Geriatric Education Committee

New Report: Health of Older Adults Declining in California

Steven P. Wallace, PhD, Professor, UCLA School of Public Health

Despite years of improving mortality rates, recent trends in other indicators of the health of older Californians are not so rosy according to a new report, Trends in the Health of Older Californians, by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. Throughout the state, older adults are increasingly likely to report cancer, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and the need for help with emotional problems. The use of medical care services also increased, including the percent of older adults who went to the emergency room as well as the percent that made monthly or more frequent doctor visits. This presages significant challenges for California over the next two decades - a time in which the elderly population is projected to double.

“This is a bad way to start the new century,” said the report’s author, Steven P. Wallace, PhD. “Unless there is an increased focus on the prevention and management of chronic diseases, the promise of a healthy and happy retirement will be unattainable for millions of Californians.”

There were some positive trends in the report, including improved screening rates for several types of cancer and a drop in the number of older California women taking hormone replacement therapy, drugs that have been linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease and breast cancer.

This last change is linked to significant new information provided to doctors and their older patients about the dangers of hormone replacement therapy.

“It’s an example of a concerted prevention effort that will have a long-term payoff in terms of better health and fewer health-care costs,” said Wallace.

Residents of the heavily Latino San Joaquin Valley reported the worst health status of seniors in the state. Improving their health through physician-directed prevention efforts may be harder due to problems in the health care system, language and cultural barriers, and limited community resources. In addition, fear of using government health services linked to immigration concerns, even among the documented and citizens, remains a significant barrier to preventative health care, Wallace said.

The proportion of older adults reporting diabetes in the San Joaquin region increased from one in six in 2001-just above the state average-to the highest in the state, with one in four of all older adults reporting that they have diabetes in 2005. The San Joaquin Valley is also the only region of the state where mammography rates worsened between 2001 and 2005. In every other region the proportion of older women with a recent mammogram increased. The San Joaquin Valley also has particularly high rates of sedentary lifestyle, obesity and falls.

Racial and ethnic health disparities at the state level were striking for some health conditions. In 2005, diabetes and obesity were almost twice as high among older Latinos and African Americans than among older non-Latino whites. Latinos, Asian Americans and African Americans also reported substantially worse self-reported health. In addition, older Latinos, African Americans and Asian Americans are three times more likely to be food insecure. California’s elderly population is set to become majority non-Caucasian as of 2030, with Latinos comprising among the largest ethnic groups.


Message From the President

Marilyn R. Gugliucci MA,PhD
Director of Geriatric Education and Research
University of New England

In 2004, AGHE initiated a new strategic planning process, which included a goal to assess the functions of AGHE and GSA as an organization since the merger that occurred in 1998. The AGHE Executive Committee continued discussion on this issue and in July 2007, identified the need and relevance of conducting a 10-year merger review. Our AGHE President at that time, Marie Bernard, MD, presented the AGHE/GSA Merger Review proposal with Lisa Gwyther, who was then the GSA President. Both presidents agreed to move forward by appointing a joint committee to conduct what is now referred to as the AGHE/GSA Operational Review Committee. The name change from Merger Review to Operational Review more adequately represented the charge of the committee. The committee did not review the merger; instead, they were to review the operations of GSA and AGHE to promote efficiency and effectiveness between the units.

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We are happy to welcome the following institutions into AGHE membership. For further information about their programs, please contact the institutional representatives listed. If you know someone who would like institutional membership information, please contact Angela Bake in the AGHE office (mailto:abaker@aghe.org abaker@aghe.org). The membership application can be downloaded from the AGHE website “http://www.aghe.org” www.aghe.org).

Ontario Interdisciplinary Council on Aging and Health
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Ontario Interdisciplinary Council on Aging and Health joins AGHE as an organizational affiliate. OICAH membership is comprised of university representatives from a number of universities in Ontario that have degrees in gerontology, or health/social science programs. In addition, gerontological researchers, government representatives, consumer group representative, and students are also members.

York College of Pennsylvania
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York College of Pennsylvania joins AGHE as a four-year college. York offers a concentration in gerontology within the behavioral sciences major and a minor in the same degree. Two gerontology faculty and adjuncts provide students with ten different courses in gerontology every academic year.

Westfield State College
Tamara L. Smith, B.A.
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Tel: 413-572-8267
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Westfield State College joins AGHE as an educational affiliate. WSC offers three aging related courses per academic year in the departments of Movement Science, Psychology and Sociology.

Saint Mary’s College
JoAnn Burke, Ph.D., LCSW, LMFT
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Website: “http://www.saintmarys.edu”

Saint Mary’s College joins AGHE as an educational affiliate. Saint Mary’s offers continuing education to aging network providers through the Elderhood Institute. Gerontology has been integrated throughout the social work curriculum. A total of five social work courses provide students with aging content. Students are also able to attend continuing education programs offered by the Elderhood Institute.

Norquest College (Downtown Branch)
Arlene Wolkowycki, M.Ed.
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Norquest College joins AGHE as an educational affiliate. Norquest offers courses in dementia care and geriatrics that help integrate gerontology content throughout their health and human careers curricula. Eight courses are
offered during the academic year by five full-time and two part-time faculty. Norquest also offers on-line training for caregivers in partnership with Capital Health Region/Edmonton (Centre for Geriatric Excellence).

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**Capella University**

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Capella University joins AGHE as a university. Capella offers a master’s in gerontology that provides a comprehensive examination of the impact of aging on individuals, families and communities. Five full-time faculty and five part time faculty teach seven on-line graduate courses in gerontology and host students at a residential colloquia two or three times a year.

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**Benjamin Rose Institute**

Heather L. Menne, Ph.D.
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Fax: 216-373-1813
E-mail: hmenne@benrose.org
Website: http://www.benrose.org

Benjamin Rose Institute joins AGHE as an organizational affiliate. The Benjamin Rose Institute strives to be a leader in raising the standards of care for seniors. There are four divisions within the institute that work toward this goal: Eldercare Services Institute; Margaret Blenkner Research Institute; Katz Policy Institute; and the Margaret Wagner Apartments.

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**Ferris State University**

Omar Baker, Ph.D.
School of Nursing
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E-mail: bakero@ferris.edu
Website: http://www.ferris.edu

Ferris State University rejoins AGHE as a university. Ferris offers three courses in gerontology, two in the School of Nursing and one in Sociology taught by three full-time and one part-time faculty. Ferris is expanding their gerontology curriculum by developing a certificate in gerontology at the undergraduate level.

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Don’t Forget AGHE’s 2009 Silent Auction!

Once again we are sponsoring the ever-popular Silent Auction held during the AGHE Annual Meeting. This auction is a successful fund-raiser for the Association, it serves as a networking “hub” for visiting with old friends and meeting new ones, and it provides an important outlet for the dedicated shoppers amongst us. Do join us in San Antonio and participate in the Silent Auction!

Where do the Silent Auction items come from? Everyone coming to the AGHE meeting is encouraged to bring one or more items to contribute. Contributors will receive a receipt that you can use to deduct the full, fair-market value of the item on your income taxes.

What kind of things should I bring? Bring anything you think will appeal to AGHE meeting participants. Some popular items are: books (autographed ones are nice), jewelry, chocolates, college insignia items, collectibles, gifts for children, handmade crafts, gift cards from national store chains (especially bookstores), souvenirs from the host city (San Antonio in this case), anything with an aging theme.

What do I do with the items I bring for the auction? The set-up times are Thursday, February 26 (3-6 p.m.) and Friday, February 27 (8-9 a.m.) in the Exhibit Hall. The Exhibits and Silent Auction will be in Texas Ballrooms B & C in the Crowne Plaza- Riverwalk Hotel. Bring your items to that room during the above time slots. Someone will check in your items and give you a receipt.

When will the Silent Auction take place? The auction and exhibit hall will officially open on Friday morning (27th) at 9:30 a.m. and will be open throughout the conference during the hours that the Exhibit Hall is open. When you are visiting the exhibits or taking a coffee break in the Exhibit Hall, visit the auction tables and place your bids.

How does the Silent Auction work? The donated items are displayed on a series of tables, with a bid sheet beside each item. When you find an item you like, write down your bid, making sure your bid is above the required minimum. Throughout the conference, periodically check your bid, and if someone is bidding against you, raise your bid. At the close of the auction—Saturday at 3:30 p.m.—the highest bidder gets the item.

How will I know if I win the items I bid on? Preferably, be at the auction when it closes on Saturday at 3:30. As each table is sequentially “closed,” take the items you won to the cashier to pay (cash, checks, and credit cards accepted). If you can’t be present at the closing, check at the AGHE registration desk later in the afternoon to see if your bids were successful. Or come to the Closing Brunch on Sunday. Any items not claimed before the Brunch will be auctioned off live at that time.

Have a question or wish to volunteer at the auction? Contact Betty Douglass ebdouglass@verizon.
In & Around AGHE

Message from the GSA Executive Director

James Appleby
GSA Executive Director

At GSA’s recent Annual Scientific Meeting in National Harbor, MD, I had a chance to meet many AGHE elected officers and institutional representatives — many of them for the first time.

The most widely-discussed item related to AGHE was the 10-year merger review, which Marilyn Gugliucci details on the front page. Additionally, the “Letters to My Mentor” presentations, jointly sponsored by AGHE and the GSA Fellowship Committee, proved valuable to participants once again.

In her Presidential Symposium series, then-GSA President Lisa Gwyther incorporated an AGHE-themed session, titled “The Art, Social Construction, and Science of Aging: Promoting Health through Gerontology/Geriatrics Education and Training” and led by Marilyn. She once again demonstrated that swift action is needed to ensure that America’s expanding aging population will receive sufficient care in the coming years. With direct access to students, AGHE members are in an ideal position to ensure that we build a workforce of adequate size and competency to prepare for the days ahead.

AGHE’s own annual meeting in San Antonio is approaching very rapidly. I look forward to attending and continuing the discussions I began with many of you in National Harbor — and providing updates for items brought up when we last spoke.

I also need to bring attention to something that will closely follow AGHE’s meeting: our annual Careers in Aging Week, which is held at schools across the country and ties in directly to the workforce issues I outlined above. This is a project developed collaboratively by the GSA and AGHE staff. Its purpose is to introduce a broad audience to the wide-ranging career opportunities that exist in the field of aging and aging research, as well as to promote GSA and AGHE as the premier resources for supporting career development in the field of gerontology.

Careers in Aging Week is an endeavor that requires the participation of representatives at the institutional level to succeed. We are encouraging both GSA and AGHE members to consider organizing activities, which typically include forums, networking sessions, and even interactive demonstrations with older adults. If you aren’t sure how to get started, please visit www.careersinaging.com — there are reports from previous years as well as e-mail contacts for people who have run these events in the past.

See you in San Antonio!

James

In memory of our dear friend
Chuck Longino

by
Marilyn R. Gugliucci, AGHE President

On December 25, 2008, AGHE, GSA and the field of gerontology lost a leader and a beloved colleague. Dr. Charles F. Longino, Jr. died on this day after a brief illness. Chuck was the Washington M. Wingate Professor of Sociology, Director of the Reynolda Gerontology Program, and Professor of Public Health Sciences at Wake Forest University. He was a prolific scholar, speaker and author as well as a world-renowned expert on aging and retirement migration research.

Chuck served as the AGHE president from 2002-2004, and served as GSA President during 2006. For AGHE’s 2003 Annual Meeting Chuck designed the theme “AGHE Means Business: Educational Opportunities and the World of Work” and for the 2004 Annual Meeting he chose “Global Aging.” Chuck’s focus on global issues was the launching point for AGHE’s international work. It is very fitting that a vote will be taken by AGHE members during the 2009 AGHE Business Meeting in San Antonio to accept AGHE’s vision statement: “International Leaders in advancing education on aging;” and it’s new tag line: “Global Leaders in Education on Aging.”

Many of us who worked with Chuck will remember that winning smile and his strong advocacy for older adults, globally, and the field of gerontology. I can remember stopping to talk with Chuck at a GSA meeting a couple years back and he was so eager to introduce me to a freshman student from Wake Forest University who attended the conference with her mother. I loved this interchange because it spoke volumes about Chuck’s passion and enthusiasm for the field of aging and his commitment to students – the younger generation – to get involved in aging issues. Chuck was a mentor to both students and professionals. He always made time to discuss issues, brainstorm ideas, and share insights. His personality was such that Chuck got along with everyone, and he knew how to advance the field of aging both through teaching and research.

There are so many wonderful memories that come to mind when I think of Chuck. There is no question that he was loved by many and will be missed for a long time to come. The comfort at this time is that Chuck knew he made a difference in the field of aging and in humanity — he touched many people’s lives. It’s a wonderful legacy.
President’s Message continued from page 8

History

AGHE’s move in 1998 from an independently incorporated organization to a unit within The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) was actually a return home? In 1972, a confluence of resources, people, and events within GSA led to the birth of AGHE in 1974. Members of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Education Committee who were interested in gerontological career training in higher education established the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education with grant funding from the Administration on Aging (AoA). AGHE was initially run by its volunteer leadership as part of GSA (and in space first donated by and then rented from GSA), and later went on to hire staff in 1976 and move into its own offices in 1981.

Both organizations grew and thrived over the next decade, but by the early 1990s, AGHE and GSA were both looking at ways to enhance their visibility, provide improved member services, increase grant-seeking capacities, and economize on office operations. After six years of planning, and testing of intermediate approaches, AGHE merged with GSA in 1998 as a new and distinct operating unit of GSA. The merger documents stated that the former AGHE would be “incorporated into GSA as a specialized entity dedicated to gerontology in higher education. The fundamental mission and organizational purposes formerly reflected and articulated in the AGHE mission statement and bylaws will transfer to the new entity.”

Now, 10 years later, AGHE and GSA have attained many of their objectives as a result of the merger and continue to demonstrate their vital roles in the field of aging. However, it was believed that the full potential of the merger has not been realized and therefore the joint Ten-Year Merger Review Committee was appointed to identify areas where optimal growth and function can enrich our organization.

The review committee applied a dynamic and fluid course of action over a 9-month period as it accumulated organizational data and merger-related information. The Operational Review Report presents the committee’s collection and review of data, including interviews with key staff. It outlines details of AGHE and GSA and presents questions for further investigation and recommendations to enhance merger effectiveness and efficiency.

Committee Selection

A Merger Review Committee chair was appointed (Marilyn R Gugliucci, PhD) in December 2007. Selection of additional committee members was based on full or partial fulfillment of three criteria: (1) history and knowledge of GSA and/or AGHE; (2) significance of either current or past representation of AGHE and/or GSA members; and (3) current service within AGHE or GSA. Names of possible committee members were generated based on these criteria and the list of names was presented to the AGHE and GSA Presidents for final approval and official appointment. Of the eleven-member committee, all have been GSA members for 4 or more years and institutions that are AGHE members employ ten of the committee representatives. Two ex-officio members, each serving as staff to GSA and AGHE, were also appointed.

Committee Function and Structure

The committee’s work was based on the following stated principles:

• To use past documents as templates for review, but rely on current information to conduct the review.
• To consider “now” as the snap shot in time for all review processes.
• Maintain a vision for the future of AGHE/GSA as an integrated organization.
• Propose suggestions, recommendations, and/or solutions for consideration.

The committee identified four areas of focus for the review:

1) Administrative (includes budget, staff, and resources);
2) Programmatic (includes conferences, awards, programs, and marketing);
3) Structural (includes organizational elements); and
4) Overarching Issues (includes those areas of intersection among all issues, as well as committees, governance and “other”).

Team members and chairs for each area were:

► Administrative Team: Margaret Perkinson & Sandy Reynolds (AGHE & GSA Treasurers) Co-chairs
► Structural Team: Stephen Cutler & Cathy Tompkins (Co-Chairs), Frank Whittington, & Frances Yang
► Programmatic Team: Jennifer Mendez (Chair), Graham Rowles, & Chuck Longino
► Overarching Issues Team: Betsy Sprouse & Marilyn Gugliucci (Co-chairs)

Outcomes

As a result of this review, a comprehensive table was designed addressing each of the functional areas, the current practice within these areas, recommendations for immediate action, and recommendations for future action. It was evident to the committee that there is great potential within AGHE, the National Academy (GSA’s Policy unit), and GSA to work together to create a stronger and more visible organization than the one that exists today. As good as each unit is, identifying methods to augment integration and collaboration of services and staff responsibilities will greatly enhance the operations and create a unified public image for GSA and its units.

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Seniors Setting a Global Example for Helping the Planet

Jacquelyn B. Frank, PhD
University of Indianapolis

“As a newly retired person I wanted to tap the talents of retired people worldwide…to increase awareness and environmental action”

-Joyce Emery, CoFounder, GreenSeniors.org.

In 2006 Joyce Emery and Co-founder Keith Farnish initiated the GreenSeniors movement to encourage actions by both groups and individuals to improve the earth’s environment. In an email interview with Joyce, I learned that the movement has exploded over the past two years, thanks in large part to the Green Seniors website. The website serves as a clearinghouse for various green networks and projects around the world. The site features programs and environmental groups from Africa, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, Canada, Australia, Italy and Portugal among others. The website also features “Green Heros”—everyday seniors from across the world who are taking action to improve the planet and to educate younger generations about what they can do for the earth.

Among the Green Groups and Green Networks featured are Bomen Voor Bejaarden (Trees for the Elderly) in the Netherlands and the Great Old Broads for Wilderness Network in the U.S. The Bomen Voor Bejaarden group has used Google Maps to plot where trees are providing shade in urban areas in the Netherlands, particularly around nursing homes and other facilities where seniors are prevalent. They are also researching the best types of trees to provide shade in summer months. Great Old Broads for Wilderness “http://www.greatoldbroads.org” is a national, grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing, preserving and protecting America’s roadless public lands. Three of their primary program areas focus on the protection of grazing on federal lands, the negative impact of off road vehicles on the environment, and concern about oil and gas exploration on protected lands. Great Old Broads also has a number of local-level subgroups called “Broadbands” that address a particular environmental issue within the larger mission of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness. Currently, there are 5 Broadband groups in California, Colorado, Wisconsin, Nevada, Utah and Washington.

Bomen Voor Bejaarden and Great Old Broads for Wilderness are just two examples of seniors’ global involvement in the quest to address climate change. Green Seniors wonderfully illustrates the proactive roles taken by older adults across the world to bring about positive change. And the website itself is an outstanding resource for environmental awareness and for illustrating, according to Emery, “that seniors can take action in their own lives and lead the way for younger generations.”

I asked Joyce Emery about what academics in the field of aging could learn from this website and what they should teach their students about older adults and saving the environment. Joyce told me, “I hope you can inspire folks in your profession to use their own sense of environmental activism in working with seniors.” Most important she said, “there is no age limit on understanding that our civilization is in trouble due to environmental degradation worldwide, including global warming. Younger active seniors are throwing themselves into the work. Older seniors have the burden of this realization on their minds and they very much want to DO SOMETHING to help. You don’t have to tiptoe around them— many of them know the score, know what is at stake, better than you do. So, don’t just give them a CFL bulb for their lamp or help them collect their plastic for recycling. Give them outlets of action and expression that fit the seriousness of the situation. They are a whole lot tougher than you think.”
In previous columns I wrote about the cyber personality and the online learner. This time I want to discuss the idea of community.

When we teach online we step away from the spotlight and assume the role of facilitator. This role has been described very aptly as the guide on the side. This supports my belief that students need our experience, not our lectures, and they need us as role models, not examples of people who can repeat things they can read for themselves. I find this role very comfortable because it frees me from a level of accuracy I cannot maintain in the wake of the voluminous amounts of information available to us today, and it allows me to address each student’s needs individually.

Key concepts associated with building community are: honesty, responsiveness, relevance, respect, openness, and empowerment (Palloff and Pratt, 1999, 2003). There is also the idea of “conscious community”. Such a community emerges by having a clear purpose/goals, group norms, and a code of conduct. Like any community it has a distinctive gathering place. It just happens to be in cyberspace with help from courseware like Blackboard Vista or other course management software. Leadership in such communities is promoted from within. Students, rather than instructors, choose their leaders (they also un-choose them if necessary). What results from this shifting are: shared roles, resolution of disputes from within, and tolerance of personal issues that seep into the learning process.

Being able to identify when a community has formed is just as important as making sure you have all of the appropriate elements in place to allow its development. While I am certain more can be identified, there are five primary indicators of the successful establishment of a cyber community: active engagement, learner-to-learner interaction, resource sharing, interpersonal support, and social construction of community.

Students in successful cyber communities will actively engage each other in discussion and other discourse about content. They will also communicate on a more personal level—that is students will be more likely to disclose personal experiences in an effort to explicate a point. For example, I frequently assign the longevity calculator (http://www.livingto100.com/). At this web site students answer questions about their health related behaviors (e.g. do you smoke; how often do you exercise). A calculation is made based on this information suggesting how close to (or beyond) the age of 100 they could live, all other things being equal. Discussions around longevity and health behavior have never been dull using the longevity calculator. In the process, students have learned different approaches to their life challenges (such as unique ways to stop smoking), and support each other’s learning in ways that cannot be duplicated by an instructor.

This example also shows that discussion becomes learner-to-learner (not learner-to-instructor), where resources get shared and learners support each other. My students do not wait for my leadership or feedback, and are willing to risk challenging each other to explain and support the things they say. Students contribute to each other’s knowledge building process by not only providing the resources they discover, but also by analyzing their discoveries publicly. Through this, students learn how to express support and encouragement textually. They develop ways to convey different emotional states and responses without the use of body language and voice tone. Instead, they develop and/or fine tune the vocabulary necessary to convey emotional meaning through their writing.

This is also how meaning is socially constructed in cyber communities. Through discussion and questioning, issues of importance are identified. Through consensus building students agree on what is important and relevant, and what is not. While such decision making is not solely in student hands, in a carefully constructed cyber environment pointing students in a specific direction provides a path of appropriate discovery and meaning making.

Next time I expect to discuss rubrics in cyberspace. This will be right after our San Antonio conference—you can look me up there! And as always, if you have specific questions that you would like me to try to address, I encourage you
Academic Program Development

Gerontology Program Receives National Attention

“The Letters to My Mentor” is a new column for the AGHExchange. It is designed to recognize the continuing contribution of gerontology-geriatrics mentors and is in keeping with AGHE’s initiatives to recognize and honor those who have laid the foundation for our discipline. If you would like to contribute a “letter” to honor your past or present mentor, please submit an electronic copy (no more than 500 words, please) to: lynne.hodgson@quinnipiac.edu or dana.brady@wku.edu

Lillian Glickman, Ph.D., MSW
Co-Director
Management of Aging Services Program
University of Massachusetts Boston

The Management of Aging Services (MAS) masters degree program at the University of Massachusetts Boston has had a milestone year. Five years after its development, it has expanded its national availability by becoming available on a 100% online basis. It also has been selected the Outstanding Continuing Education Credit Program in the country by the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA). The Association noted that the aging of the American population is creating a need for expanded services and for workers trained in managing those services. The MAS program was cited as responding to this need, offering both mid-career professionals in the aging field as well as those new to the field with an advanced degree that combines both information on aging issues and managerial skills. The mission of the MAS program is to train individuals to assume management positions in agencies that deliver services to elders.

The MAS program was developed as an addition to the already well established Gerontology Department at UMass Boston, which has long been a leader in social gerontology. It offers both a Ph.D. program and another Master’s program that focuses on training students in research. In 2003, the leaders of the Gerontology program approached the Division of Corporate, Continuing and Distance Education (CCDE) about developing a new track in the Masters Program designed for practitioners in the field. CCDE hired Massachusetts’ former Secretary of Elder Affairs, Dr. Lillian Glickman, and Assistant Secretary of Elder Affairs, Ellen Birchander, to develop a curriculum for the new track and co-direct the new program. Courses were developed covering service delivery issues, policy development, chronic disease management, aging services organization and financing, marketing, and human resources.

The first full cohort of seven students began taking courses in the program in fall 2004. The program now services 55 matriculated students and generates 185 enrollments annually. Instruction is delivered by full-time University faculty, the Co-Directors of the program, and qualified professionals in the field. The curriculum is organized so that students can complete the 30-credit program in a two-year time period. The Co-Directors provide mentoring for all students in the program, including students taking classes on a non-matriculated basis. These relationships are facilitated with personal communications offered in person, if proximity allows, as well as by telephone, e-mail, and other electronic media.

A highlight of the program is its options of online and on-campus learning environments. Until this year, students could only take 80% of their courses online, which was a barrier for many out-of-state students. This changed the past January when the University approved a 100% online option. The program already has students from a number of states including Georgia, Michigan, Florida, and California. For students who are local, the program can be taken with a mixture of online and on-campus courses.

Thirty-three MAS students have now received their masters degree in gerontology through this program. Some of the positions they hold include director of an adult day care center, program coordinator for a state agency on aging, director of a geriatric mental health program, and program manager for an elder service agency. Student evaluations of the program are uniformly positive. Typical statements include: “This program has provided me with a better understanding of aging issues as well as the management skills that will position me to move up the career ladder.” “This program has opened the door to a new career in gerontology for me and made it possible to move from a high tech to an elder service career; I am excited about my new options.” “I learned so much and enjoyed the interaction with my classmates and the personal attention from the instructors.”

For more information, please contact Lillian Glickman at Lillian.Glickman@umb.edu.
Teamwork from the inside, out

by

Sarinnapha Vasunilashorn
Student Committee Chair
University of Southern California

Lydia Manning
Student Chair-elect
Miami University

Teamwork is a term often used to describe a quality that an organization strives for, but in my opinion, no other group of individuals exemplifies this aspect better than AGHE. As I quickly acquaint myself in the role of Student Chair, I am immediately amazed by the breadth and depth of accomplishments within the AGHE family. Overtime, however, I have come to realize that these accomplishments are due almost entirely to the contributions of several and the teamwork of all AGHE members. This is immediately apparent across the committees for which AGHE houses. In using my own experiences as a reference, I will discuss my encounters of teamwork from working with the Student Committee, Executive Committee, and Gerontological Society of America (GSA).

Student Committee:

From my first experiences with the Student Committee, the enthusiasm for AGHE and the fervor towards enhancing student vibrancy was remarkable. Our Student Committee meeting at GSA in National Harbor, MD was an excellent example of how the contributions of a few young professionals combined can serve to benefit the student population in general. Five generations of Student Chairs, including myself, attended this meeting, and I’d like to personally thank Bert Waters, Leanne Clark, Eric Goedereis, and Lydia Manning (AGHE Student Chair-elect) for their commitment. The strength of our Student Committee attendance was not only due to our past, present, and future Student Chair attendance, but was dually attributed to our newer members who have contributed an array of fresh ideas, creativity, and energy. For this, I’d also like to thank Laurie Garlock. With thanks to these individuals, we had an efficient and productive meeting during which we set concrete goals, distributed tasks, and established an exciting new Student Representative position to work with the Local Arrangements Chair for this and future AGHE meetings.

Executive Committee:

The dedication found within the Student Committee is no doubt a reflection of the teamwork and commitment exhibited by the AGHE Executive Committee. This was increasingly apparent during our meetings at this year’s GSA. The passion that the students maintain towards AGHE has stemmed from the inner workings of these entirely devoted individuals. Nearly each Executive Committee member belongs to other committees or task forces within AGHE, and more often than not, they wear several academic hats. Despite this, there is never a lack of individuals to carry out specified tasks or spearhead a given action item. When one person volunteers to take the lead, another committee member or two immediately joins in. This level of teamwork never ceases to amaze me, and it is something that I myself strive towards in my area of professionalism.

GSA:

Aside from the teamwork exhibited by AGHE members within AGHE, this quality has become increasingly apparent in relationships outside of AGHE. As both AGHE and GSA undergo this new and exciting time of transition, I have also noticed the degree of teamwork between the Executive Committees of both organizations. I am encouraged in knowing that two groups, so distinct and yet so alike in their own right, are beginning to and will continue to strive to work together to foster relationships within the gerontology community and to enhance the achievements of both organizations. So far, the most important lessons learned from my brief stint as Student Chair and member of the AGHE Executive Committee are that teamwork is alive and well within AGHE; teamwork is essential to achieving our most important and challenging goals; and teamwork is what makes the “work” part fun and not-so-work-like.

With that said, several of the experiences I have just shared have also been echoed by the AGHE Student Chair-elect, Lydia Manning, of Miami University. The following is a brief description of her sentiments from this year’s GSA meeting: “Attending GSA each year provides me with incredible tools. I always return with a newly ignited sense of self and purpose, as a member of the discipline and as a gerontologist. This year was no exception. This year’s GSA meeting yielded significant amounts of insight and inspiration gleaned from keynotes to committee meetings. The 2008 meeting theme was Resilience in an Aging Society: Risks and Opportunities, and the research and work presented at this conference clearly conveyed the resiliency of older adults. As a scholar interested in studying older adults’ spiritual orientations, I spent a great deal of time in sessions pertaining to spirituality and aging - an area richly illustrative of resiliency in later life. Respecting the research and work done on the resiliency of elders, I couldn’t help but notice the resiliency of my fellow students presenting at and attending GSA. Students who attend and present at GSA are amazingly resilient; presenting work that is expertly conceptualized, executed and communicated. Students work hard in the presentation of their ideas and to gain the respect of their colleagues in the field. ESPO has a presence at GSA, and it hardly goes unnoticed. Students affiliated with GSA recognize the rich opportunities that GSA yields, and many take advantage of them. I appreciated this year at GSA for those of you new to AGHE or for those unfamiliar with AGHE, I encourage you to inquire more (vasunila@usc.edu) and consider attending our annual meeting in San Antonio, TX from February 26-March 1, 2009. This way, you’ll experience first-hand the dedication, enthusiasm, and level of teamwork that words alone cease to capture its extent in entirety.
Letter To My Mentor

Tribute to George Maddox

It is a great pleasure to be able to write about George Maddox and the myriad of ways that he has influenced my career. It has been an even greater pleasure to have spent almost 35 years learning from and working with George: first as his graduate student; then as his postdoctoral fellow; finally, for more than a quarter century, as his colleague.

There are so many ways that my scholarship and my career more broadly have been influenced by George that it is difficult to know where to begin. Let’s start with issues of substance, arguably the area in which I least resemble George. He is a structuralist; I am a social psychologist. He focuses on the relatively objective conditions of late life: functional status, living arrangements, service utilization, and so forth. My bailiwick is the softer, squishier sphere of subjective well-being, depression, and the extent to which subjective perceptions are better predictors of behaviors than some kind of objective reality. George thinks that the real payoff of science is to change things. After all this time, I could not begin to count the number of times that George commented to me, “If you think that you understand a phenomenon, try to change it.” I am a strictly “hands-off” person in my research and worry much less about whether I can change something than fearing that my research will inadvertently change something in which I had no right to intervene. At this level, then, George and I are very different and it is not obvious that the student learned from the master.

But the issues on which we differ are much less important than those upon which we agree and digging deeper into my research reveals many similarities to George’s pioneering work and continuing contributions to the field of aging. And it is clear to me that my commitment to those issues reflects George’s strong influences on how I think about theory, methods, and substance. One such issue is an emphasis on the whole person, while at the same time doing justice to the multidimensional nature of complex phenomena. George and his colleagues laid this out first and with compelling logic and empirical verification when they developed the OARS methodology, but it has been a hallmark of his research since then. I’d like to think that it is a hallmark of my research as well. During the 1980’s, I began a research program examining caregiver well-being. My first publication in this area argued against aggregate scales of caregiver burden and recommended instead focusing on multiple dimensions of caregiver well-being. That is my only publication that was awarded a certificate as a “citation classic.” George was not an author of that paper, but he probably should have been. The multidimensional perspective for which I forcefully argued might, in fact, be viewed as a “knock off” of the OARS methodology.

It was George Maddox who, early on, drummed the importance of longitudinal data and measuring change over time into my head. Today the need for longitudinal data to answer questions about aging and change over time is so widely recognized as to seem trite when articulated. It was not always so. As a postdoctoral fellow, I published a paper on methods of separating age, period, and cohort. A few years later, a colleague and I used those methods to document the empirical validity of suspicions that grade inflation was sweeping college campuses. I used the Second Duke Longitudinal Study for my dissertation and published numerous articles and chapters from that marvelous data base—a data base that was virtually unique at the time. While I was still a graduate student, George and I published a paper looking longitudinally at adjustment to retirement. To illustrate just how rare multivariate longitudinal analyses were back then, that paper was the first paper ever published in the Journal of Gerontology that used multiple regression. The review of that paper took what then and now seems an extraordinarily long time. Gordon Streib, then editor of JG, wrote an apology after several months, indicating that he needed more time because he had not yet identified reviewers who could evaluate “multiple repression” analysis. The fact that I recognized the importance of longitudinal data, knew what to do with longitudinal data, and had access to longitudinal data all rest on the knowledge and resources George provided.

A final example of the effective ways that George socialized my scientific perspective is the “compared to what” issue. George truly does have the mind of an interventionist. He is not experimental in the usual sense of the word; his goals have always been so large in scope and so embedded in real world contexts that the label “experimetal” just won’t do. He is an interventionist and if he had his way health systems, social service systems, and methods of paying for health and social services would be his to design and test. My focus is at a much more individual level, but it has been profoundly influenced by George’s commitment to intervention and to answering the question “compared to what.” Indeed, another way that my argument against aggregate measures of caregiver burden could have been written by George was my critique that caregiver burden scales make it impossible to compare their well-being to that of persons experiencing other stressors.

George’s influence on my career goes far beyond laying the fundamental structure by which I think about and conduct research. He is a powerful socialization agent. It’s actually kind of scary sometimes the way his dictums and phrases pop into my mind and ultimately guide my behavior. For example, when the editorship of the social sciences section of the Journal of Gerontology was offered to me, I was not sure that I could handle it or that it would be the best use of my time. So, I sought the advice of my mentor. George let me ramble for about five minutes about the pros and cons of this decision then looked over his glasses at me, as only George does, and said, “Go ahead and do it; what else do you have to do between 2 and 4 in the morning?” End of conversation. I took the editorship, of course. But to this day, when I feel overwhelmed with deadlines or think I can’t take on one more thing, I invariably find myself saying to myself, “Just go ahead and do it, what else do you do to between 2 and 4 a.m.?” Now that’s effective socialization. I don’t even have to go to George for advice anymore—I hear his voice in my head without his presence. I get his advice whether I want it or not.

Finally, George’s very presence and style are a continual inspiration to me. George has been plying his trade for nearly 60 years now. I have known him for nearly 40 of those years. For me, George’s most distinctive and wonderful quality is his unflagging enthusiasm for his work. There are a fair number of days when frankly, my work just doesn’t seem to be able to get me up to hit the floor running, so to speak, the way it did when I was the new kid on the block. George is invariably excited about his work and the field of aging—indeed, excited is too soft a word. George is dynamic and passionate, not just sometimes, but without fail. He has not only been my primary mentor; he is and has been a role model for grabbing life and milking every minute of it. Thank you is an inadequate phrase for all that George Maddox has contributed to my career and my life, but for the moment it will have to do.
Community Colleges frequently serve more than a traditional “credit-based” academic role within the communities they serve. This is the case with Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), Grand Rapids Michigan, where a wide variety of non-credit, continuing education, and educational outreach programs and services are offered within the community. This same multi-faceted approach is applied to the aging education and outreach efforts of GRCC. Under the leadership of the Older Learner Center, formed in 1998, aging-related credit, non-credit, and community outreach initiatives are offered to the community that we serve.

From a historical perspective, GRCC has thirty-five year history of providing aging education credit courses, non-credit offerings, and community outreach programs to older adults, their families, and professional/paraprofessional service providers in the local aging network. Beginning in 1973, the first GRCC gerontology courses were developed by Dr. Robert J. Riekse, a faculty person in the Social Science Division, who at the time had academic seniority as well as released time to develop and direct aging-related community outreach programs. However, aging education and outreach activities were not formally institutionalized within GRCC until the formation of the Older Learner Center in 1998. Where under the leadership of Older Learner Center staff these efforts were expanded to include the development of new gerontology credit and non-credit courses; workshops; online offerings; student Practicum field placements; and a 32 credit undergraduate gerontology certificate. The development of each of these was based on a combination of applied gerontological research, institutional research, AGHE Standards, surveys of the aging network, and the practical experience of Older Learner Center staff in gerontology education and aging outreach.

Aging education and outreach activities at GRCC fall into two categories: credit and non-credit.

Credit Activities:
On the credit side we offer four gerontology courses, and two 120 hour student Practicum field placements, as part of a 32 credit undergraduate Certificate in Gerontology Program. This program is in its fourth year at GRCC. It has ten graduates to date, fills each of the four 3 credit gerontology courses with 36 students per class, and currently has ten students completing Practicum field placements required for graduation in May 2009.

Non-Credit Activities:
The non-credit offerings of GRCC fall into several different categories including life enrichment/lifelong learning, professional development/training, volunteer leadership development, and community outreach.

Life Enrichment/Lifelong Learning
The Older Learner Center (OLC) offers a variety of life enrichment/lifelong learning opportunities for individuals 45 and older. These include:

- Learning Clubs (Computer & Life History Clubs)
The OLC Learning Club concept is predicated upon an individual and peer learning model. This model is effective in that it is participant focused and led; not dependent on a traditional instructor/instruction role; facilitated by volunteer peer facilitators; and is a cost effective use of available college facilities in service to the community.

- Health Education Programming
OLC Health Education programming includes a number of classes ranging in length from 13 to 30 weeks designed to improve the lives of individuals 60 and older through health, wellness, and nutrition education, as well as a wide variety of targeted physical fitness activities.

- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Educational Support Groups
The OLC provides the opportunity for caregiving grandparents to share common experiences; better understand their own needs and the needs of their grandchild(ren); and gain valuable information from community professionals.

Professional Development/Training
The OLC in partnership with GRCC Continuing Education & Professional Development offers a variety of professional development and training opportunities for those working with older adults within the community. These include a number of workshops, trainings, public forums and classes many which offer continuing education credits for nurses, social workers and other professional disciplines. GRCC also offers a variety of Job Training programs for displaced and older workers.

In the fall of 2008, GRCC launched a successful new non-credit Certificate in Aging pilot initiative. This new program was developed in response to research which indicates that very few professionals currently working with older adults, their families, and caregivers have had any formal aging education. This certificate program, made up of four 8 hour courses exploring topics of Aging, Caregiving, Chronic Disease Management, and Death, Dying and Bereavement, was offered on Saturdays over four consecutive months with an average of over 25 professionals participating in each session.

Volunteer Leadership Development
The OLC is involved in volunteer leadership development through the Senior Leadership Grand Rapids program. This program is designed to develop and empower mature adults to assume leadership roles that contribute to the well-being of the community. It recognizes that mature adults represent one of our most precious natural resources – and one of its fastest growing sources of community leaders. Therefore, it works to harvest the talents of these leaders and keep them fully engaged as community trustees…working side by side with other generations to build our future.

Community Outreach
During its ten year history the OLC has played a leadership role in aging-related community-wide outreach efforts including the development of both the Kent County Caregiver Resource Network (www.caregiverresource.net) and Greater Grand Rapids End of Life Coalition (www.grendoflife.org).

In 2007-2008, Older Learner Center programming served over 600 individuals within our community. Looking to the future we are excited about the many potential opportunities that the baby boomer population will provide, and plan to continue to think outside the box in an ongoing effort to meet identified community learning needs in the area of aging education and outreach.

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