

Lifetime Learners

With about 700 current members, The Learning Institute for Elders — LIFE at UCF — has been providing meaningful engagement opportunities for those 50+ since 1991. From partnering with faculty for research to participating in custom lectures that cover the spectrum of academia, LIFE members are some of the most active members of the campus community.

And when the coronavirus began to alter university operations in March 2020, the group was among the most heavily affected organizations at UCF. Since Fall 2020, LIFE has transitioned to virtual discussions via Zoom and has ramped up offerings this spring.

“It has been an extremely rewarding, educational and terrific aspect of our social lives to gather with this group — and I miss it very much right now,” says **Todd Bowers ’77**, president of LIFE. “Even though we’ve resumed some activities online right now, it’s not quite the same.”

In an effort to regain some of the connectivity to other Knights, the organization recently launched the LIFE Coaches program, which pairs a handful of members who have completed training with 50 undergraduate juniors and seniors. Mentors will provide guidance on academic support and enhancement opportunities, graduate school and careers. The concept was created by Theodorea Regina Berry, vice provost for Student Learning and Academic Success and dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies.

Teresa Riedel is one of the most recent LIFE members who has completed training and is in the process of being paired up with mentees.

“This is a brilliant partnership that connects individuals,” says Riedel, a former Seminole County school teacher. “It is all

about supporting students, and that is critical — especially right now. All of the LIFE Coaches going through the training are excited for the opportunity to give back to the UCF community.”