In its most recently reported year, Road Scholar campus-based programs, and their recent extension to travel experiences around the world, attracted more than 100,000 American and Canadian older adults. Some programs make use of community resources through classes on local ecology or folk life. Others focus on innovative topics and experiences—writing one’s own life story, discussing contemporary films with screenwriters, whitewater rafting, Chinese painting and calligraphy, or acquiring French language skills. Travel programs are enriched by in-depth lectures and expert-led field trips.

The term Third Age, as we will see in Chapter 18, refers to the period after the “Second Age” of midlife, when older people are freed from responsibilities of earning a living and rearing children to focus on personal fulfillment.

Similar educational programs have sprung up in the United States and elsewhere. The Bernard Osher Foundation collaborates with more than 120 U.S. universities to establish Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes on campuses. Each offers older adults a wide array of stimulating learning experiences, from auditing regular courses, to forming learning communities that address common interests, to helping to solve community problems. Originating in France, the University of the Third Age provides Western European, British, and Australian older people with university- and community-sponsored courses, workshops on special topics, and excursions, with older adults often doing the teaching.

Participants in the programs just mentioned tend to be active, well-educated, and financially well-off. Much less is available for older people with little education and limited income. Community senior centers with inexpensive offerings related to everyday living attract more low-SES people than programs such as Road Scholar or Universities of the Third Age (Formosa, 2014). Regardless of course content and which older adults attend, using the techniques summarized in Applying What We Know above increases the effectiveness of educational experiences.

Active, adventurous older adults explore the sights, sounds, streets, and monuments of Dublin’s authors, poets, and playwrights as part of a Road Scholar travel program to Ireland.