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A NEWSLETTER OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Age Inclusivity In Higher Education

Promoting age-inclusive practices, programs, and partnerships in higher education.

The *Age Inclusivity in Higher Education* (AIHE) newsletter is a place where educators, researchers, campus leaders, and community members can share information about how colleges and universities are responding to aging populations and the rise of more age-diverse campuses.

This issue highlights the InterGenerational Technology Engagement Checklist for Higher Education (IG TECH) project and the value of reciprocal intergenerational exchange to advance age inclusivity.

Comments and suggestions about newsletter content and special areas of focus are welcomed from our readers. Please send correspondence to ageinclusive@geron.org.

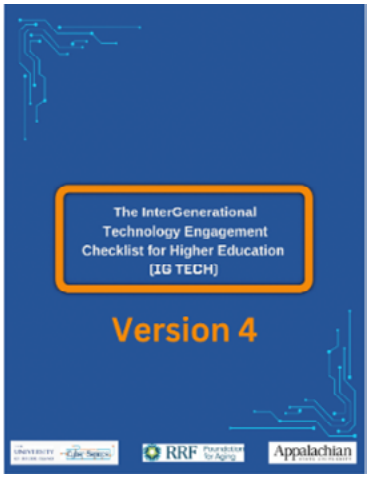
The *Age Inclusivity in Higher Education* newsletter is produced by the Gerontological Society of America.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Development of the InterGenerational Technology Engagement Checklist for Higher Education (IG TECH)

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Keeping pace with the rapid evolution of digital technology is a growing challenge for everyone—including older adults. Limitations accessing technology can also deepen existing inequalities by restricting access to vital information and resources. The COVID-19 pandemic sharply intensified social isolation and underscored the urgent need for digital adoption among older adults. Intergenerational technology programs can improve social well-being and comfort with technology within the older adult population while also providing an opportunity for younger adults to gain professional skills—and participation in these programs can reduce negative age attitudes toward older as well as younger adults. Cyber-Seniors, a nonprofit organization that works to bridge the digital divide through intergenerational connections, supports community organizations in replicating this model. Although the program has been successfully implemented at the University of Rhode Island (AFU partner) since 2016 and recently piloted at Appalachian State University, we identified a need for a scalable model to expand the program to promote greater age inclusivity in higher education. With support from the RRF Foundation for Aging, we collaborated to create the **InterGenerational Technology Engagement Checklist for Higher Education (IG TECH)** as a tool to guide colleges and

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universities in implementing their own intergenerational technology programs.

The goal of the IG TECH project was to build on the implementation of existing programs to develop a sustainable model ready for adaptation. The project involved four steps. The first step was to interview past and current Cyber-Seniors higher education partners to identify best practices and lessons learned. In these interviews, we utilized an implementation science framework to assess how factors of the intervention, the practice setting, and the ecological system impacted program sustainability within the context of higher education. In the second step, we created the IG TECH by synthesizing best practices from 18 sources, including a Generations United resource guide, followed by a critical review from our team and the Cyber-Seniors organization. The IG TECH includes a series of questions to help campus representatives make decisions about key elements of their program, including program planning, student recruitment, older adult recruitment and onboarding, and implementation/monitoring. In the third step, we recruited a Delphi panel of 47 intergenerational experts to review and critique the IG TECH using a structured, iterative process to reach consensus. We made edits and improvements after each round based on quantitative and qualitative feedback. Using this method, we conducted three rounds until achieving positive ratings on each criterion. The last step was to pilot the IG TECH through a collective case study involving two universities (New Brunswick Community College and George Mason University) during the spring term of 2025. The IG TECH team met monthly with program leads to review the progression of the IG TECH in guiding program implementation and to begin creating a learning community.

Our goals for the next project phase are to identify and implement a sustainability pathway to ensure the IG TECH and related materials (e.g., student training materials, older adult curriculum, evaluation tools) can be utilized broadly. We also plan to offer a way for researchers to collaborate to examine the impacts across programs on issues of importance to students and older adults, such as social isolation, ageism, and digital inclusion. We are aiming for resources to be available in 2026 through The Ohio State University College of Social Work's newly created Center for Intergenerational Research and Practice.

To learn more about how you can connect with the IG TECH project, drop us a note: skyeleedahl@uri.edu; jurisjj@appstate.edu



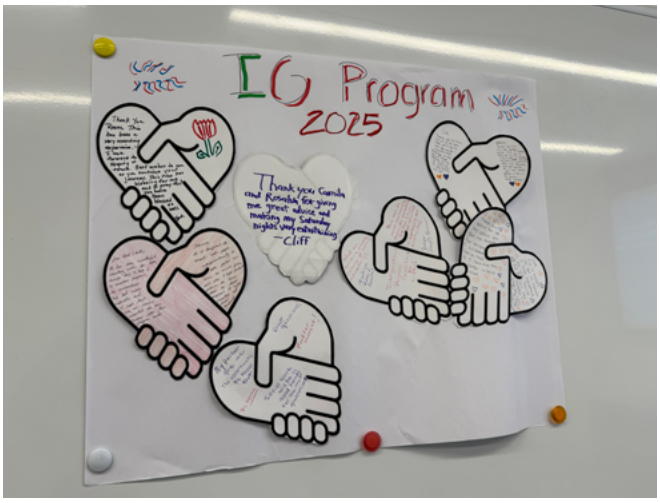
Skye Leedahl, PhD, FGSA, FAGHE
Department Chair and Professor of Human Development and Family Science, College of Health Sciences, University of Rhode Island



Jill Juris, PhD
Department Chair and Associate Professor of Recreation Management and Physical Education, Beaver College of Health Sciences, Appalachian State University

Advancing Age Inclusivity at New Brunswick Community College and George Mason University with IG TECH

In the spring term of 2025, New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) in Saint John, Canada, and George Mason University (GMU) in Fairfax, Virginia, served as pilot institutions for the IG TECH project. At NBCC, the project led by Chris London partnered with Loch Lomond Villa, a nonprofit long-term care nursing home that promotes community engagement, to provide programming. From January through March, seven NBCC information technology students went to Loch Lomond Villa to provide one-on-one sessions for 15 older adults. Students received monetary stipends for participation, and food was provided at each session. The program aimed to increase comfort among older adults in different areas of technology, with each student trained to specialize in at least two areas. Programming included training students to provide technology support with digital tasks such as using social media, preventing online fraud, managing photo storage, navigating artificial intelligence tools, and accessing health portals. The NBCC team observed how the intergenerational technology education enhanced students' practical experience while enriching older participants' lives. The team found success in learning technology and a better overall experience for all when the older adults could participate actively in small groups with student technology mentors rather than just listen passively in a large lecture format. Students reflected through weekly journals to document their experiences.



IG TECH students thank partners



GMU Osher Lifelong Learning Institute IG TECH Participants

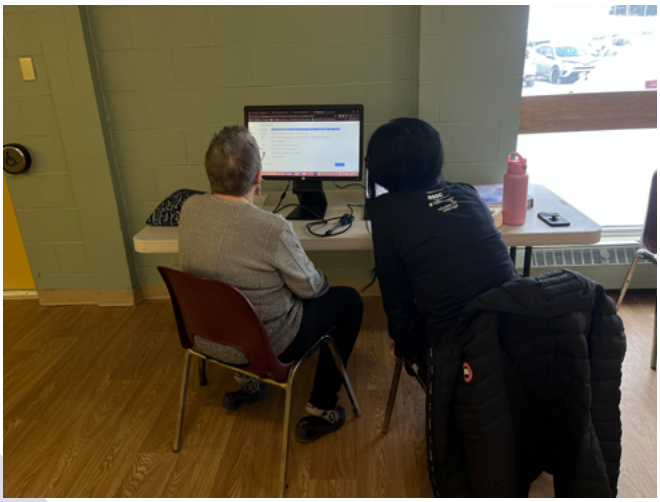
At GMU, Cathy Tompkins, PhD, spearheaded the pilot intergenerational technology program and guided the collaboration between the GMU College of Public Health students and the GMU Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which offers noncredit courses to adults over 50 years of age. For this newly designed program, undergraduate and graduate students committed to about 10 hours of online experiential learning across a 15-week semester, working in five student–older adult dyads. The intergenerational technology program centered on mutual learning and respect, beginning with synchronous online Gerontology 101 training in which Dr. Tompkins addressed working with older adults and breaking aging stereotypes. Students also completed asynchronous online training on ageism and intergenerational programs. This program focused on supporting caregivers by connecting them with online resources and social support from the Social

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"The NBCC team observed how the intergenerational technology education enhanced students' practical experience while enriching older participants' lives."

Work Integrative Research Laboratory students at GMU. Student–older adult pairs were formed based on availability, and they scheduled their own appointments. During the online meetings, the pairs discussed technology needs/interests as well as addressed social needs, and in some cases, identified social media, online groups, or podcasts to assist with meeting social needs. A paid graduate student supported the program by checking in with students and reminding them of program requirements. The program's research component explored the role of technology in caregiver well-being, stress reduction, and resource access. The pilot program is intended to serve as a blueprint for future programming.



Hands-on technology training with IG TECH participants



Chris London
Professor and Coordinator, New Brunswick Community College



Cathy Tompkins, PhD
Associate Dean and Professor, George Mason University

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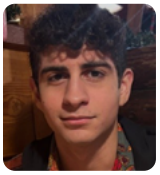
An IG TECH View From Students:
The Value of Reciprocity

The IG TECH program is something I am glad to have been a part of. At first, I was a bit apprehensive about teaching older adults, as I hadn't yet had many chances to closely interact with people in that age group. However, during our lessons, I noticed that it was easy for us to find common ground. Another thing I observed is that there was always a lively and energetic environment in the room. You could hear participation, laughter, and discussion. It was clear that everyone wanted to be involved, whether they were teaching or learning. I learned more about the older adults I was teaching as we talked. I am appreciative that I could get to know them over the course of this program and that I was given the chance to teach them. I am proud of them because they pushed through the discomfort of unfamiliarity and learned to navigate things on their [digital] devices that weren't necessarily intuitive to them before. That inspires me! It felt good to be given a chance to share our knowledge, something we might take for granted, and to try and make someone's device a more enjoyable, useful, and—most importantly—accessible thing for them. I learned things I didn't know from the adults I was teaching as well as from my peers and from the internet as we were trying to problem solve. It was nice to share the feeling of putting our heads together to figure something out. I learned that it really isn't about age or knowledge level [and] that during our time alive, despite what we may be made to believe, we can truly never stop learning.



Sheila Kazvini
New Brunswick Community College

My role in the IG TECH project was to install Google devices in older adults' apartments, which was something that I never used before. When trying to convince some to give the devices a shot, it was apparent how nervous the idea made them, and so I was always frank about my relatively low knowledge and inexperience with these devices and this worked out in my favour. [We] felt like we were on an equal playing field of understanding when it came to this technology—even though I was doing the installation—and I think that significantly lowered the pressure they originally felt. They saw that I was learning with them too.



Sebastian Santos
New Brunswick Community College

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The **University of Haifa** (AFU partner) hosted the International Age-Friendly Environments Conference in May, organized by AFU-Haifa through the Center for Research and Study of Aging, in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences, Sephardic Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, and JDC-Eshel. The conference, which brought together over 300 attendees from government, academia, health care, and nongovernmental organizations, featured keynote speaker Professor Nina Silverstein, and celebrated the institution's admission into the AFU-GN.

The Gerontology Department at **Western Oregon University** (AFU partner) hosted the Older Adult Summit in April, in partnership with their community partner Polk County Family & Community Outreach. The event kicked off with presentations by AARP Oregon State Director Bandana Shrestha and aging services leaders throughout the region. Attendees engaged in brainstorming exercises to identify strategies to advance age inclusivity in Polk County.

The Centre on Aging at AFU partner **University of Manitoba** (**UM**) hosted its 42nd annual Spring Research Symposium, bringing together attendees to learn about aging through research posters and visiting 22 exhibitor booths. Exhibitors represented aging services community organizations (e.g., Transportation Options Network for Seniors, Volunteer Manitoba, Manitoba Association of Senior Communities, Manitoba Association for Residential and Community Care Homes for Everyone, Active Aging in Manitoba). UM units (i.e., Career, Community & Experiential Learning Centre; Extended Education; Faculty of Graduate Studies; Family Resources; Planned Giving; Rady Family Centre; Recreation Services; Student Accessibility Services; and UM Retirees Association) showcased work related to their Age-Friendly University efforts.

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Eager to Learn More About Being an Age-Inclusive Campus?

When you register for the GSA 2025 Annual Scientific Meeting, sign up for the workshop ***Building an Age-Friendly Campus Network and Advancing Age-Inclusive Campus Practices*** to learn about strategies for strengthening the AFU Global Network and integrating Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE) practices into campus programs—with examples from GSA colleagues leading AFU/AIDHE campus efforts.
Saturday, November 15th | 8:00 AM–12:00 PM | Sheraton Boston Hotel

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