2020 – 2021

Annual Report

of the

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UC Berkeley

: Always On

Never Muted
It’s amazing what can happen when you shrink the world to the size of a postage stamp.
Director's Note

What a journey. After transforming our entire program in the spring of 2020, we stepped into a new fiscal year unsure of what lay ahead, but confident in our ability to weather it. Months of running on adrenaline and creative problem-solving can do that to a team.

As you'll see in this report, our community of learners remained strong and engaged throughout 2020-21 despite the tumult swirling all around. I am in awe of our members' resilience, and inspired by it. Every decision we made centered on how best to serve these remarkable individuals.

Our speaker series and special events program expanded in significant ways to address some of the country's (and world’s) most vexing problems. It is wonderful to be able to call upon the deep scholarship and expertise of our campus colleagues and community partners.

Our engagement with Cal undergrads through our Words Over Time exchanges had renewed importance for all with the message of resilience and strength. In these forums, mutual empathy reigned, buoying younger and older adults through the worst seas of fear and loneliness.

All of this engagement took place in a fractured world of new platforms and small screens. Our minds and imaginations often were called upon to complete the gesture or the picture. We balanced seeing family and friends at a distance with masks on outside with the chance to see OLLI peers full faced in the Zoom camera in their living rooms.

To our members, donors, friends, colleagues, faculty and team ... thank you for everything you have done to help shine a light on the big picture in a world very much in need of perspective.

Susan Hoffman
Director, OLLI @Berkeley
2020-21 by the numbers

- **2,799 Members**: 3011 in 2019-20
- **233 Member Cities**: 184 in 2019-20
- **26 Speaker Events & Town Halls**: 18 in 2019-20
- **63 Online Courses**: 93 in person and online in 2019-20
- **11,323 Views of Events on YouTube**: 93 in person and online in 2019-20
- **3,360 Online Event Registrants** (non-courses)
- **97% Satisfied**: according to annual member survey
- **$102,065 Donations**: from generous members and friends
In a year rife with turmoil and uncertainty, we sought to help our community make sense of the world. And, in some instances, escape it.
Four academic terms filled with history, politics, literature, film, music, art, government, writing, and even seasonal cooking. (Tomato & peach panzanella, anyone?)

Curated Curriculum

In 2020-21, we curated a roster of 63 live online courses that resonated with relevance in today’s world, from an examination of the rise of political extremism across the globe to an exploration of pivotal works of Afrofuturism — all taught by UC Berkeley faculty or other area scholars and experts.

We also recognized the need to provide some joyful escapism from the here and now. Every term included always popular arts and culture courses, as well as a delicious addition to our repertoire — a demonstration cooking course with an award-winning, Oakland-based cookbook author.

Shorter Classes, Longer Terms

To minimize Zoom fatigue for our members, faculty and staff, we revamped our traditional schedule of 2-hour classes that run for six weeks to 1.5-hour classes spread out over eight weeks.

Watch Anywhere, Anytime

Along with offering a dynamic interactive online experience that brings members together to learn together in real time, we also recorded many of our courses and provided those videos to registrants at no extra cost. Our members found the option of being able to watch classes at their convenience a compelling added benefit and reason to register.

Encore, Encore!

Inspired by our ever-growing library of pre-recorded courses, we launched “Encore” courses — a package of our most popular course videos available for registrants to view and enjoy at their leisure. An “Encore” course also includes the opportunity to participate in a livestream conversation with the faculty.
Speakers & Town Halls

America’s Unfinished Work: An Ongoing Investigation of Race in America

We launched our America’s Unfinished Work series in immediate response to the marches for racial justice in the summer of 2020. This ongoing series features influential figures engaged in the examination and eradication of systemic racism to create a more just and equal society. In 2020-21, we were honored to be joined by UC Berkeley’s Dr. Khiara Bridges, Professor of Law at UC Berkeley School of Law, who spoke about Critical Race Theory; Dr. Charles Henry, Professor Emeritus of African American Studies, who made the case for reparations; Dr. Linda Rugg, Associate Vice Chancellor, who discussed Native American repatriation at UC Berkeley; and Dr. Elliott Currie of UC Irvine on the stunning statistics about the high cost of living in fear and our inaction.

The Pandemic: Member Questions, Answered

In 2020-21, we hosted three COVID-19 Q&A sessions with Dr. Deborah Gold, a retired infectious disease specialist, who answered member questions about how to navigate the world and assess risk, both pre- and post-vaccination. Hundreds of members attended each event (and the four others that took place both before and after fiscal year 2020-21.)

Ongoing Speaker Series

Throughout the year, we welcomed many leading scholars and experts to present on timely topics. We were delighted to host Barbro Osher, Swedish Consul General in San Francisco and chair of the Bernard Osher Foundation, and Berkeley’s Robert Strand to discuss the case for Nordic capitalism; Allison Harvey, Director of the Golden Bear Sleep and Mood Research Clinic, on how to improve sleep; Berkeley’s Deirdre English, former editor of Mother Jones, on journalism and the #MeToo movement; George Breslauer, former executive vice chancellor and provost at Cal, on the myths and realities of Putin’s Russia; and many others.

Town Halls: Grappling with Resilience, Progress & Threats to Democracy

We hosted three Town Halls in 2020-21, a new format for us inspired by what we saw as a need for our community to connect in conversation amidst a world roiling outside our doors. We gathered panels of experts to discuss the January 6 insurrection of the capitol, what to expect in the Biden-Harris administration, and how to rebuild and fortify American democracy, social trust and civil society in light of the country’s deep polarization. Hundreds of members attended each of these gatherings.
Community Engagement

Words Over Time Intergenerational Dialogues

Our Words Over Time intergenerational dialogues seamlessly transitioned in 2020-21 from in-person to virtual gatherings of OLLI members and Berkeley undergraduates discussing topics of critical importance to all. This year’s civil and reflective exchanges explored mental health and emotional well-being, as well as how to build trust and find a path to unity.

Mind the Gap: Staying Connected Between Terms

We worked to keep our members engaged with one another and with us during what can sometimes feel like sprawling pauses between terms. From mid-November through mid-January, we organized a number of events, including a lively exchange about online streaming (which resulted in two pages of recommended shows and films); a discussion about the future of the EPA; a cooking demonstration; and, of course, a holiday gathering of members, faculty and staff filled with good cheer and BYO beverages.

National Science Foundation Grant: The Research Continued

We continued work on our National Science Foundation research study which was awarded to us and two campus partners, the Fung Fellowship and the Lawrence Hall of Science, in the fall of 2019. The study involves developing and validating measures of engagement in informal STEM learning and in STEM advocacy in older adults, and working to understand what motivates (or not) that engagement.

Due to the pandemic, an in-person informal STEM learning experience was delayed by a year from fall of 2020 to fall of 2021. This additional time allowed the research team to dive more deeply into developing the educational measures. A second round of interviews, focus groups and pilot surveys were conducted for the measures, along with rigorous statistical analysis and the input of the study’s expert Advisory Council.

One pilot survey for the advocacy measure involved member participation from 18 other Osher Institutes across the country in order to expand regional diversity.
Along with being buoyed by the generosity of our donors, we made a number of strategic decisions that enabled us to balance our budget. We maintained our membership dues and course fee levels, actively pursued and expanded alumni and community outreach, and, thanks to the abundance of virtual seats available on Zoom, expanded the number of members who could register for each course. We also received a distribution from our National Science Foundation grant. Operating expenses included investments in essential technology and in the printing and mailing of our quarterly brochure.

*FFE = Fund Functioning as an Endowment
Thank You to Our Donors

We gratefully acknowledge the many members and friends who generously supported our program between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Because of their belief in the work we do — and their desire to help us navigate through and beyond these difficult times — we raised a record $102,065.

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to help us sustain and grow our community of lifelong learners
for years to come.

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P = parent of Cal graduate
Thank You to Our Volunteers

We count on the energy and enthusiasm of our members to help make our program the best it can be. We are grateful to the committee members noted here for their ongoing support and counsel throughout 2020-21.

Advisory Research Team (ART)
Research Associate: Cheryl Brewster
Members: Lorraine Midanik, Sara Orem, David Presti, Peter Ralston
Staff: Susan Hoffman

ART identifies UC-based research opportunities for OLLI member participation, conducts inquiry projects focused on teaching and learning, and explores ideas and issues to inform the curriculum or membership.

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Development Committee members set fundraising goals, plan the annual fund campaign, and organize volunteer fundraising outreach efforts.

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Co-chairs: Judy Kirkpatrick & Nikki Maziasz
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The Lafayette Planning Committee provides important insights and outreach into Lafayette and neighboring communities.

Member Services Committee
Co-chairs: Joan Greer & Jerry Kaminski
Members: Susan Boyle, Valerie Knepper, Nikki Maziasz, Susan Sperber
Staff: Nancy Murr

The Member Services Committee works to build a strong sense of community and belonging through member-led activities, clubs and events.
We are grateful to the nearly 100 instructors and guest speakers who shared their expertise and scholarship with our community in 2020-21.
Our Team

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Business & Operations Manager

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