

THE OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE  
AT  
TOWSON UNIVERSITY

HANDBOOK  
OF  
STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Approved and accepted  
By Advisory Board:

January 2019

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Towson University is to offer opportunities for continued learning and programs and activities for social and cultural enrichment to persons 50 years of age and older. Learning is a lifelong process and is enhanced in a congenial atmosphere with others who share a love of learning. The Institute uses the expertise and talents of its members to plan and implement its program.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is open to any individual age 50 or older and to his or her spouse regardless of age. Classes are open to all without regard to race, creed, color, sexual orientation, national origin, educational background or disability.

## **THE OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE AT TOWSON UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE**

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (the Institute) is part of Towson University's Division of Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research (SPAR). The Institute's Director reports to the Associate Vice President of Outreach who serves as the Osher Advisor. Although day-to-day activities are planned and implemented by Osher staff and members, final authority on all Osher matters lies with the Osher Director and the Osher Advisor.

The Institute is funded by membership and tuition fees, donations, and through an endowment from the Bernard Osher Foundation. Towson University provides the Institute with classroom and office space at 7400 York Road, although special meetings may be held at other University facilities or other nearby locations. Towson University also provides technology, marketing, and other administrative support.

Since the Institute is part of Towson University and not an independent entity, any liability incurred by the Institute is a liability of the University. The Institute uses the University's financial services department for deposits of all income and payment of all expenses. The Institute develops and manages an annual operating budget that is inclusive of all Institute expenses and revenue. The budget runs on a fiscal year basis, July 1 to June 30 annually.

The Director position is indispensable to the success of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Towson University. In addition to providing an outstanding curriculum and working effectively with the administration of the University, the Director creates a strong committee structure that is vital to the planning and implementation of the program. The Osher Advisory Board protects the academic strength and viability of the program. Accordingly, it is essential that the Advisory Board be involved in the selection of a new Director. The Board chair will participate on the search committee for hiring the new director by reviewing credentials, interviewing candidates, and offering opinion in the final decision. At the discretion of the search committee, the Board as a group will also be available to meet with candidates applying for the position of Director.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute may partner with other cultural and educational institutions to sponsor special programs. It may also enter into partnerships with local senior centers and retirement communities to offer Osher courses for their members or residents. As a strategic part of Towson University, the Institute will develop collaborative programs and initiatives with other TU departments and programs that align with the Institute's mission and goals.

## **GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE AT TOWSON UNIVERSITY**

The Osher Institute is self-governing, with all policy decisions subject to the final approval of the Towson University administration. Osher's program and day-to-day activities are planned and implemented by its Director, staff, and members as represented through an Advisory Board and various committees.

### **OSHER ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Mission:** The Osher Advisory Council serves the Director by reviewing, evaluating, and providing feedback on the existing and proposed policies and activities of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Towson University, including the draft budget, status of various funds, and reports to the Osher Foundation.

**The Year:** The Advisory Council will follow the fiscal year, July 1—June 30 for its activities.

**Meetings:** The Advisory Council will schedule monthly meetings and at a minimum will meet bi-monthly.

A majority of the members of the Advisory Council will be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at each Board meeting. Robert's Rules of Order, Latest Edition, will be used to govern proceedings.

#### **Composition of Advisory Council:**

- Advisory Board Chair
- Vice Chair (Chair-Elect)
- Secretary
- Chairs of Board-designated standing committees
- Immediate Past Chair
- At-Large Members
- Ex Officio Members: Director of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

Board members are expected to attend all Board meetings or to notify the Chair when unable to attend. For purposes of voting, each Board member will have one vote with this exception: The Director is a non-voting member.

#### **At-Large Members: Selection Process and Responsibilities**

The Advisory Board will elect four At-Large members to serve one two-year term on a staggered basis, with two of the terms expiring each election year. The Board will publicize and solicit nominations from

the Osher membership each March. The Board Chair will appoint an ad hoc nominating committee to review nominations; elections will take place at the May Advisory Board meeting. At-Large terms will begin on July 1. Osher members seeking At-Large membership on the Board must have been an Osher member for at least 2 years, must have taken classes in 3 of the past 4 semesters prior to being nominated, and must have skills and talents commensurate with the responsibilities and tasks at hand. They are expected to participate in all Board deliberations and bring program observations and issues to Board meetings. At-Large members have full voting privileges.

The Chair of the Board will be in charge of the voting process. Voting will be conducted by written ballot, and the top vote-getters will be chosen. In case of a tie, a run-off vote will be conducted. An At-Large member will not be eligible for reelection immediately after his/her two-year term is ended, but will be eligible after a period of one year.

If an At-Large member resigns from the Board or is unable to complete his/her term for any reason, the Board Chair, in consultation with the Osher Director and with the approval of the Board, will appoint a replacement for the remainder of the term. Partial terms do not count toward term limits.

### **Officers of the Board**

Board Chair

Vice Chair (Board Chair-Elect)

Secretary

The Board Chair serves for a term of two years.

The Vice Chair of the Advisory Board will be elected by the Board in November of the second year of the Chair's term by general consensus or formal vote. Office terms begin immediately. The Vice Chair automatically becomes Chair at the end of the two-year term of the presiding Chair or if the Board Chair is unable to perform his/her duties. A candidate for the position of Board Vice Chair shall be a current or former member of the Advisory Board.

The new Secretary will be chosen by the Board in March of the year that the current Secretary's three-year term ends.

### **Responsibilities of Board Officers**

Board Chair:

Schedules and conducts Advisory Board meetings.

Prepares agendas for Board meetings.

Sends notice of meetings to Board members.

Performs any other tasks deemed necessary for the proper functioning of the Board.

Is involved in at least one committee and is informed about activities of all committees.

Vice Chair (Board Chair-Elect):

Assumes responsibilities of the Chair in his/her absence.

Secretary:

Records minutes of all Advisory Board meetings and distributes them to all Board members.

## COMMITTEES

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Towson University is served by the following standing committees and subcommittees:

- Executive Committee
- Planning & Development
- Curriculum
  - Day Trips (Curriculum subcommittee)
  - Book Exchange (Curriculum subcommittee)
  - Art Exhibition (Curriculum subcommittee)
- Membership/Outreach
  - Social/Hospitality (Membership/Outreach subcommittee)
- Classroom Facilitation/Safety
- Philanthropy

The Advisory Board may establish other committees as needed to carry out the operation of the organization and will determine whether or not the committee chair serves on the Board. The Board will also determine when it may be appropriate to dissolve a committee.

**Composition of Committees:** The number of persons on each committee will be left to the discretion of the committee chair.

**Committee Chairs:** Committee chairs will be appointed for a term of three years by the Director in consultation with the Advisory Board Chair. Appointments are renewable but chair transitions are encouraged to ensure diverse opportunities for leadership throughout the membership.

**Responsibilities of Committee Chairs:** The Director will provide committee chairs with the names of individuals who have expressed an interest in serving on a committee. Committee chairs will select committee members from those Osher members who have indicated an interest in serving on a particular committee, or they may be asked to serve by the committee chair. The Director will provide committee chairs with the names of individuals who have expressed an interest in serving on a committee. Committee chairs will contact each person on the list whether or not space on a committee is currently available. Committee chairs will provide the Director and Board Chair with a list of selected committee members and will update this list as necessary.

The Director in consultation with the Committee Chair and the Board Chair will appoint a Vice Chair of each standing committee, who will be trained/mentored by the Chair. The Vice Chair will accede to the position of the Chair at the end of the Chair's term. Chairs or Vice Chairs will conduct committee meetings. Subcommittees will be created as necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the committee. Committee Chairs will report regularly to the Board on the work of the committee, decisions made, and recommendations for new or future activities, policies, or programs.

## COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Committees will perform those duties identified below:

The **Planning and Development Committee** meets to discuss and address issues that affect Osher's future. In addition to regularly updating the Osher Handbook of Structure and Governance, this committee makes recommendations on long-range planning issues to the Board and the Director for consideration. This committee is headed by the Board's Past Chair and is comprised of the current Board Chair, Chairs of standing committees, and the Osher Director.

The **Curriculum Committee** assists the Director with planning the overall curriculum by developing ideas for courses, lectures, and workshops; evaluating and making decisions on submitted course proposals; recommending appropriate instructors; and reviewing course evaluation results.

The **Day Trips Committee** plans and executes trips that provide enrichment and may complement the Osher curriculum. In conjunction with Osher staff, this committee arranges the details for each trip including working with vendors and marketing the trips to Osher members. This committee is a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.

The **Book Exchange Committee** establishes guidelines and criteria for books to be included in the book exchange. This committee receives and evaluates donated books and maintains the collection in room 113B. This committee is a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.

The **Art Exhibition Committee** is responsible for planning displays of Osher member artwork in the classrooms during each semester. This committee plans exhibition themes, recruits artists to exhibit, and hangs the artwork in the classrooms. This committee is a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.

The **Membership/Outreach Committee** works on issues relating to recruiting and retaining members; developing strategies for creating a robust membership with thought to classroom, parking, and staffing needs; enhancing the membership experience by welcoming new members and supporting integration of all members into the Osher community; assessing the needs and satisfaction of Osher members through surveys and other means.

The **Social/Hospitality Committee** promotes community and sociability at Osher by overseeing the provision of refreshments during semester courses and at the Previews while also planning all of the details for member luncheons at area restaurants. This committee is a subcommittee of the Membership/Outreach Committee.

The **Classroom Facilitation and Safety Committee** members assist instructors with classroom technology and distribution of handouts; communicate Osher announcements to the class; assist in the monitoring of attendance; receive safety training, including Automated External Defibrillators (AED); and implements safety procedures in the event of an emergency.

The **Philanthropy Committee** works to ensure the future financial security of the Osher Institute by developing a culture of charitable giving; increasing donor participation at Osher; and educating Osher members on the 6 funds that support the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Towson University.

## **REPORTS TO THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP**

The Director and the Board Chair will plan and call a town-hall meeting of the membership annually with the goal of updating members and ensuring there are opportunities for members to provide feedback. Notices publicizing the town-hall meetings will be posted in the Osher suite at least two weeks prior to the meetings. Notice of the meetings will also be emailed to Osher members and announced in class. Written town-hall meeting agendas will be made available to members. Agendas will include a Director's Report, a discussion of goals for the coming months and an open forum for comments and suggestions from members.

## **REVISIONS TO THE MANUAL OF STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE**

This manual will be reviewed every two years in December by the Osher Planning and Development Committee. Changes will be made as needed with the approval of the Advisory Board and the Osher Director.