

OLLI AT LSU

LAGNIAPPE CHAPTER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP GUIDELINES

Special interest Groups (SIGs) are a new benefit offered to all OLLI at LSU members. They foster fellowship by allowing OLLI members to engage with others who share a common interest. SIGs complement and enhance OLLI classes and other programs offered by OLLI; they are not to compete with or duplicate them. Commercial or professional solicitation for services or products is not permitted at SIG meetings.

SIGs, even more than most OLLI programs, are member-driven, not staff-driven. They are established, managed and run by OLLI members who share an interest; OLLI provides opportunities for SIGs to publicize and promote their activities. The OLLI Advisory Council and SIG Committee, who oversee SIGs, are volunteers. A SIG's vitality, therefore, depends mainly upon the active participation and commitment of its own members.

These guidelines explain how SIGs are established and operate within OLLI, and they provide tips for maintaining a thriving SIG.

Establishing a New SIG

Application Process

1. Read the guidelines to understand the purpose, structure, and operation of the SIGs and the process for establishing one.
2. Obtain and complete a SIG Proposal form. These are available on the OLLI website.
3. Submit the proposal to the OLLI office, directing the form to the attention of the SIG Chair.
4. The SIG Chair reviews the proposal with the OLLI Advisory Council and the SIG Committee and may return them to the applicant for additional information or with suggestions for revision. The SIG Chair communicates with the applicants to help move the proposal forward to approval by the OLLI Advisory Committee.
5. Once approved, an organizational meeting can be planned. The SIG Chair works with the OLLI office to publicize this meeting on the website, in OLLI News and the Newsletter.

Organizational Meeting

At the organizational meeting, the group should accomplish the following:

1. Agree upon a SIG Leader and other individuals who assist in the organization and management of the group. Each SIG is required to have a Leader who is responsible for the group's activities and compliance with OLLI's rules for SIGs, including maintaining and submitting SIG rosters. Although there is a Leader, SIGs are strongly encouraged to distribute tasks among several members, planning when and how they will share responsibilities and designating back-up Leaders for key tasks.
2. Decide whether there are any minimum requirements for participation in the group. For example, a SIG for bridge players should specify whether it is for beginning, intermediate, or advanced players. If there is a requirement that every member of the group take a turn hosting a meeting, that rule must be clear and the consequences for not following the rules should be clear.
3. Confirm that there is sufficient interest among members and prospective members to maintain a viable SIG. A viable SIG should have about 15 people who are willing to attend meetings regularly. Determine if the group has a maximum number of members. If so, the SIG Leader or designee keeps a waiting list of potential new members.
4. Agree upon a meeting schedule and format.
5. Review the rules set by OLLI at LSU for SIGs.

SIG Organizational Meeting Report

Upon completion of the organizational meeting, the Leader should complete the SIG Organizational Meeting Report form. These are available on the OLLI website. The SIG Chair seeks final approval from the SIG Committee. Once approved, the SIG Chair notifies the OLLI office that the SIG is operational. Information about the SIG will be published on the website and in the catalogs.

Operation of SIGs

Meetings and Scheduling

- SIGs meet on a regular schedule, usually once a month, according to the needs of the group. SIGs may meet either regularly or occasionally at various locations, according to the SIG's needs and preferences. For example, SIG's may meet at the Library, or at a restaurant or coffee shop, or at members' homes. If the SIG would like to meet on the LSU campus, do not directly contact other university departments about meeting space without working through OLLI office.
- Meetings should be held at a consistent time and day. Every effort should be made to avoid conflicts with scheduled OLLI courses and workshops and OLLI membership events. If necessary, a SIG may be asked to change their meeting time and location to accommodate such events and activities. SIG Leaders must work with staff to find solutions that lead to the smooth operation of all programs.

Joining SIGs—Each SIG designates a contact person who provides information about the SIG to potential members and to the staff and volunteers at OLLI. The information contact is often the Leader but may be a different person. OLLI members who wish to join a SIG are encouraged to call or email the contact to confirm meeting times and locations. The contact information will be published in OLLI's course catalogs and on the website.

Current OLLI membership is required for regular participation in SIGs—Visitors who wish to learn more about OLLI or about a specific SIG are welcome to visit one time, with the permission of the SIG Leader. To continue participating, individuals must become OLLI members. The SIG Chair initiates an annual check of membership in September. The SIG Leaders collect and submit the names of all SIG members to the SIG Chair. The SIG Chair works with the OLLI office to confirm OLLI membership. The SIG Leaders are notified of any participants on the roster who are not members. SIG Leaders are expected to remind participants to renew membership and to ask nonmembers not to participate in the SIG.

Record Keeping and Communication

- The SIG should keep an up-to-date list of their members that includes email addresses and phone numbers in order to communicate with participants regularly and distribute to all members of the SIG.
- The SIG should keep track of participation levels. If there are changes in the level of attendance, the SIG Chair works with relevant parties to assess new needs.
- When communicating with SIG members, please make sure that only SIG business is discussed. The SIG member list is not to be used for any purpose other than to announce meetings or to communicate to the group as a whole. Improper use of email by participants or Leaders may lead to loss of SIG privileges.

Recruiting and Publicity

Each SIG is responsible for recruiting participants, notifying members in advance of meetings, generating their own publicity and communication materials, and for helping to keep information published about the SIG up to date. While SIG Leaders may be responsible for this, some SIGs designate other members to be responsible for publicity, communication, and recruiting. A variety of methods are available for publicizing SIG activities and recruiting new members.

- A list of all active SIGs with information contacts will be published on the OLLI website and in the catalogs. Send updates to the SIG Chair.
- OLLI News and Newsletter—When trying to get a new SIG up and running or if the SIG's events are open to the general membership and a general announcement to all members would be appropriate, please contact the SIG chair, who forwards that information to the OLLI Office for publication.

Notification of Changes or Problems

- Notify the SIG Chair if the SIG Leader changes or if there are changes in the responsibility for group activities like scheduling or publicity.
- Notify the SIG Chair of changes in information for the designated contact person so that the website and catalog are up to date.
- Notify the SIG Chair of changes in the SIG's regular meeting location or schedule so that the website and catalog are up to date.
- Notify the SIG Chair of any SIG attendance problems, the need for a new SIG Leader that cannot meet through the members of the group, or any other problems with the running of the SIG. The SIG Committee will work to support SIGs in sustaining membership and in meeting the needs of OLLI members.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) PROPOSAL

This proposal needs to be approved by the Advisory Committee before an organizational meeting

Name of person making the proposal: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____ Date: _____

Name for the proposed SIG: _____

Proposed meeting location/frequency: _____

Describe the purpose of the SIG: _____

Name, phone number and e-mail for initial SIG Leader and Coordinator:

Names of other OLLI members who plan to participate:

Any other information which should be considered: _____

You will be notified of the Advisory Committee decision. If approved, announcement of the organizational meeting will appear in OLLI News. You will be contacted for additional details on when/where the organizational meeting will be held for inclusion in the announcement.

Continue on the back or on additional sheets if necessary

For committee use only: Advisory Committee Date: _____ Reviewed by: _____ Approved: Yes / No

SIG ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING REPORT

SIG Leader/Coordinator to complete this form after holding the organizational meeting

Name of the SIG: _____

Is the SIG moving forward: Yes/No If no, why: _____

For SIGs moving forward, please provide the contact info (name, phone, e-mail) for:

Leader: _____

Coordinator: _____

Contact person for OLLI publications: _____

Describe the purpose of the SIG: _____

Meeting location/frequency: _____

Maximum size of the SIG (Leader/Coordinator to keep waiting list if necessary): _____

Names of other OLLI members who will be participating: _____

Have all SIG participants been confirmed as current OLLI members: Yes/No

Continue on the back or on additional sheets if necessary

For committee use only: SIG Committee notified: _____ OLLI office notified: _____