Osher Leadership Council Minutes
June 6, 2017

Absent: Marlene Ebert, Bill Pawelski,
Guests: SPCS Dean Jamelle Wilson, Alumni Relations Director Laura Krajewski

Chair Charlie Huffstetler called the June meeting to order in the Eskandarian Room at 1:45am.

Charlie welcomed new LC member Jeff Keil and new Osher staff member Amy Edwards.

The minutes of the December 2016 council meeting were approved as emailed.

Osher Class Attendance Review:

George Pangburn introduced his research by noting that he and other instructors have become aware of the number of no-shows in their classes. Because of this, George offered to review the attendance records for our spring semester over the last three years. He outlined his work of tallying the data, then analyzing for trends, as well as possible issues to address. George reported that, while there are more than just a few members who miss a class here and there, there are only a handful of chronic offenders. He found that an increasing number of members notify the Osher office if they are unable to attend a class.

George’s report is attached to these minutes, but his overall conclusion is that we do not have a critical attendance problem. He noted, however, that in classes where the numbers become very low, those instructors may not be motivated to teach for Osher in the future. We should continue to monitor attendance and be mindful of any significant changes. He offered steps for consideration, including capping the number of classes a member may take each semester and reviewing what other Osher Institutes do if they are experiencing this same problem.

Discussion followed, with LC members strongly in favor of continued unlimited classes for Gold members. Good communication (emails, word of mouth, course confirmations) is essential in making members aware of the need to notify the office if unable to attend a class.

A two-phase plan was suggested. Phase one would be to share George’s report with the full membership via an email blast. George and Peggy will work on this message soon. Another component would be to add a message about withdrawing if unable to attend in our catalog and on our registration form. A suggestion was also to send a separate email to all attendees and wait-listed people to note the oversubscription to a given class (as opposed to including it in the course confirmation email). Phase two would be to contemplate consequences for those who abuse the system.

Comments from the Dean

Charlie welcomed Dean Wilson to our meeting and offered her the floor. Jamelle first thanked Osher LC members for their leadership and support. She noted the Osher volunteers who assisted with SPCS Night and Commencement. She then spoke to the SPCS Strategic Plan and noted that lifelong learning is a key component. Jamelle acknowledged the upcoming launch of the online registration software system.

When the Dean offered to field questions, Landon asked her to speak to her recent state appointment to the Board of Education. Jamelle noted that she is honored to serve in this capacity. Lee Ann noted that 16 Osher members volunteered for Alumni Weekend and asked Jamelle to keep us in mind for more SPCS volunteer opportunities. Jamelle highlighted the possibility of connecting with SPCS students in a “career advisory” capacity.

Charlie acknowledged his gratitude to Pat and Jamelle for his experience at the National Osher Institute Conference in Texas. He thanked both for the very generous support that UR provides our institute, noting that not all are as fortunate. We are very much a part of the UR family.
Director's Report:

- Peggy introduced Alumni Relations Director Laura Krajewski when she joined us for a few minutes. Laura offered her thanks for our Alumni Weekend volunteers, who were a huge help in serving the more than 2,000 alums who came for the many events that weekend.

- Peggy reported finances to be in the black, ahead of budgeted projections. She noted that summer courses started June 1, and she's scheduling for fall now. The new online registration software has moved the fall deadlines up significantly, to allow for testing and training. Launch date is August 15. Peggy noted the ongoing work on the Regierer Foundation grant with interviews for the part-time position in process now. She said that Amy will report on her Osher Capacity-Building grant work later in the agenda.

- Peggy reported the latest membership count as 907, which is significantly higher than this time last year.

- With this number reported, Charlie asked Jamelle about our membership growth and the University’s expectations. Linda questioned if there is any approval required or a cap on this growth from within the University.

  **POTENTIAL ACTION ITEM:** Jamelle charged the Council with providing her with its recommendation on growth. She is willing to take it forward to senior leadership. In order to proceed with this effort, a proposal will be developed.

  Discussion followed on what growth could mean, especially if we hit 1000 members. Are we positioned for a second $1 million from the Osher Foundation and if so, what are the requirements of that gift? Don questioned why we need/want to increase membership and if we are successfully serving the needs of our current members. Can we sustain our institute if we grow? Peter noted the critical need for quality programs, as this will ensure our long-term viability and will bring in more members.

  **POTENTIAL ACTION ITEM:** Charlie suggested that the Council consider modifying its Strategic Plan to address growth. Rather than take a reactive approach to membership, a proactive strategy is preferred to identify and explore the options: no cap; a cap; or a 1,000 sustained member target to possibly qualify for a second-tier Osher Foundation grant. The outcome of this initiative will be a proposal, endorsed by the Leadership Council and the Director, to be submitted to Jamelle.

- Peggy's noted the handout on the Road Scholar Survey summary results, with the full report to come later this summer.

Chair Report

- Charlie offered a copy of the Osher monthly newsletter and suggested that all LC members sign up to receive it. Here’s the link to do so:
  
  [https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001qvJffTsWn98z2rYjfnrYVsg59tH8wte59e3Kt3CB1p377Oj1SA-pj1pby1MjjWGTCTRAY5CO95rK7v36bTkdLU_SxF-oPSe0xqaXJWr5Drog%3D](https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001qvJffTsWn98z2rYjfnrYVsg59tH8wte59e3Kt3CB1p377Oj1SA-pj1pby1MjjWGTCTRAY5CO95rK7v36bTkdLU_SxF-oPSe0xqaXJWr5Drog%3D)

- Charlie and Peggy attended the Osher Institute National Conference the first week in April in Irving, Texas. Charlie noted the great benefit of attending and hearing what other institutes are doing.

- Charlie commented that one of the breakout sessions he attended at the conference focused on curriculum committee and how vital they are to an institute’s success and vitality. He shared handbooks from Temple University. He noted that we currently have an inactive curriculum team and perhaps we should focus on getting this team fully functioning by finding a leader for it. Don Miller volunteered to chair this team. (YAY DON!)

Team Reports

**Marketing:** Lee Ann said the Marketing team is in full throttle mode, as its members have served at SPCS and University functions recently and now are beginning the summer farmers’ markets. Charlie and Anne Hufstetler staffed the first South of the James market on June 3 and 28 documented contacts. During June and July, Osher volunteers will staff 2 markets each at South of the James, St. Stephens, and Great Big Greenhouse. Lee Ann noted that Colleen Anders and Cathy White staffed a booth at the Chesterfield Schools Retired Teachers event, with quite a few people expressing
interest. Lee Ann and her team continue to circulate catalogs everywhere, with Lee Ann especially checking all the spots on campus on a regular basis. LC members recommended connecting with real estate associations, the VA Association of Independent Schools, and retired teacher groups. Contact information is helpful if LC members can provide it to Lee Ann.

**Membership:** Ruth reported that the second spring orientation attracted a small number of new members – approximately eight. The summer orientation is scheduled for June 19 at 1pm.

Landon asked for volunteers for the Membership team. Because previously planned transitions did not occur, the team is short on new members. Work could involve emailing new members to welcome them, following up with non-renewing members to determine why, but perhaps there are better ways to reach out and serve our new members.

**2017 Strategic Plan**

Charlie referred LC members to the Strategic Plan handout, which highlights the work planned for this year. In response to the online software registration initiative, Lee Ann offered her assistance. (*Note: Peggy followed up after the meeting with the implementation team and found that members will be needed to test the system and to assist with the training sessions on Aug 15/16.*)

**New Business**

**Osher Capacity-Building Grant**

Osher Stewardship Assistant Amy Edwards reported on an introductory meeting of the Development team and LC Executive Committee. This meeting served to introduce the specific requirements of the grant and ideas/work to date. The three take-aways from this meeting were

1. To determine the fit of our work with the University’s Advancement staff
2. To mine the available data to get a better handle on our historical giving
3. To move forward with a fund-raising campaign

Amy then reported her work to date on these items. She continues to make inroads with Advancement staff. She outlined our giving history, noting the results of our 2014 and 2016 annual fund letters. Our giving rate is approximately 5%.

Amy is working on an annual fund campaign, with a letter to go to members in August, followed with a reminder at our mixer in September, then phone calls in October. Several LC members offered to work the phone-a-thon, if we go that route.

Much discussion followed on compelling reasons to give. While some felt that tangible things (i.e., a gathering space, vans/transportation, lecture series) were good, others did not. While internally we may want to raise funds as a “rainy day” account or a cushion for hard times, LC members strongly felt that is not a viable marketing statement. Most agreed that the compelling reason to give is to ensure quality programming now and into the future, however we can wordsmith this message.

Amy said that she is working on the pieces required for the annual fund letter and showed a sample from UVA that listed its leadership on the letterhead. She asked members if they would be willing to have their names appear on our letterhead, and all agreed it would be fine.

Charlie followed that by saying it would send a strong message to the larger membership if 100% of LC members gave to the annual fund prior to the letter going out, so that Amy could incorporate that into the message.
Charlie thanked all for their time and concluded the meeting at 2:20 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Watson
6-7-17
Osher Class Attendance Review

Purpose:

In the 2016 Osher Membership Survey we asked members about their degree of satisfaction with the ability to get into classes that they wanted to attend. 81% of those responding indicated they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. Only 3% indicated that they were not satisfied. While the survey question was focused on satisfaction in getting into classes, the question is also somewhat related to the level of class attendance. The purpose of this review is:

1) to determine the level of attendance in Osher classes over a multi-year period as the number of class offerings have expanded; and
2) to determine whether there are trends in attendance that may warrant actions or changes in the program by the Osher Director. For consistency purposes, we chose to use the same semester for each year in the review, namely the Spring semester.

Methodology: Review over 200 class sign-in sheets covering a three-year period (2015-2017) examining:

- the number of Osher members registered for each class offered,
- the level of expected attendance for each class (those who registered less any withdrawals times the number of sessions in a class), and actual attendance (the total number of persons who came to class over the duration of the class)
- the ratio of actual attendance to expected attendance
- the number of no-shows (persons who registered for a class, but did not withdraw and did not attend any of the class sessions)

The data was captured in an Excel spreadsheet derived from the class listings for this three-year period.

Observations:

1) The number of class offerings in Spring semesters increased over this three-year period by 38% from 76 in 2015, to 98 in 2016, to 105 in 2017. (See Table 1.)

2) The number of 1-session classes increased significantly over this three-year review period from 32 to 50. In relative terms, 1-session classes made up about 50% of classes offered in 2015 while they accounted for 67% of those offered in 2017.

3) Osher class registrations increased by 36% from 2,015 to 2017. In absolute terms they went up by 760 (from 2,116 in 2015 to 2,876 in 2017).

4) Over that same period, actual class attendance (those persons who signed in at classes) increased as well, by nearly 800 or 27%.

5) The ratio of actual to expected class attendance increased over the period, but only slightly, from 62% to 66%. However, 30 of the 200+ classes looked at as part of this review had less than 50% attendance.

6) No-shows are a significant part of the overall attendance picture, and the data showed that over the period of review, approximately 25% or 1 in 4 persons who register for a class, never attend and never withdraw from the class. Some classes had a much lower percentage of no-shows than 25% while some were much higher.

7) Review of sign in sheets showed that in Spring 2015, approximately 155 Osher members were no-shows for one or more classes (registered for a class, did not withdraw and did not attend any sessions of that class). In Spring 2016, about 175 members were no-shows for one or more classes. In the aggregate, this means that about 530 class seats went unfilled in 2015 and 580 in 2016.
Most of those who were no-shows missed just one or 2 classes in that semester. However, a total of 14 members had 10 or more (and some substantially more) no-shows in the review period.

8) No attempt was made to count Gold vs. Silver members in terms of class registrations or attendance. However, anecdotally, it’s clear that Gold members make up the overwhelming number of registrations as well as attendance. It’s also clear that they make up the great majority of no-shows.

9) Over the three-year period of review, it appeared that the number of members informing the Office that they had to withdraw from a class was increasing. This is a good thing, especially in those classes that are wait-listed, as it allows other interested members to take the class.

**Conclusion**

The above observations do not lead to a conclusion that we have a critical attendance problem in Osher classes at UR. However, we do have instances where member turnout for classes has been exceedingly low which could lead volunteer instructors to question whether teaching at Osher is something that they want to continue to do. Our membership structure (Gold members paying an annual fee that allows them to take unlimited classes and Silver members a much smaller fee and being on a pay-per-class basis) sets up a situation where there is no motivation for Gold members to attend the classes for which they have registered. At the same time, we have no programmatic goal in terms of member attendance and the current attendance levels have not led to any adverse consequences. Some proactive steps that the Osher Director and Leadership Council may wish to consider:

- Continue to monitor attendance of Fall and Spring semesters to determine if attendance (and particularly, no-shows) is becoming a more serious problem for the program.
- Reach out to other Osher programs that have a similar fee structure to ours to determine if they have experienced attendance issues and how they may have dealt with them.
- Depending on the results of the above two actions, consider placing a cap on the number of classes that Gold members may register for, as a way to encourage more serious consideration about registration decisions

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<th>Expected Attendance</th>
<th>Actual Attendance</th>
<th>Actual/Expected</th>
<th>Number of No-shows</th>
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