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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 recent innovative efforts by GSA and its members that aim to tackle ageism in different ways to advance age inclusivity in higher education.

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

Updated Ageism First Aid Course to Launch in Early 2026 >>

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) is updating and relaunching the Society's popular Ageism First Aid online course early next year.

The updates to the course aim to ensure the content is timely and easy to understand, and to prepare students to engage thoughtfully with older adults, avoiding stereotypes and ageist language. The course will also better align with other GSA age-inclusive efforts, from the programming of the Age Inclusivity in Higher Education (AIHE) Workgroup to the work and trainings offered by the National Center to Reframe Aging.

A new name for the course will be announced, but the purpose of the course will remain the same. The updated course will help students change how they think and feel about older people and aging. It will also help improve how students communicate with and about older people, which will improve the quality of life for everyone where we work and study. The course is designed to prepare students for assignments in the field and in careers where they will be interfacing with older adults.

The course is intended for all students from all educational backgrounds; its primary use for GSA

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member faculty has and will continue to be for undergraduate students, but the course will also serve as a valuable resource in introductory courses (ranging from nursing to social work to premed), as well as upper-level courses (such as in internship programs) for students with no prior training or limited experience in working with older adults.

GSA staff and the editor of the updated course, Tina Newsham, PhD (AGHE Past-Chair), focused on refining content to simplify the concepts and to update references and data throughout. These changes include:

- **More concise copy**—The concepts and theories have been simplified and language reworded to ensure the course content focuses on the most important information for anyone engaging with older adults as part of their coursework.
- **New course flow**—The course introduces the concept of ageism and the fundamentals of aging before addressing communication changes and practical tips for talking to older adults.
- **Shorter course**—The new version takes about 1.5 hours to complete, reduced from a 2-hour course.
- **Application-based scenarios**: Quizzes throughout the course are replaced with scenarios that allow students to apply concepts learned in the course to real-world situations.

The cost will remain the same as the previous version: $19 for individual students who sign up for a free GSA undergraduate membership. Faculty interested in incorporating the course into their curriculum or coursework can reach out to Charlie Baase at cbaase@geron.org to find out more. GSA staff will continue to provide faculty with user support and instructions to share with their students.

GSA is hosting a learning session on the updated course for faculty to explore the offering during the scientific meeting in Boston on November 14, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. ET in the Exhibit Hall's Product Theater



Charlie Baase
GSA Vice President, Marketing Communications & Business Development

Innovative Actions in Higher Education to Address Ageism in Health Care



Strengthening age inclusivity in higher education is the responsibility of each faculty member and higher education leader to ensure that students across the age spectrum are educated about issues that relate to aging. Students preparing to enter their adult personal and professional age-diverse worlds, especially those in the health professions, need to be prepared to act when they face ageism in health care. Defined as the systematic and unjust treatment of individuals based on their age within health care settings, older adults are particularly at risk. It is expressed through stereotyping, under- or overtreatment, biased resource allocation, and patronizing communication. Ageism in health care settings is often a result of insufficient geriatrics training for providers.

GSA is well positioned to lead the Recognizing and Addressing Ageism in Health Care initiative in collaboration with AARP. According to the *Carta of Florence Against Ageism: No Place for Ageism in Health Care*, 2024, "Pervasive ageism in health care is particularly destructive since it negatively affects health survival and trajectories of health and well-being of older persons and curtails individuals' capacity to contribute to societal goals."[1] Ageism in health care contributes to substantial economic burden, with lower preventive care use and more frequent emergency room visits. Research by Becca Levy, PhD, estimated $63 billion annually in added health care costs due to ageism.

To confront this challenge, GSA has created a comprehensive suite of tools and resources designed to enhance impactful educational practices [Ageism In Health Care]. These aim to raise awareness, improve communication, and refine clinical decision-making. The offerings include video vignettes and reports focused on effective communication with older adults and medical decision-making. A new curricular resource titled "Recognizing and Addressing Ageism in Health Care" features a 45-minute lecture tailored for students in the health professions, and emphasizes case studies and practical strategies.

A multi-university pilot program is set to launch this fall, with plans for expansion in 2026. By integrating these resources into health professions programs at higher education institutions across the United States, GSA aims to address ageism in clinical settings, enhance health outcomes, and promote equitable care for older adults. For those interested in learning

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1 Ungar, Andrea et al. "Carta of Florence Against Ageism: No Place for Ageism in Healthcare." *The Journals of Gerontology. Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences vol. 79,3 (2024): glad264. doi:10.1093/gerona/glad264*

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"By integrating these resources into health professions programs at higher education institutions across the United States, GSA aims to combat ageism in clinical settings, enhance health outcomes, and promote equitable care for older adults."

more about the initiative or to participate in the 2026 expansion, sign up at Ageism in Health Care-Learn More & Participate.

Tackling ageism in health care necessitates a unified approach to shift attitudes, educate future health care professionals, and implement policies that uphold fairness and respect for older adults. This multifaceted initiative aligns with our mission to ensure that future health care professionals treat and care for older adults with dignity and respect, while being aware of the harmful effects of ageism.

As chair of the GSA Ageism in Health Care Advisory Board, I thank fellow members for sharing their expertise: Mark Brennan-Ing, PhD; Terri Harvath, PhD, RN; Becca Levy, PhD; Spero Manson, PhD; Joann M. Montepare, PhD; Andrew Steward, PhD, LCSW; and Mary Tinetti, MD; as well as GSA staff James Appleby, BSPharm, MPH, ScD (Hon); Ophira Bansal, MBA; Elana Kieffer Blass, MBA; and Lisa C. McGuire, PhD. This remarkable team is deeply committed, bringing both passion and focus to the project.



Marilyn R. Gugliucci, MA, PhD
GSA President



Lisa C. McGuire, PhD
GSA Vice President, Strategic Alliances & Practice Innovation

Bringing Together Reframing Aging and Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE): A Conversation with Nancy Morrow-Howell

Tell us about why bringing these efforts together is needed.
In the age-friendly ecosystem movement, we strive to promote practices, programs, and policies to advance age inclusivity and reduce age bias in health care systems, communities, workplaces, and institutions of higher education. Yet strategies to advance inclusivity are implemented by people who may or may not be familiar with effective ways to communicate about age and aging. For example, we could be advised to include more older people to increase the age-diversity of an organization or committee; but as we implement this suggestion, we could fail to be inclusive by using language that otherizes older members or by not recognizing their capacity.

What is the AIDHE Quick Start Guide that is being developed?
This new resource aims to support efforts to advance age-inclusivity and reduce ageism at colleges and universities. In the AIDHE Quick Start Guide, we draw on the AIDHE model, which suggests practices to create age-inclusive learning and work environments in the core institutional domains of Teaching & Learning, Services & Resources, Student Affairs, Physical Environment, Research, Personnel, and Outreach & Engagement. In implementing practices across these domains, faculty, staff, students, and administrators also need skills in presenting information and communicating with stakeholders of all ages in ways that reduce age bias and increase inclusivity.

To strengthen these communication skills, we brought together practices from the AIDHE domains and principles from the Reframing Aging initiative. The National Center for Reframing Aging at GSA provides communication strategies to advance an "equitable and complete story about aging in America." Reframing Aging principles include confronting the prevailing narrative of age as decline and deficit, highlighting the opportunities of longer life and the capacity of older adults, using language that is free of bias and inclusive, and educating about ageism to raise awareness.

In the AIDHE Quick Start Guide, we suggest actions and language to operationalize these Reframing Aging principles across domains and hopefully contribute to the effective implementation of AIDHE strategies.

What is an example of age-inclusive language in higher education?
Several Reframing Aging principles are relevant across AIDHE domains. In classrooms, admissions offices, and staff meetings, we should take every opportunity to talk about aging as a universal, developmental process and advocate for universal design to support people of all ages. We should emphasize that we are all aging and avoid language that otherizes older people and sets up "us versus them." We should focus on skills, qualifications, and contributions, not age or generation. We could improve the age diversity of our campuses by highlighting voices and images of older students and colleagues in campus newsletters, panels, and marketing. People of all ages have health issues, caregiving responsibilities, technology challenges, mobility limitations—we will serve all stakeholders better by not focusing on people by age.

In short, programs and policies are important but not enough. All of us implementing AIDHE practices on campus will be more effective if we use messages and language suggested by Reframing Aging. To create more age inclusivity and age justice on our campuses, we need to ramp up our efforts from the macro to the micro level.

When will the AIDHE Quick Start Guide be available?
The Age Inclusivity in Higher Education (AIHE) Workgroup aims to complete the work and have the virtual guide available by the beginning of 2026. If you want to know more about it, please look for me at GSA 2025 and ask!



Nancy Morrow-Howell, PhD, MSW
Washington University in St. Louis

Presentation proposals are being accepted and sponsors sought for the Second Biennial Mid-Atlantic Intergenerational Conference on June 3–5, 2026, at the Age-Friendly University (AFU) Network partner, Stockton University's Atlantic City Campus. Adjacent to the famous boardwalk, the event will gather colleagues to share ideas, successes, and challenges in creating and sustaining age-inclusive intergenerational programs. Cosponsored by the Penn State University Extension Service and the Stockton Center on Successful Aging, proposals are due no later than November 30, 2025. For more information, visit the conference website or email co-chairs Matt Kaplan, PhD (msk15@psu.edu) or Christine Ferri, PhD (Christine.Ferri@stockton.edu).



IPE Organizers and Panelists

Congratulations to GSA colleagues Skye Leedahl and Jill Juris, and the University of Rhode Island (AFU partner), who received a third-year grant from the RRF Foundation for Aging to disseminate resources that promote the use of technology as a tool for building connection across generations within higher education systems. Read more about the InterGenerational Technology Engagement Checklist for Higher Education (IG TECH) in the Summer issue of the AIHE Newsletter.

Northern Arizona University recently piloted an Interprofessional Education (IPE) event to build a dementia-ready workforce in a region identified as a "memory care desert." Faculty and GSA members from nursing (Gemma O'Donnell, MSN, Terry Smith, MS), the psychological sciences (Eric Cerino, PhD), and social work (Michael McCarthy, PhD) guided students through a case-based, small-group learning experience that emphasized empathy, communication, and collaborative care for individuals with dementia. In the spring of 2026, the team will expand the initiative by including additional departments to prepare students for dementia-informed, team-based care.

The Age Inclusivity in Higher Education (AIHE) Workgroup and the Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network are pleased to be hosting the GSA Workshop **Building an Age-Friendly Campus Network and Advancing Age-Inclusive Campus Practices** at the upcoming GSA 2025 where GSA colleagues will share information about their AIDHE/AFU campus efforts.

Saturday, November 15, 2025
8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. EST, Sheraton Boston, Gardner Room

Questions? Contact:
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Joann M. Montepare jmontepare@lasell.edu

RESOURCES

The American Psychological Association (APA) and its Committee on Aging (CONA) have developed a new APA Resolution on Ageism, reaffirming the APA's commitment to identifying, opposing, and eliminating age-based prejudice and discrimination in research, practice, and public policy. The resolution addresses the consequential impacts of ageism and calls for systemic changes that promote dignity, respect, and inclusion for people of all ages.

Feel free to share and cite the Resolution in your efforts to advance age inclusivity

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