

Interview
Norma Clippard, Executive Director of OLLI
OLLI Office
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Norma, tell us about when and why you came to Vanderbilt.

One of my colleagues, Mary Pat Teague was coaching my youngest daughter in soccer and we were discussing my desire to go back to work. I had worked at the University of Mississippi when my husband was in law school and loved the academic atmosphere of the university. After I stopped working to have my children and stayed at home with them for a number of years, I always had my sights set on Vanderbilt – such an impressive university!

Were you already living in Nashville then?

Yes, I had a business background with a marketing emphasis and I was interested in going back to work at some point. I reached out to Mary Pat and she told me that the person who was directing retirement learning at Vanderbilt, Silvine Hudson, was looking for an assistant. After I was hired, I worked closely with Silvine until her retirement later that year. She was such a gracious, smart woman and so passionate about the program. I'm so grateful that I had that time with her because I learned so much from her. This fall will mark my 17th year with Vanderbilt.

When did the Osher Foundation get involved?

The Osher Foundation contacted me in 2006 and I applied for the grant. We were awarded \$100,000 for two straight years preceding the \$1,000,000 endowment. The application for the second million proved to be a longer process. We doubled the number of classes, established a fund raising campaign and greatly increased the number of volunteers. We were awarded the second million dollar endowment in 2015.

Before Osher, how was the retirement learning program at Vanderbilt funded?

Vanderbilt has always been supportive and generous and continues to be.

The Osher Foundation started funding lifelong learning programs in California (where Bernard Osher resides) and Maine (his home state). Mr. Osher decided he wanted to broaden the scope and have representation in every state. We are very proud to be the OLLI in Tennessee!

What would you want a prospective member, or one who is just about to start classes, to know?

Our main focus is lifelong learning, staying active and engaged. I would want a new member to know that this is not only productive but also very enjoyable. I get very excited about the quality of classes we are able to offer the community!

When I retired in 2013, everybody I ran into asked me the same two questions: how do you like retirement and what do you do? The answer to the second question is always OLLI.

Norma, thank you so much for sharing the history of OLLI with us and for your unique perspective.