Best Practices for Peer Learning

Jim Bouchard, OLLI Director at
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Howard Korman, OLLI/Omnilore President

April 30, 2014
California State Universities

There are 23 California State Universities, and we are one of the smallest with approximately 10,000 students.
Where We Are

We are located on the campus of California State University, Dominguez Hills in Carson, CA

- 16 miles south of downtown Los Angeles
- 8 miles east of the beach in Redondo Beach
- We are the only University of the South Bay

![Map of South Bay Area with CSU Dominguez Hills location indicated]
Nearby OLLIs

Our nearest OLLIs are at UCLA to the north, and CSU Long Beach to the south.
Diversity Ranking

In 2008, U.S. News & World Report’s annual “America’s Best Colleges” ranking recognized CSU Dominguez Hills as being...

“One of the most racially diverse universities in the West offering bachelor’s and master’s degrees.”

California State University, Dominguez Hills has a student population that is among the most ethnically and culturally rich in the nation:

- 40% Hispanic,
- 30% African American,
- 18% Caucasian,
- 11% Asian/Pacific Islanders, and
- 1% Native American.
- Strong international program -- 141 international students on our campus representing 85 countries.
Membership is up!

Our OLLI has 704 members, up from 608 last year, and we are the largest learning-in-retirement organization in the South Bay.
Four Venues

OLLI has 4 locations throughout the South Bay:

• Carson (CSUDH campus)
• Redondo Beach (2 classrooms)
• Torrance (venue for Osher Lectures)
• Manhattan Beach (venue for Osher Lectures)
On-campus OLLI Classes

OLLI classes (campus)

• OLLI at CSUDH is a program of the College of Extended & International Education.
• OLLI classes take place on campus in the Extended Education classroom building.
• We have a dedicated Osher Macintosh Lab, and access to smart classrooms and an auditorium.
Osher Lecture Series - 15 lectures total each semester; 30 lectures annually

- Osher Lecture Series - variety of topics; 2 hours in length
- 3 venues - Carson, Torrance, Manhattan Beach
- 5 lectures each semester at each venue
- lectures more accessible to seniors throughout the South Bay.
Peer-led Classes

Omnilore - Peer-learning group

• Our peer-led group meets in Redondo Beach in 2 classrooms.

• The classrooms are located 7 miles west of campus, straight down 190th street, 15 minutes--depending on the traffic.

• 342 of our OLLI members participate in this program. It’s called “Omnilore” and we refer to its participants as “Omniloreans”.

Franklin Center
Redondo Beach
A Brief History of OLLI and the Omnilore program

- **1990** - Omnilore Society started by Burt and Diana Cutler
  - Based on the Plato peer-led learning group at UCLA
  - Met in private homes
- **1992** - Omnilore affiliated and sponsored by CSU Dominguez Hills
  - Benefits that result from association with a University-classroom space and credibility
  - CSUDH Extended Ed has leased 2 classrooms in Redondo Beach from 1992 to present
- **2002** - Dean Margaret Gordon responded to an invitation to apply for a grant from the Bernard Osher Foundation
- **2009** - Omnilore under OLLI umbrella; received 1 million dollar endowment from the Bernard Osher Foundation to establish Osher Institute
2014 - OLLI has 704 members, 342 of whom are active Omniloreans in our peer-led program
Omnilore - A Peer Learning Model

Jim Bouchard, OLLI Director at CSUDH
Howard Korman, OLLI/Omnilore President
4/30/14

lor@laprintingco.com
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Overview

- The largest educational organization for seniors in the South Bay

- A Component of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), a national learning-in-retirement organization with 700 members

- Part of the CSUDH College of Extended and International Education (Dr. Joanne Zitelli, Acting Dean)

- Currently, over 300 retired but active seniors living in the South Bay are Omniloreans

- Many Omniloreans are retired school teachers (our largest group) and aerospace workers, as well as professionals, such as medical doctors and lawyers

- Omnilore has operated for over 24 years and currently meets at the Franklin Center in Redondo Beach, occupying 2 rooms
The following endorsement is used with permission of the Beach Cities Health District:

*Omnilore is a real gift to the community. We know that keeping an active mind and social circle are keys to successful aging. Omnilore supports both of these activities.*

Susan M. Burden  
Chief Executive Officer  
Beach Cities Health District
Goals of Omnilore

- Provide easy way for South Bay Seniors to expand intellectual/educational horizons

- Provide seniors an avenue to keep mentally active in a friendly setting with other like-minded, contemporary classmates

- Increase mental activity, social involvement of South Bay Seniors for better mental and physical health at this time of life

- Continue to learn and self-educate on a wide range of subjects
Nearly all of Omnilore’s activities (classes, special interest groups, committee meetings, etc.) take place at the Franklin Center in 2 rooms

- Each trimester, Omnilore offers members the opportunity to choose from 20-25 study/discussion (S/D) topics
- Topics are chosen by the Curriculum Committee from a nominated list of greater than 100 topics in several broad categories, including art, science, history, economics, current events, philosophy, etc.
- Members “vote” on the topics; these data are used to form the S/D Groups, based on level of interest and time considerations; Each S/D Group is “custom-fit” to:
  - Members’ interests
  - Times that members are available
  - Typical group size is 10-16 members
Omnilore Activities (cont.)

- Omnilore has a peer-led classroom format, with no lecturer and no tests; a member-coordinator facilitates

- Each member must actively participate at each session

- During at least one session of each trimester-long S/D Group, **each** member **must** present material on a chosen subject and lead the group discussion
Study/Discussion Group

- 10-16 members
- Discuss a core book
- Peer-teaching
- Peer-learning
- Each member does research and makes a presentation on a related subject
Some Mechanics for Running the S/D Groups

- Trimester structure (Sept. - Dec., Jan. - Apr., May – Aug.)
- Meet for 2 hours, twice a month – daytime during the week (AM or PM)
- Typical class timing for the 2 hour session
  - Housekeeping - 5 minute
  - 1st Presentation – 40 minutes
  - Break – 10 minutes
  - 2nd Presentation – 40 minutes
  - Discussion of Text – 25 mintes
- We accommodate everyone's date and time constraints – scheduling software
- Audio-Visual aids – projector, laptop computer, desktop presenter, VCR player, etc.
- www.omnilore.org
Organizational Structure

- Board of Directors – Elected Officers
  - President, VP – Academics, VP – Administration
  - Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Past President
  - Three Members-at-Large

- Board of Directors – Standing Committee Chairs
  - Communications, Curriculum, Forum
  - Head Coordinator, Membership

- One paid professional – administrative assistant
- Remaining Positions are all volunteer
Omnilore Activities
(other than S/D Groups)

- Omnilore holds quarterly forums for all members, with knowledgeable guest speakers on topics of current interest
- Several Special Interest Groups meet regularly: Best Seller Book Club, Hiking Club, Fine Art Photography
- Qualified members present various computer-related topics on a monthly basis
Currently variety of topics

Past themed series:

- The American West
- Presidential Elections
- The Genome
- Central Europe
- Film as Art
- Middle East Culture
Hiking Group

- Fitness of mind and body!
- Led by Omnilorean who is a member of the Sierra Club
- Hike once a month followed by picnic lunch in a near-by park
- Past hikes to downtown LA & downtown Long Beach
Benefits for Omniloreans

- Bottom line…we do it for the fun of learning
- Active and passive learning
- Takes place in a relaxed atmosphere
- We create the curriculum
- Expand our thinking, stretch imagination
- Grow new neurons
- Tie-in to the CSU Dominguez Hills
  - Fee structure
When OLLI was formed, the idea was for Omnilore to become a program under the umbrella of OLLI at CSUDH, while remaining a self-directed program (peer-taught, peer-led, peer-run) within OLLI.

Examples of how we have succeeded in transitioning to a seamless OLLI organization:

- Omnilore program participants attend OLLI classes, events, and functions on campus
- OLLI members have attended orientations and enrolled in Omnilore as a result
- Omnilore participants attend recently established Osher Lectures for OLLI members in Manhattan Beach, Torrance, and Carson
- An Omnilorean established an Osher Lecture Series which is supported by OLLI members in Manhattan Beach - attendees to these lectures often approach 100
- Omnilore participants teach OLLI classes
- An Omnilorean is the OLLI webmaster
- OLLI members attend quarterly speaker luncheons (forums) organized by Omniloreans at the Los Verdes Golf Course
Topics for Discussion
- already established groups or interest in establishing a group

- Level of classes (e.g., college level)
- Range of topics
- Professions of participants (e.g., engineers, teachers, doctors)
- Structure of sessions (e.g., trimester)
- Number of classes
- Facility requirements
- Process used to run program
- Formation of study discussion group
- Promotional techniques to get members
  - Ambassadors for peer learning
  - Orientation sessions
- Use of technology