

ADVANCING AGE INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Winter 2023

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 perspectives from attendees of the GSA 2022 Annual Scientific Meeting. Our contributors draw on their presentations and offer ways we can continue to advance age inclusivity in higher education.

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

Ensuring LGBTQ Representation Creating an Age-Inclusive Campus for All

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We all agree the movement toward creating more age-inclusive and welcoming institutions of higher education is overdue. The benefits of fostering these intergenerational dialogues are innumerable. Yet, we must understand these positives against the challenges in ensuring we do it right. As we move toward a more age-inclusive higher education, we must recognize the diversity within the aging population. We must avoid what so many others do—oversimplifying what it means to age in the United States.

One growing population of older adults close to my heart, where much of my work focuses, is the aging Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ)

community. According to a 2021 Gallup Poll, 7.1% of the United States population identifies as LGBT. Additionally, the Williams Institute reported that there are nearly 2.4 million LGBTQ individuals aged 50 years and older and that this number is expected to double to 5 million by 2030. They come from all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and religious affiliations. They live in urban centers and rural communities. As we consider age-inclusive higher education, I encourage all to pay attention to how we work to address their needs and encourage their involvement.

Creating an affirming, age-inclusive institution requires work. One of the first things we can do is to reflect on our practices. What does our age-inclusive work look like for someone looking in? Have we created an exclusionary model of age-inclusivity that targets only a particular segment of older adults? For example, consider how your promotional materials look. Do they all feature cisgender heterosexual couples? What about your intake forms? Do people have the option of identifying whether they are a member of a same-sex couple? Are you collecting the necessary data to know whether you are not reaching the LGBTQ community? What about your educational and related offerings? Would LGBTQ individuals feel comfortable participating in them or coming to your campus? What could you do to mitigate these concerns?

One step would be to reach out to local or statewide LGBTQ organizations. Doing so provides an opportunity to connect with them and share about your age-inclusive work. Initiating communication with them also provides the opportunity for them to respond to barriers that are preventing their engagement. Most importantly, it opens a door between the university and the community. Sometimes all that is missing is an open door for people to enter.

Equally important is ensuring that your age-friendly institution is ready to welcome and develop relationships with the LGBTQ community. Ideally, resistance and barriers to engagement, such as hesitation of group members or intergroup dynamics, will be addressed before approaching the LGBTQ community and group. You also cannot expect the LGBTQ community to do all the heavy lifting to ensure your institution is a welcoming and affirming place. Groups such as SAGE ([SageUSA.Org](https://www.sageusa.org)) and GLAAD ([GLAAD.org](https://www.glaad.org)) are useful resources as you begin this journey.

Creating environments welcoming to all is critical to the long-term success of age-inclusivity in higher education. Indeed, universal design for all people is at the core of the age-inclusive system. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish for LGBTQ older adults.

Campus Spotlight

Examining Campus Age Biases Through Student Experiences

By Allyson S. Graf, PhD
Katherina Nikzad-Terhune, PhD, LCSW-S
Northern Kentucky University

Northern Kentucky University (NKU) is a regional institution serving close to 16,000 students in undergraduate and graduate education. Joining the Age-Friendly University (AFU) network in January 2020, NKU's ongoing commitment to age-friendly principles is maintained through a coalition of faculty, staff, students, and community partners. These collaborations are resulting in AFU initiatives such as development of

a digital literacy program, programming on age-inclusive practices, and research studies on caregiving across campus and age-related experiences in the classroom.



At a time of growing enrollment among adult learners on NKU's campus, the student body is increasingly age diverse. Identifying and reducing age-related bias on campus offers multipurpose benefits: supporting those who experience ageism while promoting professional skills to combat ageism in future careers. Little research has focused on ageism experienced by adult students and the possible disruption this creates to feeling included as part of the campus community. Therefore, we conducted mixed methods research (using survey and focus group methods) of adult learners (defined as 25 years of age and older) assessing the extent to which they experienced and felt impacted by age-related bias on campus.

The results of the survey (N = 186), which used modified versions of workplace measures of age discrimination and intergenerational climate, suggested generally positive age-related classroom experiences, although intergenerational contact was not prevalent in findings. Additional analyses suggested differences in these perceptions for those completing coursework mainly online versus mainly in-person.

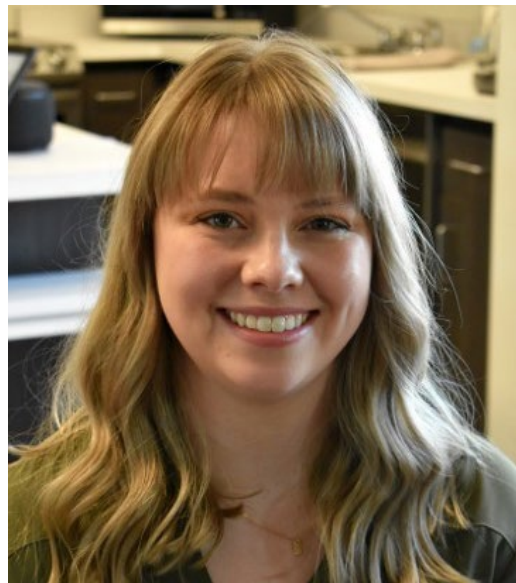
The focus groups contained eight adult (25–67 years of age) and four traditionally aged (24 years and younger) learners. Largely, participants defined ageism as discrimination in the workplace and did not see their classroom experiences as ageist. Yet, they described several instances of age-related bias in their interactions with peers and faculty, both as targets as well as perpetrators. These biases were not always negative, such as being recognized as a source of knowledge, leadership, and experience because of one's age; however, some adult learners expressed resentment for being relied on by younger peers and faculty alike.

Key takeaways from this investigation suggest the need to examine in more detail how ageism manifests in the classroom setting and how to minimize the impact this has on learning and engagement. Further, faculty can be intentional about creating opportunities for intergenerational exchange to reduce stereotyping and promote inclusion, with particular attention to virtual spaces.

Campus Voices

Charting the Course for an Age-Friendly University at Illinois

By Wendy A. Rogers, PhD
Alyssa Stansfield, PhD
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



Collaborations in Health, Aging, Research, and Technology (CHART) was founded in 2017 in the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. We spearheaded the proposal for our Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative in 2020. In addition to the value of having the designation, the process itself served to enhance our visibility across the campus. The Dean of our college, Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, helped us to spread the word at various levels of university administration. We were delighted that our proposal included endorsements from Chancellor Robert Jones, Provost Andreas Cangellaris, 15 deans, and six institute directors. We were invited by the Vice Chancellor of Research, Susan Martinis, to present at one of her executive meetings to spread the word about AFU and the activities across campus that related to the initiative. When we received our official designation, the university issued a press release with a quote from Chancellor Jones that read in part, “The AFU principles provide a valuable guiding framework for distinguishing and evaluating how we can shape age-friendly programs and practices, as well as to identify gaps and opportunities for growth.”

This is a great illustration of how the AFU designation can bring people together across a campus and advance the mission of aging centers. Becoming an AFU has continued to guide our efforts to start new activities and engage the older adult community with the university in a meaningful way. We had our Fall 2022 CHART interns review AFU activities at other universities to provide guidance for our development. One direct outcome was the identification of the need for a clearinghouse of AFU-related activities for older adults and campus members to access. We are currently developing a section of our CHART website to meet this need. We also implemented a research advisory board composed of older adults in the community who will serve as subject matter experts to provide input based on their lived experiences. They will advise researchers on technology development, study design, recruitment, and more.

Our biggest barrier was the pandemic and having to slow down planned activities involving in-person interactions. Now that more in-person activities have resumed, making it easy for older adults to get to campus has been identified as a barrier, as many are not motivated to join an on-campus activity due to limited available parking. We have combatted this by securing a location with free, accessible, and close parking. We have also found that engaging community networks—including aging services, advocacy groups, and living facilities—has helped us to spread the word

about CHART and AFU activities on campus. Most successful has been embedding our CHART Coordinator as a member of these groups and forming close connections with key people in the community to build a sense of trust with CHART and the university. Fostering these relationships has helped to engage the community in our activities and to guide our AFU efforts.

News and Notes

- The GSA Age Inclusivity in Higher Education (AIHE) Workgroup recently held its strategic planning meeting and welcomed new members, Katherina Nikzad-Terhune (Northern Kentucky University), Andrea June (Central Connecticut State University), and Ramraj Gautam (University of Massachusetts Lowell). Thanks are extended to Carrie Andreoletti (Central Connecticut State University) and John Schumacher (University of Maryland, Baltimore County) for their valuable contributions to the AIHE Workgroup.
- AFU partner University of Manitoba in Canada now offers a new micro-certificate in Facilitating Older Adult Learning. This online learning opportunity to facilitate age-friendly teaching and learning efforts will be available in January 2023. For more information and to register, go to: [Micro-certificate in Facilitating Older Adult Learning | University of Manitoba](#).
- [The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus \(CU Anschutz\) Multidisciplinary Center on Aging](#) launched a trailblazing AFU initiative to develop a new workforce of Older Adult Research Specialists (OARS); the OARS will join CU Anschutz research teams to serve as the experts for education, recruitment, and retainment of older adults in research and clinical trials. After a 14-week training program, OARS are eligible for hire by research teams across campus in need of the expertise and lived experiences that the OARS bring to this work. Having OARS join research teams also creates a more intergenerational campus work environment. The program launched in Spring 2022 and has had two cohorts graduate to date with a waiting list for both cohorts in 2023! For more information email jodi.waterhouse@cuanschutz.edu.
- **San Diego State University (SDSU)** became an AFU to align and coordinate faculty, students, staff, and alumni efforts to meet the emerging needs of diverse older adults, their families, and communities. The AFU effort is housed in the [SDSU Center for Excellence in Aging and Longevity](#), whose mission is to ensure that everyone has long lives of health, equity, and opportunity. A panel addressing "[Older Adults in San Diego: Today and Tomorrow](#)" kicked off SDSU's AFU lecture series.
- Associate Professor and Gerontology Program Coordinator Lisa Hall and gerontology majors in the Senior Research Seminar at AFU partner Missouri State University (MSU) invited students, faculty, staff, and administration to learn about aging, ageism and the benefits of intergenerational teamwork and learning. The experiences of age-diverse students generated discussion around the operational and structural separation on campus of variously aged students as well as the impact of labels such as "traditional" and "nontraditional." EncourAGE Inclusivity t-shirts were designed and distributed to attendees.
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gerontology

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“nontraditional.” **EncourAGE Inclusivity** t-shirts were designed and distributed to attendees.



- David Burdick, Director, [Stockton Center on Successful Aging](#) (SCOSA) and Karen Rose at AFU partner [Stockton University](#) presented to new faculty at a workshop hosted by the Stockton Center for Teaching and Learning Design. The annual event offers an opportunity to forge connections and discuss ways the AFU lens can enhance creativity in teaching, scholarship, and service. New age-friendly SCOSA efforts with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion are also underway, including a regular column on AFU initiatives in SCOSA E-News as part of the university’s Celebrate Diversity Digest.

- Lisa Wagner and Liv Schaffer at AFU partner [University of San Francisco](#) (USF) gave

a talk as part of an age-friendly joint effort to connect USF’s Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning, which has celebrated and amplified the voices of lifelong learners for 40 years, with traditional college-aged students at USF. Wagner discussed research findings from her Generation to Generation USF/Fromm intergenerational class and Schaffer discussed her work with the Dance Generators, USF’s intergenerational dance company, along with other case studies of intergenerational programming from the social impact field



Resource Center

Must-read resource for aging-based internships, practicums, and field placements

The Gerontology Field Placement: Internships and Practicums in Aging (2022) [The Gerontology Field Placement: Internships and Practicums in Aging \(2022\)](#) by Rona J. Karasik, PhD, FAGHE, FGSA; Laura K.M. Donorfio, PhD, FAGHE; and Phyllis A. Greenberg, PhD, MPA, FAGHE, “guides gerontology students step-by-step through

the process of searching for, securing, and completing an aging-based internship, practicum, or field placement. It underscores the value of hands-on, community-based learning and provides a framework for identifying experiences that fit a student's academic requirements and professional objectives. The text describes the multitude of interdisciplinary and interprofessional career opportunities available for those working with or on behalf of older adults, ranging from traditional opportunities in health and human services to careers in leisure, business, housing, and finance."

The Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education Newsletter is produced by The Gerontological Society of America.

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