?](#) ChatGPT, April 3, 2024.