WINTER 2025

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.

Drawing on the Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE) model recently adopted by GSA, this issue shares information and resources about Teaching and Learning, one of the seven core AIDHE domains.

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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Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE) model

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Transforming Teaching and Learning for Age-Inclusive Campuses

What the AIDHE Model Suggests

The Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE) model adopted by GSA, which builds on the seminal work of the Age-Friendly University Global Network, offers a comprehensive framework for fostering age inclusivity in higher education. Introduced in the fall 2023 issue of the *Age Inclusivity in Higher Education* newsletter, the AIDHE model emphasizes the shared responsibility of faculty, staff, and students in creating an age-inclusive campus culture across seven key domains of activity in higher education.

Teaching and Learning, the cornerstone of any academic institution, represents a significant opportunity to enhance age inclusivity. Faculty, staff, and students can work together to create learning environments that acknowledge and support age-diverse populations. This includes incorporating age-related content into coursework to build broader awareness of aging and address societal ageism.

With support from the RRF Foundation for Aging, a research group in which I participated (Bowen, Silverstein, Montepare, Whitbourne et al.) conducted a study based on the AIDHE model—encompassing surveys and focus groups—that highlights several challenges for campuses as well as evidence-based strategies to address these challenges.

Older students, those beyond the traditional range of ages 18 to 24

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"Faculty, staff, and students can work together to create learning environments that acknowledge and support age-diverse populations."



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years, often report feeling excluded or at a disadvantage in classroom settings, sometimes because faculty design assignments and policies that inadvertently fail to consider the diverse life experiences and needs of their students or because the classroom space itself is not designed to support accessibility. In response to these challenges, our study yielded the following recommendations:

- Increase flexibility in teaching, classroom management, and course policies to accommodate caregiving/work obligations.
- Educate faculty members on an asset-based approach (strength-driven) to teaching older students.
- Design accessible classrooms and remote learning environments.

Sometimes, the challenges with Teaching and Learning begin before students even set foot in a classroom, as advising is sometimes geared toward the needs of traditional-aged students. Therefore, our study further offers the recommendation that campuses tailor academic advising and registration to the needs of returning and older students.

Expanding students' access to age-related content represents another critical step. In addition to expanding offerings of age-related content courses, embedding aging themes in non-gerontology courses is essential to bolstering students' awareness of aging and age bias. Initiatives such as adding an "aging" designation to general education diversity requirements offer promising pathways toward widespread adoption. However, such curricular changes require the commitment of faculty and program administrators, which underscores the importance of recognizing aging as an essential area of study across disciplines. As a start, however, we recommend campuses work to make age-related course content appealing and relevant to students.

To drive these changes effectively, campuses would benefit from implementing three interconnected strategies identified in our research:

1. raising awareness about age inclusivity can foster a more welcoming environment for all;
2. educating faculty, staff, and students about age bias equips them to identify and address challenges more effectively; and
3. surveying the campus community provides invaluable insights into perceptions of age inclusivity and highlights areas for growth.

By adopting these strategies and embracing the principles of the AIDHE model, higher education institutions can create a culture that not only supports age-diverse learners but also serves as a broader example of inclusivity. Together, we can reimagine teaching and learning as spaces where individuals of all ages can thrive.

Visit the GSA Enrich Learning Center on Age Inclusivity in Higher Education to learn more about the AIDHE model and supporting resources.



Lauren Marshall Bowen, PhD
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Exploring Novel Strategies for Advancing Age InclusivityCampuses

The Centre on Aging at the University of Manitoba has explored a number of teaching and learning strategies that align with the Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education framework as part the institution's Age-Friendly University (AFU) efforts. In 2021, the Centre on Aging held a competition to fund AFU initiatives as a unique way to champion age inclusivity at the university. The goal of the AFU competition was to: (1) increase the awareness of AFU on campus through broad promotion of the funding competition to academic and non-academic units; (2) engage more units in purposeful AFU activities; and (3) create opportunities for new AFU initiatives. Applications required that an AFU project was feasible in the time of the funding (9 months), had support from the unit head and any collaborators, had a budget justification for their request for funds, and was committed to sustainability related to the project. Four projects were funded:

- Tunnel wayfinding (Architectural and Engineering Services, Sustainability Office)
- Technology training (Alumni Relations)
- Education for those working with older adults (Faculty of Extended Education)
- Webinar and workshop series with intergenerational artists (School of Art Gallery)

The funding team met monthly with the funded groups to be updated on their projects. In these monthly meetings, we also used the time to share successes/challenges as well as provide input into their projects. Because many had not previously worked specifically with older adults, these meetings provided important support to the projects.

One project of particular interest is the micro-certificate program on Facilitating Older Adult Learning developed by Extended Education. This online educational opportunity was designed by conducting literature reviews, consulting with content experts, and collaborating with community experts.

The on-demand micro-certificate involves 36 contact hours arranged into three 12-hour modules, with the following topics for each module:

- Older adult development
- Universal design for learning
- Using technology for teaching and learning with older adults

The overall goal of the modules is to enable individuals to work more effectively teaching and supporting learning of older adults. It was designed with many types of learning environments in mind: classrooms, activity centers as well as health care and therapy settings. Those enrolled can take the modules in any order, which can be done singly or as a series. The modules can be completed on demand online, but there are specific time periods over which they must be completed. The successful completion of all three modules earns the micro-certificate.

In winter 2023, 25 people took part in the program. Feedback from these individuals indicated that it was a valuable micro-certificate, where individuals gained a deeper understanding of how older adults think, improved their technology skills, and learned how to engage older adults in virtual formats. Overall, it was valued by many for personal and professional growth. One person described it as "a valuable micro-certificate—one of few that is specific to older adult learning."

Learn about the micro-certificate and watch this video from one of the participants. For more information, please email the program: eeprograms@umanitoba.ca



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A Conversation About Intergenerational Teaching and Learning

The Case of Older Learners Auditing Classes

SUNY BROCKPORT

In your experience, what are the benefits of intergenerational teaching and learning in higher education?

Opening classes for older adults to audit benefits everyone. Older adult learners are interested in the course content at hand so they are motivated to learn. They select a course because they are genuinely interested in the topic. Instructors appreciate this level of motivation as older learners contribute regularly to course discussions by asking questions and sharing insights. Older learners' presence in the classroom provides opportunities for intergenerational engagement with students. This interaction is reciprocal; it often bridges the educational and social domains as both groups learn together throughout the semester. For students, it also provides a positive example that the desire to learn continues into later life. Older learners also gain perspective on the academic expectations for students and the role of technology.

What are some of the challenges your research has revealed?

Managing expectations related to level of engagement (e.g., attendance, completion of assignments) is very important. If an instructor gives permission for an older adult learner to audit the course, there is an expectation the learner will regularly attend class and keep up with course readings, etc. When this doesn't happen, it could lead to negative perceptions of older learners. Ensuring that auditors and instructors meet early to set mutual expectations is key. Pedagogy is also important. Intergenerational engagement is more likely to happen in courses where dialogue and small group work is required, rather than large lecture-based courses.

Older adult auditors also count as a "seat" the same as a tuition-paying student. If a course is in high demand, instructors may not have space to enroll auditors.

What strategies do you suggest for encouraging faculty to explore more intergenerational exchange in their classrooms?

Older adult learners can bring many positive attributes to the learning environment, but they need a clear path to gain entry to the course and related materials. While large-scale auditing initiatives take time to develop, instructors can work with their alumni offices or local community organizations to promote a small number of courses with a limited number of spaces. Alternatively, not all older adult learners want to commit to a semester-long course. Inviting this audience to participate in select learning activities designed to foster intergenerational dialogue as part of course activity may be more feasible.

How might our institutions support this pedagogical approach?

Learning is an integral component associated with the ongoing process of development and aging. Institutions of higher education can benefit greatly by working within their community to implement Age-Friendly University principles and the Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education model, which bring into focus intergenerational teaching and learning. This work needs to be recognized and valued by institutions. One way we have done this at our institution is to provide letters to faculty who have accepted older adult auditors into their courses. This letter thanks them for their efforts in supporting age-inclusive learning at the university and encourages them to include the letter as part of their annual report. Depending on the department's appointment, promotion, and tenure guidelines, these efforts may fall under teaching or service.



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Center for Research and Study of Aging (CRSA) at the University of Haifa presents "A Taste of Academia"

Taste of Academia

As part of its AFU initiative, the **Center for Research and Study of Aging** (CRSA) at the University of Haifa organized its "A Taste of Academia" program to strengthen the connection between the university and the city's older adults. Lecturers across faculties presented on a variety of topics to stimulate discussion and thought among the intergenerational participants.



Lasell Village women's basketball team meet with Lasell Village residents

A Winning Game

The fall semester marked a new step in intergenerational programming between AFU partner **Lasell University** (LU) and **Lasell Village** (LV), organized by LV fitness trainer Paul Connolly and LU head coach of women's basketball Kelley Sundberg. LV residents met with the LU Lasers basketball team and attended a winning game. Designated as the team's new good luck charm, plans are in the works for residents to attend more games over the winter season.

An Intergenerational Gathering

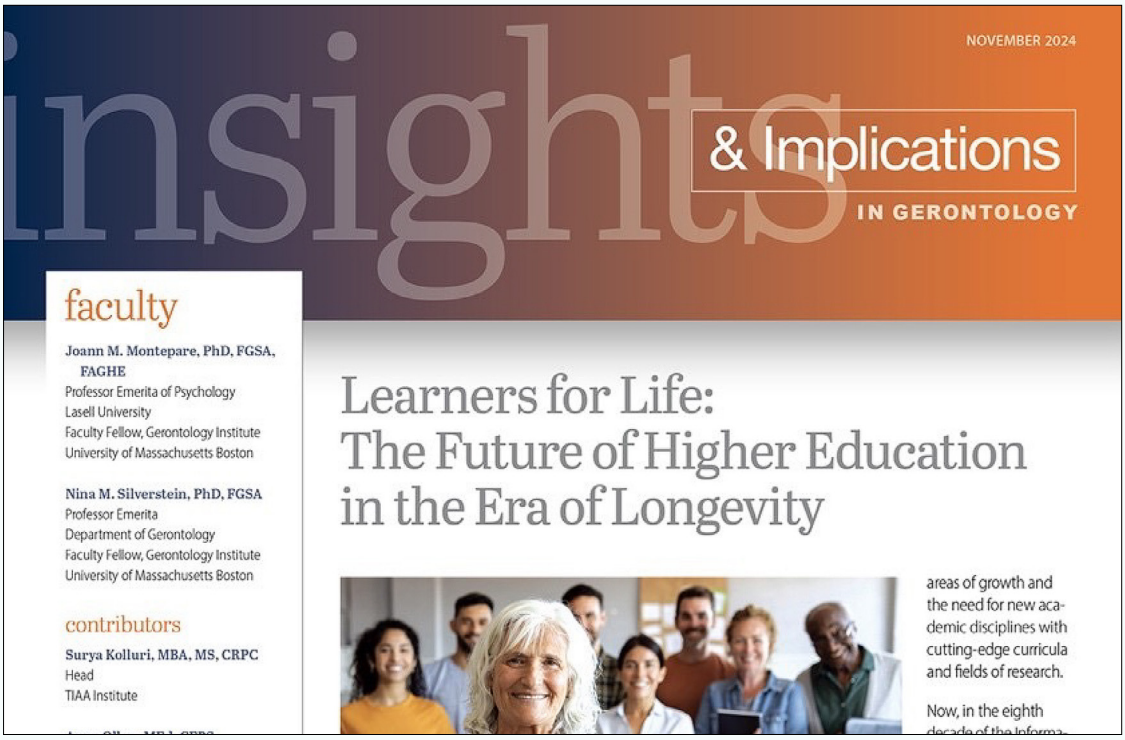
The **Stockton Center on Successful Aging** at AFU partner Stockton University, in collaboration with Stockton's Hughes Center for Public Policy, hosted an intergenerational gathering with students and older adult community members to explore voting issues prior to Stockton's Constitution Day keynote address by Richard L. Hasen, PhD, JD, University of California, Los Angeles School of Law. In addition to discussing voting laws in New Jersey, participants shared personal voting experiences, concerns, and ways to support first-time voters.

Research Resident Advisory Council

AFU partner **University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus** (CU Anschutz) **Multidisciplinary Center on Aging** (MCoA) is launching the inaugural Living Lab in Colorado. MCoA has collaborated with Balfour Senior Living to host the Balfour community as an active Living Lab for researchers conducting studies in aging to work within the community and its residents directly. Residents will organize a Research Resident Advisory Council (RRAC) to screen and select studies that are most appropriate for their communities. The RRAC will also partner with researchers to co-create research proposals.

GeriEducators

The **Multidisciplinary Center on Aging** (MCoA) at AFU partner **CU Anschutz** has created a new role on campus: GeriEducators. This innovative program aims to establish intergenerational learning environments by engaging older adults with students and fostering the development and refinement of clinical communication skills for effectively working with older adult patients. GeriEducators will be involved with course content revisions from a patient perspective, sharing (audio/video) recordings to augment course content related to communication and patient perspectives, and reviewing submissions of communication handoffs between students from different health care disciplines. For more information visit MCoA programs.



The new GSA report Learners for Life: The Future of Higher Education in the Era of Longevity, made possible with support from the TIAA Institute, explores factors affecting the changing number of people who seek higher education and the times in their lives when they do so. The report provides examples across a range of campuses about age-inclusive ways higher education can provide solutions to its contemporary fiscal challenges. Download your copy and share it with your campus leaders to inform and inspire their thinking about age inclusivity.

Longevity Levers
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