

## Aging and Generational Issues

### Executive Summary

- Members of the Cluster on *Aging and Generational Issues* met on several occasions during the 2002 spring semester
- Initial discussions dealt with the charge given to the cluster and a variety of wide-ranging ideas for achieving the goals of the planning activities
- In the course of the semester, preliminary steps were taken to gather information about aging and generational activities/programs occurring on our campus
- Plans were formulated to identify related activities and programs occurring within the Missoula community and across the State of Montana
- Three recommendations were identified for immediate consideration:
  - Strengthen the existing *Human and Family Development* minor currently offered by the University
  - Develop an undergraduate major, and possibly a master's degree program, in *Human and Family Development*
  - Create an *Institute for Gerontology Education* on the University of Montana – Missoula campus
- Several additional ideas and recommendations were identified, which might well constitute the focus of future discussions by the cluster

### Introduction

Aging and generational issues represent key areas both from an educational as well as a societal perspective. In particular, current and past demographic trends provide evidence for the increasing salience of aging issues. For example, the fastest growing segment of the population is the aged, a trend that has been referred to as the "Graying of America" (Hoyer, Rybash, & Roodin, 1999). Over the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked growth occurred in the age band known as the 'oldest old', and this trend is expected to continue (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2000). The largest expansion is predicted to occur between 2010 and 2030 as the 'baby boom' generation reaches age 65 (American Association of Retired Persons, AARP, 1987). By the year 2050, the elderly will comprise nearly 23% of the total population (versus the estimated

12.6% of the population in 1991; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991; AARP, 1987). Because these trends are pervasive, issues relating to aging, gerontology, and geriatrics are becoming increasingly salient.

Members of the planning cluster on *Aging and Generational Issues* began meeting in February 2002. Initially, discussions dealt with the charge to the planning cluster, cluster membership, and the need for the cluster to collect information rather than to solely concentrate on generating ideas.

It was evident from the onset of these meetings that the diversity of the cluster, with members drawn from several disciplines across campus, would be a major contributing factor to the outcomes of the discussions. Members had various degrees of understanding, knowledge, and interest in aging and generational issues. Several members were actively involved in programs related to the issues or knew of individuals on our campus who were engaged in these activities. In addition, members of the campus community who were not part of the cluster were asked to attend cluster meetings and provide input. As a result, a wide variety of ideas and topics typified the group discussions.

### **Overview of Cluster Discussions and Interactions**

- (A) **Working Strategy**. Initial discussions among cluster members in the 2002 spring semester dealt with the vastness of the topic(s) at hand. Simply defining the issues proved to be a large and complex challenge, as did exploration of approaches for incorporating this topic into the learning and research environment at the university. The discourse followed several pathways, including philosophical, theoretical, political and programmatic perspectives.

It was noted that several activities, which are directly related to the topic assigned to this cluster, are currently occurring on campus as well as in the Missoula community. As a result, the cluster embarked on the general strategy of identifying what the campus, the community and the state are doing in the area of aging and generational issues.

- (B) **Tapping into current campus activities**. Preliminary steps were taken to initiate the task of identifying and gathering descriptive information about activities and programs on campus.

(1) **The Gerontology Education Committee**, currently chaired by Dr. Ann Williams, has met for several years. It is composed of faculty from departments across campus, College of Nursing faculty, and community persons active in aging issues. Activities of the committee include bringing visiting scholars to campus, organizing student career events, presenting at state gerontology meetings, and assisting the Montana

Gerontological Society with its activities.

During the past year, several key proposals have been written in order to advance gerontological education on campus and in the state. Members of the Gerontology Education Committee, with financial assistance from the Dean of the School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, have submitted a \$1,717,000 Geriatric Education Center Grant for the state of Montana. This grant provides for geriatric education of health professionals and is a consortium of The University of Montana, Montana State University, and Rocky Mountain College. Also, a proposal for an Institute for Gerontology Education on The University of Montana-Missoula campus was approved by the Faculty Senate in May 2002. This Institute will provide the key infrastructure for advancing aging and generational issues at The University of Montana.

(2) **The Human and Family Development minor** is offered on this campus as an interdisciplinary program. Sue Forest, who chaired the HFD Minor Committee prior to her departure from the university in May 2002, met with the cluster to discuss this HFD academic program. Although several faculty members from across campus participate as advisors to students in the HFD program, this is basically a “hidden minor” that warrants greater exposure on campus. The HFD minor, which is pursued primarily by students majoring in the areas of health, education and human services, attracts approximately 50 new students each year.

Students in the HFD minor develop a plan of study that provides them with the knowledge and competencies to work in service programs (i.e. group homes, domestic violence shelters, juvenile detention centers, case management services, child care facilities, children’s programs, parenting centers, early intervention agencies). Currently, 23 sites in the Missoula area serve as practicum placement sites for students pursuing the minor in Human and Family Development.

There are excellent opportunities to increase student participation in this minor and to consider expanding the curriculum into an academic major. A major in HFD could provide much needed training for individuals working in a variety of social service positions such as probation officers, residential treatment centers for youth, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, employment agencies, parenting agencies, etc. By emphasizing a lifespan approach to this degree, the university could attract and provide students with highly marketable skills in the social services.

(3) **The College of Technology** dean, Paul Williamson, visited the cluster to provide an overview of how the College of Technology is involved in aging and generational issues. Although the COT has not programmatically addressed these issues to date, there will be several opportunities to do so in the near future. The COT will be gearing up to address growing concerns related to aging: training students to replace

people retiring from the workforce, training students for jobs in health programs, training aging individuals (over the age of 50) who return to the COT to develop additional skills for new careers, etc. Careers, more so than enrichment, will be the primary focus of the COT in addressing the needs and interests of the aging community.

- (C) **Coordination Between Clusters**. Members of two clusters ... *Aging & Generational Issues* and *Health Sciences & Human Services* ... met to formulate recommendations dealing with the university's involvement in gerontology and geriatrics. They produced a visioning document (see attachment) that identifies several recommendations to strengthen gerontology/geriatric education, research, funding, and regional leadership at the University of Montana, Missoula.
  
- (D) **Future Cluster Meetings**. In the course of their meetings during the 2002 spring semester, members of the cluster realized they were simply "scratching the surface" in their discussions dealing with the university's future involvement with aging and generational issues. Only a small portion of the cluster's initial work strategy ... to survey current activities in this broad arena of issues... was accomplished during the 2002 spring semester. Given a possible reconstitution of cluster membership in AY 2002-2003, interest was expressed in continuing the dialog, with major emphasis on completing the on-campus survey and moving to an assessment of related activities occurring in Missoula and across the State of Montana.

### **Recommendations and Ideas for Further Discussion**

Members of the cluster expressed strong support for the university to coordinate and increase its activities related to aging and generational issues. The discussions focused primarily on the role of the university in providing social, medical and educational support to an aging population. Due to time constraints faced by the cluster in the spring of 2002, ideas concerning generational issues as related to the life cycle were not part of the mainstream of the discussions. However, it is recognized that the broad topic of *aging and generational issues* covers an extensive and complex array of educational issues.

A variety of ideas emerged as important goals and recommendations for the members of this cluster. Three recommendations, in particular, were identified as high priorities for the university's immediate consideration. Additional recommendations warrant further discussion and consideration, perhaps through the reconvening of the cluster in the upcoming academic year.

(A) **Recommendations Identified for Immediate Consideration by the University.**

(1) **Strengthen the existing Human and Family Development minor currently offered by the University.** This is an existing program that can be readily enhanced to advance the university's strength in the area of aging and generational issues. With an interdisciplinary faculty committee already in place, this program requires a dedicated faculty leader, dedicated secretarial support, and dedicated office space. Funds are required to market the program on campus. In addition, the faculty member responsible for leading the committee requires reassigned time from teaching in order to focus on marketing the program, developing and maintaining additional practicum sites, and assisting with job placements for students who graduate with the HFD minor.

(2) **Develop an Undergraduate Major, and Possibly a Master's Degree Program, in Human & Family Development.** Based on the success of the minor in Human & Family Development (ca. 50 new students per year enter the minor), it is recommended that the program be expanded to include an undergraduate major. To initiate planning for this degree, a statewide needs assessment should be conducted to determine employment opportunities in agencies and programs where graduates would be placed. The resources necessary to expand this interdisciplinary program include the items listed above for the minor, along with two tenure-line faculty positions and scholarship funds for students interested in pursuing this degree. Efforts should be made to offer part of the curriculum through distance learning. Distance delivery of the courses would accommodate the educational needs of people ... especially those presently working in social service agencies ... who would like to upgrade their skills without moving to Missoula.

(3) **Create an Institute for Gerontology Education on the University of Montana – Missoula campus.** In May 2002, the Faculty Senate approved a proposal to create an Institute for Gerontology Education. Assuming this institute is established, sufficient resources should be made available for it to successfully advance educational, research and community outreach activities in aging and generational issues. Support for the institute would be a critical starting point as it could serve as a clearinghouse for ideas and ongoing research, planning and action efforts. For example, a very thorough needs assessment is required to determine specific strategic directions, such as development of new programs, research initiatives, etc. The institute could be an important resource for planning and development on a number of fronts.

(B) **Recommendations and Ideas Identified for Further Discussion by the Cluster**

- **Prepare the University for the “Baby Boomer” Boom.** In the next 20 years, 47 million jobs will be vacated by retiring “baby boomers.” Most will be leaving technical or management positions requiring educated and trained personnel that higher education is unprepared to provide and from a student pool too small to meet the need. At the same time, the “baby boomer” cohort is expected to be healthier and more interested in returning to education than any previous demographic retirement group in our history. Some retirees will be seeking to return to the university for intellectual stimulation, some for a change in their careers. They are expected to enter higher education at a rate that is 3 times that of the traditional 17 and 18 year olds. The “baby boomers” will change the curriculum and the way we deliver learning. The “baby boomers” will bring new attention to every aspect of aging, including health, housing, transportation, entertainment, education, safety, and other needs. They will have the political and financial clout to change the priorities of our culture and our institutions ... including institutions of higher education ... to meet these needs.
- **Resurrect Plans to Build Retirement Housing on Campus.** Penn State has joined dozens of colleges and universities (including Iowa State, Cornell, Dartmouth, Duke, Michigan, Alabama, Louisiana State and the University of Florida) building retirement homes for their faculty, staff, and alumni. The synergy that can be developed between experienced seniors committed to a path of lifelong education and traditional students is obvious. Campus housing can also be a training and research resource for the university. The University of Montana already has a retirement housing plan developed in the late 1990s, but the RFP was cancelled for failure to find an adequate developer/contractor. The housing plan should include state-of-the-art technical advances developed by the Montana University Affiliated Rural Institute for Disabilities (MUARID) and internet connectivity.
- **Develop Special Educational Opportunities for Seniors.** In many cases, retirees will not be interested in pursuing a degree. Therefore, the university must explore ways of delivering instruction that are not limited to traditional semester-long courses. The University of Montana should develop an institute that offers short courses, specially designed for seniors, based on the model of Summer School or Wintersession. These would be self-supporting courses, many of which could result in certificates rather than in academic credits leading to a traditional undergraduate or graduate degree. Concurrent credit-bearing undergraduate and graduate courses, along with seminars, could be offered to attract students working toward a

degree. By forming partnerships with other institutions of higher learning, the University of Montana could offer courses to non-resident students who wish to transfer their credits to degree programs at other institutions. Affordable programs that mix travel and liberal arts education (like Elderhostel or courses based on the Elderhostel model) need to be developed by establishing partnerships between the university and travel companies.

- **Establish Training Programs.** Well-planned training programs to meet the needs of the elderly and jobs vacated by the “baby boomers” should be developed and offered by the College of Technology and on the university’s Mountain campus. The Institute for Gerontology Education could play a prominent role in collecting and analyzing assessment data and providing faculty expertise for this process. For example, if there is a need for retirement and nursing home administrators, the School of Business Administration and the College of Technology could offer courses to train these individuals. Similarly, the School of Law might provide courses on legal issues related to the elderly, if there is a demand for instruction in this area.
- **Apply an Interdisciplinary Approach To Educate Traditional and Non-traditional Students.** Interdisciplinary approaches, which are a strong asset on this campus, should be employed to focus teaching and research on specific aspects of aging. Different foci could be developed that bring together courses from various academic disciplines. Possible foci include (a) aging within the broader context of generational change; (b) aging and aging services within the purview of public, private, non-profit and voluntary associations; (c) aging, advocacy and public service; and (d) the socio-politics of aging.
- **Emphasize the Development of Niche Programs Dealing with Aging.** The need for knowledge about aging is substantial and the University of Montana should focus its resources on special areas that meet that need. With special emphasis on niches that pertain to the State of Montana, teaching and research might concentrate on (a) aging within rural, small communities, (b) aging within cities of the Rocky Mountain West, (c) aging among Native Americans, and (d) aging and poverty.
- **Capitalize on Opportunities that Exist Within the Office of Civic Engagement.** The Office of Civic Engagement can play an important role in exposing students to ... and educating them in ... the broad areas of geriatrics, gerontology and generational issues. Aging and generational issues pose many challenges to our society and to educational institutions responsible for preparing students to meet these challenges. As is frequently the case in training students for

careers in the social service and human service professions, experiential education plays an important role in developing student awareness and interest in the service professions. The University of Montana should strengthen its commitment to student involvement in community sites and programs dealing with youth and elderly populations in the State of Montana. This will help to strengthen citizen awareness and encourage larger numbers of our students to consider careers in these important areas. With the assistance of the Office of Civic Engagement, the university can assume a greater educational role in the broad arena of aging and generational.

- **Use Established Units and Programs on Campus.** In this era of tight academic budgets, it will be a challenge for the university to move forward on educational initiatives dealing with aging and generational issues. Nevertheless, the university can make progress in this area by building on what is already working and looking for ways to support, expand, and coordinate these efforts. Existing resources that the university should turn to include the Gerontology Education Committee, the proposed Institute for Gerontology Education, the Office of Civic Engagement, and the program in Human and Family Development. The university has a history of establishing successful interdisciplinary programs in research and education. It should capitalize on these cooperative efforts and encourage the faculty to use similar approaches to undertake initiatives focusing on aging and generational issues.
- **Address Aging and Generational Issues in the Context of the University's Liberal Arts Mission.** Special attention should be given to determine how this university can best serve as a site for developing and sustaining broad-based intellectual discourse regarding theoretical, philosophical, ethical and political dimensions of aging and generational issues. Steps must be taken to promote provocative and timely interdisciplinary dialogue around themes such as "global graying;" intergenerational caregiving; gender and generation; social constructions of age and aging; age, poverty and inequality; aging and a changing rural context; age and the political economy of health care, etc. The university can serve as an important site for research, course development, and community-campus dialogue via seminar series, special programs, demonstration projects, etc., that respond to and build on these issues.
- **Work in Collaboration with Community, State and Regional Organizations Engaged in Aging and Generational Issues.** An appropriate next step would be to develop a forum for dialogue with representatives from groups such as the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Area Agency on Aging, Senior

Citizens, the Missoula Demonstration Project, Hospice, Montana Gerontological Society, etc. It is essential to understand the current policy/ practice terrain and the directions in which these groups are moving, in order for the university to identify its role in this area of research and education. The university needs to build partnerships with these groups, remain mindful of their interests and priorities, and demonstrate a commitment to long-term collaboration. In addition, as the university considers new educational initiatives in aging and generational issues, it is essential to assess how these initiatives will impact other programs on campus, in the community, and across the state.

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This report was prepared from materials made available through discussions and written input by members of the *Aging and Generational Issues Cluster* during the 2002 spring semester. Members who contributed to this report are listed in alphabetical order.

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## **Gerontology Development Vision and Recommendations**

### ***Health Sciences and Human Services Cluster (in Coordination with Aging and Generational Issues Cluster)***

#### **Background and Rationale**

The University of Montana recognizes the rapidly shifting demographic scene in regard to the growth of the elderly population in Montana, nationally, and globally. In response to this trend, the university is in a position to explore ways in which this trend can be addressed, offering education and training for emerging careers, serving as the focal point for gerontological and geriatric research, and engaging involved stakeholders in a discourse about aging from not only a health and human services perspective, but also from political, theoretical, philosophical and ethical perspectives. The university is encouraged to assume leadership in the area of research, faculty development, campus-community dialogues, course/degree development from the associate level through the doctoral level, and in continuing education.

Any initiatives taken on by the university should be guided by the following perspectives:

- The process of aging needs to be viewed from both a geriatric (health/physiological) and gerontological (psycho/social/ecological) perspective
- Programs and course offerings need to be developed that address not only the issues/needs of Montana elders, but also that pay attention to regional, national, and global “graying” issues
- Planning and implementation of any programs need to be based on strong needs assessments to determine need, identify community-campus resources, develop strategic plans, and address research/practice issues effectively
- The planning process needs to proceed in collaboration with organizations, agencies, and other educational institutions with a focus on aging that are already engaged in research, practice, and social policy development in regard to aging

#### **Recommendations and Suggestions**

The *Health Sciences and Human Services cluster*, in coordination with the *Aging and Generational Issues cluster*, recommends the following:

- University wide capacity building in the field of gerontology/geriatrics
  1. Faculty development in gerontology/geriatrics needs to be enhanced in order to prepare faculty for teaching and research in the field.
  2. The Institute for Gerontology Education (formerly the UM Geriatric Education Committee) needs to be supported administratively and financially as the focal point of university wide academic planning in gerontology/geriatrics.
  
- Strengthening of gerontology education at the baccalaureate level
  1. Support the Human and Family Development Minor (emphasis in Gerontology) through an allocation of faculty time.
  2. Support the development of a Gerontology Certificate at the associate and baccalaureate levels.
  
- Strengthening of gerontology education at the graduate and doctoral levels
  1. Explore the development of a Gerontology Certificate at the graduate level.
  2. Explore the possibility of an interdisciplinary PhD in gerontology.
  
- Supporting of university efforts (currently supported financially by the School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences) to garner federal funding for education and research related programs.
  1. Provide funding for grant seeking efforts to establish a Geriatric Education Center at the University of Montana in collaboration with Montana State University School of Nursing and Rocky Mountain College Physician Assistant Program (if the UM grant is not funded in July 2002 and needs to be resubmitted. This center would spearhead the following initiatives:
    - Faculty training in gerontology / geriatrics
    - Traineeships and continuing education for gerontological professionals
    - Development of interdisciplinary training/clinical sites for students in gerontology
    - Development of a virtual resource center on aging to be housed at The University of Montana

2. Provide funding for the writing of research grants in the field of gerontology.

- Seeking of opportunities to assume statewide and regional leadership through seminars / lecture series on aging, considering partnerships / collaborations with such entities as the Practical Ethics Center and the Institute for Medicine and Humanities.

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