

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. This issue brings together leaders from the founding partner institutions of the Age-Friendly University initiative to share information about new developments in the Age-Friendly University Global Network.

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

Advancing the Age-Friendly University Global Network: Our Next Decade

**M. Aaron Guest, PhD, MPH, MSW, Assistant Professor of Aging,
Center for Innovation in Healthy and Resilient Aging, Arizona State
University, Secretariat, Age-Friendly University Global Network**



When launched in 2012, it would have been difficult to imagine the swiftness at which the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University (AFU) would be adopted globally and lead to the emergence of the Age-Friendly University Global Network (AFUGN). Indeed, over 100 universities worldwide have adopted these principles as a framework for their institutions to embrace age-friendly practices. Equally as exciting has been to witness the innovation that has gone into embracing these principles on campus.

As we begin the second decade of the AFUGN, I am as thrilled as ever to continue—and expand—this work. After 10 years of leading the network and discussion among the three founding universities, Dublin City University (DCU) has passed the Secretariat and AFUGN Host role to Arizona State University (ASU). The University of Strathclyde has assumed the role of Vice Chair of the AFUGN. DCU will remain involved as a member of the executive team.

We at ASU are enthusiastic to assume this role and, with the assistance of our partners, look forward to continuing and advancing the work of the AFUGN. These efforts include the development of a global advisory board of regional representatives and strategic plan, expansion to underrepresented countries and continents, new educational opportunities and webinars, additional resources from the Secretariat, and increased opportunities for collaboration, research, and networking. Guiding these efforts, we hope will be regional leads who will work to build community and develop opportunities for those in their region. We will remain an engaged Global Network in which we learn from one another and create a more age-friendly world.

In the coming months, we will share more about the plans for the network—and will need your input in shaping its strategic direction. Your engagement and feedback are critical to ensuring success.

Periods of transition can be tricky—believe me, I know. Thank you all for your patience and commitment to AFUGN as we have worked to ensure its long-term sustainability. I am pleased to share that we will re-open endorsement applications for the Ten Principles on August 15, 2023. You will be able to learn more and endorse the Ten Principles at our new website AFUGN.org, which is launching soon. In the meantime, contact us at Secretariat@afugn.org if you have any questions.

Endorsements submitted previously but not acted on are undergoing review, and you can expect to hear from us by August 15th. For existing members, expect a questionnaire at the end of August as we aim to learn more about one another.

In reviewing the activities of the last decade, it is beyond impressive what has occurred and what you, as AFU champions, have achieved. I look forward to seeing what we do together in this second decade.

On a personal note, and on behalf of all of us engaged with this work, there is an immense debt of gratitude to Christine O’Kelly at DCU for her tremendous work in bringing the AFUGN to this point. I look forward to her continued engagement and mentorship. I must also thank Alix McDonald and Gemma Gilliland at the University of Strathclyde as well as Rick Knopf and Lindsey Beagley at ASU for their dedication and work on behalf of the AFUGN. Finally, a special thank you to Judy Karshmer, Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation at ASU, for providing the support to ensure this vital work continues.

Onward!

Campus Spotlight

Reflections on 10 Years Leading the Age-Friendly University Global Network

Christine O’Kelly, Dublin City University

Little did I know back in 2010 that the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University (AFU) would become a manifesto to advance age inclusivity and inspire over 100 universities globally to join Dublin City University (DCU) and embrace the concepts of age-friendly in higher education.

Photo: Christine O’Kelly and DCU President Daire



At that time, I led a global nonprofit organization focusing on gender and aging, working on advocacy and inclusion for more than 20 years. However, over time, I realized we were only speaking to half an audience—we were engaging with older people to influence change rather than engaging younger people to be active agents in changing their future.



When an opportunity to work with DCU arose in 2014, I was delighted to be appointed to the position of age-friendly coordinator with a mandate from DCU’s then President, Prof. Brian MacCraith, to “make the job your own.” Arizona State University and the University of Strathclyde had endorsed the Ten Principles under their lifelong learning programs.

Photo: A Taste of DCU

However, it struck me that while lifelong learning is essential, AFU needed to expand to embrace a much broader multidisciplinary approach from financial services to technologies, humanities, health care, science, and business. Higher education is critical in ensuring that academic knowledge, discourse, and research are harnessed to inform aging policy and change how society thinks and responds to demographic needs. We have a duty of care to our students to ensure they are leaving the university well-rounded with the tools for their future career success and knowledge to carry them through to age successfully.

Over the past 10 years of leading the Age-Friendly University Global Network (AFUGN), I have had the great honor and privilege to work with colleagues worldwide to implement age-friendly practices by challenging stereotypes, promoting intergenerational learning, and advancing the Silver Economy through education and research. I am proud to have represented DCU at the United Nations, AGE Platform Europe, and the European Covenant on Demographic Change (DCU is a founder member) and to have contributed to several national and international working groups. The incredible opportunities to work with AFU champions and host four international conferences, and engage in seminars, conferences, and presentations globally have extended beyond my professional role and I have made lifelong friendships and connections, which I value beyond measure.

Changing the narrative on aging and adopting a cross-sectional approach starts with the individual. Prof. Alexandre Kalache, the founder of the age-friendly movement, said, "The gift of longer life is arguably the most consequential legacy of the past century. It is transforming all culture and politics and generating almost limitless potential for overall human development." When I see a small child outside at play or a new baby, I am struck by the fact that the work we are doing now will influence their lives. I believe that is worth the fight.

Thanks to the ongoing support of DCU's President, Prof. Daire Keogh, age-friendly activities will continue in DCU to advance the Ten Principles and contribute to the AFUGN. I am pleased to remain on the Executive Board and support institutions on their AFU journey. I know that the AFUGN is in good hands, and I am very excited to be part of the next stage of the revolution in higher education led by Arizona State University and the University of Strathclyde. I wish them success and thank all the AFUGN members for their support these past years.

Campus Voices



An AFU Conversation With Alix McDonald, Head of the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland

What do you see as the key aspects of the Age-Friendly University (AFU) Secretariat model?

We are really excited by the new AFU Secretariat model, which will be led by our fellow founding partner Arizona State University. Here at the University of Strathclyde, we will serve as the Vice Chair of the Secretariat and will lead on recruiting more members in the UK and across Europe.

We will build upon the incredible legacy created by Dublin City University over the last 11 years and continue to lead and support all AFU members globally by coordinating activities and managing relationships. We will also facilitate communication between members, monitor implementation of AFU policies and programs as well as represent the AFU at meetings, conferences, and other events.

From your global perspective, what do you hope the new AFU organization will accomplish?

Ever since its creation, the AFU has aimed to foster intergenerational exchange and enable the exploration of Age-Friendly initiatives within institutions, and we aim to build upon this. We will work together to support members to cultivate new innovative practices in teaching, research, and community engagement.

The network gives members a unique opportunity to become part of a global expertise base in the field of aging. By engaging with the Ten Principles of the AFU, members can become united in their activities related to aging. We hope this will facilitate exciting new collaborations and enhance the potential for successful funding applications among network members.

What are some AFU highlights of what the University of Strathclyde has been doing on its campus?

As one of the initial members, membership in the AFUGN underpins the University of Strathclyde's founding principle of providing "a place of useful learning, open to all." We are committed to both research relating to aging and demographic change as well offering a unique range of learning opportunities across the life course.

In 2017, we established the Age-Friendly Academy (AFA) to showcase our commitment to positive aging. The AFA captures the increasing amount of research and provision that we have here at Strathclyde focused on aging and demographic change as well as offering learning opportunities for older people. We currently have research expertise in a range of topics, including psychology, education, and computer and information science.

We continue to offer learning opportunities for adults and run the largest program of university-based learning opportunities aimed at those aged 50+ in Europe. The programs are constantly evolving to cater for the interests of the older adult students and are not just about learning; they are a fantastic opportunity for our learners to make friends and socialize with others at a similar stage in life.

More recently, we have created of a unique range of upskilling courses to support adults in mid-late career who may be looking to re-enter the workforce, are facing redundancy,

or are considering a career change and are keen to develop their transferable skills. These courses have been a great success at a time when many adults are reassessing their careers and life goals.

The AFA also actively promotes volunteering to those aged 50+ to take part in a varied range of university-wide volunteering opportunities or research activities.

We are also very proud to promote a range of initiatives to those at the other end of the age spectrum. This includes “Young Strathclyde,” where we inspire children to take part in learning beyond the classroom, as well as the Glasgow Intergenerational Mentoring Network, which matches children and young people with older adult mentors to support them into higher education and nurtures literacy development in primary schools.

What are some words of advice you can give institutions looking to be more age-inclusive and join the AFU Global Network?

We would encourage any institution to become more age-inclusive and promote positive aging across the lifespan. Together we want to break down barriers and change the perception of what a university is and who it can be for. Becoming a member of the AFU Global Network can give institutions an invaluable platform for sharing best practices and innovative approaches to engaging with our aging world.

By joining the network, members can not only strengthen the capacity of their institutions and demonstrate their commitment to advancing lifelong learning, but they will become part of a powerful collective advocating for the importance of aging within higher education.

News and Notes

- The Anschutz Multidisciplinary Center on Aging at **AFU partner University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus** successfully led state Senate Bill 31 Concerning improving older Coloradans’ access to trained geriatric specialist health-care providers, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation, which will to improve health care provider access for older adults during the 2023 Colorado Legislative Session. The successful passing of this age-friendly bill is preceded by Senate Bill 158, which was successfully passed during the 2021 Colorado Legislative Session. Senate Bill 158 Concerning modifications to the Colorado health service corps program administered by the department of public health and environment to expand the availability of geriatric care providers in shortage areas in the state, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation, which passed loan forgiveness for geriatric-trained clinicians to provide incentives to pay off their student loans quicker. The work now begins, with the successful passing of Senate Bill 31, for the creation of the Geriatrics Health Care Provider Consortium, which will help lead the development of this training program across higher education institutions throughout Colorado that currently have graduate-level clinical training programs. The eligible trainees will represent a variety of health care disciplines to include physical therapy, psychology, dental medicine, pharmacy, and social work. Once the trainees

complete the 1-year training program, they are eligible to apply for loan forgiveness by working at approved clinics across the state.



AFUs connect across the pond:
CCSU study abroad course visits University of Strathclyde

- **AFU partner Central Connecticut State University** recently returned from an intergenerational course abroad to Scotland where they visited fellow AFU partner University of Strathclyde in Glasgow and met with members of the Strathclyde Centre for Lifelong Learning and the Age-Friendly Academy. The focus of the course was global aging and livable communities. They also spent some time in Edinburgh with the Place-Age project team at Heriot-Watt University and the OPENspace Research Centre team at the University of Edinburgh College of Art. Participants enjoyed the power of intergenerational learning and connection on each day of their travels.
- **AFU partner Stockton University** and the Stockton Center on Successful Aging hosted the annual Successful Aging Festival after a 3-year hiatus. This age-friendly daylong event gathered 350 older adults from surrounding counties, members of the Stockton University Retiree Association, and university staff, faculty, and students who were invited to attend breakout sessions on nutrition, exercise, and technology, to meet over 40 exhibitors and vendors, and to learn about the Village to Village NJ Network whose goal is to assist New Jersey residents to age in place.

- The Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, which is part of the **AFU Council at AFU partner University of Minnesota**, is now offering free age-friendly weekly Mindful Mondays drop-in sessions open to individuals of all ages, held noon to 1:00 pm (Central time) via Zoom. Experienced instructors guide participants through a series of mindful movements and meditations that will leave them feeling rejuvenated. No prior experience or special clothing is necessary. If you are interested in participating, [register here](#).
- Allyson Graf of **AFU partner Northern Kentucky University**, Andrea June of **AFU partner Central Connecticut State University**, and Maryam Tabrizi of **University of Nevada, Las Vegas** convened to promote age inclusivity in higher education at the annual meeting of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues in Denver, Colorado. An interactive discussion session introduced a framework for fostering intergenerational conversations and action on social issues with illustrative examples. The session complemented conference efforts imploring that age be included in intersectional approaches to research and policy.



Andrea June, Allyson Graf, and Maryam Tabrizi

Resource Center

Are you exploring innovative educational approaches as part of the AFU initiative?

Consider sharing your efforts and insights with a submission to Gerontology & Geriatrics Education (G&GE, GSA's Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education peer-reviewed journal). G&GE considers manuscripts under three categories: Pedagogy and Practice; Research; and Structured Reviews. Submissions should demonstrate scholarly rigor (including appropriate methods/theoretical grounding) as well as clearly indicate how and why the findings advance the current body of gerontological and/or geriatrics pedagogical knowledge. See the [G&GE website](#) for additional information. Also see [previous G&GE articles](#) related to the AFU initiative.

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