

LLI Council Workshop
Bertelsmann 214
July 15, 2019
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Council Members Present: Mary Deady, Tom Esposito, Robert English, Nanci Kryzak, Deborah Lanser, Jill Lundquist, Emily Michael, Ann Miller, Chuck Mishaan, Cathy Reinis, Deborah Schwartz, Anne Sunners, Maddy Watterson

Council Members Absent: Susan Hirsch

Also Present: Joyce Carter-Krawczyk, Oliver Johnson, Donna Warner

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Tom Esposito 9:34 a.m. in room 214 of the Bertelsmann Campus Center.

Introductions and Ground Rules

Workshop participants introduced themselves, stated their current position with LLI, and described their past volunteering experiences.

Cathy Reinis then reviewed the ground rules for participating in the workshop: speak up, ask questions, listen respectfully to others, speak one at a time, stay focused, and no cell phones or side discussions.

Review of Long-Range Planning Implementation

Donna Warner began with a brief review of the principles that guided the long-range planning committee in developing their 13 global recommendations (Appendices 1 and 2, pp 8-10). She pointed out that there are five LLIs in the area, but together they only serve less than 5% of the local senior population. At the same time, general interest in LLIs is growing, especially given the understanding that socialization is vitally important as we age. Workshop participants then reviewed the success of efforts to implement each of the global recommendations and offered specific suggestions and comments for improvement. In general, participants agreed that many aspects of the long-range plan were being successfully implemented.

Membership and Community Participation

We should emphasize that we are a membership organization.

- **Goal:** To provide opportunities for socializing—and that is best done through volunteering. Members will encouraged to do more than just come to class and participate in the whole program.

Workshop participants appreciated that increasing the membership fee provided necessary financial stability for Bard LLI. Moreover, it has enabled us to work with the Dean of Bard College to identify suitable areas for donations.

- **Possible Alternatives:** We can consider associate member levels, at a reduced fee. Intersession and SummerFest were both open to nonmembers, and a few Saturday classes were offered.

- **Possible Action:** Develop special activities that would be open to community residents, possibly for a fee.

New Program Options

Development of new program options is a growing success story. SummerFest was well received, and in the fall, we are offering two four-week programs. The exercise, video, and photography classes have been popular.

Some additional ideas worth exploring:

- Having programs at the large conference room at Blithewood, which is available all day Friday. A program that keeps people at Blithewood would alleviate concern over parking spaces near Olin.
- Consider on-line courses.
- Put class materials online and facilitate discussion groups; Bard has given us the necessary software.

One caveat about new programs: we have to consider how changes affect infrastructure.

Improved Socializing

Workshop participants counted as successes the introduction of name tags, the meet-and-greets for new members, and the emphasis on greeting participants during SummerFest. The mentor program has been a major success.

The current hospitality rooms are crowded and don't facilitate interaction. Possible improvements in hospitality were suggested:

- A lunch table at Kline Commons reserved for LLI members.
- The reception area in Olin atrium; it could be difficult, since it would have to be monitored all day and we might not be able to reserve the space.
- Set up smaller reception areas in different buildings.

Ideas for community outreach:

- Follow the example of Vassar and have a day at Bard LLI once a year. Give people from the community the chance to attend three or four classes, and possibly provide lunch.
- Hold community events collaboratively with Bard, possibly in conjunction with a concert or other Bard event.

Partnership with Bard and Other LLIs

Tom Esposito mentioned that Bard President Leon Botstein strongly supports Bard LLI and has encouraged us to grow. Bard sees us as a source of support, since we have doubled our donations to their programs.

- **Message for Members:** Bard provides us with a lot of help beyond the classrooms, including lectures by their faculty, help from security, free access to their software, free parking, and disability parking. The value of their support exceeds our total budget.

Bard is one of the community programs of CCE, under the direction of Jonathan Becker. Jill Lundquist is our liaison with CCE.

The downside is that our funds go into a Bard account. We don't have to deal with liability insurance, but we have lost some control over our funds.

Possible future steps with Bard:

- Continue to hold classes on campus while considering additional program locations. This could help facilitate the goal of serving more people in the surrounding community.
- Look for ways to increase our visibility at Bard.
- We could explore ways to share classes with undergraduates, which would facilitate contact with students.

We had thought about cosponsoring events with other LLIs, but realized they didn't want to do the work.

Technology Infrastructure

Workshop participants applauded Deborah Schwartz and Chuck Mishaan for the major improvements in our use of technology, in how we handle registration, surveys, elections, registration, the newsletter, and the website. Airtable has been enormously useful in organizing member information. Deborah noted that we may not yet have the ultimate tech package for our needs.

Financial Planning

Since the finance committee was created, we have been able to systematize donations to Bard and organize our internal expenses. The committee has been a major support for the long-range plan.

- **Need:** People who have a financial background for the committee.

Coordinated Communications

The improvement in communications got a major gold star for the development of the annual calendar, online newsletter, regular informative emails, and the website especially the home page. Participants also noted the improved communications to members and the general community about Intersession, Summerfest, and the time to apply for membership.

The improved publicity yielded noticeable results: this year we had more than 120 applications for membership, far more than in previous years.

- **Action Point:** Chuck Mishaan offered to analyze responses from new members about where they learned about Bard LLI.

Building a Volunteer Community

This is a work in progress. When asked, committee chairs all said that their number one need was more volunteers. We still need to strengthen the program to develop leaders.

- **Goal:** Develop a feeder system to groom people for leadership position in advance of vacancies—a replacement table.

As of August, half of our membership will be relatively new—we need to stress to them that their help in running the organization is critical. Airtable can help us identify members with specific, needed skill sets.

Priority Admissions and Registration

We are still reviewing ways of giving priority for admission to persons with skills that meet critical needs. Otherwise, applicants will be admitted by a lottery system.

Priority registration for one class is given to anyone who is an active volunteer, class managers, and AV support people. However, this system poses a problem in terms of registration.

- **Issue:** Can we identify other significant ways to reward people for their assistance.
- **Issue:** What would be a fair system for enrolling members in an oversubscribed class?

LLI Growth

The workshop participants agreed that we are meeting the objective to grow gradually. One limit has always been parking.

- **Possible Option:** Look at ways to include applicants who didn't get in, perhaps with SummerFest, Intersession, or a special lecture.

Evaluating the New Committee Structure

Jill Lundquist briefly noted that the new organizational structure was developed because several committees did not logically fit anywhere in the preexisting structure. We also adopted a calendar to match Bard's for fiscal reasons. Currently, the six standing committees are codified in the by-laws, but the committees that operate under them are not described there. Thus, reorganization of the subcommittees is possible. Jill asked whether anything needs to be fixed.

Planning and Evaluation Committee

The committee has worked well to troubleshoot issues before they get to Council. However, the current members (the Executive Committee, Chuck Mishaan, Deborah Schwartz, Anne Sunners, and Jill Lundquist) are also on several other committees, which can lead to burnout. Although we would like to reduce the burden on Deborah Schwartz and Chuck Mishaan, they are both essential in this committee.

- **Goal:** Simplify the committee structure, perhaps limiting it to 6 with others pulled in, as needed. Perhaps all officers are not needed.
- **Question:** Should people who are not in leadership positions be added? People who are experienced in the organization will be most helpful, but taking on some new people would allow them to learn. However, since P&E has taken on Nominations, experienced people would be preferable.
- **Action point:** Jill may review ways to revise the committee structure.

The organizational goal is to develop a plan to coordinate each subcommittee, after assessment by the Workflow Committee and P&E.

- **Action point:** P&E can compare the reality chart on the website with the patterns and committee descriptions identified by the Workflow Committee.

Intercommittee Communications

Problems were encountered when one subcommittee needed to communicate with another subcommittee under a different umbrella. People aren't getting the right information at the right time. The annual calendar was designed to help address this issue, but it can't provide every detail of every task.

- **Suggestion:** Consider rearranging organizational structure by communication groups.
- **Suggestion:** Have a leadership blog, which could be done on G Suite in groups. The downside is that this would require several hours of tech training for the many people who aren't familiar with the program.

One goal of the Workflow Committee is to alleviate such issues:

- Each member of the Workflow Committee is working with one standing committee to get details on tasks, their calendar, who they need to interact with.
- In addition, they are interviewing people to learn about the glitches.

Membership Development

Admissions is currently a subcommittee of Membership Development.

- **Suggestion:** Consider incorporating Admissions into Registration, under Administration/Infrastructure, since Chuck is using the lottery system for acceptance.
- **Suggestion:** Rename the Admissions Committee Applications and Re-enrollment.
- **Action point:** Work with P&E to develop an application form that identify potential new members with skills that match critical needs identified by committee chairs.
- **Suggestion:** Add leadership development to the goals of Membership Development.

More volunteers are needed to implement and expand our current programs, a task for the volunteer coordinator.

- **Possible Action:** Ask new members about their interests at end of their first year. Many people check off several areas of interest on their application, but don't follow through.
- **Possible Action:** Have ambassadors speak briefly before large classes about the need for more volunteers.
- **Observation:** Ultimately, recruitment success depends on person-to-person outreach,

Catalog

- **Question:** If catalog becomes digital, does it belong in Program Support, Communications, or Curriculum?

It already has an interface with Curriculum because Bill Tuel works on both.

Nominations and Elections

- **Question:** How should Nominations and Elections be linked?
- **Possible solution:** They can go together, and incorporate a process of identifying volunteers under the direction of the volunteer coordinator. In that case, they would be considered part of Membership Development.

Hospitality

Hospitality arranges for food for the hospitality room, the annual meeting and fall luncheon and art show. It works with but is separate from Special Programs, which arranges the program component of the annual meeting and fall luncheon.

Social Activities

Currently, there is no Social Activities Committee, although the idea for one has been approved.

- **Possible Action Point:** Move the Social Activities Committee to Membership Development, after considering how many tasks we want to assign to the latter committee.

Chuck pointed out that the garden tour class facilitated socializing and wondered whether such classes should be included under Social Events. We decided to keep SummerFest classes as part of Curriculum but emphasize their strong social benefit.

- **Action Point:** Publicize the social side of LLI events, as occurs for example in off-Friday classes and our luncheons.
- **Action point:** Encourage members to attend the student concerts at noon on Tuesdays, an excellent way to meet the students and facilitate social interaction.

Special Programs

The current difficulties with the art show were seen as a lab study in how to improve functioning. Right now, the art show is being run by two new people with little technology experience and no idea of how it has been done before. So Deborah Schwartz is handling questions about the art show when it really is the responsibility of the special events subcommittee chair.

- **Action point:** Anne Sunners will work with the chair to address the problem.
- **General Principle:** Encourage volunteers to contact the standing committee chair with any issue.
- **Related Action:** Get out email for the art show.
- **Action point:** The Workflow Committee will assess their issues and consider identifying more experienced people to assist the organizers of the art show and other special programs.

Tech Issues

Both Deborah Schwartz and Chuck Mishaan are overloaded with work and meetings.

- **Goal:** Alleviate the workload for Chuck and Deborah.
- **Possibility:** Given the eight new members with tech experience, Deborah Schwartz is hoping to assign one tech person to each committee.

Many of their tasks and ours would be made easier with consistent use of the technology available to us. Deborah Schwartz emphasized the importance of training up some new people as well as current committee members.

Action Point: Institute a half hour of tech training before Council meetings, beginning with the August meeting. And stress the need for Council members to practice using the technology.

Fundamental Principle: When a tech problem arises, don't call Chuck!

Suggested Next Steps (1-2 years)

Over the course of the day's discussion, workshop participants recommended the following:

- Keep emphasizing that ours is a member organization.
- Consider alternate fee options.
- Consider opening Saturday classes to new members.
- Consider including nonmembers in social activities
- Consider Blithewood Friday programs
- Develop online discussion groups through G Suite
- Expand the number of social activities.
- Reserve lunch tables for LLI members at Kline Commons.
- Investigate the possibility of using the atrium in Olin for hospitality.
- Develop one-day programs that can be open to the community, for a fee and lunch; possibly in conjunction with Bard.
- Develop targeted LLI events at Bard College, possibly including Fisher events.

- Establish a hospitality satellite at RKC.
- Advertise the free Bard conservatory programs to LLI members, and possibly combine them with a social event.
- Develop a financial plan.
- Create an ongoing feeder system for leadership development (replacement table).
- Organize a Nominating Committee.
- Consider ways to reward member participation.
- Have ambassadors to different classes to describe the needs for and rewards of participation.
- Reconsider priority admission to classes
- Review the composition of P&E Committee.
- Target nonmembers who joined us for Intersession and SummerFest and applicants who were not accepted this year for various programs open to nonmembers.

Tom Esposito noted that these ideas are worth exploring but cautioned about the practical difficulty of implementing them.

- **Challenge:** How do we expand our capability to implement these and other ideas?

Suggested Long-Term (3-5 Years) Steps

- Explore partnerships with Bard and other LLIs.
- Develop programs that would include Bard undergraduates, possibly joint classes.
- Develop new parking options.

Conclusion

The reorganization of Bard LLI is fundamentally working well, although some changes are indicated. Some decisions about additional reorganization need to wait for the report from the Workflow Committee.

Tom noted that many of the group's ideas are excellent, but we have to consider their practical implications for committees that may already be overstretched. Again, we have to encourage people to pitch in, and reassure them they don't have to give their life to LLI.

Final Thought

You can always amend a big plan but you can never expand a little one.

President Tom Esposito declared the meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Lanser, Secretary

Appendix 1

Lifetime Learning Institute (LLI) at Bard Long Range Planning 2016-2020 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. LLI has a moral responsibility to serve more people as the older population in our area grows and will adapt its programs to meet this need.
2. LLI will remain based primarily on the Annandale Bard campus, although programs may be offered off campus, virtually, and on days other than Fridays.
3. LLI will increase its visibility with the Bard community, including students, and surrounding communities.
4. LLI will continue as a membership organization with consideration of new membership options and fee schedules.
5. LLI will diversify LLI programs to accommodate more people and increase choice while developing the infrastructure to do so.
6. Progressive changes will occur over the next five years.
7. All recommendations are provisional and impacts on LLI will be evaluated before moving on to next steps.
8. The proposed changes are interdependent--a change in one area (e.g. growth) may impact or be dependent upon changes in other areas (e.g. registration, technology).

Appendix 2

Lifetime Learning Institute (LLI) at Bard Long Range Planning 2016-2020 GLOBAL RECOMMENDATIONS in 13 AREAS

Approved November 21, 2016

1. CREATE NEW MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OPTIONS

LLI will remain a membership organization but may adopt new membership options and fee schedules. Selected LLI programs and events will be open to the community residents.

2. OFFER NEW PROGRAM OPTIONS

To accommodate growth and diverse member preferences, new program options will be offered. Gradual implementation of program and schedule innovations can energize LLI and align it with new directions in education. Options might be courses shorter or longer in length; lectures combined with small discussion groups, more hands-on programs, on-line and off-campus programs, or many other variants.

3. OFFER NEW SCHEDULE OPTIONS

LLI will experiment with classes or events held on days other than Friday, on Saturdays, or in the summer. It is strongly recommended that LLI experiment with alternative schedules to accommodate more program options, growth in membership, and community participation, while alleviating problems with limited classroom space and parking.

1. INTRODUCE NEW SPECIAL EVENTS AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROMOTE THEM

Members have expressed a strong interest in getting to know other members and to have structured social opportunities. Efforts will be made to support socialization, among them name badges for all, meet and greet gatherings, reserved lunch tables, or special events for members and the community alike.

1. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH BARD, OTHER LLIs, AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Partnerships with Bard, other LLIs and community institutions can help LLI to have a broader reach into the community. LLI will co-sponsor or lead development of events open to a broader audience than LLI members

1. CREATE TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT LLI GROWTH AND INNOVATION IN ALL CORE OPERATIONS

As LLI grows and innovates, it is vital to have technology infrastructure to support these changes. Several LLI operations have already been transitioned successfully from paper to electronic processing and e-surveys have been used to obtain member feedback. Although registration will continue in 2016-2017 on an Access platform, the LLI Technology Committee will select and implement software components to support all core LLI operations by fall 2018.

1. CREATE A FINANCIAL PLAN FOR LLI'S FUTURE

A LLI finance committee does not presently exist, but is needed to plan a stable financial future for LLI. A Finance Committee will review and make recommendations to the Council on all aspects of the organization's finances, including member fees, current and new sources of income, and allocation of resources to LLI operations, to Bard students, and to our host, Bard College.

1. CREATE A COORDINATED SYSTEM OF REGULAR WEB, EMAIL AND NEWSLETTER COMMUNICATIONS

To create an informed membership, LLI needs regular communications with members, Bard College, partner organizations and the public, including an annual calendar. Various strategies will be implemented to encourage members to get to know each other.

1. BUILD A VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY THROUGH NEW AND CURRENT MEMBER ORIENTATION, TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

LLI is a member-run organization: Periodic orientations are needed to keep members apprised of LLI operations and diverse volunteer needs. Prospective volunteers will have access to training or mentoring needed to support LLI operations. Service to LLI has educational and social benefits.

1. MODIFY THE ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION PROCESS AND THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF "PRIORITY" REGISTRATION TO STREAMLINE REGISTRATION

The LLI admissions and registration process, and the current practice of priority registration, may be modified to improve operations, starting in the fall 2017. These are several actions needed to build an infrastructure that can accommodate LLI growth and new membership and event options.

1. CONDUCT ONGOING DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION

Collect data in a standardized format on all LLI operations to track trends, and measure progress towards goals. This includes data on programs offered, attendance, participation at LLI events, and feedback from presenters and LLI members. Report back regularly to membership on data collected.

1. IMPROVE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE/GOVERNANCE

As LLI changes, a review of Council and committee structures is needed; a review is also required in 2017 under LLI bylaws. The goal of the review is to flag new committee functions that may be needed, while also proposing changes to the current committee structure. This includes redefining scope, combining committees, or changing committee status (e.g. ad hoc, standing, or subcommittee).

13. GROW LLI GRADUALLY

Grow LLI gradually and expand further as program and systems changes are made to accommodate a larger number of members and community participants. (SEE ALSO #2 MEMBERSHIP AND #12 PARTNERSHIPS BELOW)

