Retired professors are afraid to tell the university leadership that they want to keep their university email account

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This can seem surprising in a university, where questioning assumptions is supposed to be part of the culture. But there are several understandable reasons why retired professors may hesitate to tell university leadership, *“I want to keep my university email account.”*

The central issue may be less about email technology than about the *change in relationship with the institution at retirement.*

1. *Loss of formal status and influence.* While employed, professors have a recognized institutional position. After retirement, particularly if they are not granted emeritus status, they may feel they no longer have sufficient standing to make requests.
2. *Fear of appearing demanding.* A professor may think: *“I am retired. Perhaps I should simply accept the rules.”* Asking to retain an email account can therefore feel like asking for a privilege rather than requesting continuity of an academic identity built over decades.
3. *Respect for hierarchy and university autonomy.* Academics may be accustomed to challenging ideas but surprisingly reluctant to challenge administrative decisions affecting themselves personally. If IT or university leadership says that accounts are terminated because of policy, security, or cost, individuals may assume that the decision cannot realistically be questioned.
4. *Uncertainty about what other universities do.* A retired professor who loses an account may believe this is simply normal practice everywhere. Evidence that other universities allow retirees to retain email addresses can fundamentally change that perception.
5. *Fear of damaging continuing relationships***.** Professionally active retirees may still depend on their university for colleagues, research cooperation, library access, office facilities, projects, or invitations. Even without an explicit threat, they may worry that complaining could make those relationships more difficult.
6. *The problem is individualized.* Each professor retires separately. The university has an established policy; the individual encounters it only once. This creates an asymmetry: *the institution is organized, while affected retirees are dispersed.*
7. *They may underestimate what the address represents.* A university email address used for 20 or 30 years is not merely an inbox. It can be connected with publications, professional networks, former students, research

collaborators, conferences, databases, and thousands of contacts. Losing it can mean losing part of one's *continuing digital academic identity*.

This leads to a deeper question worth discussing: *Why should a professionally and academically active retired professor feel afraid—or even embarrassed—to ask the university to explain why a long-standing university email account must be terminated?*

The role of retired-professor associations is therefore particularly important. Instead of requiring individual retirees to complain, an association can transform a personal concern into a legitimate institutional question:

“Some of our professionally active retired colleagues would like to retain their university email accounts. Could the university explain the reasons for the present policy and explore whether continued access can be provided safely and economically?”

That wording does not accuse anyone. It asks for evidence, dialogue, comparison with good practices elsewhere, and a possible solution. It also fits very well with the principle for *Connected Beyond Retirement*:
Question courageously.
Examine evidence carefully.
Conclude cautiously.
Engage respectfully.
Seek solutions collaboratively.

Perhaps the most important cultural question is therefore not *“Why are retired professors afraid to complain?”* but: *How can universities and retired-professor associations create an academic culture in which retired colleagues feel confident and entitled to ask reasonable questions—even when those questions concern decisions made by the university itself?*

That is very much in the spirit of a healthy academic community: *critical inquiry combined with respectful dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.*

As professors emeriti who enjoy the privilege of retaining access to university email account after retirement, we advocate for a similar arrangement for professionally and academically active retired professors who do not currently hold this status. We support this in the interest of retired professors, the university, and society as a whole.