Profile

Steve Schiffman

For Steve, math opens door to incredible discovery

Steve Schiffman is an inspired educator. So it makes perfect sense that when he came to OLLI a few years ago, he was primed for maximum engagement.

Steve is a new member of the OLLI Advisory Board. After a career as a higher education administrator and faculty member, he is pleased to be working with another kind of educational institution. “As a former dean I know what is involved in making educational things work,” he says. Steve also serves on the OLLI Education Committee. He teaches classes about math and last spring offered “Reimagining the Urban University” with fellow faculty member Jack Lynch.

Steve earned a Bachelor of Science in mathematics from MIT, and then a Ph.D. in the same field from Dartmouth College. Although this was “a long time ago,” math still excites him. “My OLLI classes are designed assuming that you have had no math since high school (way back when!). I treat math not as an instrumental tool, but as an area of incredible discovery. Some of the greatest intellectual discoveries have come in the field of mathematics.”

After a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Colorado, Steve taught at Colorado College. He then went back to MIT to get a master’s degree from the Sloan School of Management and worked at Digital Equipment Corporation for a time.

Steve joined the faculty of Babson College in 1986. While Dean of the Undergraduate Program from 1994 to 2002, he became the architect of a thoroughly revised curriculum. “We basically

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reinvented business education by emphasizing entrepreneurship,” Steve says. Babson received both a Pew Leadership Award for renewal of undergraduate education (1997) and a TIAA-CREFF Hesburgh Award for its innovative, even revolutionary, efforts (2002).

In 2001, while still Dean at Babson, Steve joined with the founding faculty of the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering as a senior partner and helped create the original Olin College curriculum. From 2009 to 2011 he served as Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty at Olin. During the academic year 2011–2012 he was on sabbatical at the Maine College of Art as Visiting Faculty in Creative Entrepreneurship.

Steve really gets fired up when he talks about his experiences at Babson and Olin.

A particular highlight is the way that the Olin curriculum came about. Prospective students and faculty “tried out” various pedagogies and classes. “The students [then in high school] co-created the school with us,” he says. “The students were, and are, really invested.” In 2014 Olin was ranked third in the nation among engineering schools that award a bachelor’s or master’s as the highest degree. It is no wonder, given all this, that Steve received the Leavey Award for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education in 2010.

The educator-mathematician is also an accomplished musician. He has played the clarinet since childhood, and travels to Boston biweekly for lessons. He practices every day. Steve performs with the Portland Rossini Club and is a member of the Marston-Kotzschmar Music Club, gathering with fellow musicians to play in local homes. He is on the Board of Visitors of the New England Conservatory of Music.

As an OLLI student, Steve has gravitated to courses on literature and the arts. “OLLI embodies the fascinating idea that people want to learn for the enjoyment of learning, and not for a credential or anything else.” He is a booster: “The greatest thing is that it’s affordable and it runs well with a lot of dedicated volunteers and a small, excellent staff.”

Steve grew up in New York City and Long Island. After spending most of his career in Boston, he retired several years ago and moved to Portland with his wife, Lisa, a former librarian at MIT. A big draw to Maine was their daughter, Emma Kelly, a landscape architect, who lives with her husband, Mark, and son, Jacob, in Buxton.

In his down time, Steve likes hiking the Camden hills and going to his camp in Union. He spent two weeks hiking in England with an old friend this summer. When it comes to reading for pleasure, he prefers the page-turning works of spy-masters like John Le Carré.

With faculty member David Morton, Steve is developing an upcoming winter class that will focus on math, philosophy, and mysticism. From his background in higher education, he remains most interested in OLLI as a place “for people to explore teaching things that they have an interest in or a passion about.”

Steve Schiffman is clearly a man of passion, especially for education. No doubt he will keep teaching, and serving OLLI with his customary enthusiasm.

—Amy Liston
Advisory Board

Susan Morrow and I recently returned from the OLLI National Conference in Charlotte. It was quite an experience to spend time with 250 other OLLI representatives, both staff and volunteers, from states all across the US—from Hawaii to Maine. Although each OLLI is unique, it was clear that we have much in common—particularly the strong commitment to the joy of lifelong learning for adults 50 and over.

A whirlwind of panel discussions, presentations, and facilitated table conversations filled the two days. We had a chance to share our successes and pick up some good ideas on topics such as growth management, working with volunteers, curriculum ideas, intergenerational programs, and alleviating technology fears.

A particular pleasure for me was meeting Bernard Osher, the gentle and soft-spoken founder of the Osher Foundation, which has funded the 119 OLLI programs, bringing so much enjoyment to our 150,000 members nationwide. Everyone at the conference was thrilled to hear him speak briefly to welcome us, and Susan Morrow was fortunate to be seated at his table for our final dinner—a tribute to her long association with the National Resource Center staff.

—Susan Gesing, Advisory Board Chair
susangesing@gmail.com, 967-5660

What Should We Be Called?

NPR’s Ina Jaffe, keynote speaker at the recent OLLI National Conference, gave an entertaining talk, telling stories based on interviews with people in the traditionally retired age group, which is her new beat. “And what do you want to be called?” she asked the audience. “How should we refer to you?”

She explained that she had posed the same question to her radio listeners, requesting them to send in their offerings. While none of her listeners came up with a sensational new phrase for this age group, the term older adult was the most popular suggestion and senior citizen, one of the least. What do you think? Is older adult an appropriate term to use in referring to some of us?

Do you have a better idea? Please e-mail me your thoughts on this or fill out a form available in the OLLI office. I’ll report back in a future Newsletter. And because she requested it, I’ll pass on our suggestions to Ms. Jaffe.

—Susan Gesing
susangesing@gmail.com

Deadline for the December issue is November 15.
NOTES FROM SUSAN

I have just returned from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute’s National Conference, held this year in Charlotte, North Carolina. This three-day conference, held every 18 months, is a chance to learn new initiatives, experience new programs, hear new ideas, and network with OLLI people from all over the country—from Maine to Florida, to Alaska and Hawaii. Each OLLI may send one staff person and one volunteer to the conference.

Susan Gesing, Advisory Board Chair, and I were your representatives.

There are currently 119 OLLIs throughout the country. Steve Thaxton, Executive Director of the Osher National Resource Center, had the best quote of the conference: “To know one OLLI is to know…one OLLI.” Each OLLI is unique, with almost as many models as there are OLLIs. It’s always very interesting to hear how other OLLIs work and compare them to ours.

I must tell you, we have a very solid program here at USM. We have wonderful, reliable volunteers, dedicated instructors, an amazing facility, and free, convenient parking. Lots and lots of OLLIs really struggle with things we take for granted.

Tuesday evening we had a formal dinner with assigned seating. I was very honored to be seated at Mr. Osher’s table, along with many prominent people from the network. Since I’m not one of those people, I assume it was an acknowledgement of our growing, thriving, solid, amazing program.

Thank you all for making this possible for me.

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

OLLI Raffle for Scholarship Fund

The Raffle to support the OLLI Scholarship Fund will be held from October 26 to November 6 in the lobby of Wishcamper Center. The Scholarship Fund allows 70 to 80 of your fellow OLLI members to take classes each year. YOUR SUPPORT is critical to their enjoyment of all that OLLI has to offer.

The goal of the Raffle this fall is $1500, a 10 percent increase over fall 2014. With a NEW additional prize of a $50 Buoy Local Gift Card, we’re sure you will help us meet that goal. The Buoy Local [sic] card is accepted at dozens of Portland quality businesses (such as Longfellow Books, Coffee by Design, Browne Trading Company, El Rayo Taqueria, and many more). For more information, visit https://www.buoylocal.com/.

Thanks for your help!

—Dick Leslie, Chair
Resource Development Committee

Remember to pick up a CLYNK bag at the office for your deposit bottles and cans! Proceeds benefit OLLI.
Reflections Is Ready!

The 2015 edition of Reflections, OLLI’s annual literature and art journal, is back from the printer and ready for you to enjoy! Explore 40 photos, paintings, stories, and poems submitted by OLLI members. Many, many thanks to everyone who submitted their work, and to Pat Budd and the Reflections committee.

You can pick up your free copy at the OLLI office.
OLLI’s Long-Range Plan

OLLI Advisory Board members have worked hard over the past two months to update OLLI’s long-range plan for 2015–2018. OLLI’s mission remains unchanged, but a slightly revised vision statement and a reworking of our organizational core values were approved at the September meeting and are presented below. Goals and objectives are in the approval process and will be introduced in the next Newsletter.

OLLI at USM — Mission

OLLI at USM is committed to providing, for its members, a wide variety of stimulating courses, lectures, workshops, and complementary activities in a creative and inclusive learning community.

Vision

OLLI will be driven by the creative and innovative spirit of its founding mission, will maintain its strong sense of community and inclusiveness, expand its abundant opportunities for members to exchange ideas and experiences, and maintain a standard of excellence.

Core Organizational Values

These are the fundamental beliefs of OLLI at USM that guide our planning and decision-making. These core values support our vision, shape our culture, and reflect what we value.

Joy of Learning – We believe that continuing to grow and learn new things is a deeply fulfilling lifelong priority.

Community – We recognize the importance of interaction with other members to share knowledge and experiences, to expand our perspectives, and to make new friends, in an atmosphere of inclusiveness, respect, and openness.

Accessibility – We strive to make classes, lectures, workshops, seminars, and activities affordable and accessible for all members.

Excellence – We strive for excellence by committing our intelligence, creativity, and energy to achieving quality in our curriculum, faculty, facilities, operations, and relationships within our community.

Volunteerism – We recognize the crucial importance of volunteers to the success of our programs.

—Susan Gesing, Advisory Board Chair

From the Education Committee:
“and gladly teach?”

Those of you who have courageously tackled Chaucer (I did under the patient guidance of the excellent Evy Newlyn) may remember that one of the pilgrims on the trek to Canterbury was a clerk, of whom it was said, he would “gladly learn and gladly teach.” Would any of you glad learners also gladly teach? Perhaps teaching once was an option, but life took a change of direction. Perhaps you have mastered a skill or have a passion for a subject matter that you would like to share.

“But I’ve never taught.” Chill out. Some of our most popular faculty members had not taught before joining OLLI. Watch your winter Newsletters for a date, time, and place for a spring workshop for aspiring OLLI faculty. Questions? Contact John Sutherland at jsuthkarina@gmail.com.

Bike and Nosh Special Interest Group riders
Important Links

The USM website is a treasure-trove of information about upcoming events and other information. Many events are open to the public or to OLLI members as USM students. Check it out here:

http://usm.maine.edu/

The OLLI pages on the USM website also have tons of information. Here are some of them.

Our OLLI home page, with links to catalogs, online registration, and more:
https://usm.maine.edu/olli

Our Special Interest Groups: https://usm.maine.edu/olli/olli-special-interest-groups

Advisory Board members: https://usm.maine.edu/olli/olli-advisory-board

A catalog of Great Courses tapes and DVDs available to sign out from the OLLI office:
https://usm.maine.edu/olli/great-courses

When do class terms begin and end? Here’s our academic calendar:
https://usm.maine.edu/olli/olli-academic-calendar

What other goodies can OLLI members enjoy? Check them out here:
https://usm.maine.edu/olli/olliusm-student-privileges

USM provides students (including us!) many discounts:
https://usm.maine.edu/sullivancomplex/university-community-recreation-fitness-discount-offerings

Information may not always be up to date on some pages. It’s always a good idea to check if a phone number or e-mail link is provided.

Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow—Not!

Winter outdoor enthusiasts are eagerly awaiting winter weather. The rest of us, not so much.

But there can be too much of a good (or bad) thing, snarling traffic and closing schools.

So here’s the word: If USM closes, OLLI closes. Simple. But hold on—how do we find out?

USM has a Storm Line, updated at least daily. Call 780-4800. You can try it right now, even if the sun is shining. This is the only official source of information. Do NOT rely on TV or radio listings.

Program the number into your phone or post it on a sticky note.

Handy hint: If USM says it is open, but it’s snowing or doing something else awful outside, call the Storm Line again before you leave the house. USM sometimes changes opening and closing times or closes altogether later in the day.

Another handy hint: If you are at all uneasy about traveling to OLLI, even if we’re open, make some cocoa, wrap up in a blanket, and stay home. Look out the window at the mess and smile.
Online Registration Notes and Reminders

Winter registration will begin Dec. 1 at 10:00 a.m.

At this point we have used the new online registration system for one complete year. We are very pleased with your response and willingness to try something new. It has worked very well for the vast majority of people—almost 80 percent!

As we begin our second year of online registration, there are a few things you should know:

If you have never set up an online account yourself, BUT you have taken classes at OLLI this past year, and now you would like to register yourself online, PLEASE come to the OLLI office in NOVEMBER and we’ll help you set up your online account. You will not be able to log in yourself, and you will need office assistance. Come see us! We want to help you.

Remember: Online registration gets priority in all classes.

When you register and pay on line, you will receive three e-mail confirmations within minutes: a class confirmation (one for each class), a payment confirmation, and a receipt for payment. If you do not receive these e-mail confirmations within minutes of registering, you should call the OLLI office. Chances are that an error has occurred. The only form of payment for online registration is by credit card.

Whether you have a newly created account or already have one, it’s also a very good idea to log into your OLLI online account in November to assure that you remember your user name and password. You can reset your password at any time. We have found that many of the people who have forgotten their passwords have created vague or complicated ones, making them hard to remember.

We recommend that you keep your password as simple as possible, but it must contain at least 8 characters. You can use your name, the street you live on, your oldest child’s name, your youngest child’s name, your initials and Zip code, and so on. Passwords are case sensitive so we recommend you use all lowercase letters—whatever is easy for you to remember. And for goodness’ sake, write it down!

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

OLLI Needs Volunteers

OLLI is successful due to a great staff and many volunteers who teach and/or serve on standing committees (Communication, Community, Education, Nominating, Resource Development, SAGE) or help with periodic committee activities such as the Raffle, Book Sale, Wrinkle in Time, Trips, Welcome Table, and so on.

If you are interested in helping as a volunteer, please contact me at dicksturg13@gmail.com or complete a Volunteer Interest Form at the OLLI desk indicating your area of volunteer interest and your contact info.

As open positions occur on any volunteer committee, you may be contacted. Thanks in advance for your interest in helping.

—Dick Sturgeon, Volunteer Coordinator

Bridge Club Needs a Table

Do you have an old card table you do not want anymore? If you do, please contact Dottie Clark at dclark50@twc.com. The Bridge Club SIG is in desperate need of additional card tables. Thank you!
OLLI Celebrations

It’s celebration time again! Please join OLLI’s performance groups on **November 10** for a day of music, song, dance, and theater. The schedule is as follows:

**Room 133**
- 9:00 to 10:15 a.m.  OLLI Senior Players
- 10:30 to 11:45 a.m.  Readers’ Theater Class

**Forum**
- Noon to 12:30 p.m.  Bring your own lunch; drinks and desserts will be provided

**Room 102**
- 12:30 to 12:40 p.m.  Dance Class Demonstration
- 12:50 to 1:30 p.m.  Recorders
- 1:40 to 2:15 p.m.  OLLI Singers

Circle your calendar for a special treat. We greatly appreciate your sharing this special day with us!

**Time to Wax Up Those Skis**

Join the OLLI Downhill Ski Club and have fun in Maine’s wonderland of ski slopes this winter!

We are an enthusiastic group of downhill skiers who enjoy skiing with others, yet are confident and prepared to ski independently. Skiers’ abilities in our Club range from intermediate to advanced-intermediate to expert. We typically carpool together from the Portland area, and we almost always eat lunch together.

We already attract a small, friendly group of advanced-intermediate to expert skiers. This year, we would like to welcome intermediate skiers to join our club, too. With varying ability levels, we can choose to ski different trails and different mountains and still enjoy camaraderie on the slopes.

We’ll be holding an organizational meeting to orient new and returning Downhill Ski Club members and answer questions. The meeting will be held on **Tuesday, Nov. 10, at 9:30 a.m., in room 103** (the Art Room) at the Wishcamper Center.

For more information or to sign up for the Downhill Ski Club, even if you can’t attend the organizational meeting, contact Lois Winter at lwinter@maine.rr.com, or 871-8029, or 518-7793.

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**OLLI Night Out Goes to Lunch**

With our change to Standard Time on Nov. 1, we switch over to lunch meetings, as our members have requested.

In November we will have lunch at Fire & Water Fish and Chop House in South Portland. This jazzy-looking place features casual American food with an emphasis on filling appetizers.

**Menu** (Click on the word.)

Celebrate Veterans Day by having a meal with us.

**When:** Wednesday, November 11, at 12:30 p.m.

**Where:** Fire & Water Fish and Chop House, Marriott Hotel, Sable Oaks Drive (off Gorham Rd.), South Portland (871-8000).

**Reservations:** A must by noon Monday, November 9. Call or e-mail me.

—Barbara Bardack
865-2009
lascala2@comcast.net
Walkers Plan a Busy Month

We’ve enjoyed two delightful walks in October at Pisgah Hill and Kelsey Brook.

On Wednesday, Nov. 11, we are returning to the popular Morse Mountain hike in Phippsburg. This is part of the Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area and is a two-mile walk (each way) to Seawall Beach, Maine’s largest undeveloped barrier beach.

You can look across the Sprague River to Popham Beach next door. The path is wide, with even terrain, but there are several inclines. We hope to have a guide along to explain more about this little-known treasure that belongs to Bates College. For lunch we will go to another favorite — North Creek Farm in Phippsburg, a unique eating experience. **NOTE: We will meet at 9:00 a.m. for this walk, instead of the usual 10:00 a.m. time.**

On Tuesday, the 24th, we will be walking at historic Gambo Falls in Gorham. This is the site of a gunpowder manufacturing mill in the 1800s, and some remnants of the foundation still remain. The terrain underfoot is not difficult and there is little change in elevation. **We will meet for this walk at the usual 10:00 a.m. time.**

For both walks, we will meet at the Back Cove parking lot across from Hannaford on the Marginal Way end at the designated time (see above) to carpool.

For the Gambo Falls walk, some people may prefer to drive their own cars and not go to Back Cove. This is not recommended for Morse Mountain as the parking area there is small. Bring your lunch for the Gambo Falls walk and we will eat outside, weather permitting. Bring water and dress warmly.

If you have questions, please call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304 for the Morse Mountain walk or Pat LeFebvre at 883-2936 for the Gambo Falls walk. If you are a first-time walker, please let Rae know.