

ePistle

Working for Excellence the Teacher Resource Initiative(WE-TRI)

Volume 3, Issue 1

January 2020

Editor's Comments



First edition of the ePistle for the New Year! Hope you had a great holiday season and ready to dive back into OLLI classes in the new decade!

A few things that we will be discussing in this edition. The first is the Teacher Appreciation Event at Mason in Loudoun on Thursday, February 27 at noon. As usual, a free lunch, followed by presentations. More to follow in this ePistle

OLLI staff provided members with the opportunity to participate in an Ideas Survey. We will discuss two portions of the results – first, thoughts members had with regard to teaching – some surprises! And second, and most interesting to me, some suggestions for classes. Take a look at some of the thoughts people had, and see if any of them are in your wheelhouse!

As usual, we will provide you with a calendar of upcoming events, and some other thoughts for teaching tips

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Evaluation Doris Bloch



Did you know that OLLI has composed an evaluation form? It is available on the OLLI web site, under Instructor Resources. Lots of our instructors do use it, while others don't know that it exists.

The first thing to know about the form is that its use is completely optional! No one is forced to use it.

The second thing to know about the form is that it is paper-based, so there is no automated format. It is typically given out on one of the last classes for a multi-session course, or at the end of a single session class. It is filled out by the class members and immediately turned in.

The third thing to know is that the form is **ONLY** for the use of the instructor! It never goes to the OLLI Office or staff; it never goes to the Program Planning Group Co-Chairs! It is turned in to the instructor. No one else has the ability to see it! No one else has the ability to act on the results, nor does anyone else want to act on the results.

So, what good is it, you ask? It is merely a feedback tool, to tell the instructor if the students liked the class, felt that the instructor had a good grasp of the subject matter and used the audio-visual tools effectively, and it lets the instructor know if there are additional future courses to suggest that would be of interest.

Might it be helpful for you? It certainly is helpful for me!

Questions?

Excelsior!

Alice and Shannon's Corner

How to Prepare for an Emergency at OLLI

In the event that you confront an emergency in your OLLI Mason classroom, the following provides some instruction to help you manage the situation.

First, assess the situation. Is this truly an emergency? Is someone in physical danger or is there a threat to the welfare of OLLI members?

If the answer is "yes:"

1) Injury

Call 911, and stay with injured person. Do not intervene or move the individual. Wait for emergency personnel to arrive to help. Please also find a way to notify OLLI staff so they are aware of the incident. Once the situation is resolved, contact the OLLI Administrator to complete the OLLI Incident Report Form. You'll need the following information:

- Name of injured/sick person
- Date and Time of Incident
- Location
- Was 911 called?
- Names of those who witnessed or assisted during the incident

2) Serious Weather

If there is a weather emergency, university authorities will contact OLLI staff who will reach out to instructors in the classrooms. You will be instructed to vacate to the appropriate location for safety purposes. Please consult the signage posted in each OLLI classroom with this information.

3) Danger on Campus

In the event of a dangerous incident or other threat to campus (shooter, e.g.), we ask that you reference the Mason protocols for detailed training and instruction found at: <https://ready.gmu.edu/>

Thanks for following these protocols to maximize classroom safety. If you have any questions, please contact the OLLI office: olli@gmu.edu, 703-503-3384.

Idea Survey – Student Reactions

There were some very interesting results from the idea survey with regard to teaching and how the students reacted to what was presented. First, students were asked what type of teaching style was most appealing. To my surprise, 91% (61% highly appealing, 30% appealing) found the lecture format appealing – far and away the best result. While this flies in the face of what academic studies have shown about adult education, I think it is because the instructors who use this format are skilled, and do more than just read a paper. Rather, they engage the audience through thought-provoking questions and the like, and techniques such as eye contact and voice modulation.

The response to the idea of homework between classes was interesting. 43% found the idea of homework appealing or highly appealing. On the other hand, 24% found it not appealing – the highest not appealing response. So I think providing students with some enrichment, such as additional readings, would work well, but probably avoid making that part of the class.

Later, we will look at specific classes students suggested, but of interest is what areas students wanted more classes (since they could choose more than one, the totals far exceed 100%).

The highest totals were:

History 54%
Humanities 44%
Science/Tech/Health 43%
Art/Music 39%
Lit/Theater/Writing 30%
Current Events 30%

So what can we garner from these responses?

First, OLLI members seem very satisfied with the types of classes and the method of instruction. Again, while most academic studies say that the worst format for adult education is lecture, the success of OLLI lectures is a testament to the instructors.

Second, OLLI members seem interested in information outside of the classroom, but it is apparent that they do not want to have such homework required. Consider giving students access to web sites, videos and books to enhance the student experience.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI

TIME FEBRUARY 7

SUMMER 2020 PROPOSALS DUE (GET THEM IN NOW!)

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE MASON IN LOUDOUN, RM 208

TIME FEBRUARY 27

TEACHER EVENT

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI CAMPUSES

TIME MARCH 30

SPRING 2020 TERM BEGINS

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI

TIME APRIL 13

FALL 2020 PROPOSALS DUE (GET THEM IN WELL BEFORE THEN!)

SAVE THE DATE – OLLI GMU EVENT

So we have the Teacher event at Loudoun on February 27 to put on your calendar. But projecting further out, don't forget the OLLI GMU event!

Traditionally held at the Fairfax Country Club, 5110 Ox Road in Fairfax, not far from the Tallwood Campus, this allows all of the OLLI instructor cadre to come together (and get a free breakfast in addition!) We will hear from instructors as to how they organize, research and teach their classes, and have the opportunity to exchange ideas.

It also is an opportunity to see how OLLI and GMU work together, and how particularly the scholarships funded by OLLI help out needy students to pursue their academic dreams.

More information to follow, but for now, make sure that you have the morning of Friday, April 3, on your calendar!

SOME IDEAS FOR CLASSES

The second interesting part of the Idea Survey was when students were asked what classes they liked and which they didn't. It seemed the Civil War, not surprisingly, remains an areas of great interest for OLLI students. While specific teachers were named, students also enjoyed outside speakers, such as from GMU. In terms of multi class presentations, there was some interest in

Shakespeare (I am thinking about a class on Shakespeare at the movies, so it does not have to be limited to reading the plays themselves)

Current Events (particularly of interest with the 2020 election looming)

Foreign policy issues

Aging issues (such as health/long term care, volunteering, downsizing)

Specific untapped history classes (how about the Whigs, the Etruscans or the Hapsburgs?)

Some single session class ideas might include:

Master craftsman class (Tricks of the trade shown by a carpenter, chef, seamstress or gardener, etc.)

Tax saving tips (good idea for the winter 2021 term!)

Hiking trips

Some previous classes/trips, such as the olive oil tasting or the Mosby Courthouse Raid walking tour, were requested to be repeated.

Two general ideas I think are worth exploring - A few one day programs during intersessions, due to long breaks, and an interdisciplinary approach to classes.

Finally, one member asked that people be careful about injecting political beliefs into classes. In some cases, it is unavoidable, but the general rule of avoiding religion and politics probably holds!

If any of these classes sound interesting, please either submit a course proposal to Alice and Shannon, or contact me at dunphyji@aol.com to discuss. Also, if you would like the full list of class suggestions (only scratched the surface), also contact me at this email.

Teachable Moment of the Day

Folks who are in their first semester of attendance at OLLI, either on a semester or annual membership, have a red dot on their nametag. Please look for these folks in your classes.

Recruiting (and even more importantly, retaining) members is the key to OLLI's future. Starkly speaking, no members, no OLLI. So reach out to those folks, and make them feel welcome in your class.

They also are looking at OLLI with fresh eyes. Toni Acton captures their reactions with a new member survey, but it's not a bad idea to ask them after class how they thought the class went, and if they have any suggestions going forward. In addition to possibly getting some great ideas, it makes the new members feel that their opinions are valued, which cannot help but give them a positive opinion of OLLI.

So make sure you engage new members in your class. It's not only the right thing to do – it's the smart thing!

Teacher Event

Please put Thursday, February 27 on your calendar and save the date for the Reston/Loudoun Teacher Appreciation event (and BTW, even though it is in Loudoun, all OLLI instructors, regardless of their home campus are welcome)

We will start as we traditionally have done, with a free pizza lunch and time for networking. We will then hear from OLLI leadership, expressing their appreciation for all the hard work that our instructor cadre performs – after all, instruction is why OLLI exists

Jim Anderson, who many of you know from his Civil War and Frontier classes, will give a short tutorial on his methodology for finding pictures, photos and graphics for his PowerPoint slides. Alice Slayton Clark from OLLI staff will make a presentation on the different staff member responsibilities, and then there will be time for an open discussion.

The event will be held at Mason-in-Loudoun, 21335 Signal Hill Plaza, Room 208. If you have a parking pass for this facility, bring it – if not please contact me below for further information.

Please RSVP to me at dunphyji@aol.com if you are planning to attend.

RANDOM THOUGHT OF THE DAY

TWO FINAL THOUGHTS THAT WERE ON THE IDEAS SURVEY – AND I WILL QUOTE THEM WORD FOR WORD

WE NEED QA PROGRAM FOR THE SPEAKERS WE HAVE. ARE WE CONTRACTING FOR SPACE TO ACCOMMODATE SPEAKERS WHO ARE. NOT UP TO STANDARD?

OLLI NEEDS TO SPEND MORE TIME AND EFFORT TO DETERMINE IF AN INSTRUCTOR REALLY KNOWS HOW TO TEACH !

I REALIZE THAT ANY FORM OF EVALUATION OR SELECTION PROCESSES IS A VERY TOUCHY ONE WITH INSTRUCTORS. BUT TWO STUDENTS TOOK THE TIME TO ADDRESS. THOUGHTS?

SEND ANY OTHER RANDOM THOUGHTS TO THE EDITOR AT [DUNPHYJJ@AOL.COM](mailto:dunphyjj@aol.com)

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