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Professional networks are critical for PhD students and early career faculty, yet there is scant research on the development of their professional networks. Social network analysis is a useful approach to describe the development of professional networks. This methodological paper explains its use and benefits, using a social network analysis of alumni from the first three cohorts of the Association of Gerontological Education in Social Work (AGESW)'s Pre-Dissertation Fellowship Program (PDFP) as an example. We present results, challenges, and recommendations. Alumni ($n = 12$) reported meeting an average of 20 scholars ($SD = 13.2$) through AGESW. These professional relationships led to collaborations on conference presentations and manuscripts as well as opportunities to leverage the relationships for future professional needs. Suggested applications of social network analysis for program evaluation, such as co-author and citation networks, are also presented with a focus on training programs designed to support robust professional network development.

REFLECTIONS AND PROSPECTS OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Kathy Lee,¹ Tyrone Hamler,² and Cara Wallace,³

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The demand for professional training, mentorship, and research in the field of aging is expected to increase remarkably. Recent statistics indicate less than 8% of social work students nationwide specialize in gerontology; however, a significant amount of social work graduates, regardless of their specialization at school, serve older adults in various social and health care settings. As a panel, former fellows present experiences as participants of the AGESW Pre-Dissertation Fellows Program. The program helps students comprehend basic principles of doctoral education and develop strong professional networks with other gerontology-focused colleagues and mentors across the country. Doctoral students are also trained to be competent working with older adults through research, teaching, and professional development. Many fellows move into faculty positions and their accomplishments are varied and impressive. It is difficult to separate these from the education, connections, mentorship, and support received from the AGESW network and through participation in this program.

SESSION 5085 (SYMPOSIUM)

POLICY SERIES: THE ROLE OF A STAKEHOLDER MEMBER GROUP IN SHAPING GERIATRIC POLICY: THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR GERIATRIC EDUCATION

Chair: Leland Waters

Discussant: Brian Lindberg

The National Association for Geriatric Education (NAGE) is a non-profit membership organization representing Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Programs (GWEPs), Geriatric Academic Career Awardees (GACAs) and other programs that provide education and training to health professionals in the areas of geriatrics and gerontology. Our work includes faculty training and fellowships, continuing education, and hands on experiences in the clinical setting. One of our priorities is to educate policy makers and the public about the need for health care professionals to receive geriatrics education so they will better serve the expanding older population. One of our goals is to provide a mechanism for policy development and dissemination to external audiences regarding the mission, goals and impact of geriatric education programs. Our policy objectives include providing guidance to the United States Public Health Service and other organizations in the development of programs to enhance the education of health care practitioners and others. Another objective is to educate Congress about necessary priorities in geriatric education. We serve as a voice for the goals and interests of the nation's GWEPs, GACAs, and other groups providing education in geriatrics and gerontology. This symposium will first describe how geriatric educators inform policy. Then a historical perspective of how NAGE has influenced aging policy is provided. Recent efforts to increase funding for geriatric education will be shared, followed by future directions in policymaking.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GERIATRIC EDUCATORS TO PUBLIC POLICY

Anna Faul,¹ Jennifer Severence,² and Leland Waters,³

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Despite the current pressure to reduce state and federal spending, policymakers must find ways to address the challenges of a growing population of older adults with complex health care problems. There is an increased need for the health professions workforce to have collaborative care skills and geriatric clinical competencies. Therefore, programs like the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and the Geriatric Academic Career Awards (GACA) are important in strengthening the workforce and supporting policy development that addresses increased demands on the health care system. In 2019, the Bureau of Health Professions, under the Health Resources and Services Administration, provided 48 GWEP awards and 26 GACA awards in 37 states and 2 territories. These programs play an important advocacy role to improve on and expand geriatric education. This symposium provides an overview of these programs and their role in advancing geriatric care and in shaping policy.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STAKEHOLDER MEMBER ORGANIZATION TO ADVOCATE FOR GERIATRICS EDUCATION

Leland Waters,¹ and Elyse Perweiler,² 1. *Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, United States*, 2. *Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Stratford, New Jersey, United States*

The National Association of Geriatric Education Centers organization was established in 1990, to promote

interdisciplinary geriatric education and to provide a unified voice for Geriatric Education Centers (GECs). In 2005, the GECs voted to form two non-profit organizations due to restrictions related to lobbying activities. An umbrella organization was created, the National Association for Geriatric Education, that includes all geriatric related education programs, and maintain a lobbyist in Washington DC to protect the GECs interests. It was a pivotal time, as we had a year (2006) without federal funding that summarily dismantled the DHHS-HRSA geriatrics programs, including the entire GEC network, the geriatric fellowship program, and Geriatric Academic Career Awards. This resulted in a GEC-wide and national geriatrics movement that succeeded in restoring the geriatrics line item in the President's budget. Our advocacy efforts not only had the line item restored, but obtained an increase in funding for geriatrics.

AN UPDATE ON RECENT GERIATRIC EDUCATION ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Catherine Carrico,¹ and Katherine Bennett,² 1. *University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, United States*, 2. *University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, United States*

The National Association for Geriatric Education (NAGE) has maintained consistent education and advocacy efforts since 2006. In recent years NAGE has implemented formal and grassroots advocacy strategies. At the federal level NAGE has increased collaboration with other aging advocacy organizations and coalitions. At the request of Congress, NAGE leadership and stakeholders have testified before Congress and regularly submit testimony to the House and Senate. NAGE staff maintain strong working relationships with congressional staff. Strategies for effective grassroots education and advocacy have been taught to members, and membership has mobilized to educate elected officials about the essential work of the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Programs across the country. This presentation will provide a thorough review of NAGE's advocacy work over the past 4 years.

CURRENT AND FUTURE GERIATRICS EDUCATION POLICY INITIATIVES

Marla Berg-Weger,¹ and Katherine Bennett,² 1. *Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, United States*, 2. *University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, United States*

Current and future NAGE policy-related activities will be the focus of this presentation. The Geriatric Academic Career Awards (GACAs), which support the career development of junior faculty clinician educators in geriatrics, were reinstated by HRSA in 2019 after a 13-year absence. We will discuss the role of this award in the broader context of geriatrics education and GWEPs, how GACA awardees have been integrated into NAGE, and the need for expansion of the GACA program to support both the GWEP and geriatric education pipelines. Areas for future NAGE engagement will be focused on advocacy efforts to support: permanent GWEP reauthorization by Congress; expanding current level of \$40.737 million to \$51 million to enable HRSA to increase the number of GWEPs to further extend their reach; increasing funding for GACA awardees; and strengthening the synergies between the GACA and GWEP programs to support development of future GWEP leadership.

SESSION 5090 (SYMPOSIUM)

WHY AGE MATTERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION: AGE-FRIENDLY TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR CULTURE CHANGE

Chair: David Burdick

Co-Chair: Karen Rose

Discussant: Dana Bradley

Momentum is growing for the Age-Friendly University Network as proponents, primarily gerontology educators, have successfully encouraged university presidents to sign nonbinding pledged to become more age-friendly in programs and policies, endorsing 10 Age-Friendly University Principles. While this trend is inspiring, more is needed to fully achieve benefits for universities, students, communities, and older adults. Four presentations discuss innovative ways of deepening university commitment, weaving the principles into the fabric of the university. The first paper describes thematic content analysis from five focus groups with admissions and career services staff at Washington University in St. Louis and the recommendations that emerged for the provision of programs and services for post-traditional students. The second paper describes efforts to utilize community-impact internships and community partnerships to build support for Age-Friendly University initiatives at Central Connecticut State University, particularly in the context of the university's recent Carnegie Foundation Engaged Campus designation. The third paper describes how Drexel University became Philadelphia's first Age-Friendly University and current efforts in the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Care Profession's AgeWell Collaboratory to convene university-wide leadership for an AFU Steering Committee working on four mission-driven efforts to ensure AFU sustainability. The fourth paper describes steps taken by AFU proponents at Western Oregon State University to gain endorsement from university leadership and community, including mapping the 10 AFU Principles to the university's strategic plan, faculty senate endorsement, and survey/interview results of older community members' use of the university, which collectively have enhanced deeper and broader campus buy-in of AFU.

MOVING TOWARD AGE-DIVERSE UNIVERSITIES: PERSPECTIVES OF ADMISSION AND CAREER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Nancy Morrow-Howell,¹ Natalie Galucia,¹

Emma Swinford,² and Tanner Meyer,² 1. *Washington*

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As age diversity in universities increases in response to demographic shifts, changes in educational practices, programs and policies are needed. To inform these transformations, this research focuses on opportunities and challenges of increasing age-diversity. We conducted 5 focus groups and included 31 professional staff at Washington University in St. Louis who work in admissions and career services. A thematic content analysis revealed themes in two main categories: challenges of serving non-traditionally aged students (fitting in, career concerns, acclimating to learning environment and technology, ROI, and ageism) and benefits of older students (intentional students, experienced students, and classroom diversity). Recommendations emerged, including affinity groups, social opportunities which include