

OLLI @ PITT Guidelines for Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are a benefit offered to OLLI at Pitt members. They help to foster fellowship by allowing OLLI at Pitt members to engage with others who share a common interest. SIGs complement OLLI's courses, lectures, and other programs; they do not compete with or replace them. SIGs are noncommercial and solicitation of services or products are not permitted at SIG meetings.

Special Interest Groups **are member-driven**, not staff-driven. They are initiated, managed, and run by OLLI members who share the interest. OLLI staff are supportive of SIGs and can help the SIGs to promote and advertise themselves to our OLLI membership. SIGs grow, develop and are sustained by the active participation and commitment of its own members.

The guidelines below explain how to establish and operate a SIG within OLLI at Pitt.

Establishing a New SIG

1. Be sure you understand the purpose, structure, and operation of the SIGs and the entire process.
2. Complete a SIG proposal form.
3. Submit your proposal for a new SIG to the OLLI at Pitt Director.
4. OLLI staff will review your proposal. Proposals may be approved, rejected, or returned for more information or with suggestions for revision. You will be notified of your proposals acceptance or if other actions are necessary.
5. When a proposal is first accepted, a provisional approval is granted, pending the successful outcome of an initial organizing meeting.
6. The OLLI member(s) schedule an organizational meeting. Along with the organizer's efforts to recruit members, OLLI can advertise the scheduled meeting. An OLLI staff member must attend.
7. Hold the organizational meeting and accomplish the following:
 - a. Agree who will be the coordinator(s) that will assist in the organization and management of the SIG. Each group must have an identified coordinator who is responsible for the group's activities, compliance with rules, and communication with OLLI staff.

- b. Decide if there are any prerequisites for membership such as having completed an OLLI course or being proficient at a particular skill level (languages, bridge, etc.)
 - c. Confirm that there is enough interest to maintain a viable SIG.
 - d. Agree on a meeting schedule and format.
 - e. Review the rules set by OLLI at Pitt.
8. The SIG is granted final approval upon successful completion of its organizational meeting.

OPERATION OF SIGs

Meetings

Special Interest Groups meet on a regular basis, monthly or another schedule, according to the needs of the group. SIGs may meet off campus, or at other locations based on the SIGs needs and preferences. For example, meetings may be held at restaurants, parks, bowling alleys, coffee shops, etc. but the meeting location needs to be available and accessible to any OLLI member. Generally, Pitt classrooms are not an option for SIG meetings due to limited availability and the need to schedule OLLI courses in classrooms.

Joining SIGs

Each SIG must designate a contact person who provides information about the SIG. The information contact is often the SIG Coordinator, but may be a different person. OLLI at Pitt members who wish to join a SIG are encouraged to call or email the information contact to confirm meeting times and locations.

Current OLLI at Pitt membership is required for regular participation in Special Interest Groups. Visitors who wish to learn more about OLLI at Pitt or a specific SIG are welcome to visit one time. To continue participating, individuals must become OLLI at Pitt members. Please refer interested persons to the OLLI office at (412)624-7308 or to join online at www.oli.pitt.edu. SIG coordinators are responsible for ensuring that all of its regular members comply with this requirement.

Record Keeping

SIG Coordinators need to keep an up to date list of their members that includes email addresses and phone numbers in order to communicate with them regularly. Inactive members should be periodically purged from the list. SIG member lists are collected occasionally to verify that SIG participants are OLLI at Pitt members.

In addition, a record of attendance should be kept for all meetings. It is helpful to use a small sign-in notebook with a page for each meeting or sign-in sheets in a binder. Chose a method that works best for you. This record keeping is important so that OLLI at Pitt understands the numbers of individuals who are routinely participating in SIGs.

Scheduling Space

SIG Coordinators are responsible for finding appropriate meeting space. OLLI at Pitt staff can assist by discussing options and brainstorming possibilities. At times, it may be possible to meet on campus but this is unlikely to be a regularly available location. Please consult with OLLI at Pitt staff to help you.

PUBLICITY and RECRUITMENT

Each SIG is responsible for recruiting participants, notifying their members in advance of meetings, generating their own publicity and means of communicating, and for keeping information about their SIG up to date. Some SIG coordinators designate other members to be responsible for publicity, communication, and recruiting of members. OLLI at Pitt can support your publicity efforts in the following ways:

- Notices of SIGs for placement in OLLI catalogs
- Open Houses – SIGs can have information and a representative available at OLLI open houses.
- Classroom Announcements – if your SIG is closely related to an OLLI course topic, you may contact the course instructor to ask permission to make a brief announcement.
- If you are starting a new SIG, OLLI staff can help with class announcements
- OLLI at place your meetings on the website calendar
- OLLI can share your meetings via our enews or email blasts; Facebook page or Twitter.

Notification of Changes or Problems

Immediately notify OLLI staff of changes such as:

- Your SIG coordinator
- Designated contact information (phone numbers and email addresses)
- Permanent change to meeting times/day
- Any issues or problems or the wish to dissolve your SIG so that all the OLLI listings are up to date.