

# ADVANCING AGE INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

July/August 2021

The *Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education* Newsletter is a place where educators, administrators, scholars, and community members can share news about how colleges and universities are responding to aging populations and the rise of more age-diverse campuses. Building sustainable age-friendly programs calls for bold moves and clever efforts, along with time for reflection. In this summer issue, read about creative age-friendly ventures and lessons learned to boost your efforts to advance age inclusivity on your campus.

Comments and suggestions about Newsletter content and special areas of focus are very much welcomed from our readers. Please send correspondence to [ageinclusive@geron.org](mailto:ageinclusive@geron.org).

## Feature Article

### Looking Back and Moving Forward

**Joann M. Montepare, PhD, Lasell University**  
**Andrea Zakrajsek, OTD, OTR/L, Eastern Michigan University**  
**Caroline Cicero, PhD, MSW, MPL, University of Southern California**

There are so many reasons why people think summer is the best season everone main reason being that its a vital time for reflection and renewal. In this spirit, the editors look back on this inaugural year of *Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education* in this summer issue to tell you what we learned and what we see as opportunities moving forward.

*Joann Montepare gives her reflection.* We launched the Newsletter during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic with no idea of how it would be received in the midst of so much happening on our campuses, in our communities, and around our country. However, the response was incredibly positive, especially as we witnessed the upsurge of ageism, the consequences of age-related health disparities, the plight of older workers, the rise of intergenerational tensions, and so much more that made clear the call for higher education to be at the forefront of addressing the needs of our aging, age-diverse population. From this turn of events, I learned how our collective voices and sharing of our age-friendly efforts however big or small were key to keeping our momentum flowing. We now have the opportunity to broaden our efforts and strengthen our voices by sharing ideas, insights, and strategies for shaping more age-friendly campuses in future issues of our Newsletter. Please send your news our way!

*Andrea Zakrajsek shares her thoughts.* This past year has brought much transition, disruption, and uncertainty. Yet, it has thrust us into important and productive conversations, become nimble as we responded to changes, and become more innovative as we addressed challenges and needs of our world. In a matter of moments, our teaching and research shifted as we moved to working remotely during the pandemic. While this necessary change inspired new opportunities for delivering age-friendly initiatives and collaborations on our campuses and in our communities, it also reminded us of the need to be mindful of differences, disparities, and diversity in our programming practices calling for our age-friendly efforts to also be more inclusive.

*Caroline Cicero offers her perspective.* I have been so pleased to see the continuing work of the age-inclusivity movement this past year, despite all the obvious setbacks associated with our virtual lives. We have been able to encourage campus diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to include age as a factor in their current work and future plans. In return, we assured our own efforts to pursue age-friendliness include people of all demographic backgrounds and abilities. Age-inclusivity and the pandemic highlighted the need for intergenerational programming. One of the main ways campuses and families were able to include the needs of older adults was in technology training. Getting our older community members online and on apps for health care, vaccines, socialization, shopping, and emergency preparedness has been a main feature of all types of age-inclusive communities. Students across the country and world have been integral in making these connections happen for their families and campus communities. Looking ahead, more of these efforts and connections can only strengthen the age-friendliness of our campuses and our communities.

*We all express our appreciation for your contributions to the success of this Newsletter and look forward to working with you as we craft future issues and work together to advance age inclusivity in higher education.*

## Campus Spotlights

### An Age-Friendly University Program for All Seasons

#### Personal Enrichment, Action, and Knowledge Series (PEAKS)

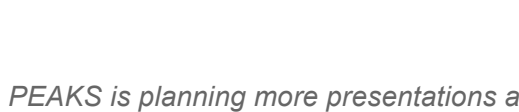
**Pamela Elfenbein, PhD**  
**University of North Georgia**

In response to entreaties for programming to meet the needs of our rapidly growing older adult community, the University of North Georgia (UNG) Institute for Healthy Aging created the Personal Enrichment, Action, and Knowledge Series (PEAKS) in collaboration with UNG Blue Ridge Campus. PEAKS is a series of age-friendly, engaging, and seasonally appropriate presentations and activities designed to expressly meet the interests and requests of our region.

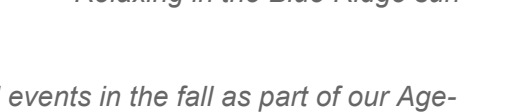
Programming began virtually during the wintry months of early 2021 with a variety of presentations. Professor and author Westina Matthews, PhD, shared personal experiences of both difficult times and a life well lived as discussed in her book, *Dancing from the Inside Out*. The Rev. Dr. Cynthia Park, a renowned philologist and Episcopal Church priest who has been heavily influenced by the stories shared with her, presented *Twice Upon a Time: Rethinking Our Well-Rehearsed Stories*. Author Lisa Russell offered insights from her book, *Lost Mill Towns of North Georgia*, complete with maps for self-driving tours, about the 1880s textile era of North Georgia that enticed an entire workforce to leave their farms and move their families into modern mill villages.

As the weather warmed in early spring and we began to think about moving outdoors, Rosann Kent, MA, Director of the UNG Appalachian Studies Center, spoke about European settlers coming to our mountains and bringing with them traditions from the old world such as planting by the signs, a method of planting (and living) according to the moons phases and position in the zodiac. Participants got out their calendars and gardening tools and took to their gardens.

In early summer, Megan Hume, a volunteer from Project Chimps, a chimpanzee sanctuary within 10 miles of the UNG Blue Ridge Campus, discussed the mission of Project Chimps, the background of how the chimps came to live at the sanctuary, current issues facing chimps in captivity and in the wild, and chimp protection and conservation in the United States. This virtual presentation offered an in-person component of a 2-hour tour of the Project Chimps facility, lunch, and then participants made enrichment activities for the chimps.



Touring Project Chimps



Relaxing in the Blue Ridge sun

PEAKS is planning more presentations and events in the fall as part of our Age-Friendly University community efforts!

## Campus Voices

### Campus Conversations

#### Collective Voices for Advancing Age Inclusivity

**Joann M. Montepare, PhD, Lasell University**

In April and May, The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) Age-Friendly University (AFU) Workgroup hosted a series of 1-hour virtual conversation sessions featuring workgroup members and invited campus representatives to talk with AFU partners and interested others about how we can further age-inclusive principles on our campuses. The chat was active and informative with a number of questions raised and suggestions offered.

In particular, several individuals posed questions about knowing who to invite to the table when assembling a team to explore joining the AFU network. On many campuses, AFU efforts are being spearheaded by faculty in gerontology or related programs. In these cases, AFU partners suggested being sure to invite individuals in other programs who are working on aging-related issues from different perspectives. Great work is so often being done in silos across our campuses and the age-friendly initiative offers an opportunity to bring these efforts together. Connecting with individuals in programs that take a campus-wide and community-focused lens, such as colleagues from graduate and professional studies or service-learning programs, is also a useful strategy. And of course, connecting with individuals interested in strengthening campus diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts should part of the plan.

Others asked about how to get administrators to see the value of the age-friendly principles. Several suggestions were offered such as preparing talking points and one-page overviews (with information about aging populations and campus age demographics) to introduce the issues and their relevance (see examples in GSA-AGHEs [Tools for Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education](#) about Making the Case). Being patient yet persistent was also recommended given that understanding the need for a campus to be more age friendly and the opportunities that exist is a process that can take time to develop.

Another question was how to involve individuals in age-friendly efforts and sustain their engagement. Suggested strategies included making personal appeals, providing incentives, and recognizing individuals for their contributions. Whatever strategy one might use, two considerations should be kept in mind. First, the AFU principles are aspirational and our age-friendly initiatives are works in progress, which naturally will begin with small steps, working peer to peer. Second, communicating to others about what we are doing is key. Our age-friendly efforts need to include ways to inform our campus community about our work through regular announcements to raise awareness and get others thinking about how their teaching, research, and community activities can be more age friendly.

The AFU initiative has been described as a grassroots/bottom-up approach that relies on shared voices. Campus conversations are a vital component of this collective venture and the Workgroup looks forward to more of them!

## News and Notes

Co-editors Tamara E. Shovali and Marilyn R. Gugliucci are pleased to announce that the seventh edition of the *GSA-AGHE Gerontology and Geriatrics Curricular Standards and Guidelines in Higher Education* is forthcoming. All chapters now provide information about competency-based education. Additional materials include curricular matrices for both gerontology and health professions programs, and a new chapter for pharmacy doctoral programs. This is an integral resource for educators implementing and revising programs in liberal arts and health professions education. The charge for revisions originated from the AGHE Academic Program and Development Workgroup. Publication is expected by November 2021 and the new edition will be introduced in an AGHE symposium at the GSA 2021 Annual Scientific Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona.

The **University of Nebraska Omaha** (UNO) recently joined the global AFU network as the first age-friendly university in the state. The UNO effort, championed by Department of Gerontology faculty Julie Braskevich Boron and Lyn Holley, was kicked off with the 1-day virtual workshop *Imagining an Age-Friendly University of Nebraska at Omaha: Content, Colleagues, and Conversation*, supported by an AARP age-friendly seed grant.

The Center for Age Related Excellence (CARE) at **San Diego State University** (SDSU) addresses issues that impact the health, well-being, and quality of life for older adults from diverse populations. Recently, CARE led SDSUs efforts to be the first AFU in San Diego with a focus on interprofessional and intergenerational lifelong learning. Steve Hornberger, Director of the SDSU Social Policy Institute, is spearheading the campus AFU initiative and how it will align with the state of Californias new Master Plan for Aging.

The **University of Queensland** (UQ) in Brisbane, Australia, became the first AFU in the southern hemisphere. Among many campus initiatives, making public-facing spaces and eventually the entire university dementia inclusive is a priority through work with Dementia Australia. UQ is also launching a revitalized orientation program for older students guided by the coordinator of the campus AFU initiative, Nancy Pachana, Professor in the School of Psychology.

## Resource Center

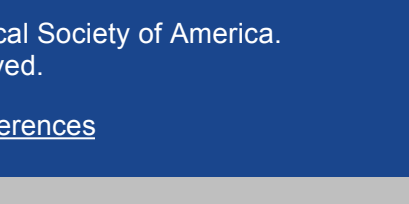
**Youre Invited!** Advancing Age Inclusivity in Psychology: A Virtual Teaching Workshop **Friday, August 20, 1:00 pm-3:00 pm EDT**. Hear from educators in aging about ways to integrate aging content in core courses across the psychology major curriculum. Organized by Division 20 (Adult Development and Aging) of the American Psychological Association. [Register Here](#).

**Please Join Us!** Check out the AGHE Teaching Institute: *Arts, Films, and Novels, Oh My! Teaching about Aging through Humanities/Cultural Representations*. This is an onsite [GSA 2021 Annual Scientific Meeting preconference event 8:00 amnoon MST, Wednesday, November 10](#). Presenters will share experiences and information about incorporating arts and humanities strategies into gerontology education to expand students critical thinking about cultural representations of aging.

**Hot off the Press!** [Assessing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education: Introducing the Age-Friendly Inventory and Campus Climate Survey \(ICCS\)](#). N.M. Silver, S.K. Whitbourne, L.M. Bowen, J.M. Montepare, T. Jansen, C. Beaulieu, A. Prasad, *The Gerontologist* (2021).

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**and Andrea Zakrajsek, OTD, OTR/L**



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