

# WHAT'S HOT

A Newsletter of



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*Building a Case for Age Inclusivity*

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## Shifting Perspectives About Aging Populations

Adults are living longer and healthier lives around the globe. This changing demographic creates new opportunities for societies to leverage the advantages of an aging population, producing improvements for all. After reaching retirement age, many individuals continue to have more years of high functional capacity and can fulfill diverse roles that are valuable for society, resulting in changes to formal and informal workforces. At the same time, societal initiatives are needed to promote engagement and well-being across the lifespan. Moreover, there is a need to train more individuals in gerontology to provide better care for those older adults who may need support, and multifaceted strategies are needed to address ageism and age discrimination.

The aging population is also changing the nature of the consumer market for goods and services across sectors, including technology, travel, entertainment, home design, fashion, urban planning, and other fields. Across industries, employers, employees, and entrepreneurs who have an understanding of the interests and needs of aging populations will be poised for success.

These trends call for institutions of higher education to embrace

opportunities to become more “age friendly” through new approaches to educational access, teaching, research, and community engagement. These institutions can support efforts for older adults to participate in educational, career, wellness, and related activities on campus. Institutions are also called upon to extend aging education to younger students, increase an understanding of the longevity dividend, and promote age-inclusion by bringing younger and older learners together in educational exchanges in the classroom.<sup>1</sup> The Age-Friendly University (AFU) movement has emerged as one of several responses to these forces and needs. This issue of *What's Hot* discusses the trends and climate driving age inclusivity, such as the AFU movement and the development of the AFU initiative, as well as the positive results emerging from this movement and other age-inclusive programs.

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At the same time, societal initiatives are needed to promote engagement and well-being across the lifespan.

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## Changing the Conversation About Aging

Perceptions of older adults and their ability to contribute to society are shifting as people age in the United States and around the world, and organizations dedicated to addressing the needs of older adults are leading the conversation. In particular, The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) has launched the Reframing Aging Initiative on behalf of eight national aging organizations. This long-term social change endeavor aims to improve perceptions about

aging and counter ageism. It is designed to support healthy and productive aging for all people across the life course.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, AARP's Disrupt Aging initiative is working to "reinvent what it means to age" and change common narratives about aging to reflect positive attitudes. This initiative calls upon society to think about aging in a different way and use more positive language to discuss aging in communities, workplaces, and educational institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Both initiatives aim to shift ways of thinking about aging and create a new paradigm that recognizes the value of all individuals to society, regardless of age. They aim to change what it means to get older so that aging is not viewed as a time of decline, but instead as a period of life during which people can pursue new interests and opportunities. Notably, educating people about aging also contributes in a positive way to their own experience of aging and longevity.

## The Multigenerational Workforce

The workforce (including both paid and volunteer workers) is becoming increasingly age diverse as many people continue to work longer. Older adults are continuing to work for a number of reasons, including needed income, professional advancement, and personal development. Additionally, some countries are increasing the age for receiving full retirement benefits (e.g., Social Security in the United States).

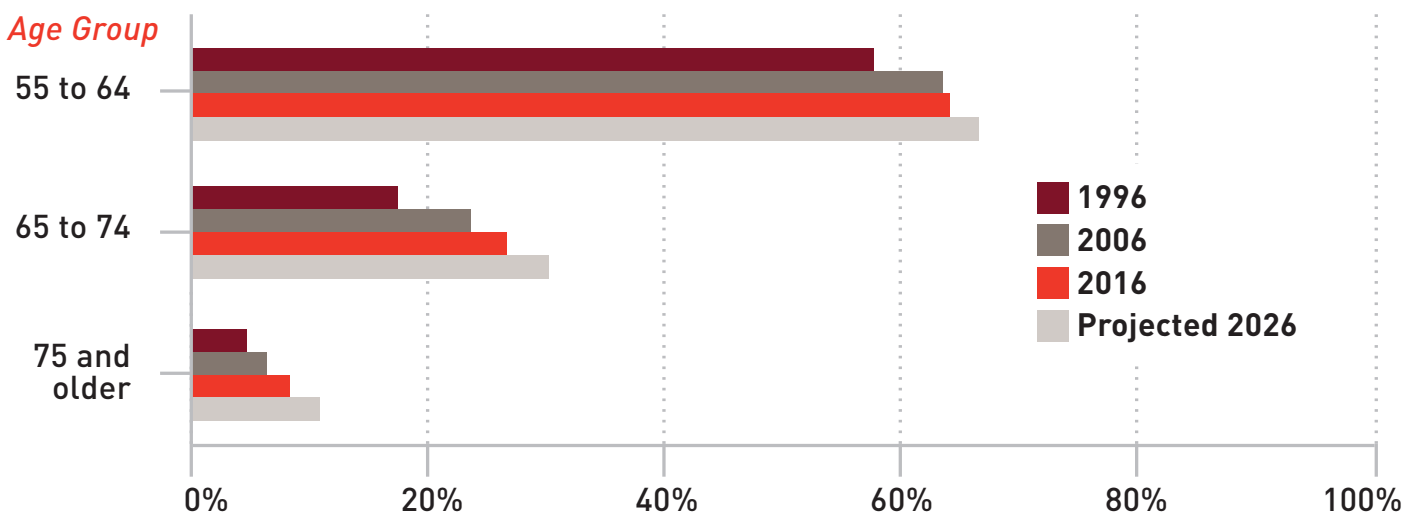
People aged 55 years or older have been a steadily increasing segment

of the American workforce (Figure 1) and have much to contribute.<sup>4,5</sup> Overall, nearly half of today's retirees work, have worked, or plan to work during their retirement; 7 in 10 Americans who will soon "retire" say they plan to work in retirement.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, many older adults say they would return to work if the right opportunity came along.<sup>5</sup> The resulting changes in the age diversity of the workforce have important implications for all workers.

Older workers offer value for employers. Older adults can bring

certain skills to the workplace, including institutions of higher learning, based on their years of experience and gained wisdom from working through challenging situations.<sup>3</sup> Older workers may also bring institutional knowledge, commitment to the enterprise, and low absence rates. They often serve in mentoring and advisory roles to guide and develop younger workers. A multigenerational workforce calls for multigenerational education. Traditional-aged college students who earn their education alongside

**Figure 1. Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate by Age**



Source: Reference 4.

<3%

of medical school students select electives about aging.

<1%

of nurses are certified as gerontological nurses.

4%

of social workers have completed specialized geriatrics training even though 75% of social workers work with older adults.

People aged 55 years or older have been a steadily increasing segment of the American workforce and have much to contribute.

adults of varying ages will be better prepared to interact productively with multiple generations when they enter the workforce. Increased exposure to older adults in a variety of roles can counter ageism and transform beliefs and attitudes about older adults and the aging process. In fact, positive intergenerational programs have been called “a vaccination against ageism and a prescription for longevity.”<sup>6</sup>

In addition to paid work, older adults contribute to society through civic participation, community engagement, and volunteering. Programs are emerging that capitalize on the desire of older adults to apply their talents

and develop intergenerational connections in educational efforts. For example, Experience Corps ([www.encore.org/experience-corps](http://www.encore.org/experience-corps)) is an AARP program that engages adults 50 years of age and older in tutoring elementary school students in literacy. Volunteers support students through one-to-one activities, small group activities, or classroom-wide activities. Through this program, which focuses on communities with high levels of poverty, the lives of both younger and older people are enriched.

Similarly, Senior Corps ([www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps](http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps)) is a network of national service programs for Americans aged 55 years and older; it is made up of three primary programs with each taking a different approach to improving lives and fostering civic engagement. Senior Corps volunteers commit their time to address critical community needs, including academic tutoring and mentoring, caregiving, disaster relief support, and other activities.

Finally, there is a need for more individuals to be specifically trained to support an aging population. Even though older adults are the fastest growing segment of the population, few students have any training related to aging. For example, less than 3% of medical school students select electives about aging, and less than 1% of nurses are certified as gerontological nurses. Only 4% of social workers have completed specialized geriatrics training even though 75% of social workers work with older adults.<sup>7</sup> Professionals across wide sectors of the economy need to prepare to support an aging population.



**7 in 10**  
Americans who will soon “retire” say they **plan to work** in retirement.



## Higher Education and Aging

Institutions of higher education are poised in many ways to be more age friendly to help support the interests of an aging population. Institutions can play critical roles in preparing traditional-aged students for an aging society as well as their own aging, both through the study of gerontology and by exploring applications of aging in a wide array of other disciplines. New opportunities and innovative practices in teaching, research, and community engagement are needed as institutions of higher education seek to expand their age-friendly strategies and respond to the changes created by aging populations.

A number of age-friendly efforts have been set in motion to support these changes. The Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), the educational unit of GSA, is a membership network of colleges and universities that offers education, training, and research programs in the field of aging. The purpose of AGHE is to foster the commitment of higher education to the field of aging

through education, research, and public service.

As a global leader in education on aging, AGHE has a two-fold mission:

1. To advance gerontology and geriatrics education in academic institutions.
2. To provide leadership and support of gerontology and geriatrics education faculty and students at education institutions.

To advance this mission, AGHE provides a forum for debate of issues regarding the advancement of gerontology, educational opportunities for older people, and education of society about aging. It also provides a network base for communication, interorganizational cooperation, and leadership with associations of higher education, public officials, volunteers, and others interested in education about aging. Finally, AGHE offers leadership on policies and issues related to higher education, and it has endorsed the AFU principles, which are presented in the next section of this newsletter.

Several AGHE initiatives designed to advance gerontology education are underway. Specifically, to help provide curricular structure, in 2014, AGHE approved *Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education*, the first integrative resource to address multisystem approaches; interdisciplinary aspects; communication of older adults' "voices" and strengths; and research utilization.<sup>8</sup> In addition, a three-part webinar series on AFUs is available at [www.geron.org/programs-services/gsa-webinars](http://www.geron.org/programs-services/gsa-webinars).

### Age-Diverse Campuses

Today, the vast majority of students graduate from college having had little experience studying issues that will have great personal importance as they age or work collaboratively with older adults in their communities or workplaces. As a result, most traditional-aged college students move into their adult years and enter an age-diverse workforce with limited knowledge about aging or experience with older adults outside the experiences they may have had with their

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By 2025,  
**42%** of the U.S.  
student body will  
be adults aged  
**25 and older.**

families. Campuses that embrace age diversity and the AFU principles are needed to expand this knowledge and experience across all disciplines.

More age diverse campuses can increase interactions between older people and younger people in a natural environment. When age diversity and intergenerational exchange of ideas are part of the classroom experience, older adults bring new energy to a broad range of academic topics, such as the environment, politics, and civil rights. Furthermore, age-friendly and age-diverse campuses can help address ageism, which is fueled by age-segregated environments that fail to expose learners to the multidimensional nature of aging and the value of relationships with older adults. Therefore, increasing the numbers of older learners on campus can help advance efforts to reframe aging.

### Older Adults on Campus

One component of shifting the role of aging adults in society is addressing the needs of older learners in higher education. The number of older adults enrolled in colleges and universities is expected to continue to grow.<sup>9</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics projects an adult student population of 9,670,000

by 2025, or 42% of the country's student body in colleges and universities.<sup>10</sup> Older adults are returning to higher education for various reasons, such as to start a new career or pursue intellectual interests. Although some are seeking education because of a desire to learn something new, for the joy of learning, or to remain engaged in society, others are attending for pragmatic reasons, such as obtaining additional training to adapt to changing labor markets and wanting to remain productive members of a new economy.<sup>9</sup>

Institutions are exploring opportunities to attract an age-diverse student body for many reasons. Intergenerational learning experiences offer benefits to students of all ages and have societal benefits that extend far beyond the classroom.

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Additionally, expanding offerings for older adults is increasingly being explored as an option by institutions of higher education that are seeking to maintain robust, competitive student bodies.

Adjustments to systems of teaching and learning designed to accommodate age-diverse learners tend to benefit all learners. Educational institutions are experimenting with a range of new strategies to adjust learning systems that address the role of technology in learning, including online education and accessibility, and strategies to enhance learning in the classroom to improve teaching methodologies. The impact of various interventions can be expected to benefit all students and should continue to be evaluated by institutions and researchers.

However, adults often encounter barriers to college enrollment, including financial barriers, and situational factors, such as caring for spouses, children, or grandchildren. Many adults are employed full time while they are attending classes, and therefore seek out coursework that accommodates their work schedule. Logistical barriers, such as transportation, physical accessibility of classrooms, and using technology, can also

impede access. However, many adults are able to access higher education through online learning courses, which can help address some barriers but require availability of and comfort with technology.

A study of the experiences of older adults on campus at the University of Massachusetts Boston identified several recommendations for supporting

older adults in higher education. These recommendations include:<sup>9</sup>

- Heighten faculty and administrator awareness of the needs and expectations of older learners.
- Increase older adult awareness of financial aid options.
- Develop an exit questionnaire for older learners to identify barriers to enrollment and identify trends in motivation, expectations, and experiences.
- Provide placement opportunities for older learners who are interested in second career opportunities and volunteerism.
- Inform older learners about support services available on campus.
- Consider adaptations to the physical environment that can both support older learners and benefit everyone on campus.

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## The Age-Friendly University Movement

**T**he AFU initiative grew out of the work of an international interdisciplinary team convened in 2012 by Professor Brian MacCraith, President of Dublin City University (DCU), in partnership with Ireland's Prime Minister Enda Kenny.<sup>11</sup> The

initiative was part of an overall vision in Ireland for following the World Health Organization's community initiative to become a more age-friendly country. The interdisciplinary team at DCU included educators, researchers, administrators, and community

partners. The AFU initiative aligns with the purpose of AGHE to foster the commitment of higher education to the field of aging through education, research, and public service.

DCU's age-friendly initiative outlined six pillars of activity in



higher education (Table 1) and ten AFU principles based on these pillars (Table 2).<sup>12</sup> The AFU principles offer a framework for shaping age-friendly campuses. DCU also spearheaded the development of an international AFU network of partners. The AFU global network provides institutions with opportunities to learn about AFU efforts underway at other institutions, including innovative practices for teaching, research, and community engagement that provide social, personal, and economic benefits to students of all ages.

DCU continues to be a leader in advancing the AFU movement and offers numerous ongoing opportunities for learning, research, and resources. More information is available at [www.dcu.ie/agefriendly/index.shtml](http://www.dcu.ie/agefriendly/index.shtml).

### Embracing the AFU Principles

The AFU principles provide an aspirational and comprehensive framework that calls upon institutions of higher education to focus more of their efforts around aging and access. Institutions

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worldwide are invited to endorse the AFU principles and join the AFU global network. AGHE endorsed the AFU principles in 2016. Currently, more than 50 institutions comprise the AFU global network and the number of members continues to grow across the United States, Europe, Canada, and beyond.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, the AFU principles provide structure for guiding institutions to develop their age-friendly vision, programs, policies, and partnerships. They are designed to assist institutions with identifying gaps and opportunities for new age-friendly efforts.

### Table 1. Pillars of Activity in Higher Education

- Teaching and learning
- Lifelong learning
- Research and innovation
- Intergenerational learning
- Encore careers and enterprise
- Civic engagement

Source: Reference 11.

Becoming an AFU calls for a campus-wide commitment that goes beyond the creation of a single program or track in specific departments. Institutions that endorse the AFU principles commit to addressing them as a broad initiative throughout their programming and to changing their campus culture.<sup>14</sup>

Institutions can take many routes to support age-diverse student populations. A variety of course offerings, including continuing education and graduate programs, can meet the needs of older learners who are seeking to advance their careers or embark

### Table 2. The 10 Age-Friendly University Principles

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programs.
2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue second careers.
3. To recognize the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master's or PhD qualifications).
4. To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
5. To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6. To ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7. To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities.
9. To engage actively with the university's own retired community.
10. To ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

Source: Reference 11.

on new ones. Institutions can raise awareness about and offer programs that prepare students for careers that meet needs of adults as they age.

Beyond academic offerings and programs focused on gerontology, educational content about aging can be integrated across the curriculum in a wide range of classes, such as biology, business, humanities, criminal justice, environmental studies, political science, urban planning, and other disciplines. By infusing aging comprehensively throughout the curriculum, universities can promote a culture of inclusion and appreciation among learners of all ages.

Higher education can intentionally incorporate more intergenerational exchange in teaching and learning to foster

aging competency in all classes. When younger and older learners take classes together, younger students are exposed to and have the opportunity to appreciate the experiences, knowledge, and wisdom that older adults are able to contribute. Older adults also have opportunities to benefit by being valued for their experience and insight and through forming intergenerational relationships.

AFUs focus attention on fostering connections between institutions and members of their own population of retirees as well as local community groups and organizations. They also can direct research endeavors and public discourse to address aging needs in a more concerted way.

### **Endorsing the AFU Principles**

Institutions interested in working with the AFU global network of partners to build a more age-

friendly campus can endorse the AFU principles. The process for doing this often begins with faculty who want to champion the initiative on campus. Individuals who want to lead efforts to pursue an AFU designation can seek guidance from AGHE and collaborate with colleagues to review the AFU principles and map them to the strengths and needs at their institution as well as audit their institution's current practices.<sup>15</sup>

Seeking faculty endorsement of the principles at the institutional level requires collaboration with appropriate members of the administration (e.g., dean, provost, president) and may require support from a faculty assembly, governance group, or curriculum committee. For more information about joining the AFU global network, visit [www.aghe.org/19-resources](http://www.aghe.org/19-resources).

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## Success Stories

**M**any schools have taken their own steps to shift the narrative around aging. There are numerous examples that show how institutions can leverage their strengths to advance age inclusivity. Among the success stories of colleges and universities are efforts to incorporate aging content in a variety of classroom settings, spur innovation to develop

products that address needs of older adults, and create programs that support older adults in their communities. Community colleges, which traditionally serve more age-diverse populations, also have developed age-inclusive programs. The programs highlighted here provide a sample of the different types of activities that institutions can implement to be age friendly and support work-life needs of older learners.

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### **AARP Connecticut and Borrow My Glasses Disrupt Aging Classroom Curriculum**

Each state office of AARP has explored opportunities to advance the Disrupt Aging initiative across various audiences, including the community, employers, and institutions of higher education.

Although strategies differ among states and based upon the intended audience, all Disrupt Aging activities are intended to have a positive transformational effect on attitudes about aging.

In Connecticut, the state AARP office partnered with Borrow My Glasses (a company focused on developing educational programs about aging and caregiving) to develop, pilot, and evaluate a program about perceptions of aging to non-gerontology classes. The program was piloted at universities in the state during the 2018–2019 academic year.

Members of the AARP office in Connecticut and Borrow My Glasses collaborated with Central Connecticut State University (the first educational institution in the state to join the AFU

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global network) and Quinnipiac University to pilot the Disrupt Aging Classroom program as a tool to bring content on aging into classrooms. Sacred Heart University and the University of Hartford also participated in the Disrupt Aging Classroom program in 2019. The objectives of the curriculum aimed to prepare students to:

- Describe demographic trends in aging.
- Define and discuss examples of ageism.
- Recognize older adults as multidimensional individuals.
- Examine one’s personal stake in the aging trend.
- Identify opportunities stemming from the aging trend.

The 2.5-hour didactic and interactive curriculum was delivered by Donna Fedus, a gerontologist educator with Borrow My Glasses. The subject matter was presented to students across a range of academic disciplines, including classes in sociology, psychology, managerial communications, occupational

therapy, business, diversity/social inclusion, and criminal justice.

Evaluations administered before and after the presentation demonstrated that the curriculum was effective at shifting attitudes about aging, helping students see older adults as multidimensional individuals, and increasing their understanding of the value of developing intergenerational networks. Students also reported having an increased awareness that they will likely encounter older adults in many capacities throughout their careers and that they are better prepared to interact with older adults. Classroom professors also recognized the value of incorporating aging information into their curricula and seek to expand the program to additional classes they teach.

AARP and Borrow My Glasses are exploring opportunities to expand the program to additional classes (e.g., architecture, management, communications, marketing), to other universities in Connecticut, and to other states through the network of AARP state offices. AARP volunteers are being trained

**“Aside from any experience they have with their families, students don’t have a good understanding of the complexities of the older population. They don’t have client experience yet, and they have misconceptions, like what they see in the media—that older people are crotchety or forgetful. Disrupt Aging Classroom is a wonderful base of information to get students started learning about older adults as an eye-opener experience before they learn more upper-level occupational therapy concepts.”**

*—An Occupational Therapy Professor*

to deliver the program so that it can be disseminated more broadly.

### **Washington University for Life**

Washington University in St. Louis recently joined the AFU global network and launched a program called Washington University for Life. This program aims to work with various schools, departments, and institutes within the university to:<sup>16</sup>

- Expand opportunities for people to engage in education throughout the life course via degree and certificate programs, individual courses, campus seminars, and other activities.

- Build skills among faculty, staff, and students to work in multigenerational environments.
- Institutionalize programs that facilitate transitions between jobs as well as into retirement, with a focus on ongoing purpose and meaningful engagement.
- Increase knowledge through research on multigenerational education, age stereotype in academia, and educational pathways for longer lives.

Washington University plans to work to advance existing programs, develop new programs to support older adults, and develop a research agenda around aging. It already has an age-diverse campus, with approximately 10% of the student population 35 years of age or older, with higher percentages in certain programs.<sup>16</sup> The university also offers a range of educational opportunities, such as seminars and workshops, for

adults who want to engage in lifelong learning without pursuing a degree as well as numerous programs in place to support older learners. For example, the university's Next Move program is designed to support the needs of learners who already have significant work and life experience and are pursuing a new career.

### **AARP Foundation BACK TO WORK 50+**

The AARP Foundation BACK TO WORK 50+ initiative connects community colleges and employment services to help older workers find jobs. The program currently works with more than 20 locations throughout the United States to support the creation of programs and services that target workers who are 50 years of age and older.<sup>17</sup>

For example, Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona, offers multiple services to older workers.

Job seekers who are at least 50 years of age may participate in the AARP Foundation BACK TO WORK 50+ program, which assists learners with:<sup>18</sup>

- Exploring and transitioning into a new career.
- Updating personal marketing tools and networking strategies.
- Navigating the online job application process.
- Conducting a focused and targeted job search.
- Obtaining information about in-demand jobs.
- Exploring and accessing training options to update skills.
- Job search coaching with strategies designed specifically for the 50+ worker.
- Making connections with local employers who understand the value of hiring mature workers.



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Posing challenges faced by older adults to students and tasking the students with developing solutions to help older adults overcome the challenges can produce meaningful results.

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Pima Community College offers both online and classroom courses to support the educational needs of older learners. In-state residents who are at least 55 years of age can qualify for a 50% reduction in tuition through the college's Lifelong Learner discount.

Similarly, at Jefferson State Community College in Birmingham, Alabama, the AARP Foundation BACK TO WORK 50+ program helps unemployed adults 50 years of age and older seek employment. Only half of Alabama residents who are between the ages of 55 and 64 years are employed, and many are seeking work. The college's resources designed to support these job seekers include a coaching program that helps older adults update their job search skills (e.g., interviewing and networking skills), gather detailed information about the local job market, and obtain short-term job training. Students who are eligible can receive tuition assistance for specific programs, including medical coding and office management.<sup>19</sup>

### **Innovations to Support Older Adults**

Many areas of everyday life for older adults could benefit from innovative products that help overcome various challenges.

Posing challenges faced by older adults to students and tasking the students with developing solutions to help older adults overcome the challenges can produce meaningful results.

Faculty can foster student creativity and build inclusivity in their classrooms to address these needs. Design challenges that produce improved options for people with varied abilities can be incorporated into a wide range of classes to reach a broad student audience. The following examples showcase institutions that have implemented successful age-friendly programs to create new products.

#### ***InnoVenture Weekend***

At Florida State University (an AFU global network member) and Florida A&M University, students participated in a 2-day team-building innovation and business pitch competition called InnoVenture Weekend.<sup>20</sup> The 2018 event fostered intense collaborative work among students studying engineering, computer science, business, and entrepreneurship. It began with an overview of demographics of older adults in the United States, a discussion of the elements of human-centered design, and a review of principles for how to pitch a new product.

In preparation for the weekend, volunteers from the Florida State University Institute for Successful Longevity ([www.isl.fsu.edu](http://www.isl.fsu.edu)) selected problems facing older adults from more than 80 submissions for students to address. The students then worked with older adult mentors from the institute to understand how certain tasks (e.g., opening a medication bottle) can be challenging for older adults. Using this information, students created products that address

the challenges, presented their designs, and made a pitch to a panel of judges.

Students reported that InnoVenture Weekend was an excellent learning opportunity that allowed them to interact with students from different majors and blend different strengths and perspectives to creatively solve problems.

The winning product that emerged from the intergenerational design process was called Findr—a device to track items that are often misplaced, such as eyeglasses, car keys, and TV remotes, without using the internet. Other innovative designs generated over the weekend included Mova, which helps sustain mobility for people in wheelchairs; Smart Cart, which helps move heavy items from a car to the house or around the yard; Medi-Mug, which dispenses medicines; and yAAD, which helps keep track of daily tasks (and could benefit people of mixed ages and abilities).

#### ***Disrupt Aging Design Challenge***

Parsons School of Design at The New School partnered with AARP to engage third- and fourth-year fashion design students in the Disrupt Aging Design Challenge. Participants were asked to engage in human-centered design processes to create clothing that addresses critical aging and ability-related issues.<sup>21</sup>

Older adults can face many challenges getting dressed, such as difficulty manipulating buttons or other fasteners with arthritic hands. People with mobility limitations may have difficulty putting on certain items of clothing. Individuals with vision loss may not have confidence in their style choices.

In the Disrupt Aging Design Challenge, students had the opportunity to work and design

with individuals of different ages and abilities to learn about their challenges with clothing and explore design ideas to address those challenges with more inclusive clothing options.

Learning objectives for the lesson included that students will be able to:

- Understand the importance of aging and inclusivity in design.
- Learn how human-centered design processes can break down stereotypes.
- Discover how human-centered design processes can result in more diverse fashion outcomes, which can reach a broader range of people—particularly those in marginalized communities.
- Recognize the impact of aging on future design career paths.
- See why movements such as AARP's Disrupt Aging campaign

are essential to changing the narrative on aging and ability.

- Identify design challenges facing an aging population across a range of everyday activities.
- Brainstorm potential solutions and design concepts to address issues.

The design challenge was structured as a competition and included the production of a garment or product of the design concept that was developed to address the issue. Several student finalists were selected to present their designs to a panel of judges. Designs produced through this program included a vest with extended wingspan for people with skeletal conditions, shoes with integrated navigation and clothing with a unique Braille tagging system for people who are blind, and buttonless apparel for people with degenerative diseases.

## AFUs and Intergenerational Living Arrangements

Lasell Village is a Boston-area continuing care retirement community (CCRC) with a built-in lifelong learning component that has led initiatives in intergenerational living and university partnerships. The CCRC is located within the campus of Lasell University, a liberal arts institution that has been a leader in the AFU movement and is part of the AFU global network. By policy, Lasell Village residents agree to participate in at least 450 hours per year of activities with the university, including coursework, student mentorship, and research projects.<sup>22</sup>

The RoseMary B. Fuss Center for Research on Aging and Intergenerational Studies is located in Lasell Village and promotes intergenerational connections through research,



education, partnerships, and programming. Fuss Center staff also work with faculty to help support intergenerational classroom dynamics.

The younger university students have numerous opportunities to interact with Lasell Village residents inside

and outside the classroom. Younger and older learners collaborate on projects and panels as well as interact in campus activities, including social and cultural events.

This arrangement is mutually beneficial because it provides unique learning experiences for both

younger and older students, allows for operational efficiencies, and provides a diversified revenue stream for the university. Additionally, many students are employed at Lasell Village, providing career opportunities for students and a labor force for the village.<sup>22</sup>

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## Outcomes and Future of AFUs

Some existing age-inclusivity features of AFUs have already demonstrated beneficial outcomes, such as the shifts in attitudes seen in the Disrupt Aging Classroom program, intergenerational experiences for younger and older learners, and the creation of products that meet the needs of older adults in various design challenges. Intergenerational classroom experiences have also broadened students' knowledge about aging and enriched their personal attitudes about growing older.

As the efforts to reframe aging spread through society and the AFU global network grows, increasing numbers of individuals will be more knowledgeable about aging, cultivate positive attitudes about older adults, and have opportunities to develop valuable intergenerational relationships. Additionally, more older adults will be able to enjoy longer productive and rewarding

work lives. Ongoing community engagement, either through work or volunteerism, can benefit many sectors of society. Age-diverse learning environments engender innumerable experiences for both older learners and younger students who benefit from multigenerational perspectives across a range of disciplines.

The AFU movement has the potential to help colleges and universities thrive financially because older adults can increase enrollment and provide new revenue streams; these enhancements are especially meaningful as many institutions are facing decreasing enrollments of traditional-aged students as the result of shifting demographics. From certificate programs at community colleges to advanced degrees in universities, more institutions of higher education are seeing the value of providing age-diverse programs that meet the needs of older learners, realize the

benefits of intergenerational education, and help the school remain competitive.

Undoubtedly, the AFU movement poses many exciting research questions and opportunities. In addition to evaluating outcomes associated with specific initiatives, research is needed to explore implications of changing narratives around aging and related aging initiatives. Findings emerging from such research will be important for identifying and refining future age-friendly approaches in higher education that support aging adults.

The need for more age-inclusive campuses is clear, and our institutions of higher education are well-positioned to meet many of the opportunities and challenges of aging populations. With the AFU principles as a guide and a growing network of committed institutional partners, there is much to explore and accomplish locally and globally.



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## Aging and AFU Resources

### **AARP Disrupt Aging**

[www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging](http://www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging)

### **Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE)**

[www.aghe.org](http://www.aghe.org)

### **Age-Friendly University Global Network**

[www.geron.org/programs-services/education-center/age-friendly-university-afu-global-network](http://www.geron.org/programs-services/education-center/age-friendly-university-afu-global-network)

### **AGHE Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education**

[www.aghe.org/resources/gerontology-competencies-for-undergraduate-and-graduate-education](http://www.aghe.org/resources/gerontology-competencies-for-undergraduate-and-graduate-education)

### **AGHE Online Directory of Educational Programs in Gerontology and Geriatrics**

[www.aghe.org/resources/online-directory](http://www.aghe.org/resources/online-directory)

### **Dublin City University—Age Friendly University**

[www.dcu.ie/agefriendly/index.shtml](http://www.dcu.ie/agefriendly/index.shtml)

### **Reframing Aging Initiative**

<https://www.geron.org/programs-services/reframing-aging-initiative>

For more on the topic, see the *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education* Special Issue on Age-Friendly Universities. April–June 2019, Volume 40, Issue 2.

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