



Collegium News

The Quest for Longer Life

by Kathy Mellstrom

It is obvious that the beneficial practices that foster good health late in life will also contribute to living longer. We have learned that a healthy diet, exercise, social connection, and good medical care help to maintain health, strength and mental abilities into old age. Life expectancy has doubled in developed countries since 150 years ago, largely due to better nutrition, advances in medicine, and public health initiatives. Today, research into further ways to increase lifespan and extend “healthspan” abounds.

Over the last ten years, there has been a burgeoning of new research on extending human life, much of it funded by Silicon Valley tech billionaires and other wealthy individuals. While much investigation focuses on drugs with age-defying effects, more and more scientists are using genomic technologies and molecular research, and analyzing data on small, genetically isolated communities with high numbers of centenarians.

Research has revealed that some existing drugs used for medical conditions coincidentally also have an anti-aging effect. Examples are metformin, used for diabetes, and rapamycin, used for transplants and some cancers. Resveratrol, the beneficial compound found in red wine, provides a basis for the development of new drugs. Mayo Clinic’s James Kirkland, who studies ageing, says he knows about twenty drugs now that extend the lifespan or healthspan of mice.

Genetic and molecular studies of certain long-lived populations in Calabria (Italy), Hawaii, and the Bronx have turned up molecules and chemical pathways that may ultimately lead to the possibility of good health in ageing for everyone. In Ecuador there are several individuals with a recessive genetic mutation that causes impaired growth. It also seems to protect these “little people” from serious diseases that typically afflict the aged, such as diabetes and cancer. It is a low level of a human growth hormone that is believed to be the cause of this benefit. Studies on mice whose growth hormone was limited produced smaller mice with 40% greater lifespans.

Much biomedical research concentrates on trying to cure individual diseases. The scientists who investigate the ageing process, with the goal of preventing it, see this as the way to fend off the many diseases that come with it. Sociologist Jay Olshansky points out that a cure for heart disease or cancer could lead to a dramatic increase in the incidence of Alzheimer’s disease. By tackling ageing at the root, all age-related diseases could be lowered simultaneously.

Scientists have successfully intervened in ageing in a variety of animals, and expect it will soon be possible to do so in humans. How much can the human lifespan increase? Scientists are divided. Some think indefinitely, others believe there is a ceiling at around 120. Either way, the impact on society, economy, and life choices will be enormous.



Elder Collegium Class Schedule — Spring 2017

For Lifelong Learning

The Questing Intellect Never Retires

March 27 - May 19, 2017

Formal registration period ends March 6 (late registration possible)

<i>Title of Course</i>	<i>Instructor</i>
19th Century Russian Short Stories: Pushkin to Gorky (two sections) 8 Mondays, 9:30-11:30 and 1:30-3:30 (Limit 18 each section)	Bill Woehrlin Northfield Senior Center 106
The History and Chemistry of Chocolate 8 Mondays 1:30-3:30 (Limit 18)	Jerry Mohrig Rice County Hist Soc, Faribault
Jazz: The First Hundred Years 8 Tuesdays, 9:30-11:30 (Limit 21)	Steve Kelly Village on the Cannon
Corals and Coral Reefs: What do they tell us about human impact? 8 Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30 (Limit 30)	Gary Wagenbach Village on the Cannon
The Irish Revolution: Literature and Violence, 1916-23 8 Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30 (Limit 25)	Jim McDonnell Northfield Public Library
Northfield Architecture: Historic and Significant 7 Wednesdays from Apr. 5, 9:30-11:30 (4 sessions will end at noon) (Limit 15)	Barbara Evans Village on the Cannon
Philosophy and Psychiatry: Some Questions 8 Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30 (Limit 20)	Perry Mason Northfield Senior Center 106
The Existential Cafe 8 Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30 (Limit 15)	Almut Furchert Village on the Cannon
Pre-Code Hollywood Film 8 Wednesday evenings 7:00-9:00 (Limit 18)	Scot Covey Northfield Senior Center 106
Great Decisions 8 Thursdays, 9:30-11:30 (Limit 35)	Robert and Sharon Flaten Village on the Cannon
Exploring the Short Story 8 Thursdays, 9:30-11:30 (Limit 12)	Emily Urness Northfield Senior Center 106
Myths and Controversies in American Higher Education 8 Thursdays, 1:30-3:30 (Limit 20)	Daniel Sullivan Village on the Cannon
Historic Mills of the Cannon Valley 4 Thursdays, Mar. 30-Apr. 20, 3:00-5:00 (Limit 20)	Jeff Jarvis Faribault Senior Center
Music Listening 8 Fridays 9:30-11:30 (Limit 20)	Karen Madsen Northfield Senior Center 106

Our Purpose:

To provide a content-oriented study experience for elder students with senior faculty.

Our Program:

- CVEC focuses on a desire for life-long learning
- The courses of study are selected to provide rich academic experiences in the liberal arts
- Most of these courses will use a seminar format with learners actively participating in discussion
- CVEC welcomes younger registrants (under 50) on a seat-available basis
- Previous formal education is not a requirement

Our Policies:

- Class sizes are limited (as shown in parentheses)
- Most classes will meet 8 times, once/week
- Classes are 2 hours/session
- Financial assistance is available for registrants who cannot afford the fee (see Registration Form)
- Students may withdraw from a course before the 2nd class meeting and request a refund

Course Descriptions: Spring 2017

Bill Woehrlin: The Russian Short Story: From

Pushkin to Gorky (two sections)

8 Mondays, 9:30-11:30 and 1:30-3:30, Northfield Senior Ctr 106

Enrollment limit: 18 in each section

Few would disagree with the opinion that 19th century Russia made one of the greatest contributions to world literature.



Less well known than the novels and the plays are the Russian short stories that treat many of the same “eternal” questions that any literate people should be asking. A number of these stories, if read in sequence, can also give some insight into the changing issues that made up public discourse.

The sample stories we will use for class discussion will be found in Carl R Proffer’s *From Karamzin to Bunin* along with handouts provided in class. Proffer’s book offers brief biographical information on the authors as well as some critical assessment of the stories. Our discussions of the stories should take up about two-thirds of our class time and reflect spirited enthusiasm somewhat short of mayhem.

Bill Woehrlin joined the Carleton faculty in 1962 and for 31 years taught courses in Russian and Soviet history, as well more general courses in early modern and modern Europe. He especially enjoyed freshmen seminars that introduced incoming students to the nature of historical inquiry.

wwoehrli@carleton.edu

Jerry Mohrig: The History and Chemistry of Chocolate

8 Mondays, 1:30-3:30, Rice County Historical Museum, Faribault
Enrollment limit: 18

We will examine the allure and romance of chocolate while probing the history of cacao from the Mayas and Aztecs to its embrace by 18th century Europeans and finally to modern America. We will explore where chocolate comes from, its constituents and chemistry, its health effects, and how chocolate’s many varieties are manufactured. The class will also hold a chocolate tasting session. Three predecessors of his course have been taught by Jerry in the past, the most recent in 2012. Past students have suggested that it’s time to give other Elder Collegium students the opportunity to learn more about one of our favorite foods.



For an expanded description, go to cvec.org

Jerry Mohrig taught at Carleton College for 36 years and is an emeritus professor of chemistry. He has also been an amateur historian most of his life and believes that there is nothing wrong with having fun while learning the chemistry and history of chocolate.

jmohrig@carleton.edu

Steve Kelly: Jazz: The First Hundred Years

8 Tuesdays, 9:30-11:30, Village on the Cannon

Enrollment limit: 21

A new and exciting popular musical style emerged about one hundred years ago combining many contemporary influences,



especially those of ragtime and blues. It was known variously as “jass” or “jazz” or “ragtime” and flourished in several locations, but was especially associated with the Storyville district of New Orleans. This course will trace the origins and development of this rich style, jazz, from the Levees of New Orleans in 1915

to the lofts of SoHo in 1990 to today through the music created by the great performers of jazz. We will use the *Ken Burns Jazz: The Story of America’s Music* 5-CD set as our guidebook. Reading knowledge of music is not required. This is a repeat of last term’s course, which not everyone who registered was able to get into.

Stephen Kelly retired in 2011 after teaching music history and early music performance at Carleton College for thirty-seven years. He has been a Fulbright Scholar and has published scholarship on medieval music, the medieval monastery, jazz history, and pedagogy. Kelly taught jazz history for twenty-five years at Carleton and plays sax and clarinet in Occasional Jazz and the Northstar Cinema and Quadrille Orchestra.

skelly@carleton.edu

Jim McDonnell: The Irish Revolution: Literature and Violence, 1916-23

8 Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30, Northfield Public Library

Enrollment limit: 25

Shortly before his death in 1939, W.B. Yeats was tormented by thoughts that his play *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) might have inspired the Easter Rising of 1916:

*I lie awake night after night
And never get the answers right.
Did that play of mine send out
Certain men the English shot?*

The 1916 Rising is now generally regarded as the most important single event in modern Irish history, although at the time it was considered a gratuitous terrorist outrage. The fact that three of the seven signers of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic were poets helped change perceptions of the meaning of the event.

In this course we will discuss both the events of an extraordinary historical period and the literature that accompanied those events. We will read poetry, fiction and dramas of W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Sean O’Casey, Frank O’Connor and others.

Jim McDonnell retired in 2007 from the Carleton English department where he taught Irish literature and Shakespeare. Born of Irish parents in London, he spent most of his early childhood in the West of Ireland and returns there often.

mcdonne@carleton.edu



Gary Wagenbach: Corals and Coral Reefs: What do they tell us about human impact?

8 Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30, Village on the Cannon

Enrollment limit: 30



A detailed look at the back story for recent headlines such as “Great Barrier Reef: More Than 90 Percent of Marine Ecosystems Suffering from Coral Bleaching”. Coral reefs are among the most complex and productive biological systems on the planet. Warm water events triggered the headlines shown. What is the nature of the creature known as a coral? What is a healthy reef? What prognoses for the future of healthy reefs are being framed by ecologists? What do studies of ancient reefs tell about the history of our planet? Humans have lived among reefs for a long time, their livelihoods both supported by and entangled with reefs, especially by means of fishing. It turns out fish play a key role in promoting reef health. Weather, climate, disease, and humans have affected Pacific, Caribbean, and Atlantic coral reefs. Join Gary for an exploration of these and other connections (including hyperbolic geometry and crocheting) we all have with coral reefs. Next time you go snorkeling in the Caribbean, and I hope you can do so, your understanding of what you are seeing will be deeply enhanced.

For an expanded description, go to cvec.org

Gary Wagenbach taught biology and environmental studies at Carleton College, including leading off-campus trips to study coral reefs. He also taught and participated in several Elder Collegium courses and volunteers on local conservation boards and, on occasion, at a K-12 school in Yangon, Myanmar (Burma). gwagenba@gmail.com

Barbara Evans: Northfield Architecture: Historic and Significant.

7 Wednesdays from April 5, 9:30-11:30 (4 sessions will end at noon), VOC.

Enrollment limit: 15



Learn about Northfield’s historic buildings and significant architects and builders of commercial, college, and residential structures, focusing on buildings in the Historic District or on the National Register of Historic Places. Understand the architectural terminology used to describe historic building features, construction techniques, and styles. We’ll use *Northfield: The History and Architecture of a Community*, published by and available at the Northfield Historical Society as our text. We will NOT meet the first Wednesday, March 29th. We will meet the remaining seven sessions, beginning on Wednesday, April 5th. Four sessions will be expanded to 2½ hours allowing for architectural walking tours and site visits. Details will be provided in the online expanded description. Participants will do moderate walking and provide their own

transportation to various locations after the first meeting at Village on the Cannon, which will be a two-hour session.

For an expanded description, go to cvec.org

Barbara Evans taught American literature, drama, debate and composition in Rochester, MN for 34 years. She is a graduate of and has been a visiting professor at St. Olaf College, teaching public speaking and first year writing. Her interests include architecture, literary and architecture-based travel, photography, and renovation of her Arts and Crafts home here in Northfield. Her recent appointment to the Heritage Preservation Commission has opened doors to explore the buildings and homes inside and outside of Northfield’s Historic District.

barbjevans@aol.com

Perry Mason: Philosophy and Psychiatry: Some Questions

8 Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30, Northfield Senior Center 106

Enrollment limit: 20

This course will consider some philosophical questions about psychiatry and mental illness in general, though without presuming to offer an exhaustive coverage of relevant issues.



The most basic question concerns how mental illness or disease or disorder is to be defined. Are mental disorders best conceived on “the medical model” as illnesses for which we should seek cures or at least amelioration, or should we think of them as non-medical “problems in living” for which we should seek practical solutions or improvements?

A second basic question can be put broadly this way: What are the various mental disorders? If there are different kinds of disorder, how do they differ and how are they similar? And how, then, are they to be categorized or classified?

A third question arises already in the second one: how are diagnoses to be made?

Finally, we will ask to what extent a mental disorder can undermine one’s responsibility for his or her actions. The question of culpability is treated in various ways in the legal context, and we will look at several of them to suggest possibilities for settling the matter in the context of morality.

Emphasis will be on discussing helpful articles from disputants in the area; these will be provided in electronic and/or duplicated form.

For an expanded description, go to cvec.org

Perry Mason: Retired Professor of Philosophy at Carleton, after 36 years of teaching. The chief areas of his teaching have been ancient Greek philosophy, philosophy of religion, metaphysics, and early modern European philosophy.

pmason@carleton.edu

Almut Furchert: The Existentialist Cafe.

8 Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30, Village on the Cannon

Enrollment limit: 15

This course gives an overview about existential phenomenological authors from Kierkegaard to Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir, Karl Jaspers, Husserl and Edith Stein. We will read together the bestselling book *The Existentialist Cafe* by Sarah Bakewell as well as some excerpts from original texts that will be provided.



We will ask if there is more to existential thoughts than smoked-filled coffee houses and what they might provide to our every day questions.

Dr. Almut Furchert is a German trained psychologist, philosopher of religion, scholar and practitioner with emphases in existential thought and wisdom traditions as well as spiritual integrated care. In her teaching she likes to invite you on the ancient path of philosophical practice as a way of gaining understanding and self insight.

almutfurchert@gmx.de

Scot Covey: Pre-Code Hollywood Film

8 Wednesday evenings, 7-9, Northfield Senior Center 106

Enrollment limit: 18

The U.S. film industry adopted the Motion Picture Production Code in 1930, in an attempt to curtail “immorality” in this increasingly popular entertainment. However, the Code was not strictly enforced until 1934, giving filmmakers four more years to “break the rules.” The best of these movies weren’t so much about titillation and exploitation as they were stories that questioned conventional views of good and evil, eschewed “moral uplift,” and had a great time doing it.



We will be looking at seven examples, and discussing both the film itself and its cultural context. Many of these films are not available through common sources, so we will be providing group viewings during the first part of each class.

For an expanded description, go to cvec.org

Scot Covey is a vintage film enthusiast who grew up in Northfield and has a philosophy degree from Carleton. He has done graduate work in cultural studies and is fascinated by the intersection of American political and cultural history.

scot@redpets.com

Robert and Sharon Flaten: Great Decisions

8 Thursdays, 9:30-11:30, Village on the Cannon

Enrollment limit: 35



The Elder Collegium is one of 65 groups in Minnesota sponsoring the study of “Great Decisions,” a program of the national Foreign Policy Association coordinated by Global Minnesota. Every year over 9,000 Minnesotans study issues selected by the Foreign Policy

Association as significant for US interests. This year's issues are: European Union, Trade Policy, South China Sea, Saudi Arabia, Geopolitics of Energy, Latin America, Afghanistan/Pakistan, and Nuclear Security.

A brief text will be available covering each of the topics, ten or twelve pages with bibliography, not required, but useful for about \$20. Discussions will be led by Bob and Sharon Flaten with key additions by former diplomats and invited speakers.

Robert Flaten, an Ole grad, served as the American Ambassador to Rwanda from 1990 to 1993. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1994 after assignments in France, Pakistan and Israel and the State Department in Washington. He is past Chair of the Executive Committee of the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, Ambassador in Residence at St. Olaf and Vice President of the United Nations Association of Minnesota. He was recently elected to the American Academy of Diplomacy. **Sharon Flaten** holds a BS from Concordia Teachers College, a BS from Wayne State University, and an MA from Eastern Michigan University. Sharon has coordinated and participated in Great Decisions programs since 2006 in Stillwater and Northfield.

raflaten@gmail.com cassakr@gmail.com

Emily Urness: Exploring the Short Story

8 Thursdays, 9:30-11:30, Northfield Senior Center 106

Enrollment limit: 12

This course will give students the opportunity to explore concepts within writing the fictional short story. It will be



equal parts analysis of literature and trying our hand at short fiction. Each class section will contain discussion, writing exercises, and lessons on craft. Topics to be discussed include, but are not limited to, structure, tone, style, setting, character, dialogue, and rewriting. Students will share their work and garner helpful feedback. This course is friendly for beginning level writers. It is a safe creative space for storytelling. Students should expect to leave this course inspired to continue writing fiction and with the tools to do so effectively. This course will culminate with a student reading event. The required textbook for this class is *What If: Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers (3rd edition)*. Supplemental readings and handouts will be made available as well throughout the course.

Emily Urness is writing instructor at Metropolitan State University. Her resume includes stints as a freelance writer, a newspaper reporter and editor, as well as a literary journal editor for several publications. Her own writing has received recognition through publication as well as honors from the Loft Literary Center and grant funding from the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council. In addition to her writing endeavors, she is a regular facilitator of writing workshops at local libraries, senior centers, and Crossings Art Center. She enjoys the creativity and sense of community from her students in the Elder Collegium.

emilyurness@gmail.com

Jeff Jarvis: Historic Mills of the Cannon Valley
4 Thursdays, Mar. 30-Apr. 20, 3-5, Faribault Senior Center
Enrollment limit: 20



This course is a history of the flour mills, the people, and milling technology developed in the Cannon Valley between 1855 and 1895. Find out how these combined elements made Cannon Valley flour superior to all others, for a time commanding top prices at home and abroad. In part, this is a repeat of last year's course and is being offered again. This class is open to all, especially to those who missed a spot in last year's class.

For an expanded description, go to cvec.org

Jeff Jarvis is a Faribault native and holds a B.F.A. from Mankato State University. He has worked with the City of Faribault Parks & Recreation Department for 17 years. An artist and author, Jarvis has been involved in a 10-year book project—researching and writing *Historic Mills of the Cannon Valley*. During this time, he has enjoyed sharing his research with many groups and individuals.
historicmills@gmail.com

Daniel Sullivan: Myths and Controversies in American Higher Education
8 Thursdays, 1:30-3:30, Village on the Cannon
Enrollment limit: 20



This course engages a series of myths, counter-intuitives and controversies in American higher education such as: Why does college cost so much? Why can't a college be more like a firm? Isn't intercollegiate athletics in elite private colleges and universities the paradigm for what should be? Why can't anyone say with good evidence if students leave college with better higher-order skills than when they arrived? Is it a liberal arts education – or a liberal education – that students need for work, life and engaged citizenship in the 21st century? What are free speech and academic freedom, exactly, in the collegiate context – are trigger warnings appropriate? Why is it that the wealthiest colleges and universities educate the smallest number of low-income students? Classes will involve readings and their discussion.

Daniel Sullivan is President Emeritus of St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, and former chair of the board of directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. In June, 2013 he and his wife Ann moved back to Northfield where he began his career at Carleton teaching sociology from 1971-1986.
dsullivan@stlawu.edu

Karen Madsen: Music Listening
8 Fridays, 9:30-11:30, Northfield Senior Center 106
Enrollment limit: 20

You probably know what to listen to, but do you know *how* to listen? Explore the inner workings of music throughout history. Gain a fuller appreciation of great works and composers, and understand how history molded music and how music molded history. You might also gain a few new favorite pieces or composers along the way. No experience is required for this course, just an interest in music and a willingness to uncover the mysteries of classical music. (You will be doing some listening out of class, so a CD player, computer, or other listening device will be really helpful.)



Karen Madsen has been involved with music her whole life, starting with a Schroder piano as a toddler. She coaches the Northfield High School Music Listening teams, which guides students through an array of music from earliest history to recent works. The Northfield teams have advanced to the State contest 16 of the past 17 years, and they have five first-place titles and several second and third-place finishes. Karen teaches violin, viola, and cello lessons, plays cello in several ensembles, and runs String Solutions, a violin shop in Northfield.
kmadsen@q.com

Course Previews at Public Library
March 6 – Monday – 7-8 pm – Steve Kelly: “Lipstick’s”
Traces: A Jazz-Age Chronicle

In the summer of 1925, Harold Ross, the editor of a new magazine, called *The New Yorker*, hired a spirited young woman, only a few years out of Vassar, to take over a night-club column. During the following five years, writing under the name “Lipstick,” she produced over one hundred of these columns, which provide richly textured description of the entertainment and social world of the Roaring Twenties.

March 13 – Monday – 7-8 pm – Barb Evans: *Northfield Architecture: Historic and Significant*

April 11 – Tues – 7-8 pm – Jerry Mohrig: *History and Chemistry of Chocolate*



CANNON VALLEY ELDER COLLEGIUM

Registration Form 2017 Spring Term Classes March 27-May 19, 2017

**Formal registration period extends from publication of this form until March 6
(late registration possible on space-available basis)**

**Complete the form below and bring to the Northfield Senior Center, or mail to:
CVEC, Northfield Senior Center, 1651 Jefferson Parkway, Northfield, MN 55057**

Include course fee of \$50 (or \$30 where noted), payable to CVEC, or check the financial assistance box. Books, other materials, and travel when specified for a class, are extra and optional.

Name (A) _____

Name (B) _____

Address _____

City / ZIP _____

Telephone _____

E-mail (A) _____

E-mail (B) _____

(Email addresses to be used only for CVEC activities)

Register Early to Avoid Being Disappointed

The registration period extends from the publishing of this form until March 6. Registrations may be mailed to the Northfield Senior Center or deposited in the registration box there. All registrations received by 6:00 pm on March 6 will be treated as arriving at the same time. Random selection will be used to fill any oversubscribed courses. After March 6, late registrations will be accepted on a space-available basis.

If your course is oversubscribed, you will be notified by email so you may register for another course. If you register by 6:00 pm on March 6 and are not admitted to an oversubscribed course you will be given priority for admission if the same course is offered again and you again register for the course by 6:00 pm on the final day of that registration period.

If you successfully register for a course that fills to the class limit, and then find that you will not attend, please notify the Operations Director promptly so another student may take your place.

Class availability and enrollment numbers will be updated periodically at cvec.org and posted at the Northfield Senior Center. Confirmation of registration will be sent by email or postcard.

For class selection, indicate person A, B, or both.

_____ **The Russian Short Story:** (AM)

_____ **The Russian Short Story:** (PM)

_____ **The History and Chemistry of Chocolate**

_____ **Jazz: The First Hundred Years**

_____ **The Irish Revolution: Literature and Violence, 1916-23**

_____ **Corals and Coral Reefs: What do they tell us?**

_____ **Northfield Architecture: Historic and Significant**

_____ **Philosophy and Psychiatry: Some Questions**

_____ **The Existentialist Cafe**

_____ **Pre-Code Hollywood Film**

_____ **Great Decisions**

_____ **Exploring the Short Story**

_____ **Historic Mills of the Cannon Valley @ \$30**

_____ **Myths and Controversies in Amer. Higher Education**

_____ **Music Listening**

If members A & B register for the same course: in case of the course being oversubscribed and filled by random selection: We should be considered ___ separately or ___ together.

Do you think you may have difficulty hearing the instructor and/or discussion in class? Check here (A) _____ (B) _____ if you'd like to borrow a pocket microphone/amplifier/earbud unit.

Check if you wish to receive registration confirmation by postcard, not email. _____ (Email saves printing & postage.)

Check if you need financial assistance _____

Check if this is your first CVEC class _____

Included is a tax-deductible gift of _____

Those who feel able are invited to include a tax-deductible contribution. Actual expenses incurred by CVEC per course registration average about \$65.

Because many volunteer their time, our administrative costs have always been minimal. The difference between CVEC's tuition revenue and total cost has been bridged by member contributions and grants.

Questions concerning registration should be directed to:

Dale Sommers, Operations Director
101 St. Olaf Ave #212, Northfield, MN 55057
507-645-8673 d.sommers@charter.net

Cannon Valley Elder Collegium
1651 Jefferson Parkway
Northfield, MN 55057

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From the Director: “See-vec” and oversubscriptions

My first encounter with the Elder Collegium, the spring of 2005: Newly retired, I drive into a parking lot behind the Northfield Retirement Center to attend the Annual Meeting. A man at the entrance stops each driver; evidently there is more than one event that afternoon, and his job is to direct them to an appropriate parking area. “Civic?,” I hear him ask me. Pause...“Uh, no, the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium,” I respond naively. (Later, I realize he probably said “see-vec,” which my puzzled mind associated with some kind of City affair.)

Since then, every time I hear “see-vec” used offhandedly in public gatherings I wonder about missed opportunities. Do the listening seniors, some only vaguely (if at all) aware of the treasures we offer, connect that “see-vec” with anything real? Wouldn’t “Elder Collegium,” though a bit longer to say, be more likely to spur curiosity and even action? After all, the two words of that phrase do suggest the essence of what we offer—much more than “see-vec” or even a spelled-out “C-V-E-C.” Wouldn’t it be good for us all to avoid these “in-group” terms?

Applications for our Winter term courses (now nearly completed) once again reached a record at the end of the formal registration period. Six out of the 14 courses were oversubscribed, with a record 55 people disappointed (though several changed to other still-open courses)—continuing a trend building over recent terms. Some argue that we should be pleased that there’s so much demand, but it’s more likely a problem for those 55 who were turned away. What can we do to better meet the demand?

- Increase class sizes? Some of our classrooms won’t allow that, and beyond some point the discussions and informality of many of our classes would suffer.
- Offer more courses? We’d be glad to, but that’s not easy. Ed Langerak, our Curriculum Director, works constantly at this; you, our members, can (and do) help by sending Ed names of potential new instructors.
- Schedule second sections of popular courses or repeat the courses in a later term? We try to do this when the instructor is willing, but instructors often aren’t; they have other demands on their time and energy.

We’re working on the above. You can see in this newsletter some modest increases in class size limits, one two-section course, three first-time instructors, and three repeats of previously oversubscribed courses.

Rich