

ADVANCING AGE INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Fall 2023

The *Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education* (AAIHE) 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 offers a view of how the Gerontological Society of America (GSA), Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), Age Inclusivity in Higher Education (AIHE) Workgroup, and partners are looking to expand age-inclusivity practices more broadly across campuses not only for students, but also for faculty and staff.

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

Age Inclusivity Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE): A Guiding Panoramic Model

Joann M. Montepare, PhD (Lasell University), Nina M. Silverstein, PhD, Susan Krauss Whitbourne, PhD, and Lauren M. Bowen, PhD (University of Massachusetts Boston)

The call for higher education to be more age inclusive warrants an evidence-driven, comprehensive framework. To this end, research conducted by GSA Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) members ([Silverstein, Whitbourne, Montepare et al., 2022](#)) with the support of the RRF Foundation for Aging (formerly the Retirement Research Foundation), has identified a systems-level, campus-wide model of institutional functions, which serve as intersecting domains of age inclusivity and suggest the many ways age-friendly practices in higher education can be realized. Using data gathered from a diverse sample of U.S. institutions with the newly designed Age-Friendly Inventory and Campus Climate Survey (ICCS), this Age-Inclusive Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE) model advocates that campus practices be viewed within the context of seven core institutional domains: Teaching, Student Affairs, Community Outreach, Personnel, Physical Environment, Research, and Services and Resources. In addition to attending to the experiences of age-diverse students, the AIDHE model also challenges the view of higher education as an age-segregated

environment and recognizes the age-diverse faculty, administrators, and staff who are employed on campuses and would benefit from more age-inclusive workplace practices.

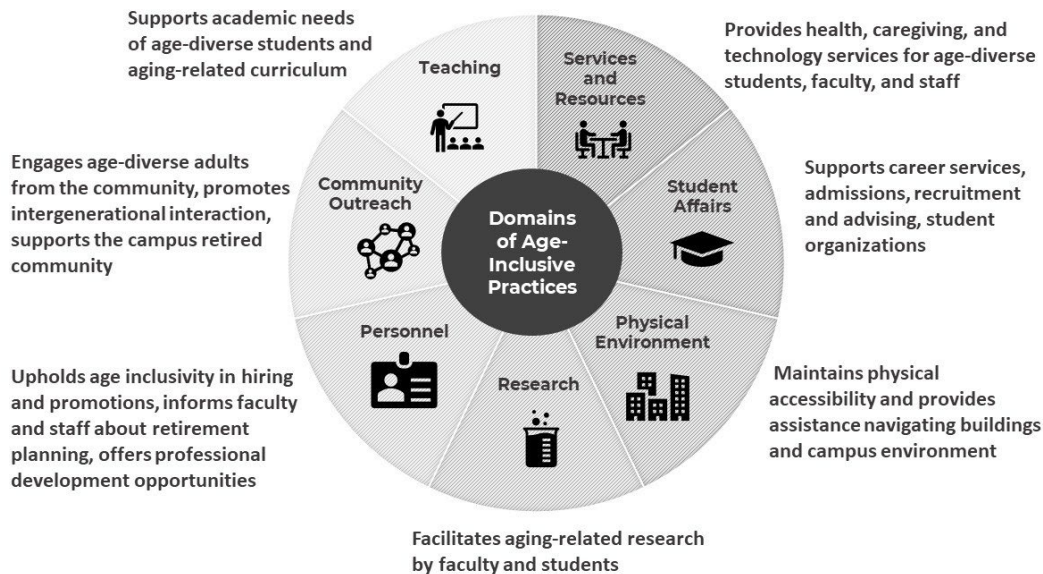
The AIDHE model builds on the pioneering age-friendly campus concept introduced in 2012 by the [Age-Friendly University Global Network](#) (AFU GN) initiative that set into motion a worldwide awakening of how institutions of higher education can respond to opportunities presented by an aging population. To date, over 100 colleges and universities have endorsed the [10 Principles of an AFU](#) and joined efforts to explore how their institutions can support the professional and personal lives of older adults through greater access to educational, cultural, and wellness programs; extended research on aging; and wider community engagement. This important foundational work is now challenging scholars to consider the broader implications of what it means for higher education to be age inclusive and how professional organizations such as GSA and its AGHE can expand the reach and impact of this contemporary campus concept.

The GSA Age Inclusivity in Higher Education (AIHE) Workgroup recently adopted the panoramic AIDHE model to guide its thinking about age inclusivity in higher education. Recognizing that being age inclusive ultimately calls for refining how higher education sees the implications of aging, the AIHE Workgroup will begin exploring ways to engage with AFU GN partners, GSA members, and experts in higher education to better understand the opportunities and challenges for building and sustaining cross-campus practices that impact the success and well-being of age-diverse students, faculty, and staff. Among these challenges will be understanding how efforts to advance age inclusivity can be integrated with campus efforts in motion with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Language around age matters, as we have learned from the [Reframing Aging initiative](#), and using the right words can be a challenge as concepts evolve. The AIDHE model calls for several distinctions about how to define and communicate what it means to be age friendly, age inclusive, and age diverse. With respect to higher education, it is suggested that being age friendly be used to reflect the types of specific campus practices recommended by the AFU principles along with other ICCS activities that aim to make educational experiences more accessible and positive for older individuals—in part reflecting the prior use of the term by other initiatives such as the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities Framework. However, being age inclusive moves beyond the mere presence of these age-friendly practices and reflects how such efforts are valued, recognized, and integrated into the fuller campus environment and mission of an institution. The term age diverse is best used to reflect the broad age range of communities of interest that institutions now serve considering the shifting age demographics.

With the guiding AIDHE model in hand, it is hoped that GSA and AGHE can better support and extend the efforts of the AFU GN and others interested in making higher education a learning and work environment where individuals, regardless of their age and role on campus, can thrive without preventable barriers.

AGE INCLUSIVITY DOMAINS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (AIDHE) MODEL



Adapted from Silverstein, N. M., Whitbourne, S. K., Bowen, L. M., Montepare, J. M., Jansen, T., Beaulieu, C., & Prasad, A. (2022). Assessing age inclusivity in higher education: Introducing the Age-Friendly Inventory and Campus Climate Survey. *The Gerontologist*, 62, 1, e48-e61.

Campus Spotlight

Fostering Age Inclusivity through Campus and Community Collaborations

Katherina Nikzad-Terhune, PhD, LCSW-S and Allyson S. Graf, PhD

Northern Kentucky University's (NKU's) path to becoming the first Age-Friendly University (AFU) in Kentucky began with a strong collaboration among three faculty and two staff members who shared a unified mission to promote age inclusivity and awareness on campus. This collaborative spirit led to the creation of NKU's AFU Coalition, which quickly tripled in size to become a vibrant active group with representation from faculty, staff, and students from various departments on campus and representation from community partners spanning support services to adult education—taking our age-friendly efforts to an even broader level in line with the Age-Inclusive Domains of Higher Education (AIDHE) model.

The encompassing mission of the AFU Coalition is to promote campus-wide age inclusivity and active engagement, with a strong focus on the educational needs, interests, and experiences of both adult learners and traditional-aged students.

The diverse membership of the AFU Coalition has organically led to the development of new projects and initiatives that benefit learners of all ages and that foster new connections across NKU's campus and the broader community. A powerful component of NKU's AFU Coalition is its inclusion of community partners to help propel its mission of age inclusivity. The following initiatives illustrate the successful age-inclusive partnership between campus members and community constituents.

Caregiving Across Campus

This past year, AFU Coalition members completed a Campus Caregiving Needs Assessment to obtain an estimate of the number of caregivers on campus and to identify unmet caregiving needs to guide future recommendations, support services, and solutions. Data from this study resulted in the identification of new support services for caregivers on campus, the formation of new community partnerships, and the launch of a campus caregiver recognition event and community resource fair. The faculty leading this research involved community partners at the onset to help inform and financially support the project with hopes of creating a model for others seeking campus-community engagement. The Caregiving Across Campus initiative highlights the intergenerational impact of caregiving along with how collaborative efforts from both campus and community constituents can result in more robust responses to caregiver needs.

Northern Kentucky Digital Literacy Initiative

Another example of how community and campus partners have joined forces to create impactful change through a wider age-inclusivity lens is the Northern Kentucky Digital Literacy Initiative, which aims to provide basic digital literacy and technical support to adults of all ages in the Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati region through collaboration between community partners and NKU. This initiative has grown to include representation from multiple campus and community members who are actively working together to raise awareness regarding digital literacy resources for the public and help individuals connect to digital literacy support services.

NKU's AFU journey has resulted in significant progress toward advancing awareness and the formation of new age-inclusive programs and practices. By utilizing a broader age-inclusive lens, NKU's AFU Coalition has involved both campus and community members and resources to identify and execute initiatives that further its mission. These interdisciplinary efforts serve as a catalyst for expanding learning opportunities, strengthening intergenerational connections, and identifying and responding to the ongoing needs of our campus and community.



The original members of the NKU AFU Coalition. From left to right: Dr. Allyson Graf (Psychological Science), Sara Conwell (Adult and Transfer Center), Dr. Suk-hee Kim (Social Work), Amy Danzo (Adult and Transfer Center), and Dr. Katherina Nikzad-Terhune (Social Work).

Campus Voices

A Conversation With Louis Soares Chief Learning and Innovation Officer American Council on Education



Q: From the perspective of higher education, what do you see as the advantages of advancing greater age inclusivity across our colleges and universities?

The 100-year life is fast becoming a reality for most developed nations. This means more older individuals are active in all areas of their life: work, family, and community.

The age-inclusive organizational, program, and campus design provides an opportunity for colleges and universities to optimize benefits for higher education and society in two ways. The first way is to create a pathway to meet the education needs of older adults as they navigate life complexity across multiple domains. The second is to become a platform for bringing multiple generational perspectives together on campus to model the evolution of deep dialogue necessary to resolve the nation's future-oriented challenges, including racism, inequality, climate change, etc.

Higher education and society at large will benefit from an age-inclusive approach.

Q: How do you see age inclusivity fitting in with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts on campuses?

DEI remains a work in progress on the nation's college campuses. The American Council on Education's own work with campus executives on shared equity leadership posits a spiral of change beginning with development of critical consciousness on issues of race and ethnicity at the level of the individual that then leads to shifts in organizational values and processes that enable more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus communities.

As society ages and becomes more diverse, the intersectionality of race and ethnicity with age becomes yet an additional challenge/opportunity with which to advance DEI efforts on campuses. Developing critical consciousness of this intersectionality allows for the challenge/opportunity to re-engage DEI through the lens of older learners, faculty, and staff. Issues and disparities unique to older, diverse students open fresh pathways for looking for policy and practice change in areas, including technology and physical campus accessibility and health well-being; while not totally new, they tend to broaden DEI work.

Q: What are some of the challenges of raising awareness of age diversity, friendliness, and inclusivity on campuses?

Even today, college and university campuses are thought of as places for the young. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. It does mean that higher education institutions invest a lot of time and money in finding and engaging younger people to pursue college as an option in their early adult life. And yet, as society ages and citizens stay more engaged for longer periods of time with a need for knowledge and skills updates, it behooves campus leaders to think about how they might re-engage potential older students. Some of the challenges in incorporating age inclusivity include: (1) the youth orientation of most marketing and admissions processes; (2) a resulting lack of presence of older students on the campus and an invisibility of faculty and staff who are older as public faces of the institutions; and (3) a lack of programs and initiatives that have proven effective with other populations with unique needs—for example, military learners.

Q: How can we encourage more institutions of higher education to pursue more age-inclusive practices and policies?

Mission alignment is always the place to begin with college and university practices and policies. How can the mission of the institution be interpreted considering a desire to engage and serve older learners? Special emphasis should be placed on the opportunity that older learners create in terms of enrollment and contribution to campus life. Next is encouraging open and honest dialogue about the needs of older learners and the institution's capabilities to meet them. This dialogue will uncover misconceptions, values, and resource gaps for serving older learners, given our mission. Once leaders are clear on the opportunity and the challenges, they can create incentives using organizational values and processes that reward innovation in serving older learners. Age inclusivity aligned to the mission is the key.

News and Notes

Welcome New Age-Friendly University Global Network (AFU GN) partners!

- Georgia State University
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Mississippi State University
- Shepherd University
- Southern Oregon University
- University of Central Oklahoma
- University of Colorado, Colorado Springs
- University of Minnesota Duluth
- University of North Carolina Wilmington
- University of South Florida
- University of Utah

A must read for building age-inclusive intergenerational connections from AFU champions at the **University of Massachusetts Lowell**: Gautam, R., Sritan, S., Khumrunsee, M., & Melillo, K. D. (2023). Promoting Age-Friendly University by engaging older adults in intergenerational learning at institutions of higher education: PRISMA-guided scoping review. [Journal of Intergenerational Relationships](#), published online.

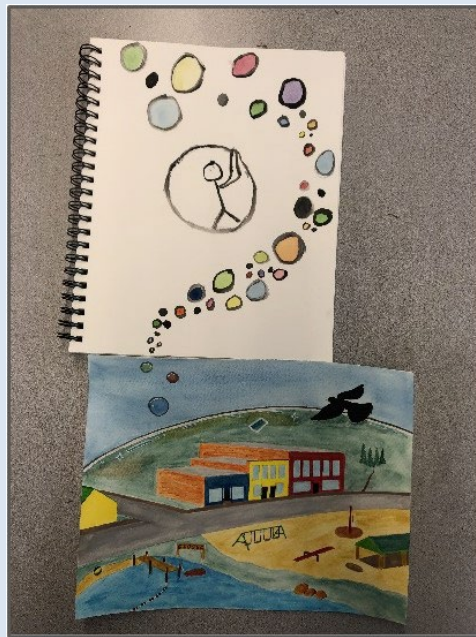
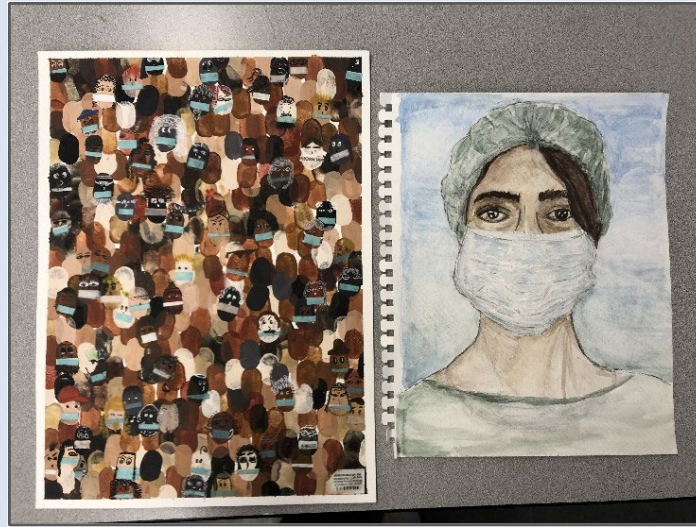
As part of its age-inclusive campus efforts connecting with faculty members, the **University of Massachusetts Lowell** organized a faculty panel: *The Best of Both Worlds: How to Retire While Staying Engaged*, designed for colleagues who are considering retirement, but want to stay engaged with the university, whether through research, teaching, student engagement, or other initiatives. Professor Emeriti Bryan Buchholz (Biomedical Engineering), Robert Giles (Physics and Applied Physics), and Karen Melillo (Nursing) shared their experiences with retirement and offered ways faculty can stay connected with the university while still pursuing their retirement goals.

Similarly supporting age-inclusive opportunities for faculty, the Friedman Center for Aging at AFU partner **Washington University in St. Louis** offers *Your Next Move: Transitioning to the New Retirement*, a 90-minute transition seminar each semester and an 8-week course each year focusing on nonfinancial aspects of retirement with planning tools and resources. This semester, a follow-up seminar was added in collaboration with the Society of Professors Emeriti that will lead a session on Transitioning to Retirement: Tips from Retirees and cover topics such as a timeline for retirement, health care options, financial concerns, step-down options, emeritus status, and more.



Age-Diverse Learners Creating Art at Missouri State University.

The Gerontology Program at AFU partner **Missouri State University** collaborated with the Art + Design Department and a local artist to offer [Intergenerational Artistic Expression](#), an age-inclusive course encouraging expression and connectivity. Undergraduates and older learners in [MSU 62](#) (a non-degree, adult student, fee-waiver program for people aged 62 and older) spent 16 weeks sharing stories and creating art, which was then exhibited to the public. As one participant remarked, *“For me, this class is freedom. It is deconstructing my fear of failure and reshaping my idea of what ‘perfect’ means. All art is beautiful, unique, and perfect in its own right. I feel free in the knowledge that I too can be an artist.”*



Artwork representing experiences of the pandemic was shared by older and younger artists at Missouri State University.

Professors Karen Rose and David Burdick at AFU partner **Stockton University** Center on Successful Aging (SCOSA) participated in an event sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning Design to let Stockton's many adjunct instructors know about various programs and services at the university. SCOSA shared information about the AFU initiative; how age is an important diversity, equity, and inclusion component; and the various teaching, scholarship, and service resources that SCOSA provides to adjunct faculty wishing to focus aspects of their work on aging.

As part of their leadership activities in SCOSA, they are also investigating the potential benefits of having the university designated as an [Age Friendly Employer](#).

AFU partner **Fielding Graduate University** is hosting the Positive Aging Webinar Series (PAWS) that launched this fall with visiting faculty Rick Moody, former Vice President and Chief Academic Officer at AARP, talking about “Autobiography and Life-Review: Learning from Our Dreams.” For more information on future webinars contact [Connie Corley](#).

Resource Center

AIHE Interest Group Meetings

Join colleagues to discuss ways GSA and AGHE can work to expand age inclusivity in higher education and to get updates about the [Age-Friendly University Global Network](#) initiative.

Virtual Meeting - Monday, October 23, 2023, 3:00-4:30 PM ET. [Register Here](#)

In-person Meeting at [GSA 2023](#): Friday, November 10, 2023, 3:00-4:15 PM, Convention Center Room 415.

GSA Symposium

Join colleagues at these symposia at the upcoming [GSA Annual Scientific Meeting](#) in Tampa, Florida, to learn about ways to advance age inclusivity in your classroom, on your campus, and around your community.

- Wednesday, November 8, 10:30AM-12:00PM, Room 123
Empowering All Ages Through Intergenerational Connection and Lifelong Learning
- Wednesday, November 8, 2:30–4:00 PM ET, Room 120
Maximizing Collective Impact Across the Age-Friendly Ecosystem (Presentation: Age-Friendly Campuses: Need and Opportunity for Synergy in the Age-Friendly Ecosystem)
- Thursday, November 9, 8:00–9:30 AM ET, Room 122
Advancing Age Inclusivity in Higher Education: Intergenerational Exchange as a Pathway to Career Readiness
- Thursday, November 9, 12:00–1:30 PM ET, Room 307
Age-Inclusive Strategies to Enhance Learning and Workplace Environments in U.S. Higher Education

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

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