OSU Emeriti Association Discussion Group Program

Purpose

The OSU Emeriti Association discussion groups have a primary purpose: To give members of the Association an opportunity to share their expertise or knowledge about various topics with others who would find that knowledge interesting and enlightening. The nature of the topics are far-reaching and are not limited to the various academic fields or careers represented by the discussion chairs. The nature of the topics can be practical, esoteric, philosophical, enriching, helpful to know, etc.

Types of Discussion Groups

Two types of discussion groups will be available to members of the Association:

1. Standing discussion groups that will continue indefinitely. Possible topics are quite broad and include the following: athletics/sports, arts, politics, religion, singles, investments, health information, and books.
2. Ad hoc discussion groups that are more specialized in nature and will likely end when the members of the group believe that the reason for the formation of the group has been fulfilled. Ad hoc discussion groups might have their mission completed in a short time but can also continue indefinitely.

Responsibilities of Coordinator of Discussion Groups

The discussion group program has a coordinator who will oversee the program and who will be responsible for compiling important information about specific discussion groups. Information about the program will be offered to the members of the Association through e-mails and the OSU Emeriti Web site. Following is a list of the responsibilities of the coordinator of the discussion groups:

1. Compile and coordinate communication pertinent to the OSU Emeriti Association discussion group program.
2. Transmit pertinent communication to the OSU Emeriti Association administrative assistant, who will send e-mail messages to the membership, as well as transmit pertinent information to the Association’s Web designer, who will upload the information to the server.
3. Work with the membership in locating discussion chairs for groups that need a chair.
4. Facilitate the process of enabling members to join various groups.
5. Serve as a liaison between the OSU Emeriti Council and the discussion group program.
6. Attempt to find additional discussion group chairs for specific topics when the demand for the initial group exceeds the number of slots available.

Responsibilities of Chair of Discussion Groups

Each discussion group will have a chair with the following responsibilities:

1. Provide the initial overall direction of the group he/she chairs.
2. Communicate with the members of the group either by e-mail or phone regarding details of upcoming meetings.
3. Determine how the discussion group should function based on his/her topic expertise and with consideration of the wishes of the participants.
4. Provide overall planning with regard to what will take place during each session.
5. Arrange for outside resource persons to attend a session if and when they are needed.
6. Determine the minimum and maximum number of participants for his/her group.

**Formation of Discussion Groups**

Discussion groups are formed in the following manner:

1. The Emeriti Council through the coordinator of the discussion group program will attempt to locate volunteers who are willing to serve as the chair of the various standing discussion groups.
2. The ad hoc discussion groups are formed in two different ways:
   a. A member volunteers to serve as a discussion chair for a specific topic because he/she has expertise and knowledge about topics of potential interest to other Association members.
   b. A member wishes to learn more about a specific topic and believes other members might also like to learn more about that topic. The member notifies the coordinator of the discussion group program, who, in turn, will notify the membership of the need for a discussion chair for that topic.

**Operation of Discussion Groups**

Discussion chairs have much latitude in how their sessions are conducted. For example, perhaps the chair might wish for the participants in his/her group to do some background reading prior to a given session. Accordingly, the chair can locate relevant information on the Internet, and the URL for that information can be shared with the group participants so they can prepare for an upcoming session. When and where needed, the discussion chair can arrange for a resource person (not necessarily a retiree nor a member of the OSU Emeriti Association) to join the discussion group for one or more sessions. A variety of venues for the meetings exist: a fast-food restaurant, the Emeriti Suite, the home of the participants if a demonstration of some activity is needed, a local park when the weather is suitable, etc.

Once a group is formed, it should be self-sustaining in that the members of the group will determine how the group will function. However, the Association, using the Emeriti Web site and e-mail can help fill openings if or when a participant drops out, assuming, of course, that a new participant would not be significantly disadvantaged because of the absence of information discussed in previous sessions. The chair and remaining participants can determine whether or not to replace a participant who drops out.

The new Emeriti Association Web site will be widely used (1) to publicize information about the groups that have been approved for formation and (2) to publicize topics for ad hoc groups that people are interested in learning more about but are in need of a discussion chair. Once groups are formed, it is anticipated that e-mail will be extensively used by the chair and the participants within his/her group to communicate with one another.

**Discussion Group Approval Process**

The coordinator of discussion groups will have the authority to approve or disapprove proposed topics for the ad hoc discussion groups. Furthermore, the coordinator has the right to refer a controversial topic to the OSU Emeriti Council for a final decision.
The initial coordinator of discussion groups is Zane Quible (zquible@okstate.edu). If you are interested in serving as a discussion group chair for a particular topic, please contact him by e-mail and include the following information:

1. Name/topic of discussion group.
2. Short description (2-3 sentences) about what you hope the discussion group will achieve.
3. Minimum and maximum number of participants you would like to have join the group.

In addition, if you would like to propose a topic for a discussion group, please contact Zane by e-mail and identify the topic you are proposing. In turn, he will have this information transmitted to the Emeriti Association membership in which he asks for a member to volunteer as chair.