COLLABORATIVE LEARNING:
The OLLI Citizen Scientist Program benefits its members and real-world research.

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) Citizen Scientist Albert Himo found an academic home in the lab of Stephanie Ceman, a professor of cell and developmental biology and affiliate of the Institute for Genomic Biology.

Together, they are studying a gene that causes Fragile X Syndrome (FXS), the most common cause of inherited cognitive impairment.

Among other tasks in the lab, Himo isolates DNA that contains a special gene that provides the body with instructions to make a protein that is vital for a healthy, functional brain.

The four-day process has yielded about a milligram of DNA, which weighs as much as a paperclip. It’s enough DNA to keep the lab’s FXS experiments going for nearly three weeks.

For Himo, this program is the perfect way for him to put his chemistry degree to work while contributing to transformative research.

“It is so marvelous that we can entrust Albert with important tasks in our lab,” Ceman said. “We enjoy being a part of our lab’s intellectual environment while we benefit from his knowledge and experiences.”

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE (OLLI) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

HOW TO JOIN:
Anyone 50 years or older can join OLLI and be a part of the OLLI Citizen Scientist program.

To find out more or express interest in the program, contact OLLI DIRECTOR Christine Catanzarite at 217-244-9141 or catanzar@illinois.edu.

The OLLI Citizen Scientist Program
LIFELONG LEARNERS AID SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

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What is OLLI?

As members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), Citizen Scientists also have the opportunity to participate in OLLI’s courses, lectures, and other activities for people 50 years of age or older.

OLLI at Illinois offers about 40 courses each semester to more than 1,000 members. Courses, often taught by distinguished faculty and local experts, cover a broad range of topics, from art and music to ethics and philosophy to science and medicine.

Past courses include the New Science of Genomic Biology, taught by IGB Director Gene Robinson and several other IGB Faculty members regarding how genetics can help us understand evolution, improve health, and solve important societal problems.

OLLI at Illinois is supported by the Bernard Osher Foundation, the Office of the Provost at Illinois, and generous donations from OLLI members and the community. It is one of 17 OLLI programs across the U.S. with over 130,000 members nationwide.

TOP 5 REASONS TO BECOME A Citizen Scientist

1 Aid Progressive Research. The IGB conducts groundbreaking studies that can help solve formidable problems related to health, energy, agriculture, and the environment. You can help.

2 Find Your Niche. Pursue your personal interests as a citizen scientist. Like technology? Work with state-of-the-art equipment in our innovative, open-concept labs. Like gardening? Help engineer plants to grow in harsher conditions.

3 Make Unique Contributions. Put your life experiences, knowledge and skills to work to aid real-world research endeavors and help shape the next generation of researchers.

4 Socialize With Others. As a Citizen Scientist, you’ll have the opportunity to interact with fellow intellectuals and develop lasting relationships within your lab group.

5 Acquire New Skills. Learn about the scientific process as you master lab equipment and techniques. From cloning DNA to recording how plants are affected by climate change, citizen scientists are exposed to a variety of new tasks and challenges.