

How Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Came to Be at Cal State Fullerton

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) has been a Cal State University, Fullerton (CSUF) chartered program since 1979 and is currently administered through the Office of Academic Programs. The Bernard Osher Foundation funded an endowment which is administered through the CSUF Philanthropic Foundation. Historically, OLLI has utilized the Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC) for financial management and staffing, while maintaining close academic and community ties to the university. The program currently has 1,200 + members from a broad cross-section of the community. OLLI at CSUF ranks among the top of the 125 programs [nationwide](#) for membership levels, programming strength, and the long-standing contributions to student success at CSUF.

What is the Ruby Gerontology Center

The Ruby Gerontology Center (RGC) is a 15,000 square-foot, stand-alone building on the campus of Cal State Fullerton. The center opened in 1988 and is home to the OLLI's administrative offices and most classes, events, and social activities. The facility includes the Shapiro multi-purpose rooms, kitchen, restrooms, storage areas, computer lab, Mackey Auditorium, classrooms, offices and patio. OLLI members have the use of the adjacent parking lot. The construction of the RGC was a legacy of the Continuing Learning Experience (CLE), OLLI's predecessor organization, and was named after major donors Charles L. and Rachael E. Ruby. Since its opening, the Ruby Gerontology Center (RGC) has operated as a hosted, multi-purpose facility. Its classrooms and auditorium have long been shared with the university for student instruction and faculty programs.

How was the RGC constructed

The RGC is sited on land owned by CSUF. The Board of Trustees of the California State University approved the plans for building a campus gerontology and learning center in 1985 and the naming of it in 1987.

Design and construction of the building was achieved through a capital fundraising project spanning seven years (1980-1986) led by then Continuing Learning Experience founder Leo Shapiro. The campaign raised several million dollars and was a collaboration between member volunteers and university leaders. The center was the first major building on campus to be built with private, corporate, and foundation funds. Over the years, OLLI has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars from membership fees and donations into renovations of the RGC infrastructure renovation and IT upgrades. The funds used to construct the Ruby Gerontology Center (RGC) were gifted to CSU/CSUF with the intent that the university would build and maintain the facility. The RGC is owned by CSUF. The university spends \$140,000 annually to maintain the facility.

What is the significance of the RGC to OLLI

The RGC site anchors OLLI's integration with CSUF — hosting classes (including those taught by faculty), student performances, and member activities that support learning, health, and social connection. This on-campus presence makes OLLI part of university life, which is not replicated by off-campus options such as community or senior centers, religious organizations, or fraternal groups.

RGC analysis

At the university's request, OLLI completed a space utilization study of RGC in August 2025. The study showed that OLLI is using all available space. With membership approaching 1,300 and demand for more on-campus classes, OLLI is expected to exceed the RGC's capacity. Projected growth in Orange County's older adult population will further increase the need for adequate space to support a strong, active CSUF OLLI program.

Advisory Group

The university is exploring options to relocate OLLI from the RGC. In the spirit of collaboration, President Ronald S. Rochon formed an Advisory Group to address key issues that have been raised — including safety, accessibility, parking, cost, and continuity — and to identify solutions that best serve the campus and OLLI. This group consists of five members from the university and five members from OLLI. John Beisner, Executive Director for Risk Management and Compliance serves as the group's facilitator. Sean Walker, Deputy Provost for Academic Operations and Programs (and ex officio to the OLLI Board of Trustees); Laura Riegler, Campus Architect; Hart Roussel, Director of Planned Giving; and Kristen Jasko, Assistant Vice President Logistical Services, comprise the university team. President Vickie Hite, Immediate Past President Mike Stover, Ray Young, Susan Snell, and Giulio Ongaro comprise the OLLI team.

To support this process, the university has also extended the relocation timeline to no sooner than June 2026, allowing time for continued discussion and review.

Doing so will help shape a path forward that honors OLLI's legacy and aligns with the university's mission and long-term needs. OLLI and CSUF are committed to maintaining open, respectful communication and engaging in this work with a spirit of collaboration.

Why is CSUF Considering Relocating OLLI

CSUF is considering relocating OLLI to address classroom limitations and support future enrollment growth. The move would help the university optimize campus space while providing OLLI with modern, accessible facilities. This process also allows CSUF to better align OLLI's operations with university policies.

What are some of OLLI's most important relocation concerns

- Classroom, office and storage space equivalency
- Costs - the impact on OLLI's finances and membership
- Occupancy terms
- Parking and pedestrian/trolley access to a facility adjacent to an arterial road
- Information technology parity, including audio/video equipment
- Operation and security procedures in buildings with other tenants

What will happen to the RGC if OLLI is relocated

If OLLI is relocated, the Ruby Gerontology Center (RGC) would be repurposed to help address CSUF's growing demand for instructional space. Since 2022, student headcount has increased by 14% (5,436 students), and the number of students taking full course loads (12+ units) has risen by 8% (7,506 students). Classroom utilization is highest Monday through Thursday, particularly classes starting between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when most students are on campus.

As a landlocked campus, CSUF must optimize every facility for equitable use and long-term sustainability. As currently configured, RGC offers 460 instructional seats, including the Mackey Auditorium. Reconfiguring the space for general academic use could yield several thousand additional classroom seats—a significant contribution toward meeting current and projected instructional demand.

Reassigning the RGC to classroom use supports the university's top enrollment drivers — Business, Psychology, Computer Science, Communications, Biology, Kinesiology, and Criminal Justice — and helps ensure that facilities align with the university's mission to provide accessible, high-quality education for a growing student body.

Some perspective on other OLLIs

There are 125 other programs [nationwide](#), each a part of a local college or university.

Many are located on campus in single-use or shared facilities as OLLI CSUF has been fortunate to maintain for so long at the RGC. However, other OLLIs must use or rent space in off-campus facilities throughout their communities, including at libraries, senior centers, schools, churches, and commercial buildings. For example, the OLLI hosted by [Arizona State University](#) that serves the greater Phoenix metropolis holds classes and events at 20 different locations.