Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at NC State University
McKimmon Center for Extension & Continuing Education
2016-17 Annual Report Highlights

PROGRAMS
Scope, Volume, and Achievements

• The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) offered 105 short courses with an enrollment of 4,020. Sixty-eight lectures were offered, with an enrollment of 4,137. Twenty-nine study trips with an enrollment of 708 and four events with an enrollment of 502 brought total enrollment to 9,367, a 4.7% increase compared to the previous year.

• OLLI Membership totaled 1,497, a 1.5% percent decrease compared to last year’s 1,521. Seventy-four percent of the 1,497 were returning members (compared with 71% in the previous year). Twelve percent of members volunteered as committee members, class hosts, OLLI ambassadors, instructors, and special interest group leaders (equal to last year’s volunteer rate).

• Eighty-six percent of the courses and lectures were newly developed for the 2016-17 program year; 48 members serving on eight subcommittees of the Program Development Committee contributed to this new content.

• The 29 study trips were content-dense and covered a range of topics. Three were multiday, two had diversity themes, five had sustainability themes, three featured outdoors physical activity, and two involved partnerships with other NC State units. Eleven of the trips were OLLI-only experiences, developed by OLLI’s assistant director and unavailable to the general public. An international trip took members onsite to learn about Croatia, Slovenia, and the Adriatic coast. A study trip ad hoc advisory committee was formed in February to assist in developing future trip ideas.

• Forty-nine NC State current and emeriti faculty and staff from 27 different campus units volunteered to teach lectures, courses, portions of courses, or study trips. An additional 18 instructors came from other colleges/universities, with the remaining 124 drawn from a broad array of community partners. Of these 191 instructors, 19 were also OLLI members.

• OLLI’s director and Advisory Council chair organized an ad hoc group on volunteering and leadership development, composed of 12 OLLI members and two staff. The group was tasked with finding ways to improve member volunteering and orientation. The group made several recommendations about ways to improve recruitment and actions to take. Since April, when many of the recommendations began to be implemented, over 35 members expressed interest in volunteering, which is an unprecedented rate in such a short period of time. The group’s recommendations will continued to be implemented in FY18 and beyond.

• The two-session course Find Your Inner OLLI was offered in January, and it was designed to encourage members to teach courses. Seventeen members enrolled, and the course met the goal of attracting members to teach; several attendees submitted course proposals following the course. The course was developed by three OLLI instructors and the chair of the Program Development Committee. The course will be repeated in fall 2017, and the group will continue to pursue other ideas to support OLLI’s volunteer instructors.

• Dr. Ben O’Neal, longtime OLLI instructor and professor emeritus of Engineering at NC State, received the William C. Friday Award for outstanding contributions in retirement, given annually by the NC State Association of Retired Faculty.

• In late May, the OLLI staff held a volunteer and donor recognition reception to thank members for the critical role they play in the program. Certificates were presented to members who were rotating off the standing committees, and Stan Darer – whose longtime volunteering contributions include class host, ad hoc committee member, Advisory Council member, and Membership Development Committee member – was presented with the 2017 Betty Poulton Volunteerism Award for outstanding service to the program.

• OLLI’s parent unit – the McKimmon Center for Extension & Continuing Education (MCE&CE) – embraced NC State’s Sustainability initiative, which “pursues balanced, ethical solutions that are economically viable, environmentally sound and socially just so that current and future generations may thrive." As a result, OLLI had the opportunity to assess its robust pursuit of sustainability. In addition to providing seven
volunteer opportunities that supported sustainability, OLLI offered 27 courses/lectures and five study trips that focused on sustainability themes.

- The fundraising plan for OLLI's Finance & Development Committee included an annual appeal letter to members; development of "Why I Give" statements from members; a presentation by Cheryl Smith, NC State's associate director for planned giving; a presentation by Mike Dickerson, director of information and accounting systems for NC State's office of Foundations Accounting and Investment, about how endowments work at NC State; and development of sponsors for OLLI's catalogs. Fundraising from members and community partners is important to meeting the rising costs of doing business, thus keeping program fees affordable. Member donations helped fund, in part, the rising cost of rent on OLLI classroom space in FY17. As a result of the committee's work, 222 members and friends contributed $24,144 in FY17; the total included a bequest from a former member (for comparison, 252 donors gave $21,510 in FY16). Seventy-six percent of the contributors were repeat donors. Six sponsors added $3,000 to this total.

- Funding from The Bernard Osher Foundation supported, in part, many member events: the Fall Sneak Peek and Ice Cream Social, the Fall Open House, the Fall Picnic, the three Cuppa OLLI events, the Seasonal Celebration, the Instructor Appreciation Social, and the donor and volunteer appreciation event. Osher funding also supported some administrative costs and the production, design, and mailing of marketing materials, including the OLLI catalogs.

Program Reviews

In accordance with NC State's and OLLI's Strategic Plan goal to "enhance organizational excellence by creating a culture of constant improvement," OLLI has established quality benchmarks that are regularly reviewed by staff, standing committee members, and the OLLI Advisory Council.

- OLLI staff track classroom capacity/fill rates to monitor program efficiency and ensure offerings are keeping pace with growth. A year-end analysis showed that lectures were filled to 77% of classroom capacity, study trips to 86%, and multi-week courses to 80% of capacity (the benchmark is a minimum fill rate of 70%).
- On end-of-course evaluations, members rated 76% of instructors as "excellent," 21% as "good," and three percent as "average" (the overall rating was 4.6 on a five-point scale where 5.0=excellent). Participants gave OLLI courses an overall rating of 72% "excellent" and 28% "good" (with an overall rating of 4.6).
- OLLI moved from a paper to online evaluation collection process, and added a question that asked participants to give an overall rating of their OLLI experience. On average, participants gave an overall rating of 4.8 for the program. Fifty-six percent of registrants completed course evaluations, which is similar to previous years. Headcounts taken in final class sessions showed that approximately 73% of registrants were still attending.

All of these evaluative numbers met or exceeded established benchmarks.

Inherent in OLLI's mission is the goal that participation will positively impact members' quality of life. The following quotes are a small sample of the 100+ comments that members made on course evaluations in the past year about how the program has affected their lives:

- "Classes help to make me a more interesting and informed friend and family member."
- "I love meeting instructors with such great passion for teaching."
- "When I moved to the Triangle 13 years ago, the only person I knew was my daughter. Through this program, my circle of friends and the quality of my life has vastly expanded."
- "I am still working so OLLI gives me a chance to learn and enjoy something just for myself."
- "OLLI keeps me well informed on important contemporary topics."
- "I'm continually amazed at what I didn't learn in college. So glad that OLLI offers a chance to fill in at least some of those many gaps!"
- "I always like to take courses outside my experience and training and OLLI offers so much to choose from in this regard. It improves my mind, challenges my preconceived notions and amazes me. I relish every minute of each class."
“I never obtained a degree over the course of my life for various reasons. Being able to attend these classes and hear these professors/presenters is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done.”

“OLLI extends my understanding of the world around me and acquaints me with diverse perspectives on a wide variety of topics that ‘independent study’ would not enable.”

“OLLI classes allow me to explore subjects and areas of interest that I never had time for while working. I missed a lot!”

Evaluations were collected for all study trips. Participants gave an average overall rating of 4.7 (using the same scale as for courses). Typical written comments included these:

- “I love the local trips for what they always add to my love and knowledge of the Raleigh area.”
- “I enjoy meeting, sharing, and socializing with people who have keen minds and are interested in new learning experiences.”
- “The trips refresh my spirit.”
- “OLLI trips are totally different from the usual senior trips offered in the area.”
- “OLLI takes me to my happy place.”
- “Study trips to NC State University sites give me increased respect for NC State.”

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & INCLUSIVENESS

- OLLI regularly provides opportunities for members to volunteer, which helps both Triangle-area organizations and the university community, as well as builds camaraderie among the members. A record number of opportunities were organized in 2016-17:
  - OLLI members volunteered for Petals with a Purpose, Note in the Pocket, and the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina.
  - A total of 18 members volunteered on two different dates for the Wake Habitat-NC State University partnership to Build-A-Block of low cost housing for local families.
  - For the 14th year in a row, 23 OLLI members volunteered to help bag/process 1,000 seedlings for the NC State Forestry Department’s annual Arbor Day Giveaway at the NC Farmers Market.
  - Thirty-four members participated in four focus groups conducted by a College of Design Ph.D. candidate, who gathered data about how older adults feel about the design of new technology.
  - According to organizers, OLLI members contributed about half of the 760 pounds of food that MCE&CE donated to the NC State’s Feed the Pack campus food pantry.

- OLLI’s inclusiveness efforts included expansion of the OLLI Ambassador program and offering programs that give members the opportunity to develop their cultural competency (a total of 24 courses/lectures fell under this category). Examples of programs included a course on cross-cultural communication, a lecture and study trip to a Sikh temple, a lecture on the genetics of sexuality, and a course on Islam taught by the imam of the Islamic Association of Raleigh.