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Stephanie Reinke named new director of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNT



Stephanie Reinke was named the new director for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNT. Madison Gore

October 23 19:07 2017

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21st November, 2019 Edition



The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, OLLI, at UNT named Stephanie Reinke its new director as of Sept. 1, taking over for Marilyn Wagner, who is retiring from the position. The plans of the new director are to increase the program's membership

base and make it eligible for a \$1 million grant.

Reinke said OLLI at UNT is designed for seasoned adults aged 50 and older. It is a learning community with classes, cultural excursions and special events. All the classes are selected by OLLI members and taught by current and retired UNT professors and area professionals, according to the [OLLI at UNT](#) website.

Over 100 classes are offered and available in the fall, spring and summer semesters, with each class lasting 90 minutes long. No test or grades are given as the purpose of the class is to learn.

"People are there for the love of learning," Reinke said.

Reinke was formerly the senior lecturer in the department of teacher education administration, where she taught and advised graduate students in early childhood education. She has an educational background and received her doctorate degree in Education from UNT in 2013. She has been employed by UNT since 2008 in both faculty and staff positions.

Andrea Tuckness, OLLI at UNT assistant director, said the program is thrilled to have Reinke on their team.

"She has been so great about reaching out and developing relationships with our OLLI members," Tuckness said. "Our membership is growing every day and we are building even stronger connections with the communities we serve."

The decision for Reinke to get involved with OLLI at UNT was when the former director, Marilyn Wagner, retired. Reinke said it was a great opportunity to take on a role that could impact the university.

"The transition from a faculty member to this director position has gone smoothly," Reinke said. "I have received great support from the Office of the President as well as from all of the amazing OLLI at UNT staff."

There are 120 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes in the United States, all supported by the Bernard Osher Foundation. Three of those locations are in the metroplex. One location is UNT's Denton Campus, Robson Ranch in Denton and UNT's New College at Frisco.

OLLI at UNT was originally named the Emeritus College. In January of this year, the Emeritus College became OLLI at UNT upon receiving a \$100,000 grant from the Osher Foundation, which is headquartered in San Francisco, California.

OLLI at UNT is currently working to grow its membership and strengthen its programming in an effort to be a sustainable and successful program, Reinke said. After receiving their \$100,000 Osher Grant in January, OLLI at UNT is working on meeting the requirements to be eligible for an endowment gift of \$1 million.

There are currently 307 members enrolled at OLLI at UNT. The goal is to increase its membership base to 500 by August 31, 2018.

People can become members by one of two ways, either paying an annual \$55 membership fee plus an additional \$10 per class or pay an annual \$140 membership fee and attend unlimited amount of classes for an entire year without additional fees.

Reinke said it is an exciting time to join OLLI at UNT because of its efforts to grow its membership. There are also increasing member benefits, which include library privileges at UNT's Willis Library, as well as course selections, special events and



activities such as attending Casanova and the Theater of the World at the Kimbell Art Museum and dinner at the Reata in Fort Worth. The institute is also offering more places to take these classes like their newest location at UNT's New college at Frisco.

Volunteers for the OLLI at UNT are an integral part of the OLLI program, Reinke said. The volunteers serve as ambassadors to promote the program, serve on committees to help guide OLLI at UNT and lead special interest groups within the group such as book clubs.

UNT President Neal Smatrask said he likes the direction OLLI at UNT is going in and is supportive of this type of community service coming to the university. He has been involved with the program for a while and has a personal commitment to it.

"There is a plan here," Smatresk said. "From a fundamental perspective, there is a lot the university can do to offer a great service to active seniors in the region who are interested in continuing their education and being intellectually stimulated."

Featured Image: Stephanie Reinke was named the new director for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNT. Madison Gore

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