

Dominican Receives \$1 Million Grant from Osher Foundation

[OLLI](#) is an academic program of Dominican founded in 2004 with a \$100,000 grant from The Bernard Osher Foundation. The University received \$100,000 in annual grants from 2005-2008 to grow the institute. Funding also came from university resources and member donations and tuition. In 2009, the foundation awarded Dominican a \$1 million endowment grant in recognition of OLLI's growth to 520 members.

This second, \$1 million grant was awarded after OLLI [surpassed its goal of 1,000 new members](#). During the 2012-2013 academic year, the institute reached 1,159 members.

“OLLI at Dominican University is learning for life,” said Katherine Henderson, Dominican’s OLLI director. “Our members enjoy being a part of a learning community of peers seeking knowledge on a wide array of topics, as well as political dialogue on current events.”

OLLI at Dominican offers content-rich liberal arts and science courses taught at the senior college or graduate level. Six and eight-week non-credit courses in history, art history, music, and science provide OLLI students with the intellectual challenge of academic programs minus the stress of grades, tests, or homework. The institute also offers a book club, travel club, theater appreciation club, and guitar club.

“We are filling a gap, as there are many educated, retired older adults in our community who have the time to update their knowledge base and meet new people,” Henderson said.

OLLI classes are taught by specialists in their fields, often professors from Dominican and other universities. Sessions are held at various locations throughout Marin, including the Dominican campus, Villa Marin, and the Osher Marin Jewish Community Center in San Rafael, Congregation Kol Shofar in Tiburon, and The Dance Palace in Point Reyes.

Henderson has known many of the OLLI faculty members as colleagues. Others engage in a process of review by the OLLI staff and/or members of the Curriculum Committee before their course proposals go to the OLLI Advisory Council. The 24 members of the Advisory Council consider the background of the faculty member as well as the course proposed.

“The quality of faculty is a big reason why the OLLI program is growing,” Henderson said.

“Besides looking for a mix of liberal arts classes each session, we are looking for faculty who can prepare lectures that are dynamic, passionate, and intellectually rich.”

The entire OLLI membership also influences decisions about which faculty and courses to offer. Decisions to rehire a faculty member often are based on comments contained in course evaluations. Clubs and workshops are discussion-based, with about 20 people per group. Lectures have between 50 and 200 members enrolled.

There are two categories of membership in OLLI: Basic members who take between one and five courses spread throughout the year, and Premium members who take up to 16 courses a year. Fees range from \$150 to \$550, with scholarships available for members who cannot afford the full list price.

The Bernard Osher Foundation supports 117 lifelong learning programs on university and college campuses across the country, with at least one grantee in each of the 50 states (plus the

District of Columbia). The foundation also supports a National Resource Center for the Institutes, which is located at the University of Southern Maine.

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