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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 insights about age-inclusive personnel practices, 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.

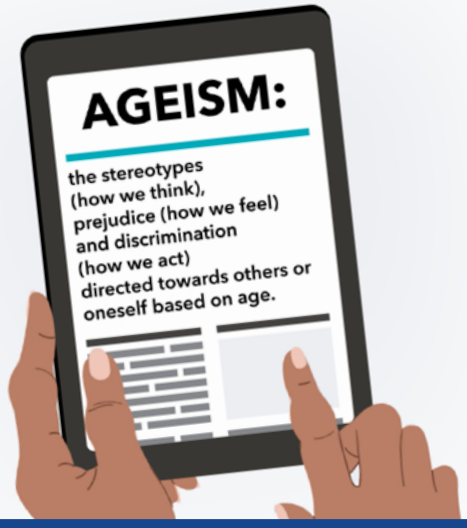
The *Age Inclusivity in Higher Education* newsletter is produced by the Gerontological Society of America.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Bringing Age Inclusivity Into Higher Education Personnel Practices:

Lessons Learned From the AIDHE Model

The Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE) model, which builds on the seminal work of the Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative, emphasizes the extent to which campuses promote age-inclusive practices along with how the campus community perceives these practices within seven domains—including the domain of personnel.

Like any employer, campuses maintain human resource departments. Applying primarily to faculty and staff, the AIDHE personnel domain entails practices pertaining to hiring, firing, retention, salary, benefits, and adherence to fair practices. Additionally, these practices involve making professional development opportunities available to employees, sensitizing employees to age bias, and providing pre-retirement advising and planning services.

In a recent study using a multi-method approach, our research team identified the following range of transformative, actionable strategies to address key challenges within the personnel domain.

Job recruitment, attainment, promotions and advancement
Challenges to age inclusivity include practices that advantage younger candidates for new positions and the perception that mid- and late-career employees are passed over for promotion opportunities. Strategies to address these challenges include:

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- Creating job ads and applications that are truly open and accessible to applicants of all ages.
- Providing training in age bias to committees responsible for job searches and personnel decisions.
- Ensuring opportunities for experienced employees to apply for higher-level positions.

Professional development
Workshops and training are important ways to allow mid- and late-career employees to advance in their campus careers. Strategies to address this challenge include:

- Offering training that increases knowledge and skills for existing staff.
- Compensating participation in professional development.

Intergenerational tensions
Feelings of disrespect can become a significant challenge for campus employees. One strategy is to:

- Provide formal and informal opportunities for intergenerational interaction and mentorship.

Recognizing accomplishments of long-standing employees
Many campuses already provide ways to honor long-time employees, but these may still be insufficient. Strategies to address this challenge include:

- Reviewing criteria in salaries and promotion for equity.
- Publicly recognizing ongoing accomplishments.
- Offering longevity awards that celebrate years of service.

Targeting of older employees for layoffs or furloughs for budgetary reasons and pressuring existing employees to retire early
Tight budgets may mean that older employees are likely to be seen as either too expensive or incapable of remaining in their jobs, leading to pressure to leave their jobs, or feeling that they are unproductive. Strategies to counteract these concerns are:

- Avoiding using age (or proxies for age) in setting criteria for layoffs.
- Establishing a positive culture of retirement.

Giving retirees a chance to remain connected to the institution
Long-standing employees who retire are likely to feel a sense of loyalty to their campus and wish to remain involved but may not have the opportunity to do so. Strategies to address this challenge are:

- Providing opportunities to remain active as volunteers or as part-time employees.
- Establishing/supporting a retired employees association (faculty and/or staff).
- Giving retired employees a chance to interact with current students.
- Providing tangible benefits that allow retirees to remain engaged (e.g., parking space, email).
- Publicly honoring the contributions of retirees.

Making it possible for adjunct faculty to receive benefits that would allow them to "age-in-place"
Non-tenured faculty operate under a different career pathway than tenured faculty that can lead to feelings of job insecurity and financial disadvantages, including retirement prospects. Two strategies to address this challenge are:

- Creating ways that adjunct faculty can shape their work environments.
- Extending the range of benefits offered to adjunct faculty.

Although implementing strategies to address personnel challenges may involve rethinking the ways that long-standing and dedicated employees can continue to feel welcomed and respected, by promoting greater age inclusivity, higher education can perform its functions in a more equitable fashion, benefiting *all* campus constituents.

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



Susan Krauss Whitbourne, PhD, ABPP
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Faculty Fellow, Gerontology Institute University of Massachusetts Boston

Scaling Up Adoption of Age-Inclusive Management Strategies Among Institutions of Higher Education:

Enriching Practices in the AIDHE Personnel Domain

Institutions of higher education are at the forefront of addressing challenges and opportunities presented by the aging American workforce—which includes faculty and staff aging across our campuses. Yet, there are few resources for employment leaders and human resource specialists (HRS) to learn about the unique qualities of the aging workforce, and there is a pervasive need to provide professional consultation and hands-on assistance to those institutions moving to adopt age-inclusive management strategies (AIMS). In response, the AIMS project provides online information, hands-on guidance, and resources to employment leaders and HRS interested in adopting human resource management strategies that address older workers and transform organizational efforts to recruit, retain, and facilitate secure retirement. Indeed, while several programs are available to assist older adults who are searching for a job or planning for retirement, our method of action does not target older persons directly. Instead, we collaborate with employment as well as campus leaders and HRS in business and higher education settings to address the challenges and opportunities presented by their aging employees.

In our previous work, we identified up to 40 different AIMS associated with beneficial outcomes for both employers and aging employees. We sorted these AIMS into separate sets of policies and programs, and validated our taxonomy using survey results fielded from 146 employers across the state of Colorado. One set of AIMS consists of tailored recruitment, offering retirement planning seminars, and other efforts that are easy to adopt (i.e., Basic AIMS). The other set of strategies may take longer to implement. These include offering elder caregiving support and more flexible retirement pathways (i.e., Advanced AIMS).

We then tested an organizational change process, "Crossing the OCEAN" (Onboarding, Consultation, Engagement, Adoption, Next Steps), that was designed to facilitate employer adoption of AIMS. "Crossing the OCEAN" consists of a 6-month schedule featuring an initial in-person meeting among employers and the AIMS project team followed by synchronous interactive sessions held once a month, in which project staff review key concepts and HRS move to identify challenges and opportunities associated with moving forward with AIMS adoption. During 2023 and 2024, 55 employers completed the initial onboarding and spent 30 minutes with the AIMS project team learning about population aging and the OCEAN consultation process. Of these, 35 completed an organizational self-assessment and 20 of these employers scheduled follow-up consultation and identified an AIMS to adopt within their company. We engaged 18 companies with AIMS adoption; 12 of these implemented Basic AIMS and 6 have implemented Advanced AIMS.

We are now moving to scale up the employer learning and adoption of AIMS by forming partnerships with professional organizations that have agreed to recruit employers to participate in a 6-month AIMS Cohort Consultation. What employers do today to support older workers lays the foundation to meet the altogether unprecedented aging of the American workforce. Moving forward, we anticipate recruiting a cohort of institutions of higher education that are motivated to adopt AIMS as part of their efforts to be recognized as an age-inclusive campus and advance practices within the AIDHE Personnel Domain. For information about how your campus can utilize AIMS to support older faculty and staff, contact Brian Kaskie: brian-kaskie@uiowa.edu.



Brian Kaskie, PhD
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Longevity Fitness and Literacy for Faculty and Staff:

A View From the TIAA Institute



The TIAA Institute has worked to support longevity fitness and literacy for faculty and staff. What are the goals of this work?

Echoing the age-inclusivity goals of GSA and the AIDHE model, the TIAA Institute is a financial retirement services organization which aims to support longevity fitness and literacy for faculty and staff both for the well-being of the individuals and for the continued vitality of the institutions they serve. There are several key reasons for our commitment:

- Faculty and staff who are physically and mentally healthy throughout their life course are more engaged, energetic, and productive in their work. This is good for them, for their students, and for the workplace.
- *Longevity literacy*—a clear and objective understanding of life expectancy—is essential to planning and preparing for a successful retirement. For many, that understanding is lacking. *Longevity fitness* is converting that understanding to action. Longevity literacy and fitness empower faculty and staff to make informed decisions about their well-being and retirement planning with consideration of special implications of longer lives. The Institute's work guides individual and societal actions toward maintaining an aging population's health, wealth, and happiness.
- On the institutional side, "healthier" employees across several dimensions lead to lower health care costs, reduced absenteeism, and increased workplace efficiency. Investing in longevity fitness supports a more stable and vibrant workforce.
- Colleges and universities can help themselves and learners across the life course by broadening recruitment efforts, expanding the curriculum, making the physical environment more accessible, and providing resources and services aligned with the needs of an aging society. We want to help faculty and staff engage in such efforts, especially as colleges and universities face declining enrollments among traditional-aged students and other headwinds. A renewed interest in and need for lifelong learning presents higher education with myriad opportunities.

Are there areas of need that you are seeing grow in scope for faculty and staff?

In the context of individual well-being, there is increasing need for mental health resources, stress management programs, and workplace flexibility. We also see increased need for financial literacy programs, enhanced retirement planning, and flexible benefits that take into account changes inherent in an aging society. Of particular concern are the financial implications of family caregiving as more people are caring for aging parents and other family members, often as they are still raising and supporting their children. Providing benefits that address needs at different life stages will be ever more important in light of changing demographics and a broader range of personal situations and preferences.

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"The Institute's work guides individual and societal actions toward maintaining an aging population's health, wealth, and happiness."

What other opportunities around age inclusivity would you like to see institutions explore?
Faculty and staff—as well as students of all ages—will need continuous skills-building in light of the rapidly changing nature of work, especially in areas such as digital literacy and artificial intelligence (AI). Providing more access and avenues for upskilling and reskilling is a priority. AI will eliminate some jobs and create many new ones. The main point is that there is a growing demand for AI knowledge across industries. 2024 research from LinkedIn shows a 60% year-over-year increase in job postings requiring AI expertise. In addition, the research shows that workers with AI skills will earn up to 25% more than their peers in similar roles without AI experience. Colleges and universities can help ensure that students of all ages are getting the AI-related training and education needed to maximize their marketability.

Institutions should also create opportunities for cross-generational collaboration on learning and teaching teams, research teams, and administrative teams that can enhance innovation while reducing ageism.

A MUST READ: The new GSA report Learners for Life: The Future of Higher Education in the Era of Longevity, supported by the TIAA Institute, explores how people of different ages are now looking to higher education for professional and personal development opportunities. Campus examples highlight innovative and varied age-inclusive practices that can also help to offset financial challenges faced by institutions. Download your copy and share it with your campus leaders to inform and inspire their thinking about age inclusivity.



Surya Kolluri, MBA, CRPC
Head of TIAA Institute



Anne Ollen, CEBS
Managing Director
TIAA Institute

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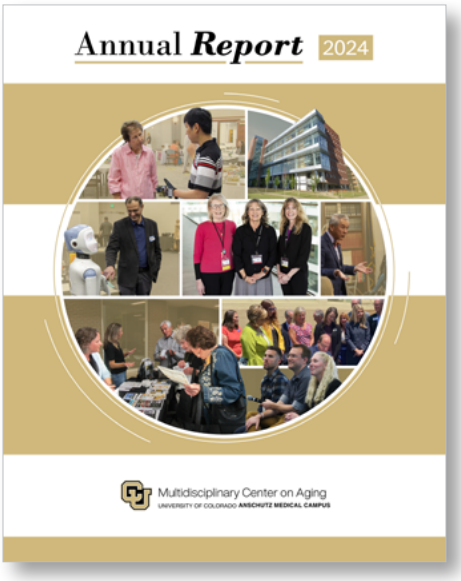
Intergenerational Talk on Finances

This spring, **Lasell University** (**AFU partner**) in collaboration with **Lasell Village** (a university-based retirement community) will host its first *Financial Literacy Forum* designed by Professor of Mathematics Neil Hatem, EdD. Incorporating the experience and expertise of campus residents and staff in intergenerational discussions in a Financial Literacy class, the initiative aims to enhance how students think about their finances and maximize their financial success as they embark on their post-college careers and look ahead. Following their intergenerational exchange, class members will help to organize and participate in a larger forum to be offered to the student community.



GeriEducators at CU Anschutz Medical Campus

The CU Anschutz Multidisciplinary Center on Aging at the **University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus** (**AFU partner**) has been busy moving CU's age-inclusive efforts forward, recently launching the *GeriEducator Initiative* in collaboration with the Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education. Twenty-five GeriEducators contributed to the curriculum development and worked with 700+ clinical students to provide humanizing health care experiences. As one student commented, "This was the best class because it made the scenarios we learned through case studies much more human and personal. Having a GeriEducator share their personal health care experiences helps to avoid ageism in health care, which is so rampant in our society. I will be a more compassionate clinician now that I better understand the needs and wants of my older adult patients."



The CU Anschutz Multidisciplinary Center on Aging also launched its inaugural Annual Report featuring age-inclusive curricular, intergenerational, and research efforts undertaken in 2024. Read the report and direct questions to Jodi Waterhouse: jodi.waterhouse@cuanschutz.edu

In collaboration with the Centre on Aging Spring Research Symposium, the **University of Manitoba** (**AFU partner**) will be hosting an Age-Friendly University Showcase, on May 7, 2025. The Extended Education division, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Family Resources, Recreation Services, the University of Manitoba Retirees Association, and other units across campus will join community organizations and poster presenters in the Exhibit Hall. For more information on registering for this free hybrid event, visit the Spring Research Symposium webpage.



Students and Ambassadors at the Aging Careers Resource Fair

The Harvey A. Friedman Center for Aging held an Aging Careers Resource Fair in March at the Danforth University Center at **Washington University in St. Louis (AFU partner)**, in celebration of Careers in Aging Month. Students explored career options, community service opportunities, internships, and aging-related WashU courses—and they spun an Aging 101 Quiz Wheel to receive prizes. Older adult ambassadors from the STL Village and the WashU Osher Lifelong Learning Institute interacted with students and invited them to send a postcard (provided and mailed by the Center) to an older relative or friend.

On May 13, 2025, the **University of Massachusetts Lowell (AFU partner)** will host its second annual conference *Cultivating Equity: Building an Inclusive UMass Lowell Faculty Community* sponsored by the ADVANCE Office for Faculty Equity & Resilience. This year's keynote speaker, Joann M. Montepare, PhD, will explore beliefs about higher education and campus practices, and how they can be reframed to create a more age-inclusive learning and work environment for age-diverse students, faculty, and staff in her talk titled, *I Used to Think, but Now I Know…Reflections on Becoming a More Age-Inclusive Campus.*

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IN THE WORKS: GSA Launches Project to Address Ageism in Health Care

Ageism in health care is the systematic and unjust treatment of individuals based on their age, particularly older adults, within health care settings. Ageism can manifest in various forms and have significant negative impacts on the health and well-being of older adults, including delayed care, negative mental health effects, worse health outcomes, and increased health care costs.

GSA members, with support from AARP, have teamed up to develop resources to educate future health professionals about what ageism is, how it looks in health care, how it negatively impacts care, and how it can be combatted in practice. The educational resources will be pilot tested at six sites during fall 2025. If you are interested in serving as a pilot site contact Ophira Bansal obansal@geron.org.

GSA project leaders are Lisa McGuire, PhD, FGSA, GSA Vice President, Strategic Alliances & Practice Innovation; Marilyn R. Gugliucci, PhD, FAGHE, FGSA, AGSF, FNAOME, GSA President; Elana Kieffer, MBA, GSA Director of Strategic Alliances; and Ophira Bansal, MBA, Strategic Alliances Project Manager.

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