

TITAN VOICES

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute turns 35 years young

Despite what my joints tell me after a hard workout, I believe there is some truth to the idea that working at a university helps keep you young. Admittedly, I'm a bit biased on the subject and have no facts to back the theory, but there is a similar contention



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that has been widely proven by much research: retired and semi-retired older adults who take classes in a university setting have increased mental and physical health and are more socially engaged.

In other words, it helps keep them young.

Before I elaborate on this educational fountain of youth, it is perhaps best to begin with an oft-forgotten truth about California State University, Fullerton: We are here to serve not just the 38,128 students enrolled at the institution; We are here to serve all students. This includes not only K-12 children throughout Orange County for whom we strive to foster a college-going culture, but also re-



FILE PHOTO: SAM GANGWER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Choreographer Cara LeGreen, center, leads about 60 members of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute during a performance to the song "Happy" in the Quad in October.

tired and semi-retired lifelong learners for whom we have the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI-CSUF), or OLLI, as it is affectionately called.

While each of our many cultural centers and diversity education initiatives are critical to our mission of inclusivity, the presence of OLLI and the age diversification its members bring to campus are no less important. That is why the dream of the 47 charter members who launched what even-

tually became OLLI, along with the vision of philanthropist Bernard Osher, could not have found a better place to take flight than here at Cal State Fullerton.

And take flight it has.

What began as eight classes 35 years ago this fall is now a record 144 courses for more than 1,550 members in everything from arts, languages, science and technology to tennis, yoga, tai chi and even Scrabble.

Moreover, the program's

special interest groups, physical activities and day trips foster increased intellectual inquiry and social engagement and just plain make life more fun.

Those of you who recently witnessed OLLI members performing a choreographed flash mob in the middle of campus as part of their 35th anniversary celebration know I am not overstating the fun part.

Indeed, as research suggests, OLLI members enjoy longer, healthier and more

socially engaged lives, but the icing on the cake is that they get to do so in a stress-free learning environment.

OLLI has zero academic prerequisites – there are no required tests or presentations, very little or no homework and classes are not graded – what some of our undergrads wouldn't give for those perks.

OLLI is all the more appealing due to the fact that most classes are held on campus and its membership fees – \$245 for three semesters and \$135 for a single semester – are all-inclusive, meaning members can attend as many classes as their time permits.

As much as OLLI members get out of their participation in the program, that pales in comparison to what they give back to our university, students and surrounding communities.

First and foremost, in lieu of taxpayer support, OLLI is made possible by the generosity of the Osher Foundation, the supervision and support of University Extended Education and the CSUF Auxiliary Services Corp., and the hundreds of OLLI and community members who donate time, expertise and financial gifts to the program every year.

Over the past four years alone, more than 1,200 on-campus volunteer positions have been filled by OLLI members working as student mentors, tutors, teaching assistants, readers, lecturers, research subjects, consultants and even faculty mentors.

Thanks to this benevolence and the age diversity, real-life work experiences and passion OLLI members bring to campus, our undergraduate and graduate students have made strides in academic success, habits of lifelong intellectual inquiry and workforce readiness.

For these reasons and more, it is important that we, as a campus community, widely celebrate and recognize OLLI-CSUF's 35th anniversary this month, particularly when the state's population of adults age 60 and older is expected to grow twice as fast as the total population through the year 2020.

Again, as a public institution, it is our duty to adapt not just to our enrolled students' needs, but all students' needs, including those older adults hoping to enrich their minds, serve a new generation and, well, just plain stay young.