

ADVANCING AGE INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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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. Age-friendly campuses have the capacity to offer diverse educational opportunities and broad connections with community efforts that can contribute in important ways to the health and well-being of individuals as they age. We share some of these real possibilities in this issue.

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.

Feature Article

Age-Friendly Principles Promote Successful Aging

By Carrie Andreoletti, PhD, Central Connecticut State University



In May 2019, I was invited to speak at Stockton University's Successful Aging Festival about the Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative, which inspired me to think about the many connections between the AFU principles and successful aging. Drawing from that talk, I'd like to share some of the ways that institutions of higher education can use the AFU principles to create pathways to successful aging on their campuses.

Although there is some controversy in the field about what exactly it means to age successfully and whether it is even appropriate to use such a term, most agree on the importance of maintaining a sense of meaning, purpose, connection, and engagement with life for fostering well-being across the lifespan. Whether we call it successful aging, optimal aging, healthy aging, or positive aging, the AFU mission and principles serve as a useful framework to aid institutions of higher education in developing programs and practices that promote health and well-being in individuals as they age.

In adopting just a few of the AFU principles, institutions can create pathways for students, faculty, staff, and community members to experience optimal aging through educational efforts, intergenerational connections, research programs, and community engagement. For the sake of brevity, I'll offer a few examples, but I encourage you to think about how the connection can be made for all 10 principles.

One of the most effective - and immediate-things institutions can do to foster successful aging is to increase education about aging and the longevity dividend (AFU Principle 7). The longevity dividend describes the economic and health benefits that can accrue when people live longer and healthier lives. Despite people's fears of aging and public debate about the burdens older adults will place on society, research suggests that aging populations have great potential to boost economic productivity.

Research also shows that accurate knowledge about aging fuels positive attitudes about aging (in both younger and older adults), which can have a positive impact on aging across multiple domains by driving healthy behaviors, including exercising,

eating well, and fostering social support and connection. Institutions can make sure that aging education is infused throughout their curricula by taking advantage of resources such as [GSA's Ageism First Aid](#), the [Reframing Aging Initiative](#), and [AARP's Disrupt Aging Classroom](#) along with teaching and learning resources created by GSA's [Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education \(AGHE\)](#). We need to change the conversation and help people think about aging from a different perspective-and our classrooms are a prime starting place.

Another AFU pathway to successful aging is through intergenerational connection and learning (AFU Principle 4). There are many ways that campuses can foster intergenerational exchange through intergenerational classes, programs, and projects. For some specific ideas, see "10 Ideas for Gaining Momentum" in the Gaining Momentum section of the [Tools for Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education](#). Moreover, research shows that intergenerational programs can reduce ageism (on both sides), promote more positive attitudes about aging, improve academic attendance, and contribute to a greater sense of social connectedness and generativity. All of these outcomes are associated with better health and well-being. However, while we know there are benefits to intergenerational connection, more research is needed, and age-friendly institutions can contribute to this knowledge by developing and evaluating new programs.

Research has demonstrated the benefits of physical activity for physical, cognitive, and mental health, and a growing body of research is focusing on the role of the arts in successful aging. Most campuses are ripe with opportunities for including older adults in their music, theater, and arts programs as either active participants or responsive observers. Many campuses also have fitness facilities-pools, tracks, gyms-that may be underutilized during times when younger students are more likely to be sleeping, studying, or attending classes. Universities can and should make it easier for older adults on their campuses and in their communities to access these resources (AFU Principle 8). Such efforts can also fuel research opportunities to further explore the benefits of physical and creative engagement for individuals as they age.

No matter where your campus is in its journey to be more age-inclusive, the AFU principles provide an excellent framework for promoting health and well-being across the lifespan and creating pathways to healthy aging for campus and community members alike.

Campus Voices

Age-Friendly Universities and Age-Friendly Health Systems: New Partnerships to Support Healthy Aging

By John G. Schumacher, PhD, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and Nicole J. Brandt, PharmD, MBA, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Did you know the age-friendly ecosystem includes Age-Friendly Communities, Age-Friendly Health Systems (AFHS), and the rapidly growing number of Age-Friendly Universities (AFU)? Population aging creates new opportunities for organizational partnerships designed to support the health and well-being of older people. While these multiple age-friendly efforts developed independently, your AFU can begin to expand its impact on healthy aging by creating partnerships with these other efforts in your area. Here we describe ideas for sparking collaboration between an AFU and an AFHS to get you thinking.

The AFHS initiative was launched by the The [John A. Hartford Foundation](#) and the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#), in partnership with the [American Hospital Association](#) and the [Catholic Health Association of the United States](#). The core of the initiative is to consistently promote the delivery of high-quality health care to all older adults through a set of four evidence-based elements known as the **4Ms**, including: (1) What Matters; (2) Medication; (3) Mentation; and (4) Mobility.

The 4 Ms

What Matters

Know and align care with each older adult's specific health outcome goals and care preferences, including but not limited to end-of-life care, and across settings of care.

Medication

If medication is necessary, use age-friendly medication that does not interfere with What Matters to the older adult, Mobility, or Mentation across settings of care.

Mentation

Prevent, identify, treat, and manage delirium across settings of care.

Mobility

Ensure that each older adult moves safely every day to maintain function and do What Matters.

Guided by the 10 AFU Principles, institutions of higher education can initiate meaningful partnerships with their local hospitals and health systems that support the teaching and dissemination of the 4Ms framework and help hospitals achieve designation as an AFHS. For example, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) and Baltimore County (UMBC) are working with the University of Maryland Medical Center to achieve AFHS status and build a business case with these initial activities:

- Establishing a standing Age-Friendly Advisory Committee composed of members from both the university and the medical center to work on mutually beneficial age-friendly activities.
- Engaging health care profession students and faculty in quality improvement initiatives focusing on the 4Ms.
- Partnering with community outreach and education to improve services to older adults to support Age-in-Place and related healthy aging programs.
- Creating an opt-in research registry of older people available to participate in clinical research studies related to the 4Ms and health outcomes.

These few activities serve to support the mutual pursuits of earning the AFHS credential and expanding our AFU's advancement of age inclusivity. We are hopeful our partnership will provide a template for state-wide programs that support new age-friendly ecosystem collaborations. Consider how your AFU might start a dialogue with your local hospital or health care system to support new win-win age-friendly ideas. Ultimately, your collaboration will benefit all the older people in your age-friendly area.

Campus Spotlights

Drexel University's AgeWell Collaboratory

By Laura N. Gitlin, PhD, and Kate Clark, MPA, Drexel University

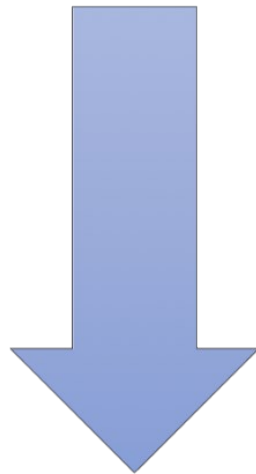


Drexel University's [AgeWell Collaboratory](#), a center without walls, brings together researchers, community-based organizations, and educators to disrupt traditional approaches to caring for older adults and pave the way for new, proven strategies that improve healthy aging across the lifespan. Led by the College of Nursing and Health Professions, the AgeWell Collaboratory unites more than 63 university faculty, staff, and students who partner in research and research training (see [Cell2Society Aging Research Network](#), Principle Investigator, Rose Anne DiMaria-Ghalili); involves over 75 community-based aging organizations and a student advisory council to provide guidance to select AgeWell Collaboratory activities; develops curriculum and experiential learning opportunities to expose students to holistic aging; and engages in research with real-world application with over \$8 million in committed funds. All of its initiatives are interprofessional, team-based, and collaborative; engage relevant stakeholders; and use a health equity lens.

In Fall 2019, the AgeWell Collaboratory paved the way for Drexel University to join the Age-Friendly University (AFU) network. As the first AFU in Philadelphia and second in the state, we join 74 institutions worldwide dedicated to advancing age inclusivity in higher education. Our [initial focus](#) has been on data gathering, developing educational infographics, conducting environmental scans, and establishing a sustainable infrastructure that involves a steering committee composed of key university leaders-from enrollment, to facilities, to alumni relations, to human resources-to guide efforts. Another focal point has been on integrating age as a dimension of university-wide diversity and anti-racism initiatives particularly as it concerns understanding and acting upon structural determinants of health, including health and housing, differential rates of chronic illness, and life

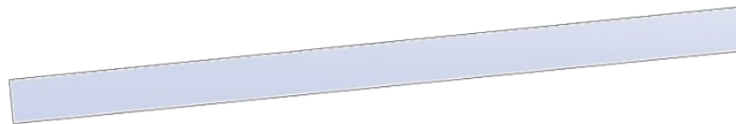
expectancies, specifically for older adults of diverse races and ethnicities.

Informing our activities is what Kurt Lewin described as force field analysis, which identifies factors specific to our university context that support or deter organizational change and the relative impact of each. A force field analysis facilitates decision-making regarding which factors to target to strengthen or mitigate their impact on becoming an AFU. Consequently, our initial efforts have focused on strengthening the impact of the Driving Forces in light of Restraining Forces identified in Figure 1. Being age-friendly is a work in progress involving continuous effort. Critical to the endeavor is embedding an understanding of the challenges and opportunities brought on with the demographic shift into the fabric of the university's vision for its future. In this way, our collective global AFU network's efforts will have the ability to play a critical role in addressing persistent ageism as well as health and longevity disparities regionally, nationally, and worldwide.



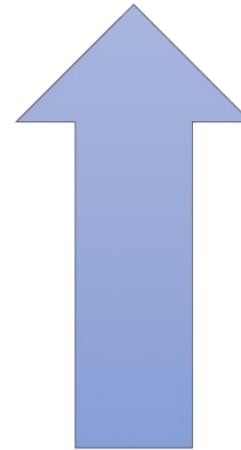
Restraining Forces

1. Lack of financial resources for special initiatives.
2. Lack of student exposure and interest in working with older adults.
3. No gerontology undergraduate or master's programs.
4. Lack of knowledge of how to integrate a life course perspective and associated disparities in curriculum and planning.
5. Focus on traditional college-aged student recruitment.
6. Lack of inclusive programs for retiring staff and faculty and no opportunities for encore careers.



Driving Forces

1. Unquestionable and immediate university leadership buy-in.
2. Aging research as a newly funded university priority.
3. Regional and national aging network organizations eager to collaborate.
4. Recognition of caregiving needs of university employees due to pandemic.
5. Impending "enrollment cliff" propelling university strategic planning to emphasize lifelong learning.
6. Emerging intergenerational initiatives that are well received by students, faculty, and community members.
7. Widespread recognition of the impacts of social determinants of health, health disparities, and racism across the lifespan and on healthy aging.
8. Aging alumni, faculty, and staff seeking to be more integrated into university.



News and Notes

- [Division 20 \(Adult Development and Aging\) of the American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) has joined the AFU movement with its endorsement of the AFU initiative as part of its division presidential theme **Advancing Age Inclusivity in Psychology**.
- Join colleagues in the aging field to discuss and offer solutions for **Building Bridges: Generating Resources for Geropsychology Education-A Virtual Geropsychology Training Conference** to be held March 2 & 4, 2021. [Preregister here](#) and begin providing your input. Supported by the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), Council of Professional Geropsychology Training Programs, Psychologists in Long Term Care, Society of Clinical Geropsychology, and Division 20 (Adult Development and Aging) of APA.

- Congratulations to **awardees of GSA seed grants** made possible by AARP to support new initiatives to advance age inclusivity in higher education:
 - Age-Friendly University Faculty Affiliate Fellow Program, Eastern Michigan University, Cassandra Barragan, Andrea Zakrajsek
 - Have You Heard of HB 60? Promoting Lifelong Learning for Older Adults Through Higher Education, University of Utah, Katarina Friberg Felsted, Jacqueline Eaton
 - UC Berkeley Emeriti Academy Virtual Gathering and Poster Session, University of California, Berkeley, Cary Sweeney, Shelly Zedeck, Angelica Stacy, Sharon Inkelas
 - Imagining an Age-Friendly University of Nebraska at Omaha: Content, Colleagues, and Conversation, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Julie Blaskewicz Boron, Lyn Holley
- AFU partner **Fielding Graduate University** presented its [2020 Creative Longevity and Wisdom Outstanding Scholar Practitioner Award](#) to the rock band Ace of Cups (the first all-female rock band to share the main stage with prominent male bands in the 1960s); the band members reunited in their 60s to produce albums in 2017 and 2019. Watch [Professor Connie Corley interview Ace of Cups' members](#) Mary Alfiler, Dallis Craft, Denise Kaufman, Mary Ellen Simpson, and Diane Vitalich, followed by a performance segment.
- AFU partner **University of North Georgia (UNG)** Institute for Healthy Aging hosts an intergenerational program to help ameliorate feelings of social isolation and loneliness. Generation to Generation pairs UNG students with older adult mentors for conversations culminating in an archive of oral histories that document the resilience, strength, and wisdom of the older generation. [Explore their stories.](#)
- AFU partner **University of Rhode Island (URI)** connects students with older adults to help them effectively use technological devices through its [Engaging Generations: Cyber Seniors](#) program. URI has greatly expanded the program by providing phone and virtual support to help address social isolation and promote well-being during the pandemic. [Read about the intergenerational program](#) to increase access for older adults.

Resource Center

- **LEARN-ENGAGE-ACT:** The GSA-AGHE-AFU Workgroup is thrilled to present [Tools for Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education](#), supported by an AARP grant. Learn why advancing age inclusivity is important now-along with how your institution can join the Age-Friendly University (AFU) network. Explore tools and resources for Making the Case, Where to Start, Gaining Momentum, and Assessing and Tracking Success.
- Learn about challenges, opportunities, and strategies related to age-diverse campuses from the perspectives of admissions and career services staff at AFU partner **Washington University in St. Louis** in a recent study published in Gerontology & Geriatrics Education and authored by Nancy Morrow-Howell, Natalie Galucia, Emma Swinford, and Tanner Meyer. Read the article [here](#).



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