

April 4, 2014

Dear Fellow OLLI Members,

As you may know, early this year we conducted our biennial survey of OLLI members. Nearly 800 members participated and gave us valuable input about how we can make OLLI at Duke even better. For all those who participated, **thank you!** Your voices have been heard!

Your Board of Advisors has been analyzing this input and making some decisions about how to move forward. Today we are pleased to share the following summary with you:

- Overall, our members are **satisfied** with their OLLI experience – over 90% indicate that they are Somewhat Satisfied or Very Satisfied with OLLI. In addition, nearly 90% feel that their OLLI experience during the current year was the same or better than the previous year. These results are a real tribute to everyone who makes OLLI at Duke special, from our instructors, to our volunteers, to our dedicated OLLI staff.
- Not surprisingly, **courses** continue to be the most important factor in the OLLI experience (94% rated courses Somewhat Important or Very Important), and our members are pleased with most aspects of our courses:
 - Over 92% rate our course **variety, content and quality of instruction** as Good to Excellent,
 - Over 90% rate the course **schedule** as Good to Excellent, and
 - Over 83% rate the **value for the money** as Good to Excellent.

Our members are somewhat less enthusiastic about two aspects of our courses:

- Only 54% rate the **opportunity to socialize** as Good to Excellent, and
 - Only 56% rate our **classroom facilities** as Good to Excellent.
- While OLLI courses are the most important factor in the OLLI experience, **activities and volunteer opportunities** are also important to our members. During the past year, about half of us (48%) participated in one or more activities like the picnic or the holiday luncheon, and over 30% volunteered in some capacity. In fact, many of our members played multiple volunteer roles as instructors, class assistants, committee or Board members, and by helping on or leading an activity. To all our volunteers, we say a sincere **thank you!**
 - Our electronic newsletter, *The Spotlight*, reaches more members than other forms of communication, like posting on bulletin boards or the member website. In fact, about three quarters of us read *The Spotlight* Often or Very Often. In addition, our member website (www.olliatduke.org), which was introduced in 2012, is fast becoming a valued source of information about OLLI.
 - Our members are becoming increasingly “**tech savvy**.” Nearly all of us (99%) use some sort of computer or smart phone, and nearly half of us (47%) use social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.). We didn’t ask these questions in the 2012 survey, but I think it’s fair to say “*You’ve come a long way, baby!*”

Those are the key findings which, as you can see, are quite positive.

As the Board reviewed these results and your numerous comments and suggestions, several themes emerged:

- Some of our **facilities**, notably the Bishop's House, are not acceptable. Unfortunately, the inherent limitations of a 100-year old building with inadequate parking are difficult to address in any meaningful way. We need to continue to make some short-term fixes, but long-term we need to work toward securing a dedicated OLLI facility where members can take courses, participate in activities, conduct meetings and interact with each other on an informal basis. Long-term, OLLI needs a first class facility with adequate space, restrooms and parking.
- Our on-line **registration system** continues to be a source of frustration for many. Over the past two years, we have made some improvements, but more needs to be done. We need to work toward achieving a registration process that allows members to log on, register for courses and pay for them, quickly and efficiently.
- Some of our **popular courses** fill up very quickly, preventing some interested members from participating. In a few cases, popular courses have "filled" in as little as 20 minutes, leaving many on the wait list.
- And finally, some **courses** are not living up to OLLI's high standards. While few in number, even one poor course is unacceptable. We need to do a better job of ensuring that every course meets our standards and that members have an easy way to provide feedback if they do not.

After much thought and discussion, the Board decided to take the following actions:

1. **Facilities** – as many know, our Strategic Planning Committee has been working to address this issue for some time. Recently, we have had some very positive conversations with Duke Administration regarding this issue and how to move forward. At this point I cannot share the details, but I am encouraged. I hope to have something more definitive to report in the coming months. Stay tuned!
2. **On-Line Registration** – as noted earlier, we have made some progress on this issue, but more needs to be done. Our Information Technology Committee will work with Duke to resolve remaining issues. We are carefully tracking the problems and addressing them as they occur. I would ask you to be patient as we work through these issues.
3. **Member Communications** – as noted above, our members are increasing using computers and smart phones as a primary means of communication, and OLLI must change accordingly. Our Communications Committee is working to ensure that member communications are clear, relevant and delivered by the most effective means, paying attention to changing demographics and the preferences of our members.
4. **Course Feedback** – as many know, we have been testing an on-line course feedback system for the past few terms. This system allows students to easily provide end-of-course feedback which is shared with the instructor, the Curriculum Committee and OLLI staff. To date, we have focused on courses with first-time OLLI instructors, but based on the survey results, we are exploring how to expand this system to our entire course offering in the near future.
5. **Full Classes** – this is a difficult issue. We are fortunate that many of our courses are so popular, but it does create problems when they are completely full. Our staff has been asked to explore ways to address this issue (for example, by adding capacity to popular courses).

Thanks again for participating in the 2014 Member Survey. I hope you are encouraged by the results and our response. We will keep you posted on our progress.

A. Wendell Musser, President – OLLI at Duke