May 19, 2015

Dear OLLI Members,

As I write this, we are about 6 weeks away from our move to our new facilities in the M2 Building in downtown Champaign. The past month has been a busy one, with much planning taking place within the office, and I am sending this message to update you on our progress, and let you know about our upcoming information session (next Wednesday, May 27; details later in this message).

Our first priority was making sure that there would be a seamless transition with our infrastructure: that our computers, telephones, files, and systems would continue to work with the university’s programs. We are happy to report that this is being accomplished with the support and assistance of many university offices, underscoring the university’s commitment to a successful transition for OLLI.

Another significant project, of course, was outfitting the new space with the equipment and furnishings needed for the smooth operation of our activities. We will take much of our existing furniture with us, and will supplement that with some new and upgraded items. Among the arrangements that have been made are:

- **New technology** – including bigger screens in classrooms, higher resolutions on projectors for better images; carefully considered room designs that will allow for better views and the best possible classroom experiences. Accessibility was a priority in creating these environments, and all new materials adhere to the most updated standards for classroom technology. One new addition we think you’ll like: the two large classrooms (where most courses, lectures, and other events will be held) will be equipped with assistive listening technology for the benefit of members with hearing difficulties.

- Faster computer connections for instructional technologies, as well as wireless internet access throughout the space (both the U of I password-protected Wi-Fi and open-access Wi-Fi that will not require any passwords)

- Welcoming and comfortable classrooms, seminar rooms, and lounge spaces – including upholstered chairs with ample padding (something that many of you emphasized on your spring course evaluations!)

- An additional coffee machine, to help you get your coffee and get on your way to class (or study group, or lecture) in good time

Here is an overview of the space itself, which encompasses 8,000 square feet (nearly double our current square footage):

- Main reception area and staff offices

- Welcome lounge, adjacent to the reception area; this is where you will find your nametags and announcements of upcoming activities
- Library and lounge, with an expanded coffee station, tables and chairs, community bulletin board, and lending library

- A large classroom with state-of-the-art technology and a maximum capacity of 150; there is a partition that can divide this space into two separate classrooms, each seating 60

- A classroom with a maximum capacity of 65 people (a little larger than our current OLLI Classroom)

- Two smaller classrooms/study group rooms/ seminar spaces, which can accommodate anywhere from 20 to 40 students, depending on how the rooms are set up; one of these rooms is carpet-free, so will be a suitable space for tai chi, dance, and other wellness-based classes

- A conference room for meetings of the Board, committees, and other small groups

Each classroom will have the appropriate audio-visual equipment for its size and configuration, and each space has been designed for optimal user-friendliness and function. Study group facilitators and course instructors will be invited to special training sessions, and the OLLI staff will be on hand for technical support for all activities, as always.

The OLLI suite is located on the second floor of the M2 Building, and can be accessed from either the Hill Street Parking Deck (attached to M2) or from the Neil Street entrance (in the center of the block between Church and Hill Streets).

The summer session of study groups will start on Monday, July 13, and this is an area where you'll notice the benefits of increased space right away: we will have multiple classrooms with flexible arrangements to accommodate the various needs and formats of groups. The ideal size of each group will be determined by the wishes of the facilitator(s) and the goals of the group, and not just by the size of the room. Watch your mailboxes for more announcements about the summer study groups!

Courses will begin on Monday, September 14 – 43 of them (an all-time high!), and you'll have many excellent choices when registration begins on June 16. The schedule will be available soon, and you'll notice another change to make your class days easier: the class start times are slightly staggered, to manage traffic and reduce waits in the office, in the two lounge spaces, and in the parking deck.

Parking plans are also being finalized, and we're grateful to the City of Champaign for considering a variety of models for our members. We will send you all of the final details, costs, and procedures in a separate message in mid-June – for now, here are the various plans that will be available:

- Pay-as-you-go, with your parking ticket validated in the OLLI office each time you are at a class (to receive the discounted rate in the Hill Street Parking Deck). If you park in other city or metered lots in the vicinity of M2, regular rates will apply.
- Purchase a coupon book with pre-paid parking coupons, each good for 2 hours of parking. These will reflect the 25% discount, and will be good for parking anytime in the Hill Street Parking Deck (not just during visits to OLLI). Coupon books will be available to purchase at the parking deck, or you will be able to order them online and have them mailed to you. (PLEASE NOTE that we will notify you when these options are available, and will provide links and detailed information about pre-paid parking at that time.)

- For those who will be using the parking facilities more frequently, another option is to purchase a Go Pass. There is a one-time equipment fee of $23.00 (for the device that you attach to your windshield), and then each time you park in the garage, the regular parking fee will be automatically charged to your designated credit card. At the end of the month, your 25% discount will be calculated and refunded to your account. The Go Pass works at all entrance and exit lanes in the parking deck, and it eliminates the need to stop and take a ticket or submit payment on each visit.

- The first 15 minutes are free in the parking deck – so pick-ups and drop-offs will be easy and no-cost.

- Many downtown restaurants also provide parking validation, and that can be combined with a pay-as-you-go or pre-paid option for even greater savings. So be sure to ask about parking validation if you stop for a bite to eat during your OLLI day.

- And, keep in mind that your OLLI membership provides you with a University of Illinois I-Card, which allows you to ride all MTD buses for free. Nearly all MTD routes have stops at or near M2; route and schedule information can be found online at http://www.cumtd.com/. We would like to draw your attention to their ADA Paratransit Service and Half-Fare Cab Program, which may be of interest to you: http://www.cumtd.com/riding

  There are even smartphone apps that will give you real-time GPS-based information about when your bus will arrive at your favorite stops. (As a frequent bus-rider myself, I’ve found that Bright Bus is a very reliable app, and it can be downloaded for free from the iTunes Store or via the links on the MTD site.)

There will be many adventures ahead for us – and one of those will be exploring the area around the M2 Building. There are many restaurants, coffee shops, retailers, galleries, and other spots to discover, including our next-door neighbors at The Art Theatre and the greenery of West Side Park just a block away. There will be special summer activities in swing after the move, including the weekly Friday Night Live events downtown (featuring live music right outside OLLI’s door) and a weekly farmers’ market every Tuesday from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. through October, just across Neil Street in Parking Lot M – just to name a few activities.

- More information about our new neighborhood in the heart of downtown Champaign can be found at the Champaign Center Partnership website - http://www.champaigncenter.com/

- Map of downtown - http://m2onnel.com/neighborhood

- Farmers’ Market – [http://thelandconnection.org/market](http://thelandconnection.org/market)

- Calendar of Events - [http://www.champaigncenter.com/#!upcoming-events/clsv](http://www.champaigncenter.com/#!upcoming-events/clsv)

We look forward to the move, but we are also enjoying these final weeks in the Atkins Building! There are still plenty of things happening at our current Research Park location, and we want to remind you of these upcoming dates. You will receive reminders and details about all of them in the weeks ahead!

- **Membership renewal** period for 2015-2016 has begun! If you have not yet renewed your membership, full details can be found on our website - [http://olli.illinois.edu/membership/instructions%20-Renewal.html](http://olli.illinois.edu/membership/instructions%20-Renewal.html)

- June 8 – Final day of spring study group session

- June 9 – **Annual Meeting and Dinner** – please join us for this year’s celebration!

- June 16 – Fall course registration begins at 9:00 a.m.; schedule will be sent to you soon

- June 23 – Summer study group registration begins at 9:00 a.m.; schedule will be sent to you in mid-June

We would like to invite you to an information/Q&A session, to expand on some of the details included in this message and answer your questions. The session will be held **next Wednesday, May 27 from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in the Fox Classroom**. The session is open to all OLLI members, and registration is not required.

The office will be closed for a short period of time as we make the physical move and get our systems online, and we will send you this schedule information next month. After the move, we will be planning orientation sessions, tours of the new facilities, and other activities designed to acquaint you with our new home before fall classes begin – and we will let you know about those as soon as the plans have been finalized.

When activities begin in the new space, we will have volunteers on hand to point you in the right direction and help you to become familiar with the facilities. As with all new spaces, it'll take some time to learn a new route, but we'll have ample signage and plenty of people to make sure everyone ends up where they belong!

As these plans take shape, Janet and Kate and I are very excited for the great opportunity this represents for OLLI at Illinois – and **we look forward to the many adventures ahead**. We may be changing the location, but the very best part of OLLI will be coming along with us: our terrific members!

Best wishes,
Chris

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