

## Session 4360 (Paper)

### Cultivating More Age-Friendly Campuses

#### BRINGING TRANSDISCIPLINARY AGING RESEARCH FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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There is a growing emphasis to use a transdisciplinary team approach to accelerate innovations in science to solve complex conditions associated with aging. However, the optimal organizational structure and process for how to accomplish transdisciplinary team science are unclear. In this study, we illustrate our team's experience using transdisciplinary approaches to solve challenging and persistent problems for older adults living in urban communities. We describe our challenges and successes using the National Institutes of Health four-phase model of transdisciplinary team-based research. Using a de-identified survey, the team conducted an internal evaluation to identify features that created challenges including structural incongruities, interprofessional blind spots, group function, and group dynamics. The team then identified responses to address the features that created challenges and determined indicators for success. Indicators for success were identified by the team as a place for continued evaluation of the teams' collaborative effectiveness, transdisciplinary integration, and impact on the university and aging community. This work resulted in the creation of the team's Transdisciplinary Conceptual Model. This model became essential to understanding the complex interplay between societal factors, community partners, and academic partners. Conducting internal evaluations of transdisciplinary team processes is integral for teams to move beyond the multi- and interdisciplinary niche and to reach true transdisciplinary success. More research is needed to develop measures that assess team transdisciplinary integration. Once the process of transdisciplinary integration can be reliably assessed, the next step would be to determine the impact of transdisciplinary team science initiatives on aging communities.

#### IMPLEMENTING AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY PRINCIPLES: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS, BARRIERS, AND OUTCOMES

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The University of Utah Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program received an Age-Friendly University (AFU) seed grant through GSA's Academy of Gerontology in Higher

Education, funded by AARP, to develop a model for promoting lifelong learning in partnership with university and community stakeholders. We designed and instituted a targeting marketing campaign that supported our goals: 1) to implement AFU principles; 2) to promote awareness of HB60, a legislative bill allowing people 62+ to audit courses at public universities for a minimal cost; 3) to enhance HB 60 enrollment through increased communication of online course options and tuition waiver support; and 4) to improve university and community stakeholder engagement. This presentation describes project benefits, including increased awareness of AFU initiatives, promoting age diversity, safe participation through online coursework, and enhanced community partnerships. The initiative garnered strong departmental support for marketing, communications, and structure for the post-award process. Barriers occurred due to a lack of HB60 infrastructure at the university level, which inadvertently obstructs organizational engagement. This initiative targeted AFU principles while supporting the university's strategic goal of engaging communities and preparing to pursue membership in the AFU Global Network. Future AFU goals include developing advocacy channels within the university to improve organizational support.

#### OLDER STUDENT EXPERIENCES: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF AGING ON CAMPUS

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There is overwhelming evidence that the number of older learners on college campuses has been steadily increasing since the 1970s. The needs of older learners differ from traditional students, and many services and resources available at higher education institutions are geared towards students aged 18-25 (Silverstein, Choi, & Bulot, 2001). Age Friendly University (AFU) principles highlight the need to consider older learners at a university and provide structure to evaluate programs and practices and to enhance inclusion and diversity based upon age. This study examined how an AFU designated university is working to better understand their older students. Methods: A web-based pilot survey of older learners (N=248) asked all students ages 40 and older a series of questions regarding motivation to attend school, barriers and supports, campus environment, and connection with AFU principles. Analysis: A regression analysis found that older learners who felt more welcomed by faculty ( $p=.001$ ), administration ( $p=.002$ ), and student organizations ( $p=.026$ ) were more likely to feel connected to campus, and younger-older students ( $p=.031$ ) and those who did not feel their job was a barrier to attending school ( $p=.037$ ) were more likely to feel satisfied with their level of engagement on campus. Additionally, older learners felt the AFU principles were demonstrated by their university. Discussion: The experiences of older learners are important as we continue to see higher numbers of students over the age of 40. Our results demonstrate the need to engage older learners as part of diversity and inclusion efforts to facilitate connection to the campus community.