

**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at NC State University
McKimmon Center for Extension & Continuing Education (MCE&CE)
2019-20 Annual Report Highlights**

Scope, Volume, Achievements

- The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at NC State (OLLI) was on track for a record-breaking year for enrollments until COVID-19 interrupted the start of OLLI's spring 2nd term, which began on March 9th. Staff moved quickly to convert 11 spring courses/lectures to Zoom, and 50% of the summer term courses/lectures were converted to Zoom.
- During this crisis, staff engaged members through weekly emails, blog and Facebook postings, and weekly Zoom social hours. Members were encouraged to try Zoom through practice sessions given in advance of ten free Zoom lectures, generously offered by OLLI instructors (with an average attendance of 100 in each lecture).
- These member-engagement efforts had a positive impact on member retention; membership tracked slightly ahead of last fiscal year, with a total of 1,706 (compared to 1,700 last year). The membership renewal rate was 76% (similar to last year's 73%), and a percentage that exceeds OLLI's 65% renewal rate benchmark.
- Total enrollment was 8,721 (compared to 10,818 in FY19); 106 short courses, 69 lectures, 14 study trips, and three events were held. Eighty percent of the courses/lectures/study trips were newly developed for the 2019-20 program year. Thirty-five spring and 24 summer offerings were canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions. Two important events that celebrate and thank OLLI's volunteer instructors, member volunteers, and donors were canceled because of COVID-19.
- Forty-four NC State current and emeriti faculty and staff from 32 different campus units taught for OLLI this year. In addition to NC State faculty and staff, 23 instructors came from other colleges/universities, with the remaining 108 instructors drawn from the community. Twenty-six of these 175 instructors were also OLLI members.
- Engagement with OLLI gave NC State faculty the opportunity to educate members of the general public about the importance of the university's mission and research impact. In 23 of the OLLI offerings, NC State faculty described their research on a wide range of subjects such as crop science, biodiversity, forestry, genetic engineering, animal science, and astrophysics.
- A total of 325 volunteers (instructors, committee members, hosts, ambassadors, SIG leaders) contributed to the program; this number compares well to last year's 346, given the number of COVID-19 cancellations experienced this year.
- The 14 study trips were content-dense and covered a range of issues. Five of the trips were OLLI-only experiences, developed by OLLI's assistant director, and which had content unavailable to the general public. Three trips were in partnership with NC State and connected members with the research and programs of the university. A four-day study trip took OLLI members to New Orleans; this trip included the National WWII Museum and the Whitney Plantation Museum, notable for its primary focus on the lives of the enslaved workers. (Twelve of the COVID-canceled offerings were study trips.)
- OLLI launched one new special interest group, the OLLI Science Group. Eight of the 16 OLLI special interest groups continued to meet via Zoom when COVID-19 interrupted the program year in March.
- OLLI staff launched a new initiative as part of its continuing effort to inform members about how the program comes together and the importance of member volunteers. Offered as a free course for members, "OLLI 101" featured the four OLLI staff, who explained their roles and how they work with members. The course met its objectives and will be repeated. On end-of-course evaluations, respondents gave the course a rating of 5.0.

- A member-led Google Drive class was created for Program Committee and subcommittee members, which facilitates communication among the 54 volunteers who develop program content.
- Twenty-six courses, lectures, and study trips gave OLLI members the opportunity to develop their cultural competency, and included subjects such as African American history, Native American history, gender studies, and different religions.
- For the third consecutive year, OLLI members volunteered for the 9/11 Day of Service; 20 volunteers assembled 700 packs of school supplies and another five members worked at the Habitat Restore. OLLI members also volunteered twice at Note in the Pocket and knitted 35 scarves and 19 hats for this nonprofit. Thirty-five OLLI members volunteered in February at the Food Bank of Eastern and Central North Carolina. Four additional planned OLLI volunteer activities were canceled because of COVID-19 restrictions.
- Again this year, OLLI members generously contributed to the Feed-the-Pack on-campus food pantry. During one week in October, OLLI members brought 964 pounds of food and other needed items to the McKimmon Center. The student volunteers who collected the contribution stated that this was the largest contribution from a campus unit that they had received in the semester. A second drive was scheduled in March, but it was canceled when COVID-19 forced OLLI to cancel classes. OLLI also spread awareness about food insecurity in North Carolina through a course that featured area organizations.
- Six OLLI members received financial aid to take 16 courses and one lecture. Financial aid was made possible through OLLI Annual Giving Fund donations.

Program Reviews

In accordance with NC State's and OLLI's strategic plan goals 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.

- On end-of-course evaluations for the fall semester and 1st term spring, participants gave an average overall rating of 4.7 for instructors, a 4.6 for courses, and a 4.7 for their overall OLLI experience (on a 5-point scale, where 5.0=Excellent). Evaluations for the study trips were also strong, with respondents giving an overall average rating of 4.8 for those educational experiences.
- Evaluations for the six 2nd term spring courses and three summer courses that were converted to Zoom also indicated satisfaction, with respondents giving an average overall rating of 4.8 for both instructors and course. Eighty-two percent of members enrolled in the Zoom-converted courses attended throughout the course, a rate that was better than the in-class attendance rate (headcounts taken in fall and 1st semester spring courses showed an average last-class attendance rate of 76%).
- While Zoom classes sometimes limit opportunities for the usual classroom exchanges, they allow both instructors and members to keep learning during this time of physical distancing. As one instructor noted, "I wasn't sure I could 'do' this, but I'm feeling much more confident now." Another stated: "Overall, I think the Zoom platform worked well... There were easy transitions between folks sharing thoughts/questions, both verbally and through the chat bar."
- Comments from OLLI participants about the Zoom transition included these:
 - "Using Zoom was an excellent decision!"
 - "I am so glad that this course continued via Zoom. I was so excited about this course and grateful that OLLI figured out a way to continue this class."
 - "I think I enjoyed it more as a Zoom class than if I had gotten in my car and driven to McKimmon. A shout out to the OLLI team for making this work well as a Zoom course and sending out the slides."

- “It was the highlight of my week. I would do other Zoom classes until life returns to a new normal.”
- The Zoom social hours held in May/June were well-received by members, with full enrollment each time. Topics included: trivia games, a name-that-tune game, an OLLI Readers Theatre performance, a sharing of stories about a favorite coffee mug, and a sharing of stories about members’ hometowns. As one attendee stated, “these sessions have been so much fun. It makes up a little for not getting to meet at class.” Another said: “I look forward to these sessions so that I can see everyone. It makes such a difference to my week.” Several attendees stated that they planned to “steal” these ideas for social activities with family and at retirement communities where they live.