Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at NC State University
McKimmon Center for Extension & Continuing Education (MCE&CE)
2017-18 Annual Report Highlights

PROGRAMS

Scope, Volume, Achievements

- The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) offered 115 short courses, 73 lectures, 33 study trips, and four events, with a total enrollment of 9,945, which is a six percent increase over the previous fiscal year and an OLLI record. The number of offerings increased by nine percent over the previous year; 81% of the courses and lectures were newly developed for the 2017-18 program year. Sixty-five members of the Program Committee and its subcommittees contributed to this new content.
- OLLI membership totaled 1,590, which is a six percent increase from the previous fiscal year and a record total. The membership renewal rate was 71%, which is similar to the rates in previous years.
- Fifty-seven NC State current and emeriti faculty and staff from 38 different campus units taught for OLLI this year. In addition to NC State faculty and staff, 29 instructors came from other colleges/universities, with the remaining 122 instructors drawn from the community. Twenty-four of these instructors were also OLLI members.
- Nineteen courses, lectures and study trips connected OLLI members to current research being conducted by NC State faculty. These offerings tended to focus on societal impacts, and examples include lectures and courses on the topics of innovative textiles, genetic engineering, the anthropology of tourism, climate change, and the impact stress has on the aging process.
- The 33 study trips were content-dense and covered a wide range of issues. Fourteen of the trips were OLLI-only experiences, developed by OLLI’s assistant director, and which had exclusive content unavailable to the general public. Eight of the study trips were offered in partnership with NC State units and connected members with the research and programs of the university.
- Fifty-three percent of members chose to register online, a percentage that continues to rise each year.
- In late May, the OLLI staff held a donor and volunteer recognition reception to thank members for the critical role they plan in the program. Certificates were presented to members who were rotating off the standing committees, and Ron Monti, the coordinator of the Science and Technology Program Subcommittee, was presented with the 2018 Betty Poulton Volunteerism Award for outstanding service to OLLI at NC State.

Initiatives

- OLLI staff and member leaders followed up on the work started by last year’s ad hoc group on volunteering, and member engagement remained a focus in this fiscal year:
  - A volunteer and committee handbook was created, so that all volunteers could understand the “big picture” of OLLI.
  - Staff developed and began mailing a welcome packet to all new members.
  - The OLLI Advisory Council approved a timeline for volunteer engagement so that recommendations from the ad hoc group would be captured and implemented throughout the year. In January, an annual “check-in” meeting with the Executive Committee of the Advisory Council was initiated and will be continued in future years. The meeting is designed to discuss and address any challenges the standing committees are facing at the halfway mark in the program year.
  - Staff began surveying committee members who cycled off of committees and special interest group leadership to gather their feedback about their volunteer experience.
- Staff created a trifold brochure that describes volunteer opportunities, and improvements were made to OLLI's website to improve access to information about volunteering.
- In January and February, committee members from the Program Development Committee and the Membership Development Committee made short classroom pitches to encourage fellow members to volunteer. This effort was very effective; in addition to gaining new class host volunteers, the Membership Development Committee gained six new volunteers, and the number of members who served on the Program Development Committee and Subcommittees rose to a record total of 65 members.
- Overall, 15% of members volunteered as committee members, class hosts, OLLI ambassadors, instructors, and special interest group leaders, an increase compared to last year's 12%, and also significant given OLLI's six percent growth in membership.
- The method for member-to-member news and communication transitioned from a quarterly newsletter to the OLLI Voices blog, which allows more members to contribute and tell their stories.
- The three Cuppa OLLI events educated members about how the program works, while providing an opportunity to socialize. In October, the members played a limerick challenge, and in April, they played a “Mythbusters” quiz.
  - In March, the OLLI Advisory Council voted to approve a modest fee increase for select courses and lectures, and a decrease in the drop fee, which will go into effect in FY2019. This will be the first fee adjustment in eight years.

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 79% of classroom capacity, study trips to 100%, and multi-week courses to 80% of capacity. The benchmark is a minimum average fill rate of 70%, and the fill rates for both lectures and courses are similar to last fiscal year's percentages.
- On end-of-offering evaluations, participants gave an average overall rating of 4.7 for instructors, 4.6 for courses, 4.7 for the study trips, and 4.8 for OLLI in general (on a 5.0 scale, where 5.0 = Excellent). Fifty-nine percent of registrants completed course evaluations, which is a slight increase compared to last year. Headcounts taken in final class sessions showed that approximately 77% of registrants were still attending, which is a slight increase compared to last year. 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 hundreds of comments that members made on the course evaluations in the past year about how the program has affected their lives:
  - “OLLI keeps me alive mentally. It provides constant stimulation, forces me to rethink accepted beliefs and, in doing so, keeps me living rather than simply existing.”
  - "OLLI provides me with learning opportunities that I would never have in my otherwise rather routine daily living. I keep growing and learning with OLLI."
  - "I am always glad when I take OLLI courses on scientific topics because knowledge in the science fields has expanded so much since I was in college.”
• "Every OLLI course I take broadens my interest and knowledge level on material and topics I never studied in college or any other seminar/class I have taken. Makes me want more."
• "Each of the courses I have taken this semester has provided one or more takeaways that has improved my life, my health, and my financial status."
• "OLLI is one of the very, very best things Raleigh has to offer. It provides the continuous stream of learning that we lose when not in school. I know you can read on your own, etc., but OLLI brings a different perspective on education, plus the opportunity for socialization and making new friends."
• "I've taken courses with OLLI that I never would have dared to undertake for academic credit. It's wonderful to be able to study a subject for the joy of learning, without risk."

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND INCLUSIVENESS

• OLLI members volunteered ten times with five Triangle-area nonprofits: Raleigh Rescue Mission, Poe Center for Health Education, Note in the Pocket, the Interfaith Food Shuttle Backpack Buddies, and the Foodbank of Central and Eastern North Carolina. These group volunteer opportunities provide OLLI members a way to meet outside of the classroom, while also giving back to the community. Additionally, for the 15th year in a row, OLLI members volunteered to bag/process seedlings for the NC State Forestry Department’s annual Arbor Day giveaway. An OLLI team also volunteered for a 5K race that raised funds for Note in the Pocket.

• OLLI’s inclusiveness efforts include offering programs that give members the opportunity to develop their cultural competency. A total of 35 courses, lectures, and study trips fell under this category. Examples of programs include a study trip to a Hindu Temple, a course on communication and gender, and a lecture about an African American cemetery in Raleigh.

• Volunteers with the Membership Development & Marketing Committee were active in presenting information about OLLI to diverse groups in the greater Raleigh community. Committee members made presentations to 15 community groups and participated in 13 community/wellness fairs.