



Learning Never Ends At Auburn University

Fall signals a return to the classroom – but no longer just for kids. For senior adults, back-to-school means learning opportunities through AU's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, or "OLLI at Auburn" for short.

Increasingly older adults nationwide are participating in some 200 institutes for lifelong learning across the United States. These educational programs all have a common thread of learning as fun, providing senior participants an enjoyable challenge to stretch their minds. In this academic arena, as in so many others, Auburn has long been a leader.

AU began its Academy for Lifelong Learners in 1990. Serving a local student base of adults, the successful program inspired many similar programs across Alabama and the region. The program's impressive record drew the attention of the prestigious Bernard Osher Foundation which recognized it as a program ready to grow and awarded it a grant of \$100,000 a year for three years. Now renamed OLLI at Auburn, the program becomes part of the foundation's university institutes for seniors.

Mary Burkhart, OLLI program coordinator in the Outreach Program Office, has been with the initiative from the beginning. Burkhart conceived the program after attending a 1988 conference on programs for retirees. Now retired herself,

Burkhart is delighted with the Osher designation. "I'm very excited that we're receiving this grant from the Osher Foundation and the opportunity to become part of its network of lifelong learning institutes across the nation."

From this initial grant, Osher will review the program for future funding – as much as \$1 million in endowment grants. "This is one of our most successful programs at Auburn," said Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach. "The grant by the Bernard Osher Foundation is a tremendous stamp of approval for the program and recognition for the wonderful work of Dr. Burkhart and the AUall volunteers."

In OLLI at Auburn, there are no tests and no grades, no attendance requirements and almost no prerequisites. There are no entrance requirements other than a desire to learn. OLLI is a membership organization; an Auburn community of learners. It is peer-led. The curriculum is developed by members. Each term there are classes in a variety of

subjects such as literature, music, art, theatre, science, history, government and politics, religion and foreign language.

Former athletic director David Housel is representative of the faithful members who count the program as one of the real enjoyments of retirement. "We never stop learning, and AUall has allowed and encouraged me to study subjects in areas I had often thought about but never had time to pursue," Housel said. "I'm a wiser, smarter, more learned man, thanks to retirement and to AUall, now OLLI."

OLLI offers exciting ways for adults in east Alabama to exercise their minds and engage in all that AU has to offer. For more information about OLLI at Auburn, go to the Web site at www.olli-atauburn.org, or the Outreach site at www.auburn.edu/outreach. 

