Dear OLLI Members and Friends,

OLLI at Illinois has charted a dynamic course of vitality and growth since it offered the very first programs in the fall of 2007. We now have more than 1,200 members who participate in more than 200 courses, study groups, lectures, and other activities each year.

OLLI's current lease in the Atkins Building expires on June 30 of this year – and I have been working with the OLLI Board and the University of Illinois administration in anticipation of this date. It is my great pleasure to tell you that OLLI will move to a new location in the M2 Building, 301 North Neil Street in downtown Champaign, to respond to current needs and set the foundation for continued growth. The new lease will be effective on July 1, and the move will take place on or about that date.

We are thrilled to have identified this newly constructed suite of classrooms, offices, and flexible spaces that will enable us to meet the needs of our members and continue to fulfill OLLI's potential as a site of engagement, education, and engagement. This exciting new location includes two large classrooms, three study group/seminar rooms, a conference room, and two open gathering spaces. At 8,000 square feet, it represents a significant increase in space, and OLLI will enjoy the full and exclusive use of that space at all times.

While this information is new to most of you, today's announcement is the culmination of more than a year of careful consideration and planning. (A more detailed outline of the process and other important issues can be found at the bottom of this message.) The decision was reached after thorough examination of the options, and with a thoughtful eye toward the very best interests of OLLI, its members, and our institute's strategic plan.

I can assure you that the plans have been made to ensure a seamless transition this summer. Your OLLI courses, study groups, lectures, and other activities will continue at the high levels you expect and deserve.

Our current space has been a wonderful and congenial home that has allowed OLLI to flourish and grow – just as our previous location in the Research Park was the ideal space for this exciting new program to establish itself and write its first chapters. These facilities will always be a vital part of OLLI's story, and we are so grateful for the opportunities we have had here. And we look forward to taking these next steps together as we enter this new phase of our story.

We will hold an open forum next Friday, March 13 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the Fox Classroom, where you are invited to ask questions and learn more about this move. This forum is open to all members, and registration is not required.

If you are not able to attend the March 13 session, this is just the first in a series of conversations; we will continue to provide information and answer your questions during the next four months. In the meantime, I invite you to stop by the office and see a few photos of the new facilities on our digital bulletin board!

All of us – Janet and Kate, OLLI's Board and committees, and the many university offices that made this announcement possible – are grateful for all that you do to strengthen OLLI and its programs each and
every day. We are truly lucky to have members, instructors, and collaborators who support our mission and share our commitments. I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead!

Best wishes,

Chris

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Christine Catanzarite
Director, OLLI at Illinois

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Who pays for our facilities?**
The University of Illinois' Office of the Provost very generously provides OLLI's facilities, and they have increased their already generous support to make this growth possible. OLLI will also contribute funds generated by the Osher Endowment, making this a true alliance in support of lifelong learning in our community.

2. **What did the decision process entail?**
   All university leases above a certain cost (including OLLI's) are required to comply with the state's formal review process, which is known as Procurement. Last fall, a call for proposals was circulated publicly by the University of Illinois' Office of Real Estate Services, outlining the specific facility requirements for OLLI; and proposals were submitted for consideration based on those requirements.

   Two proposals were received that met the minimum requirements of the solicitation, and each was reviewed for its suitability by representatives of OLLI and the university. The OLLI Board also reviewed the two choices and considered each one for its ability to support OLLI's member activities and strategic plans, now and in the years ahead.

   One proposal came from our current landlord, and offered a modified version of our current space, at a considerably higher cost. (More details are outlined in question 3, below.)

   We also received a bid that represented an exciting opportunity to grow our facilities in concert with our membership and programming. That space – the M2 Building at 301 North Neil Street – offered significantly increased square footage, a more affordable cost, and numerous amenities that will support and enhance OLLI's activities. It also offered convenient proximity to campus, downtown locations, and transportation. As a result, we made the decision to pursue this location.

   The OLLI Board, university administration, and I moved forward with the process of approving the proposal from M2; and the final contract was ratified by the State Procurement Board. And, as of this morning, the University of Illinois has executed the lease on behalf of OLLI. The 5-year lease will begin on July 1, 2015; and at the end of that term, will offer the possibility of renewal for a period of up to 5 additional years.

3. **Why can't we just stay where we are?**
   Our lease expires on June 30, 2015. Simply renewing the lease was not possible – it was necessary to go through the Procurement process, even if we hoped to stay in the same space (and we tried very hard to make that happen).

   You may have noticed several construction projects that are underway in the Atkins Building. As the Research Park undergoes its own period of growth, the opportunity for OLLI to expand by adding additional classroom space was not an option. In fact, our available space would have decreased in a new
lease period: the proposal that was submitted by our current landlord offered a slightly smaller space at a significantly higher price – which would have meant that we had to charge our members more, and offer less. It would have also had deep ramifications for our future, and our capacity to grow both our membership and our program offerings.

4. How will this affect the OLLI schedule?
You will notice a short hiatus in late June and early July to accommodate the administrative preparations and the physical move from South Oak Street to North Neil Street. The summer study group session is scheduled to begin on Monday, July 13 – and will represent the first official OLLI activities in the new facilities.

Our spring schedule is a full one in our current space: the upcoming study group session will begin in April, and we are planning numerous lectures during the spring months as well. You will also receive notice of several new activities designed to keep you busy and stimulated in the spring and summer: several day trips, local tours and programs, and other activities (including a live streaming of the National Endowment for the Humanities' prestigious Jefferson Lecture next month). Announcements for all of these events will be made as the plans are finalized.

And, of course, we will hold our Annual Meeting and Dinner on Tuesday, June 9. Please reserve the date – and watch for an invitation and more information later this spring.

5. Will parking be available?
There is ample parking (600+ spaces) in the enclosed parking garage that leads directly into the new OLLI facilities.

The parking arrangement will be considerably different, however. Currently, parking is included in the cost of membership. This has been a wonderful benefit that is rare among other OLLIs, and equally rare on our own campus. We made every effort to preserve this, and we understand that this will be a significant change for you. But leasing parking spaces in the garage would have resulted in a prohibitive increase in our membership fees – something that we were adamantly opposed to doing (see question 6). After much investigation and discussion, we determined that the best and most equitable solution is one that asks each member to assume the responsibility for their own parking costs, based on their own usage.

While OLLI offers programming throughout the year, the busiest times of the year for most members are when courses are in session in the fall and spring semesters; and, for many members, the study group sessions are active periods. This means that, for most members, the additional costs represented by parking will vary throughout the year.

We have negotiated a discounted rate in the attached parking facility of 56 cents per hour (or, less than $9 for a typical course over the period of the 8-week semester) – and we have identified some other alternatives as well:
- parking in one of the metered city lots near the M2 Building
- using your I-Card to take the MTD for free (all routes have stops at or near M2)
- for those who take multiple courses in a single semester or those who wish to share rides with other members, monthly passes can offer unlimited parking access in the garage
- most downtown restaurants and other businesses offer parking validation, which will provide additional savings
- multi-use punch cards and other pre-paid options will be available

We will provide details about these and other options in the early summer.
6. Will our membership fees be raised?
No. Your membership fees will remain the same in 2015-16 as they have since 2012: $150 per year, with one free course, one free study group, and many other benefits included in membership. Additional courses will continue to cost $30, and additional study groups will cost $15.

Our fees have remained the same since 2012, even as the number and scope of offerings have continued to grow. We made the decision to maintain the current fee structure for 2015-16 to offset the costs that members will assume for parking in the new location.

7. When will the new OLLI membership year begin?
Your OLLI membership will continue to operate on the fiscal calendar, with the full-year membership beginning on July 1 and continuing through June 30 of the next year. This year, the start of the new membership year will coincide with the first day of our new lease.

We will send all current members an email in May, inviting you to renew your membership for the 2015-16 year. New members will also be welcome to join at that time. We will let you know as soon as the renewal period has begun.

For now, your current membership remains in effect and covers all activities through June 30.

8. What about furniture and instructional technology for the new space?
OLLI owns the chairs, tables, and other furniture in our current offices and classrooms, and those furnishings will move with us to the new location. Some of our instructional technology equipment will be moved to the new space, while other equipment will be upgraded to newer, faster models that will make your classroom experiences even better.

Because there are more classrooms and circulation spaces in the new facility, we will need to purchase additional furniture to outfit those spaces for use in the new year. Most of those purchases will be made with funds that we have carefully conserved in the past two years in anticipation of a new lease (whether it was an expansion in the Atkins Building or a move to a new location). We will also conduct a fund-raising campaign among our members, inviting donations that will be applied toward this one-time cost of new furniture and technology.

9. Will we be too far from campus?
The M2 Building is just about the same distance from the center of the U of I campus as the Atkins Building – in fact, it is a tiny bit closer. As the campus expands its education, research, and outreach programs, space becomes an important conversation for all of us. Larger facilities that meet OLLI’s needs are even more challenging to find. Our search for a new space was limited to the vicinity immediately surrounding campus. You have probably noticed other university offices in campus-adjacent locations – and we are delighted to establish a visible presence for OLLI at Illinois in downtown Champaign!