

**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at NC State University (OLLI)  
McKimmon Center for Extension & Continuing Education (MCE&CE)  
2020-21 Annual Report Highlights**

## **PROGRAMS**

### **Scope, Volume, Achievements**

- The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at NC State offered 97 courses, 57 lectures, 13 study trips, and two events, with a total enrollment of 6,786 (compared to 8,721 in FY20 and 10,818 in FY19).
- Membership totaled 1,030, a 39% decrease from previous fiscal year's 1,706. COVID-19 restrictions had a significant impact on both memberships and enrollment. Sixteen percent of the 1,030 members were new to OLLI.
- Thirty-two NC State current and emeriti faculty members, from 20 different campus units, presented courses/lectures for OLLI. In addition to NC State faculty, 25 instructors came from other colleges and universities, with the remaining 38 instructors drawn from the community. Of the 95 instructors, 25 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, which meshes well with OLLI's goal to encourage members to stay current on a wide range of topics. NC State faculty presented their research on subjects such as climate change, politics, AI, astrophysics, quantum mechanics, digital privacy, and the pandemic response.
- Despite the challenges that COVID brought, OLLI staff and members of the Program Development Committee and Subcommittees had a great success rate of bringing in new instructors and new content – 80% of courses and lectures were newly developed in FY21.
- Study trips were limited because of COVID-19 restrictions, but 13 study trips were offered, mostly at outdoor locations. Six of the 13 trips were OLLI-only experiences, unavailable to the general public and developed by OLLI's assistant director. Three trips were in partnership with NC State units and connected members with the research and programs of the university.
- OLLI continued its relationship with the NC State Office of Sustainability, providing information about OLLI programs that have sustainability themes, as the university defines the term; 35% of all OLLI offerings included sustainability themes (27 courses, 26 lectures, and 6 of the study trips).
- OLLI began its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in January 2021, and despite budget and Zoom constraints, several activities marking the anniversary were undertaken in the spring semester: during the spring first term, historical "fun facts" were shared, with a later opportunity to take a quiz and win prizes; two Zoom socials in March and April featured 30<sup>th</sup>-anniversary themed games. One was organized by an OLLI instructor, and the other one was led by the Hospitality Committee.
- In March, OLLI made a successful transition to NC State University's REPORTER registration system.
- Although OLLI membership was at 61% of "normal," those members who did join were highly engaged. OLLI held 14 extracurricular Zoom events, designed to maintain the social connections that are part of OLLI's mission.
- Thirty-six courses, lectures, and study trips gave OLLI members the opportunity to develop their cultural competency, and included subjects such as local and North Carolina African American history, religion, and gender studies, as well as reflective courses on unconscious bias and race. The courses were developed both by OLLI's Program Development Committee and an ad hoc committee that meets periodically to identify course topics and strategies to advance this work.

- Again this year, OLLI members generously contributed to the Feed-the-Pack on-campus food pantry. Two drive-up events in December and April collected a total of 1,410 pounds. Clothing, scarves, hats, and mittens were also collected for the Raleigh nonprofit Note in the Pocket, which provides clothing to children in need. In July, OLLI members sewed/or contributed more than 125 facemasks for a project undertaken by Raleigh Organizing Against Racism (ROAR); the facemasks were designated for those in financial need, including home health and child care workers.
- Barbara Buescher, chair of Program Development Committee, was the recipient of the 2021 Betty Poulton Volunteerism Award for outstanding service to OLLI.
- Longtime OLLI instructor Jim Clark, NC State professor emeritus of English, was the 2020 recipient of the John Tyler Caldwell Award, presented by the North Carolina Humanities Council.
- On end-of-course evaluations, participants gave an average overall rating of 4.7 for both instructors and courses, and a rating of 4.8 for their overall OLLI experience (on a 5-point scale, where 5=Excellent). Evaluations for the study trips were also strong, with respondents giving an overall rating of 4.8 for those educational experiences.
- These evaluations compare favorably with previous years; program quality standards were maintained in FY21, despite COVID-19 challenges and the new way of learning via Zoom. Eighty-three percent of members enrolled in courses attended throughout the course; this Zoom participation rate continues to be higher than when OLLI has offered in-person courses in previous years.
- 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 impacted their lives during the COVID-19 restrictions:
  - “OLLI has retained the sense of community while pivoting to online learning. Bravo!”
  - “I’ve taken OLLI courses in the past but found that during this pandemic year OLLI became much more important to me--a source of intellectual stimulation at a time when the days seemed to run together as we were stuck isolating at home.”
  - “I am grateful that OLLI managed to find a way to do the classes during this pandemic. The classes have helped to save my sanity!”
  - “I cannot say enough about how important being a part of OLLI has been, especially this year. I have always enjoyed courses at McKimmon Center, but having them available online has been an important lifeline to me during this pandemic.”
  - “OLLI is a lifesaver, especially in the time of COVID. It’s great to have some contact with the world outside of the four walls of our home.”
  - “Being able to attend these sessions from home during this pandemic has been a true gift. I have always enjoyed courses at McKimmon, but being able to participate from home has been AMAZING. Thank you to the instructors and the whole team who made this possible.”
  - “I don’t know how I would have gotten through the pandemic without OLLI.”