The Osher Institute for Lifelong Learning

Strategic Plan
Amendments, March 10, 2017

Theme 1—Keep Our Core Membership Participating

Generally speaking, the core membership is made up of individuals who have been members for two years or longer. They constitute the great majority of class registrations at Osher at UR and are, for the most part, the source of volunteers, leadership and program stability. Accordingly, a key part of the strategic plan is focused on initiatives to keep those core members as a vibrant part of the program.

**Initiatives for 2017**

1. **Online Registration Software Implementation**

   The planned fall 2017 implementation of a new online registration system will enhance members’ experience in joining Osher, renewing membership, and registering for courses. The streamlined ability to handle all these functions within one system from a home computer will allow students to manage their Osher-related data far more easily. The initial roll-out of the software will include voluntary training sessions for members.

   **Leaders:** Osher Staff, SPCS Staff

2. **Fund-Raising/Outreach to Members**

   To ensure sustainability and long-term well being of the Osher Institute and to address an Osher “capacity-building” grant, 2017 work will include an increased focus on contributing financially to the Osher Institute. A case statement of approximately three “reasons to give” will be used to encourage members to give. These may include creating a gathering space for Osher members, having a van/bus contract strictly for Osher use, and planning and supporting a lecture series on topics pertinent to Osher members.

   **Leaders:** Osher Staff, SPCS Staff, Leadership Council

3. **Enhanced Communication with Members**

   Keeping members informed is critical to keeping members engaged. Continued and new lines of communication are planned for 2017. Already, the “all member” meeting in January was successful in bringing members up to date on our membership survey results, new grant awards, the online registration software, while also kicking off the spring semester. Continued and increased email blasts on upcoming events and opportunities will also lead to greater communication with members.

   **Leaders:** Osher Staff, Leadership Council

Theme 2—Attract and Keep New Members

Osher at UR needs to attract and keep new members in the program. New members provide new life experiences, insights and interests to keep the program strong. Moreover, as core members move from the area or leave the program for other reasons, new members help maintain a steady state of membership. However, roughly half of new members are members for only one year and there is a subsequent churning in membership. While that figure is not extraordinary compared to other Osher programs, it does reflect an inefficiency that we would like to reduce. The following initiatives are aimed at addressing that inefficiency.
Theme 3—Continue to Build New and Enhance Existing UR Relationships

Osher at UR enjoys an outstanding relationship with the broader UR community in the form of: UR professors and staff who voluntarily teach classes; first-rate classroom availability; technical support to instructors; discounts for the bookstore and various UR functions; access to the UR email system; and use of the Boatwright Library, to name a few. In the membership survey, 65% of respondents indicated that they would welcome having more UR faculty involved in the Osher program. In developing this strategic plan we felt that it is important that Osher should be increasingly supportive of the University. The initiatives that support this theme are listed below.

**Initiatives for 2017**

1. **Osher Volunteers for UR Events**

Members have expressed the desire to give back to the University and show appreciation for the great support it provides to the Osher Institute. Giving time is one way to say thank you. Already, partnerships with SPCS and the Alumni Office are in place and will offer opportunities for Osher members to volunteer their time. Activities include, but are not limited to staffing a table at a Wellness Fair, handing out packets during Alumni Weekend, and ushering for SPCS Night and SPCS graduation.

Leads: Osher Staff, Leadership Council, Marketing Team

Theme 4—Increase Inclusion

The analysis of registration data showed that most Osher members live in an area that is west of I-95, south of I-295, east of Route 288 and north of Hull Street, with a heavier concentration in the Zip Codes closest to the UR campus. In addition, the membership survey determined that 92% of respondents are white or Caucasian. The working group believes that expanding our geographic, ethnic and socioeconomic reach could enhance the program by bringing different viewpoints and life experiences to the Osher membership.

**Initiatives for 2017**

1. **Continued Focus on Diversity**

Continue to address diversity within the Osher Institute through programming that focuses on issues of inclusion, diversity, various cultures, and socio-economic differences. Ideas include, but are not limited to offering a National Endowment for the Humanities film series on Civil Rights.

Leads: Osher Staff, Osher Instructors

Theme 5—Expand Osher Outreach in the Greater Richmond Area

Osher at UR already leverages its position as the unique provider of lifelong learning in an academic setting in the Richmond area. Examples include its partnership with the Rose Group in support of China Fest, its relationship with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Virginia Historical Society and the Civil War Roundtable. We believe that continuation and expansion of this outreach through the following initiatives will provide for a more robust and intellectually stimulating program for Osher members at the University of Richmond.