



## OLLI at UMass Boston PROPOSAL FORM GUIDE

### Thank you!

As a course facilitator, OLLI Talk presenter, or walking tour guide, you are an essential part of OLLI. On behalf of the OLLI Office and Curriculum Committee, welcome to the proposal process for this semester!

Below are tips to help shape your title, description, and bio that will grab our members' interest in our course catalog and OLLI Update e-Newsletters. Following is important information regarding OLLI's commitment to diversity and racial equity.

### Tips for a Great Title, Description, and Bio

#### **Titles: What's in a name?**

*Your title is a one-liner advertisement for your course.*

*Examples:*

- **Good** - About Staplers
- **Better** - An Efficient Paper Fastener for the 19<sup>th</sup> Century—McGill, Gould, and Kletzker
- **Best** - Staplers: A History of a Practical Device

#### **Descriptions: Saying enough, but not too much!**

*Your description accurately summarizes what members will learn in your course or OLLI Talk. Avoid wrong expectations from your students--be clear! but brief!*

- Making the pitch—what are you pitching? Know what you are going to teach. Outline your presentation.
- Who is your audience? What might members know, not know, or want to know about your topic?
- Use common language. Avoid academic and technical language.
- Write 4-8 sentences. Break up long sentences.
- Stick to ONLY 100 words. We have limited space in our print catalog!

#### **Bio: Short and Relevant (only 50 words!)**

- *Tell members how you got interested in your topic—is/was it your job? Is it a hobby?*
- *Make sure your bio is connected to your course topic but offer additional information.*
- *Members want to know not only **what** they're getting, but **who** they're getting!*

If you need support creating your title, description, or bio, feel free to reach out to Genny Peterson, who coordinates the proposal process, at [proposalolli@gmail.com](mailto:proposalolli@gmail.com) or call at 617-287-7322.

### Diversity and Racial Equity at OLLI at UMass Boston

We want OLLI to be a place where member conversations--comfortable and uncomfortable, rooted in curiosity and respect—*happen*, whether during OLLI events or in unstructured social time spent together. OLLI is a community enriched by diversity including racial, ethnic, national, class, ability, gender and sexual, and faith diversity. As an OLLI facilitator, presenter, or guide, we're proud to consider you a critical part of fostering this community along with us.

What are diversity and racial equity? Like many human issues, they are complex. Below are some basic definitions and suggestions that you might find useful when considering submitting a program proposal.

### **What is diversity? What does that mean at OLLI?**

Diversity is a word with many definitions, many of which are evolving even now. When something is “diverse” we might say it is “varied,” “distinct,” or “divergent.” What some of these words imply, however, is that “diversity” means different from “normal”, as in abnormal. OLLI, like many other institutions, is pulling away from those definitions towards one that sees the world itself as a “diverse” place—our starting point is diversity as the norm. Diversity in this broad sense refers not only to racial and ethnic diversity, as it is sometimes used, but diversity in all conceivable categories including but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origins, gender and sexual identity, class, and faith.

### **What is racial equity? What does that mean at OLLI?**

The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. Equity involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. Equality, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the *same things* in order to enjoy full, healthy lives.

Racial equity is both a process and a goal and focuses on correcting structural systems that have been out of balance for decades and even centuries. For example, American laws, policies, and practices have created and influenced social, political, and other kinds of systems and structures based upon race that have had (and still have!) an enormous impact on many people. The long-term negative impacts of these structural systems on the lives and communities of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) have come to the forefront in recent movements and demonstrations. As a process, OLLI is striving to look at our own organization and what practices and policies we have in place that prevent us from becoming a more inclusive community. The goal of racial equity is achieved when our members, leadership, facilitators/presenters/guides, and programmatic content represent the racial and cultural diversity found in the communities around UMass Boston and Massachusetts.

**Here are some ways you can contribute to OLLI's values. Have additional suggestions? Send them our way.**

- Reflect and research on how your topic intersects with race and culture, strong opinions, and disability. Consider how to represent diverse viewpoints and experiences in your program's content. Consciously include the results of these reflections and research in your program, as appropriate.
- Learn members' names and do your best to pronounce them correctly.
- Know your default – how do you respond to differences? How do you usually respond when someone shares a strong opinion?
- Practice radical curiosity and radical listening.
- If you would like to speak to someone at the OLLI office to brainstorm, please contact Genny Peterson, project coordinator at [proposalolli@gmail.com](mailto:proposalolli@gmail.com) or call at 617-287-7322; Jim Hermelbracht, director, at [james.hermelbracht@umb.edu](mailto:james.hermelbracht@umb.edu).

### How can you take another step to being inclusive?

- Read non-fiction books on race and culture, developing skills for having challenging conversations, and on the disability community.
- Read/watch/listen to biographical and fictional stories **by** Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), **by** people whose voices/opinions you disagree with, and **by** people in the disability community. An internet search will turn up many titles. Become familiar with the names and faces of well-known and other creators (authors, documentarians, directors, writers, etc.) by doing an image search, learning about them on free search engines like Wikipedia, or listening to podcasts in which they are interviewed.
- Meet people from different racial and cultural backgrounds, talk to people with strong opinions you disagree with, and get to know people in the disability community. Prioritize doing so in contexts where there is not a power dynamic (like a white adult teaching Black kids, etc.). If you're not sure how or where to do this, start by driving around the area where you live and noticing who lives where. Why do you think certain people live in a certain neighborhood? Ask yourself open-ended, curiosity-driven questions.
- When in a situation in which you feel challenged, ignorant, argumentative, etc. build resilience and choose to stay in the discomfort a little longer than you usually would. Avoid processing this discomfort with the people connected to what is making you uncomfortable – doing so burdens BIPOC, people in the disability community, etc. further (reference Robin DiAngelo's comments on guilt and other uncomfortable feelings in *What Does it Mean to Be White*, 2016).
- Get comfortable with not getting it right. Keep caring. It makes the world a better place.