



**ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024**

Rivier Institute for Senior Education (RISE)

**Nancy Merz Nordstrom
RISE President**

April 26, 2024

ANNUAL REPORT, 2023-2024
April 26, 2024
Rivier Institute for Senior Education (RISE)

Introduction

The Rivier Institute for Senior Education (RISE) just completed its twenty-sixth year and is a recognized participant in the life of River University, the greater Nashua community, and beyond.

Based on Rivier University's core mission to "transform hearts and minds to serve the world" and "committed to the faith heritage, intellectual tradition, and social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church," the RISE program attempts to educate "the whole person in the context of an academic community that cultivates critical thought, sound judgment, and respect for all people." (Mission Statement, Rivier University, 2018).

RISE strives to provide a quality educational opportunity for seniors in the greater Nashua area and beyond. RISE shall achieve this by being a member-directed learning center where active participation and fellowship are key concepts. (Mission Statement, RISE, 2021)

The status of the RISE program is active and financially sound. RISE operates under a set of by-laws. The RISE program was ably served this academic year of 2023-2024 by the RISE Executive Committee members: President Nancy Merz Nordstrom, Past President Cynthia Geiger, Vice President Susan Hart, Treasurer Delores Davis, along with Coordinator Susan Deschenes.

The RISE Coordinator worked 20 hours a week, 40 weeks per year. The RISE office was open Monday through Friday from 9AM – 1PM. Inquiries were also handled by phone or email in a prompt, professional and courteous manner.

The RISE Council, consisting of the Executive Committee and the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the Curriculum, Membership, Technology Support, Publicity and Nominating Committees, and Members-at-Large took responsibility for the overall direction of RISE and the programs.

II. Statistical Information:

2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24

Number of courses offered per academic year:

2015-16	Fall 2015 – 62	Winter 2016 – 22	Spring 2016 – 59
2016-17	Fall 2016 – 60	Winter 2017 – 23	Spring 2017 – 58
2017-18	Fall 2017 – 69	Winter 2018 – 22	Spring 2018 – 57
2018-19	Fall 2018 – 69	Winter 2019 - 19	Spring 2019 – 59
2019-20	Fall 2019 – 68	Winter 2020 - 6	Spring 2020 – 64
2020-21	Fall 2020 – 29 (O*)	January 2021– 3(O)	Spring 2021 – 31(O)
2021-22	Fall 2021 – 30 (O)	January 2022– 3(O)	Spring 2022 – 37(4 OC**)
2022-23	Fall 2022 – 44(10 OC)	Winter Showcase 2023-6(O)	Spring 2023 – 34 (9 OC)
2023-24	Fall 2023 – 51(22 IP)	Winter Showcase 2024(O)	Spring 2024 - 41 (15 IP)

*O = online **OC = on-campus **IP = on-campus or offsite

Number of staff 2023-2024: 1 part-time paid Coordinator, Susan Deschenes.

Number of members (inclusive of facilitators)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Semester</u>	<u>Students</u>
2016-17	Fall 2016	367
	Spring 2017	363
2017-18	Fall 2017	409
	Spring 2018	341
2018-19	Fall 2018	420
	Spring 2019	366
2019-20	Fall 2019	425
	Spring 2020	389
2020-21	Fall 2020	173
	Spring 2021	191
2021-22	Fall 2021	175
	Spring 2022	179
2022-23	Fall 2022	205
	Spring 2023	183
2023-24	Fall 2023	210
	Spring 2024	183

Enrollment: This year, RISE's enrollment was steady. Spring and Fall semesters offered online, on-campus and off-site courses. We need new facilitators with new course material to increase the number of RISE member. We are optimistic that the enrollment will continue to increase. 65 new members joined RISE this year. Members of RISE Committees are working hard to recruit new facilitators and increase membership engagement both online and in person. In Spring 2024, the Membership Committee began a formal Outreach process, presenting information about RISE at events where people aged 55+ were likely to attend. This Outreach work should also result in more new RISE members.

III. Key Concerns

Membership reengagement: RISE is increasing the proportion of in-person to online classes. Online classes remain popular, however, as RISE serves members who do not live in the greater Nashua area and some homebound members. Some facilitators prefer to present online, especially those who live in other states. RISE needs to reach out to reengage members who do not feel comfortable using technology, to answer questions and encourage course registrations for both in person and online courses. We also need to recruit younger members to serve on RISE committees.

Budget: It was agreed to keep the Fall and Spring membership fee at \$100. Registration for both semesters remained constant. RISE has its required income of \$36,000 and raised \$4,350 in additional income for a total of \$40,350. RISE's program budget of \$13,000 was over expended by \$562.57.

New Facilitators & Courses: Members of RISE Committees, as well as the general RISE membership, need to continue to help find new facilitators who can bring new courses to RISE. New courses bring in new members. Finding new facilitators is of critical ongoing importance to RISE's future. The RISE Coordinator is also actively recruiting new facilitators.

IV. Accomplishments and Achievements

- **Course Registration:** RISE's online Membership Portal serves most RISE members well, allowing them to register for courses on their own, receiving immediate confirmation of their registration as they sign up for each course. Some RISE members need assistance registering --- they call or email the RISE coordinator to ask for help. At the Spring 2024 Information, RISE instituted a combined membership and course signup sheet, making the course registration process much more efficient for those who are less comfortable with technology and wanted to register for courses and/or join RISE at the Information Session.
- **Spring 2024 RISE Information Session:** This session was held at the Dion Center, a much larger space than the Memorial Hall Event Room. This allowed facilitators to sit in a U-shaped set of tables to meet with their potential students. There was also space for round tables where members and prospective members could sit and socialize. RISE will continue to hold information sessions in the Dion Center.
- **Online Credit Card Payment System:** Most members choose to pay online by credit card, although some still mail or drop checks off at the RISE office. The credit card payment system allows members to receive instant proof of payment.

- **Increased Partnership with the Huntington and the Hunt Community for Offsite RISE courses as well as Committee meetings at the Hunt Community:** This year, RISE presented four courses at the Huntington and 6 courses at the Hunt Community, 2 of which were single session classes. Residents attend RISE courses for free. Papercraft classes at the Huntington have not drawn residents in, but classes at the Hunt Community have proven to be extremely popular with their residents. All Tuesday morning RISE Committee meetings were held at the Hunt Community; we are grateful to have had the use of this space as well.
- **RISE Winter Showcase** – The 2024 Winter Showcase presented free single-session online Zoom classes on Wednesdays in January. This year, the RISE Coordinator advertised the Winter Showcase widely by sending emails to Senior Centers, congregate living communities, and public libraries. Many of these organizations advertised the Showcase in their newsletters. This introduced new people to RISE and served as another valuable Outreach opportunity. We are grateful to the six presenters who so generously gave of their time and expertise.
- **Recognition of RISE Volunteers** – This year, RISE held a luncheon in May to recognize committee volunteers and RISE facilitators, whose volunteer efforts allow RISE to exist. RISE President Nancy Nordstrom showed some comic videos, allowing us to all laugh together.

V. Evaluation of the Current Status of the Program

RISE was developed as an organization of, by, and for older adults. Members can join at 55, and several members are in their 90s.

The various RISE committees are made up of active members who continue to set and meet goals designed to constantly improve and grow the RISE program.

Growth and diversity through constant reevaluation of our outreach efforts is encouraged.

Goals and challenges for 2023-2024 were met. These included:

- Successful completion of Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters, both online and on-campus.
- RISE committee meetings met in person on Tuesday mornings at the Hunt Community.
- The online registration program continues to be successful, simple, and effective. More members register online each semester.
- The option for credit card payments continues to work well.

VI. Priorities for 2024-2025

- Continue to recruit new facilitators to offer RISE courses.
- Update RISE Membership Handbook.
- Reengage non-active members and facilitators since we are now offering both online and on-campus courses.
- Meet or exceed projected revenue while not exceeding expenses.
- Revise and update Bylaws.
- Search for more free off-campus space with ample parking suitable for in-person classes.
- Reintroduce greeters for all in-person classes.
- Introduce Technology Assistants for in-person facilitators who require assistance each week using Rivier University's Audiovisual technology.

Rivier University and RISE Technology Changes

- During the summer of 2023, Rivier University updated its Audiovisual (AV) systems in all classrooms. The RISE Coordinator updated AV instructions for on campus facilitators, providing separate instructions for presenting from a USB flash drive and playing a DVD during a RISE class. The RISE Coordinator also met with each on-campus facilitator before their class began to teach them how to use the new AV system. For some facilitators who were not comfortable with technology, the coordinator attended the beginning of each class session to ensure that setup for the class was complete.
- The RISE Coordinator also expanded the instructions for presenting a Zoom class.
- In Spring of 2024, RISE Zoom facilitators were offered the option of recording their classes using Panopto. The RISE Coordinator worked with RISE Technical Support Committee member Judy Brophy to create step-by-step Panopto instructions. The Coordinator also worked with IT to set up Panopto accounts for facilitators who chose to record their classes. RISE members appreciated the opportunity to watch Zoom classes they could not attend in real time.

President's Report – Nancy Nordstrom

As RISE President, I am honored to be able to deliver this Annual Report. This has been a very successful year at RISE.

Online Zoom courses continue to be very popular; RISE now has several members who live way beyond the greater Nashua area --- in Florida, Cape Cod, and Northern Maine, for example.

Members who have not returned to RISE over the last several years were contacted by letter and email, and some of them have also returned. We are getting closer to our pre-pandemic numbers for both members and number of courses presented and that is a huge accomplishment.

We are all very happy with these numbers, which are due in large part to the dedicated committees, facilitators and volunteers who work so hard to make RISE the outstanding program it is today. Thanks to all of you who have so willingly stepped up to offer your time and expertise. It is very much appreciated.

A Busy 2023-2024

A successful year, however, means it's also been a very busy year. We held both the Fall and Spring Information Sessions in-person, and each was a rousing success with most facilitators and many returning and new members in attendance.

RISE's social calendar was busy too, with New Member coffees and a Holiday party/Brown Bag lunch/book swap. The book swap was so successful we are holding another one at the RISE picnic on June 7th.

At that same picnic we will also celebrate the birthday of our founder Rose Arthur with a presentation by Jan Adams.

See the Membership Committee Report for more details about these events and activities.

Since most of us join programs like RISE as much for the socialization as we do for the learning, these social events are very important. They provide opportunities for us to chat with old friends and meet new ones. Attendance has been good, but it is our hope that even more members will attend in the future.

Ongoing Issues

Despite all this success, however, there are still a few issues we are dealing with. The biggest, I think, is classroom availability for in-person classes.

Our coordinator, Susan Deschenes, works closely with the office of the Rivier University registrar to secure as many classrooms as possible each semester. The Hunt Community and the Huntington have graciously offered us space, at no charge, for meetings and courses, which has been a tremendous help.

RISE is not alone, however, in dealing with classroom availability issues. Vice President Sue Hart and I meet once a month via Zoom with a group of other lifelong learning programs from around the country, and this issue is one they are all facing. We have had several in-depth discussions about this problem. All these other programs now have to utilize off-site locations to hold in-person classes, just as we do.

The second biggest issue we face is trying to fill vacancies on committees and on the RISE Council. Everyone is busy. RISE members are not retirees who sit around in rocking chairs all day. But without volunteers, RISE would not be the program it is today.

It was Helen Keller who said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." So please, think about that, and if you are approached about joining RISE's volunteer ranks, please give it serious thought.

Feel free, too, to call the office and tell Susan you'd like to help in some capacity. We'd love to talk with you.

Thank You

In closing I'd like to say thank you, first to Karen Cooper and her department for their ongoing help and to Sr. Paula and the Rivier staff for their support and commitment to RISE. They have given us a home and made us feel welcome.

Thank you to our Coordinator, Susan Deschenes. Susan has been with us for one year now, and it's like she's been here forever. We are so grateful for all she does for RISE in a cheery, helpful manner. We are very happy to have you.

Finally, the RISE Executive Committee would like to thank all the RISE members who show up every day, either online or in-person to continue taking courses. Without you RISE would not exist. Your commitment is deeply appreciated. With your help we can continue to ensure RISE offers outstanding programs for older adults in the Greater Nashua area and beyond.

As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Thoughtful, committed RISE members demonstrate that truth every single day. Thank You!

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Nordstrom, RISE President

Vice Presidents' Report – Susan Hart

Serving as RISE Vice President this past year has truly been a wonderful experience. The opportunity to have an active role in the ongoing development of this program has given me the chance for stimulating discourse with many fellow lifelong learners, both within and beyond RISE.

The highlight for me is working closely with our President, Nancy Nordstrom. She and I come to RISE leadership with different and complementary skills. We work as a team, in a synergistic relationship where we can meet each challenge together and imagine outcomes that best serve the RISE program.

Additionally, we receive amazing support from the RISE Coordinator, Susan Deschenes, and the dedicated members of the RISE Council and the members of our standing committees.

I would like to echo my deep appreciation for all those Nancy has already thanked. It takes us all to keep RISE as vibrant and meaningful as it continues to be.

In her report, Nancy has skillfully elaborated on RISE's activities and accomplishments throughout our year. Let me then stress how promising our future looks as we embrace the opportunity to welcome new members and facilitators, offer new and stimulating classes, and create meaningful (and fun) chances for RISE members to enjoy each other's company.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Hart, RISE Vice President

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum Committee: Submitted by Nancy Nordstrom, acting committee chair

The RISE Curriculum Committee consists of nine members who work hard to support facilitators with any help they need and to ensure excellent courses for RISE members.

During this past year the Committee focused mainly on RISE facilitators. They worked to ensure each facilitator was contacted and made aware of the Committee's willingness to work with them in any way necessary.

The Committee also promoted facilitator attendance at the RISE Information Sessions and this push boosted attendance.

The Curriculum Committee also contacted past facilitators to update them on the latest RISE news and gauge their willingness to facilitate again. This campaign also resulted in several returning to the fold.

A new information package for potential facilitators has also been developed and is available in the RISE Office for anyone who might find it useful.

The Committee, acting on a suggestion from a RISE member, is developing a special course for this coming fall entitled "In Celebration of Holidays." This course, complete with special speakers, will look at how other people around the world celebrate their holidays.

Other tasks included:

1. Compiling a lengthy list of outside organizations in the Greater Nashua area who might be approached regarding possible facilitators.
2. Reviewing and improving the RISE Information Sessions.
3. Soliciting outside speakers for the RISE Forum.
4. Creating the Winter, Spring and Fall Facilitators Showcases.
5. Leading a field trip to the Nashua Curling Club.

We had a very productive year.

The RISE Curriculum Committee welcomes new members and would like to invite RISE members to join them in helping ensure the highest caliber of courses possible.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Nordstrom, Interim Chair, Curriculum Committee

Membership Committee: Submitted by Cheryl Cummings, committee chair

The Committee held the following events:

October 6, 2023: **Welcome to RISE Coffee** – Committee members contacted all new members via email or phone, or both. The Turn-out was not great.

December 1, 2023: **Holiday Gathering** – Brown-bag lunch with cupcakes and drinks provided. This was well attending and members especially enjoyed doing a book swap. We'll add a book swap to some future Events.

March 22, 2024: **Welcome to RISE Coffee** – Committee members contacted all new members via email or phone, or both. Again, the turnout was not great, so the committee has agreed to invite all members to the coffees, with reservations being required.

June 7, 2024: **Picnic** – This will be a brown-bag lunch and book swap. Drinks and dessert, including a cake to celebrate RISE Founder Rose Arthur's Birthday, will be provided. Jan Adams will present a program about Rose Arthur's life and the early days of the RISE program.

Publicity Committee: submitted by Nancy Nordstrom

We are pleased to tell you that RISE outreach has really grown in scope.

To start with, in the summer of 2023, RISE partnered with the Rogers Library in Hudson to offer a series of presentations by RISE facilitators. This series enabled Library patrons to learn more about RISE and offered RISE members a chance to keep learning over the summer.

The ZOOM Winter Showcase in January 2024 was well attended and for the first time we opened it to surrounding libraries, and senior living centers, bringing us new members.

The Information Session Press Releases are now being sent electronically to eleven newspapers and twelve Community Access TV stations.

The RISE Facebook page is more active now with regular weekly postings which are shared on ten other town Facebook pages. For those of you who use Facebook, please visit the RISE page to LIKE, COMMENT and SHARE. This helps ensure it will be seen more often.

Even more outreach is taking place in May 2023.

RISE has been invited to take part in three separate community events – two in Nashua and one in Derry. So we will have tables, staffed by RISE volunteers, at all three events.

RISE handouts are being distributed more frequently. The generic RISE postcard is being distributed by willing members to a wide variety of locations – doctors' offices, rehab centers, dentist offices, anyplace where older adults might see it. We had 500 more printed a few months ago, so feel free to stop by the office and pick up a few to distribute.

You will also find them in the pockets hanging on the wall outside the RISE office.

Finally, RISE NOTES, the RISE email newsletter, goes out to over 800 people regularly every other Friday. It contains all manner of useful information and can be easily forwarded by members to family and friends.

We are pleased at the growth of RISE's outreach, and it has really helped grow RISE's membership.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Nordstrom, for RISE PR

Scholarships

Each year at the Annual Meeting, RISE awards scholarships to deserving Rivier students.

RISE Memorial Scholarship Fund: Two scholarships for \$2,927.68 each were awarded.

Rose H. Arthur Scholarship Fund: One scholarship for \$1,855.06 was awarded.

Appendix

RISE Financial Report FY 2023-2024 as of April 26, 2023

<u>BUDGETED YTD</u>	<u>ACTUAL YTD 2023-2024</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
EXPECTED INCOME: \$36,000	INCOME: \$40,350	\$4,350
BUDGETED EXPENSES: \$13,000	EXPENSES: \$13,564.57 **	\$564.37
<i>NET = Income - Expenses</i>	<i>26,785.43 *</i>	
<u>RISE RESTRICTED FUNDS</u>	<u>FUND BALANCE</u>	
FUTURES FUND	\$85,956.97 as of 6/30/2024	\$0
RISE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND	\$157,473.23 as of 6/30/2024	\$0
ROSE ARTHUR SCHOLARSHIP FUND	\$46,874.10 as of 6/30/2024	\$0

NOTES:

** Expenses do not include the RISE Coordinator's wages. Therefore, the NET income number is very misleading