

programs find recruiting students a challenge. Barriers to enrollment vary and are influenced by disciplinary silos, miscomprehension of terminology (such as “gerontology”), vague career paths, and limited resources. Program directors are challenged to identify innovative and new strategies that market training opportunities at a variety of levels and across colleges and departments. In an effort to harness the power of networks, it is our goal that this symposium fosters discussion in order to improve our communal approach to increase the number of individuals prepared for careers in aging. This symposium examines the recruitment experiences and challenges from the perspective of gerontology programs at four universities. Fruhauf (Colorado State University) explores the importance of university-community engagement in support of gerontology programs. Fauth and Liu (Utah State University) describe effective recruitment strategies for an interdisciplinary gerontology certificate housed within a department of Human Development and Family Studies. Eaton (University of Utah) presents the outcomes from a targeted initiative to increase early undergraduate enrollment in an interdisciplinary online gerontology minor. Finally, Yorgason (Brigham Young University) shares a systematic approach to leverage resources and fundraising that successfully increased program enrollment and faculty involvement throughout campus. Dr. Margaret B. Neal, an experienced educator and former director of the Institute on Aging at Portland State University, will facilitate discussion surrounding how we can mobilize our networks to strengthen, innovate, and expand approaches to recruitment in gerontology.

THE ROLE OF ENGAGEMENT IN SUPPORTING AND LEVERAGING GERONTOLOGY AND GERIATRIC PROGRAMS

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For nearly 20 years, gerontology and geriatric administrators and faculty have been challenged by managing “tough times” related to low enrollment and reduced or limited funding for their programs. At the same time, the aging population continues to increase and the need for highly trained individuals to work with and on behalf of older adults are needed in all sectors of the workforce. In this paper, I will build on previous empirical and theoretical work from AGHE and GSA Fellows as I integrate personal experience from my fifteen years at a land-grant university, whereby I serve as the coordinator of our undergraduate gerontology minor. In particular, in an effort to uplift the 2019 conference theme, I will organize my thoughts from the lens of university-community engagement, as I describe how to best harness networks to support and leverage gerontology and geriatrics programs.

RECRUITMENT TO THE GERONTOLOGY CERTIFICATE: STRATEGIES FROM UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

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There is a workforce shortage in age-related fields, in both medical and non-medical, and professional and nonprofessional employment levels. Jobs in aging-related fields are cited as growth careers, or in lists of “top ten

growing jobs”, yet academic training programs in gerontology are still facing low enrollment and other long-standing barriers. Utah State University offers an interdisciplinary gerontology certificate housed within the department of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS). Recruitment to the certificate is most effective from two “feeder” classes: Adult Development and Aging (in HDFS), and via a guest lecture in Community Health (in Kinesiology and Health Sciences). Face-to-face meetings with academic advisors in other departments (e.g. Nutrition) has resulted in referrals to the certificate program. Office hours and drop-ins from interested students falls on the certificate coordinator, but is essential in recruitment. In sum, face-to-face recruitment is time intensive, but significantly more effective than online/print material.

GROWING AN ONLINE GERONTOLOGY MINOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

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The Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program at the University of Utah has a long history of offering certificates (48 years) and a Master of Science degree (25 years). Relatively new to our program is the minor in gerontology, first available in 2013. This paper will describe efforts to grow this program, barriers to enrollment, and plans for expansion. In 2018, the program developed a targeted strategy to increase student awareness of and enrollment in the minor. First, we focused on newly enrolled pre-nursing students through new student orientation presentations and registration support. The introductory course within the minor jumped in enrollment from 6 students in Fall of 2017 to 40 in Fall 2018. Students taking courses in the minor received follow-up support and instructions mid-semester to ease matriculation. Enrollment in the minor increased by 140%. Next, we plan to apply these strategies to a broader number of colleges and departments throughout campus.

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT GERONTOLOGY TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING

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Training university students to work in professional gerontology settings is extremely important during an era when the number of older adults is increasing due to the Baby Boom cohort entering their later years. Efforts to reach students are critical given budget and enrollment challenges. Some university students find gerontology resources and training on their own, yet gerontology programs can do much to help students know of opportunities. In this paper, I will share methods that the gerontology program at my university has used to reach out to students and faculty across campus to encourage students to study gerontology. In the last 3 years, student enrollment in this gerontology minor has grown from 65 students housed in 3 colleges, to 275 students housed in 7 colleges. Faculty involvement has grown from a 7-faculty committee, to 61 faculty affiliates. The roles of university resources and fundraising will also be discussed.