

An OLLI Membership Spotlight

This profile features another of OLLI’s early leaders, Robert (Bob) Sack, who had a major role influencing the organization that we know today. A former OLLI Director, Joan Kammire, described him as, “a wonderful ambassador for OLLI... who was with OLLI from the very beginning and was instrumental in shaping our strategic direction, finances and initial fee structure.” Almost twenty years later, Bob is still making major contributions to OLLI—he is currently teaching a new Fall class called, *Challenges for Capitalism the United States in 2020*.



Prior Career and Early OLLI Experiences

After a successful career as a partner in an international CPA firm, and as chief accountant for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Enforcement Division, Bob moved to Charlottesville in 1987 and joined the faculty of the Darden School of Business at UVA. At Darden, Bob taught classes in financial reporting and business ethics until his retirement as an emeritus professor in 1997.

In 1998 Bob first learned about OLLI (then known as JILL, Jefferson Institute of Lifelong Learning, the predecessor organization to OLLI) from a colleague at Darden who recruited him to teach a JILL class on business ethics. Bob so enjoyed teaching that for the past 20 years he has been a key part of the OLLI faculty, teaching courses on technology and jobs, income inequality and business ethics. In addition to his teaching, he has worn a number of different hats for OLLI. In 2001, OLLI co-founder Jim McGrath recruited him to join the governing board where he served for six years. He also provided guidance to the fledgling OLLI organization in setting up its financial operations.

OLLI Strengths

When we asked Bob what he considers to be the strengths of OLLI, his first thoughts were about the quality, expertise and sacrifice of OLLI instructors: “What is in their heads is priceless...They are extraordinary folks with a willingness to graciously share their unique perspectives and knowledge about a wide variety of subjects.”

Bob believes another OLLI strength is the amount of time volunteers donate to this program. Starting from the modest beginning in 2001, OLLI has grown exponentially and it is the quality of the support provided by the volunteers and staff that has made this growth possible.

Challenges and Food for Thought

We asked Bob for his insights about what he sees as challenges OLLI faces and what advice he would give to guide our future. He listed several:

(1) He strongly supports the goal of finding a way to secure dedicated space to house all or most OLLI operations in Charlottesville. This should include both adequate classroom space that OLLI administers, and maybe as importantly, room for members to meet outside of the classroom to continue their discussions and socialization. He recognizes the financial challenge in making this possible, but he feels it would be a valuable enhancement to the richness of the program.

(2) He believes that it is important to keep the program fresh, always looking for new instructors and classes.

(3) Bob recommends we try to get a better understanding of our market and audience and explore new ways to maximize our niche.

(4) Finally, he recommends that OLLI explore ways to better coordinate and collaborate with like-minded organizations such as The Senior Center, JABA (Jefferson Area Board on Aging), retirement facilities, and senior organizations, etc.

Thank You for Your Service to OLLI

Bob's perspectives and dedication to OLLI are priceless! We wanted to express our appreciation for everything Bob Sack has done to help OLLI at UVA succeed for almost two decades. An endless thank you from the OLLI instructors, staff and volunteers!

