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## Anything but 'Retirement'

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OLLI course offerings include six separate hiking classes that take place on nearby trails.

**S**tereotypical illustrations of retirement paint pictures of gray-haired seniors who spend mornings completing crossword puzzles and afternoons rocking on front porches. However, take two steps into the Herring Center, home to Furman's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) on the Furman campus, and you'll meet some folks who are looking for more meaningful experiences in their post-career lives.

OLLI, now celebrating its 25th year, trades cookie-eating, coffee-sipping and domino-playing for class discussions about the relationship between Irish literature and politics,

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*OLLI at Furman, in its 25th year, celebrates a robust learning and social program with myriad opportunities for community involvement.*

BY LINDSAY NIEDRINGHAUS '07

morning spin classes and history lessons about the origins of Japanese culture. At its founding in 1993, the program began with 62 members and seven courses. Today OLLI

has grown to more than 2,100 members, with 115 courses offered each term.

In addition to courses spanning every subject imaginable, OLLI also offers

many opportunities for retirees to connect with the Furman and Greenville communities, allowing members a better understanding of local issues. One such program is Senior Leaders Greenville.

"We took the Leadership Greenville model and looked at it through a senior lens," explains Nancy Kennedy, director of OLLI. "Members spend a year learning about issues facing the senior population. For example, we look at health care for senior adults and the fact that not enough geriatricians are being trained . . . or we look at public transportation and assess how that's supporting the senior population. The program ends



OLLI member Nancy Story enjoys a class, *Six Centuries of the Book*, taught by Furman Special Collections Librarian Jeffrey Makala.



OLLI students use the computer lab for courses like *Beginning Computer for the Terrified*, *Safe Computing: Practical Security and Privacy*, *Enhancing Your Online Skills*, *Windows 10*, and *Adobe Lightroom*, social media classes and more.

with a course that guides seniors on how they can make a difference.”

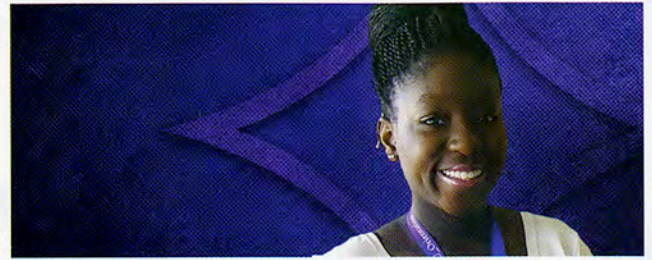
Several graduates of Senior Leaders Greenville have gone on to be elected to South Carolina’s Silver Haired Legislature, an advocacy group that works with the state legislature to address a variety of issues facing South Carolina.

OLLI member Margaret Clark helped to launch Senior Leaders Greenville. “This program provides a vehicle for retirees to learn more

about what the issues are and where they can apply their talents – a win-win for the community and the individual,” says Clark.

Adds Kennedy, “The larger message with OLLI is that retirement doesn’t translate to stagnation. You should never stop learning or being an advocate for your peers, and OLLI provides an outlet for that voice and a means to make a difference.” ●

*To learn more about OLLI, visit [furman.edu/olli](http://furman.edu/olli).*



## NOW

### *Reflection on Furman as it is now*

**At the start of my freshman year at Furman, I had an idea of how my four years were going to play out.** I am a member of Furman’s Direct Entry Program, which allows students to enter the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville following completion of undergraduate studies. Five students were admitted into the program, and five were alternates. This is the first year of the partnership, so I was ecstatic to be one of the first five people chosen.

Because the direct entry program has a set GPA and course requirements, I entered college with a strict plan in mind. I spent weeks over the summer trying to find the “perfect” major for pre-med students, and I thought I knew which classes to take and in what order. Not surprisingly, things did not go as planned.

I thought I would be a biology major because I could complete both my prerequisites and major requirements at the same time. This idea quickly faded when I realized that college biology is very different from high school biology. The work was more intense, and the concepts went into far more detail. After just a few weeks, I was certain that biology was not the major for me. But during this time I developed a love for psychology, a class I just

assumed would fill a requirement. I enjoyed everything I learned; the information stuck with me, and I wanted to learn more. This triggered some internal conflict because I felt I might be ruining my plans. I was certain that without biology I had no chance of staying on track for medical school. I immediately scheduled a meeting with both my academic and pre-health advisers. Together they assured me that I could major in something I enjoyed and still meet all of my necessary requirements. And as it turns out, psychology is a great choice for pre-med students.

Within a few months my plan changed for the better. I’m thankful that Furman gave me the opportunity to accomplish my goals while also ensuring that I make the most of my time here. My advisers have been supportive and helpful, and I can’t wait to see what surprises the future holds.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Javonia “Jay” Davis ’21** is a psychology major, a Paladin cheerleader and one of the first participants selected to the Furman University-University of South Carolina School of Medicine Direct Entry Program, which helps accepted Furman students chart a pathway to medical school.