

Promoting Intergenerational Teaching and Learning in Higher Education



A MICHIGAN INITIATIVE





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ABOUT GENERATIONS UNITED

The mission of Generations United is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all. For close to four decades, Generations United has catalyzed cooperation and collaboration among generations, evoking the vibrancy, energy, and sheer productivity that result when people of all ages come together. We believe that we can only be successful in the face of our complex future if age diversity is regarded as a national asset and fully leveraged. To learn more about Generations United, please visit www.gu.org.

**generations
united**

Because we're stronger together®



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE INTERGENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The aging of America is impacting how we live and work as well as the nature of generational relations. Between 2020 and 2060, the number of older adults is projected to increase by 60% from 56 million to 94.7 million; the number of people ages 85 and older is expected to nearly triple.¹ For the first time in history, 25% of the population in the United States is under 20 years old, 23% is over 60, and 52% is in between.² Although six generations are present in many communities, we are increasingly age-segregated. Retirement communities, educational institutions, and senior/youth centers are examples of age silos that limit opportunities for people of different ages, races, ethnicities, and other identities to share perspectives, combat stereotypes, build relationships, and work together for the common good.

Higher education institutions are primarily focused on the education of young adults. However, they have the potential to become age-integrated places that offer transformative learning experiences to people of all ages. Many have embraced the concept of diversity but need to recognize age and ageism as a part of their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Others offer lifelong learning programs to older adults but don't intentionally promote interaction with traditional students. Missing in many colleges and universities are *intergenerational learning experiences* in which students engage with older adults in the reciprocal sharing of expertise. Intergenerational learning uses generational perspectives as part of the learning content. It allows people who may think differently to build sustainable relationships and serve as resources to each other and the community. This two-way transfer of knowledge, expertise, and insight between students and older adults can transform attitudes and understanding between generations.

With support from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, Generations United is working with Michigan's colleges and universities to develop intergenerational teaching and learning opportunities designed to reduce ageism, improve health outcomes for older adults, prepare students to live and work in an aging society, and foster generational empathy and collaboration. This report represents the first step in the initiative. The next steps are creating a repository of relevant research, evaluation tools, and curricula and developing a series of webinars.

REPORT FINDINGS

This report is based on interviews with faculty members and service-learning directors from various colleges and universities across Michigan and guidance from a Faculty Advisory Group. It provides a framework for intergenerational teaching and learning, highlights examples of current practices in Michigan, and identifies challenges, promising practices, and opportunities for deepening and expanding intergenerational learning in colleges and universities.

Intergenerational teaching and learning experiences at Michigan higher education institutions fall into five categories: 1) intergenerational service-learning, 2) field placements and practica, 3) intentional intergenerational classroom learning, 4) intergenerational research, and 5) extra-curricular projects. Examples of each are highlighted. Challenges related to implementing intergenerational learning include the impact of the pandemic, ambivalence about working with older adults, building partnerships with aging organizations, time constraints, and logistics. Promising practices related to framing intergenerational learning, building partnerships, engaging faculty, students, and older adults, addressing ageism, and facilitating intergenerational learning are discussed.

MOVING FORWARD

Colleges and universities have space, structure, and resources that could be used to explore generational perspectives, foster relationships across ages, and address community concerns. They can engage students in experiences that build the knowledge, skills, and empathy needed to thrive in an age-diverse society. The possibilities for cross-generational connection are immense, but it will take time, collective will, and imagination to transform higher education institutions into places that support learning and engagement across the life course. As political polarization, pervasive loneliness, ageism, systemic racism, and health and income disparities continue to plague us, colleges and universities can play a pivotal role in creating a society that values generational interdependence, facilitates cross-age relationships, and draws upon the strengths of all age groups to solve our most intractable problems.

Five categories of intergenerational teaching and learning experiences at Michigan higher education institutions:

- 1 INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING
- 2 FIELD PLACEMENTS AND PRACTICA
- 3 INTENTIONAL INTERGENERATIONAL CLASSROOM LEARNING
- 4 INTERGENERATIONAL RESEARCH
- 5 EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROJECTS



THE INTERGENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The aging of America is impacting how we live and work as well as the nature of generational relations. Between 2020 and 2060, the number of older adults is projected to increase by 60% from 56 million to 94.7 million; the number of people ages 85 and older is expected to nearly triple.³ This demographic trend presents both challenges and opportunities. The increasing size of the older adult population will create continued and growing pressure on health care and social service systems that need to be equipped

to manage the evolving needs of older adults. The ability of these systems to provide generationally competent, appropriate, and quality care will require a workforce that is knowledgeable, non-ageist, and sensitive to the needs and strengths of older adults.⁴ At the same time, many older adults are seeking opportunities for contribution, lifelong learning, and connection with the communities in which they live.

An increasingly age-diverse and multicultural society requires a re-examination of how generations relate to each other. For the first time in history, 25% of the population in the United States is under 20 years old, 23% is over 60, and 52% is in between.⁵ This scenario presents a unique opportunity for intergenerational interaction like never before. Although six generations are present in many communities, we are increasingly age-segregated. Retirement communities, educational institutions, and senior/youth centers are examples of silos that limit opportunities for people of different ages, races, ethnicities, and other identities to share perspectives, combat ageist stereotypes, build relationships, and work together for the common good. Are we prepared to take advantage of the longevity revolution or will gaps in intergenerational knowledge, understanding, engagement, and experience undermine the promise of a more inclusive, age-diverse world?

Although higher education institutions are primarily focused on the education of young adults, they have the potential to become age-integrated places that offer transformative learning experiences to people of all ages. Many have embraced the concept of diversity but need to recognize *age* and *ageism* as a part of their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. Others offer lifelong learning programs to older adults but don't intentionally promote interaction with traditional students. Missing in many colleges and universities are intergenerational learning experiences in which students engage with older adults in the reciprocal sharing of expertise. Intergenerational teaching and learning is a low-cost, effective strategy to combat ageism among future healthcare and social service providers, reduce age-related disparities in care and care outcomes for older adults, build generational

Between 2020 and 2060 —

THE NUMBER OF OLDER ADULTS IS PROJECTED TO INCREASE BY 60% FROM 56 MILLION TO 94.7 MILLION

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empathy, and foster collaborative approaches to address complex societal challenges.⁶

Colleges and universities have space, structure, and resources that could be used to explore generational perspectives, foster relationships across ages, and address community concerns. They can engage students in experiences that build the knowledge, skills, and empathy needed to thrive in an

age-diverse society. The possibilities for cross-generational connection are immense, but it will take time, collective will, and imagination to transform higher education institutions into places that support intergenerational learning and engagement across the life course. As political polarization, pervasive loneliness, ageism, systemic racism, and health and income disparities continue to plague us, colleges and universities can play a pivotal role in creating a society that values generational interdependence, facilitates cross-age relationships, and draws upon the strengths of all age groups to solve our most intractable problems.

For the first time in history,

25% OF THE POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES IS UNDER 20 YEARS OLD, 23% IS OVER 60, AND 52% IS IN BETWEEN.

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

With support from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, Generations United is working with Michigan's colleges and universities to develop intergenerational teaching and learning opportunities designed to reduce ageism, improve health outcomes for older adults, prepare students to live and work in an aging society, and foster generational empathy and collaboration.



The first step in this initiative was conducting an environmental scan to identify existing intergenerational programs, courses, co-curricular activities, and/or clinical learning opportunities, particularly in the health and social service disciplines. This report is based on interviews with faculty members and service-learning directors from various colleges and universities across Michigan, feedback from a Faculty Advisory Group (Appendix A), and a review of relevant literature (Appendix D). It provides a framework for intergenerational teaching and learning, highlights examples of current practices in Michigan, and identifies challenges, promising practices, and opportunities for deepening and expanding intergenerational learning in Michigan colleges and universities.

WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING?

Intergenerational learning can be understood as part of *Intergenerational practice*, which is known for producing transformative experiences for learners that strengthen the quality and quantity of social interactions between people of different generations. Intergenerational learning is a “partnership based on reciprocity and mutuality involving people of different ages in gaining skills, values, and knowledge.”⁷ It leads to mutually beneficial learning outcomes, promotes greater understanding and respect between generations, and provides an opportunity to address

wider social issues. Intergenerational learning differs from everyday activity between generations where learning may take place but is not a specific aim of the activity. It uses generational perspectives as part of the learning content and provides an opportunity for people who may think differently to come together to build sustainable relationships and act together to benefit the community. This two-way transfer of knowledge, expertise, and insight between students and older adults can be transformational, impacting attitudes between generations and fostering social cohesion.

Based on the nature of the interaction, explicit intergenerational learning can take several forms:⁸

- **Learning from each other:** Examples include teaching specific skills (e.g., technology, literacy) when there is a gap between generations due to differences in prior knowledge. Usually, there is no explicit focus on understanding the experiences and values of different generations.
- **Learning together:** Age-heterogeneous learning environments intentionally draw upon different generational perspectives on the learning content. They involve non-hierarchical communication between younger and older learners and encourage equal participation in the learning process.⁹
- **Learning about each other:** The focus is on both generations learning about each other. Generational perspectives and attitudes are explored as part of the learning process and learning objectives of age-heterogeneous groups.

Based on the nature of the interaction, explicit intergenerational learning can take several forms:

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

LEARNING TOGETHER

LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER

PROJECT-ORIENTED LEARNING

- **Project-oriented learning:** Working across generations to improve communities and address societal problems. The project is a vehicle for learning. It builds upon generational knowledge and perspectives and involves learners of different ages as equal partners.

The following key principles adapted from the literature¹⁰ can be used to develop and guide intergenerational teaching and learning. These include:

- **Reciprocity:** Learning is bi-directional and reciprocal, building on the strengths of each generation. All participants have opportunities to teach and to learn.
- **Mutual Respect:** Participants relate to each other as individuals, not members of a specific age group, and respect differences in perspective, knowledge, and skills.
- **Asset and Strengths-Based Focus:** Every generation's strengths are highlighted and used to facilitate learning and promote understanding and mutual respect.
- **Inclusivity:** Participants of varying ages and abilities participate in shaping the intergenerational learning experience and have opportunities to contribute their knowledge and experiences. Inclusivity may also include acknowledgment of various identities linked to age, gender, race, ethnicity, religiosity, or other aspects of identity.
- **Relationship-Focused:** Intergenerational learning is about more than just bringing different age groups together. It *intentionally* fosters authentic cross-age connections and increases social capital through meaningful relationships.
- **Cultural Grounding:** Learning content reflects differences in norms, values, and attitudes of different generations and cultures.
- **Anti-Ageist:** There is an intentional effort to utilize intergenerational learning to dispel age-related stereotypes.
- **Cross-Disciplinary:** All disciplines can benefit from integrating intergenerational approaches into their curriculum and utilizing a lifespan perspective.

The following key principles adapted from the literature can be used to develop and guide intergenerational teaching and learning:

RECIPROCITY

MUTUAL RESPECT

ASSET AND STRENGTHS-BASED FOCUS

INCLUSIVITY

RELATIONSHIP-FOCUSED

CULTURAL GROUNDING

ANTI-AGEIST

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

Research suggests that students engaged in intergenerational learning initiatives gain knowledge and competencies that contribute to their personal and professional development, increase their confidence and ability to work in multi-generational settings, and improve their attitudes toward older adults.¹¹ Interventions that include educational and intergenerational contact components have demonstrated particularly strong effects, especially for combating negative attitudes toward aging.¹²

Engagement in intergenerational activities also has positive benefits for older adults. Research suggests that intergenerational experiences increase self-esteem and self-worth, enhance a sense of purpose and meaning in life, decrease feelings of loneliness, and improve perceived health status and emotional well-being.¹³ Older adults gain new perspectives and a deeper understanding of young people through intergenerational interaction.

Beyond its direct impacts on participants, intergenerational learning can also help colleges and universities create a wider vision that supports education and engagement across the lifespan and provides opportunities for people of diverse ages, races, and ethnic groups to come together to address significant social problems.¹⁴

WHY PROMOTE INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING?



Demographic Changes

The older population in the United States reached 55.8 million, or 16.8% of the population, in 2020. From 2010 to 2020, the 65-plus population experienced its largest-ever 10-year numeric gain, an increase of 15.5 million people.¹⁵ In Michigan, the older adult population in 2021 was 17.22% of the entire population, as compared to 16.04% nationwide.¹⁶ This number is projected to peak in 2034 at 2.9 million, with the 85+ age group growing by 94.5% from 2015.

Many older adults seek opportunities to engage in lifelong learning and share their knowledge and experience with younger generations. At the same time, a wide range of health and social support services from trained, caring professionals will be required to meet the needs of this growing population.

Simultaneously, the population is becoming more diverse. In 2020, 76.7% of those over 65 identified as white, a decrease from 84.8% in 2010. Increases were reported among older adults of color in all other groups, including people identifying as multiracial. There was also an increase in the number of older adults identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Among younger



people, these changes were similar but more pronounced, especially among Hispanic or Latino populations.¹⁷ These dynamics contribute to a “racial generation gap,” in which the younger population, influenced by recent immigration, is far more diverse than older age groups.¹⁸ In Michigan, as elsewhere, there is a potential for competing agendas between an older white electorate and a younger population that is increasingly of color.¹⁹ This underscores the importance of fostering understanding across age and racial/ethnic groups.

Age-Segregation and Ageism

Although age diversity has increased significantly, age segregation and ageism are pervasive. Age segregation is *institutional* (work, schools, community organizations, funding streams), *spatial* (lack of face-to-face contact), and *cultural* (differences in language, food, and dress).²⁰ It limits opportunities for ongoing intergenerational interaction, depriving both young people and older adults of sources of support, perpetuating age-related stereotypes, and contributing to feelings of loneliness.

Age segregation is both a cause and consequence of ageism. Ageism refers to “*stereotypes* (how we think), *prejudice* (how we feel), and *discrimination* (how we act) directed towards people based on their age. It can be institutional, interpersonal, or self-directed.”²¹ It is a multi-faceted prejudice²² and includes both *benevolent* (e.g., elder speak, infantilization) and *hostile* attitudes toward older adults.²³ Both forms of ageism reflect the belief that older adults are incompetent. Ageism has a negative impact on disparities in health care outcomes, costs, and satisfaction among older adults. Ageist beliefs, implicit bias, and stereotyping among health care and social service providers can decrease physical and mental health, decrease health-promoting behaviors such as preventative screening, and increase social isolation and loneliness, leading to poorer health outcomes and increased healthcare spending.²⁴ Ageism was exacerbated during the pandemic, when older adults were depicted as sickly and vulnerable, and physical distancing was encouraged. The intersection of ageism and structural racism further impacts older adults from historically marginalized communities and worsens disparities in social determinants of health.²⁵

Self-ageist beliefs and attitudes diminish the quality of life and threaten positive health behaviors. The University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging, conducted in 2019, determined that 82% of the national sample of people aged 50-80 regularly experience some form of ageism in their daily lives. This same group of people had worse physical and mental health and higher rates of chronic, debilitating, and costly diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and depression than those that reported fewer

ageist experiences.²⁶ A 2015 report based on the National Health and Retirement Study found that almost 20% of people over 50 have experienced discrimination in healthcare settings.²⁷ Research suggests that the most effective approaches to reducing ageism and ageist beliefs are interventions that combine education and intergenerational contact.²⁸

Although ageism is typically used to describe negative attitudes toward older adults, it is also a measure of how older adults view younger generations.²⁹ Young people often are portrayed in socially pejorative ways - as self-absorbed, lacking judgment, impulsive, and irresponsible. As the number of young people of color increases, there is growing concern that older adults who don't see themselves reflected in the faces of the young will be less supportive of investments in education and workforce development.³⁰

Workforce Preparation

Extended longevity requires a workforce trained to support people's health and well-being as they age. Currently, there is a shortage of individuals with knowledge and/or experience working with older adults. Although the need for professionals to work in the field of aging is becoming more critical, student interest in gerontology has remained relatively stagnant. Barriers such as ageism and lack of contact with older adults can affect the career choice of young professionals.³¹



Students entering the workforce need training and experiential opportunities that will help them understand the needs and strengths of older adults, the negative impact of ageism on older people and young people, and the struggles of caregiving families trying to care for children and/or older parents. In addition to working with aging adults in increasingly complex settings and systems, future health and social service professionals will have to understand other demographic changes in the population, such as racial/ethnic diversity, family structure, geographic proximity, and economic opportunities accompanying

the aging of America.³² They will also need to develop competencies to communicate effectively with people of different generations in the workplace. Regardless of discipline, all students must be prepared to live in an age-diverse world.

Changing Student Population

In Michigan, as in other parts of the country, higher education institutions are experiencing a reduction in the number of traditional-aged college students (18-25) due to low birth rates.³³ In 2017, approximately 60% of undergraduates were under 21 years of age, 16% were over the age of 30, and less than 4% were over 50.³⁴ Some adult students



enter college with significant caregiving responsibilities. A nationwide caregiver study conducted by AARP in 2020 found that approximately 5 million adult students care for an adult, typically their parents or grandparents. These students, who face challenges as they try to balance educational costs and course expectations, would benefit from a deeper understanding of older adults and issues related to caregiving.

To counteract the shortage of young students, colleges and universities would benefit from the expansion of educational opportunities to people of all ages. A growing number of higher education institutions are cultivating age-friendly campuses in which all people, regardless of age and ability, can grow, thrive, and contribute across the lifespan. The global Age-Friendly University initiative, which connects institutions in a learning collaborative, advocates for including older adults in campus activities, promotes intergenerational exchange, and focuses on research informed by the needs of an aging society. Its ten principles (Appendix B) provide a framework for promoting age-inclusivity through practice and policy. In Michigan, Wayne State, Eastern Michigan, and Michigan State are designated age-friendly universities.

In addition to age diversity, student populations are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Recent data shows a decrease over the past 20 years in the percentage of white students enrolled in higher education institutions from 71 to 54% and an increase in Hispanic or Latino students from 10 to 20%.³⁵ Experiences that intentionally connect students of color with older white adults can be an effective strategy for combatting stereotypes and finding common ground.

Social Isolation and Loneliness

There are growing concerns about the detrimental effects of social isolation and loneliness, now considered major public health problems for all generations.³⁶ The recent pandemic highlighted the need to promote opportunities for social connectedness. Across age groups, people spend less time with each other in person than two decades ago. The physical consequences of poor connection can be devastating, including a 29% increased risk of heart disease, a 32% increased risk of stroke, and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia for older adults.³⁷ Social isolation also increases the risk of cognitive decline and is linked to depression, anxiety, and a lack of empathy.³⁸ Intentional intergenerational engagement can be an effective strategy for reducing each generation's sense of isolation and improving health and well-being.

KEY FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

Data from interviews with 25 faculty and staff from higher education institutions across Michigan shed light on the nature of existing intergenerational offerings, challenges faced by faculty, and promising practices. Identifying examples of intergenerational learning was challenging due to a lack of clarity about the term “intergenerational.” A large university with Age-Friendly University status may use the term “age-friendly” activities or coursework rather than intergenerational. Faculty members who connect students with older adults in a clinical course may not label it as an intergenerational course. One associate professor who teaches a nursing class within a long-term care setting stated, “*I don’t think I have any specifically intergenerational classes.*” When the question was rephrased to ask if she had students work and learn with

older adults, the answer became, “*Of course - all my sections require students to complete coursework with the older adults that live at the long-term care facility.*” The following section describes the diversity of intergenerational opportunities, provides examples of current intergenerational efforts in Michigan, and identifies perceived benefits and challenges.

Diversity of Intergenerational Experiences

It was apparent from the interviews that there needs to be more consistency in terms of what constitutes an intentional and meaningful intergenerational learning experience. In a service-learning course, students may teach a group of older adults how to use Facebook or social media while at the same time forging relationships. Students may be paired with older adults in a health-related course to learn “competencies in geriatric care.” However, in some cases, older adults are viewed as learning props used to achieve teaching objectives, rather than partners in learning.

Although there is currently no formal typology to describe variations in intergenerational learning, current activities fall into five categories:

- 1 INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING
- 2 FIELD PLACEMENTS AND PRACTICA
- 3 INTENTIONAL INTERGENERATIONAL CLASSROOM LEARNING
- 4 INTERGENERATIONAL RESEARCH
- 5 EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROJECTS

Although there is currently no formal typology to describe variations in intergenerational learning, current activities fall into five categories:

1. Intergenerational service-learning
2. Field placements and practica
3. Intentional intergenerational classroom learning
4. Intergenerational research
5. Extra-curricular projects

The following section describes each category and provides examples from Michigan.

1

INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING

Intergenerational service-learning enables students to build professional skills in the context of community service. Providing real-life experiences with discipline-specific coursework is effective in promoting positive attitudes toward aging among students and increasing generativity among older adults. Intergenerational service-learning is offered through service-learning programs and offices, although the scope, depth, and format may differ by school, semester, and academic program and may not be identified as intergenerational. It requires collaboration with a community partner, commitment from an academic department, flexibility, time, supervision, and opportunities for reflection.³⁹ Examples include:

Eastern Michigan University

At Eastern Michigan University, which has the Age-Friendly University designation, students can participate in *Lori's Hands*, a nonprofit organization that partners with colleges and universities to build mutually beneficial relationships between undergraduate students and community-dwelling adults with chronic disease. Students provide companionship, resource navigation, and practical assistance (e.g., shopping and meal preparation) to older adults over a semester. The relationships foster empathy, compassion, and resilience among students and may reduce social isolation for older adults. As an integrative service-learning model, it provides real-life opportunities for students to work with older adults and their caregivers while training to become future healthcare and social work professionals.

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Michigan State University

The *Senior Ambassadors Program* (SAP) is an initiative led by MSU's AgeAlive, which involves collaboration with East Lansing's Prime Time Seniors Program, East Lansing's senior center, and the Social Science Scholars Program. Launched in 2020, the program creates cross-generational relationships between students and older adults living in the Greater Lansing area. Participants are paired and commit to meet for weekly social conversation and or other social activities of their choosing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Mott Community College

Occupational Therapy Assistant students participate in a number of intergenerational experiences throughout their program. These include collecting life stories, helping to develop activity kits based on older adults' lives, and writing a paper based on interviewing a person 65+. Reflection, relationship building, and fostering empathy are key parts of all service-learning activities.

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FIELD PLACEMENTS AND PRACTICA

Field placements and practica are designed to focus primarily on student learning and skill building, although it is important to balance student goals and the needs of the community organizations involved. In the health professions, students often work with older adults in clinical settings that provide opportunities for learning specific clinical competencies. The focus tends to be transactional rather than relational and exposure is often limited to older adults with significant health concerns. The following is an example of an intergenerational opportunity that has been integrated into clinical and research-related experiences.

Eastern Michigan University

The Digital Connecting Corps is a program embedded in EMU's Office of Engagement and, in partnership with the Occupational Therapy Department. The program utilizes students as tech coaches for older adults whom they meet at a senior center, library, and in their homes. It satisfies research requirements and serves as preparation for field placement requirements. Approximately 6-9 students work with 25-50 older adults each semester over 12 weeks. Students receive online training about older adults. They develop and present lessons on technology-focused topics that address the needs of older adults (e.g., laptop basics, YouTube, creating a playlist, online grocery shopping, and accessing free services). The older adults are asked to sign up for the same consecutive 12-week period where they receive a free laptop to use during the course and keep it upon completion of the program. The program is both skill-based and relationship-focused, with storytelling and Google Photos as key activities. Pre- and post-surveys are given to students and older adults to assess the program's impact on students and older adults.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact **Alicia Jones, PhD, OTR/L**
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Engaging students with older adults as part of the classroom or coursework is a powerful intergenerational learning experience. Intergenerational learning in the classroom may involve structured activities, joint projects, and/or presentations by older adults and students on class topics. The role of the instructor is to facilitate meaningful dialogue across age groups and draw upon the perspectives of each generation. Examples include:

Grand Valley State University

Individual faculty at GVSU have elected to utilize older adults as a learning resource, pairing students with older adults to complete learning activities collaboratively over the semester. Older adult volunteers participate in the class as learners alongside their younger counterparts. Learning activities focus on joint learning, collaboration, reflection, and problem-solving around course topics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Michigan State University

Grandparents University is a three-day, *overnight* camp that brings together more than 1,000 participants from around the country and world to participate in classes offered by more than 20 colleges and units. Grandchildren and their grandparents participate in three classes and unique evening programming with ample time for exploring all that the MSU campus offers and experiencing college life by living and dining in an MSU residence hall. This opportunity does not apply to current MSU college-age students, as it focuses on prospective students and their grandparents, who may not continue a relationship with MSU beyond the camp experience.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit alumni.msu.edu/grandparents-university

Eastern Michigan University

Historically, applied theater projects are shaped and designed in and with a multi-age framework. Community members of various ages work with college students on using theatre to address issues of local relevance: transportation, housing, refugee placement, etc. In 2021, graduate students in theatre designed the first ReGen storytelling workshop in tandem with the Limelight theatre company. This virtual storytelling laboratory brought together college-age students and older adults in the Ypsilanti community around shared storytelling. Both generations struggled with social isolation and lack of personal connection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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INTERGENERATIONAL RESEARCH

Most intergenerational research tends to focus on the impact of intergenerational programs/practices on outcomes related to young people and older adults (e.g., health and well-being, academic achievement, civic responsibility, attitudes toward older adults, interest in careers in aging). Research has also examined best practices in designing and implementing cross-age programming. There are many opportunities for colleges and universities to develop more in-depth and longer-term studies that explore issues such as the nature of non-familial intergenerational relationships, intergenerational norms and values in diverse communities, and intra-familial intergenerational relationships. While we did find examples of students and faculty conducting research studies on health problems experienced by older adults, efforts to bring together college students and older adults to engage in collaborative community-based participatory research is an area that needs to be expanded.

5

EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROJECTS

Many students become involved in intergenerational projects through student associations, sororities/fraternities, and other volunteer opportunities. Although these experiences are not tied to the curriculum, they can engage people of different generations in meaningful and positive activities such as intergenerational dialogues/conversations or short-term service projects.

Grand Valley State University

Grand Connections is one example of an extra-curricular intergenerational program. This program allows GVSU students to engage people of different generations in meaningful and positive activities. The primary goal of this program is to bridge generational gaps and reflect positive examples of intergenerational relationships. The program is run by the student club Students for Aging and Gerontology Enrichment and utilizes volunteers from AARP.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Perceived Benefits and Challenges

Faculty and staff who participated in the environmental scan reported that while challenging at times, intergenerational teaching was rewarding and meaningful. *“I am always overwhelmed by the heartfelt connections students and seniors make when they are given an opportunity to reflect with one another,”* stated one professor. Another offered that *“the truest and best learning I’ve seen from my students has been at the side of real people who have lived long lives and are willing to talk honestly and candidly about it.”*

Intergenerational Faculty Learning Seminar

In Fall 2023, Eastern Michigan University launched an intergenerational faculty learning seminar. Faculty from across disciplines explored the tenets of intergenerational teaching and learning with the intention of designing and/or expanding on existing community-based research. Like an academic service-learning seminar, faculty were exposed to best practices and examples of intergenerational learning across multiple subject areas and geographies.

Advisory Group members offered anecdotal evidence in support of intergenerational work, as exemplified in student reflections from intergenerational experiences. Benefits included:

- a reduction of social isolation and loneliness among older adults and students;
- an improved perspective of history;
- recognition of unconscious bias and an increased curiosity about aging and one’s own life course; and
- a greater understanding and appreciation of older people.

A nursing student who participated in Lori’s Hands at Eastern Michigan University commented: *“Lori’s Hands expanded our nursing knowledge by preparing us to talk with clients, navigate local resources, and build rapport. These are important skills I will take with me in my future profession.”*

Faculty indicated that participants found it rich, meaningful, and transformational regardless of the purpose, format, or objectives of an intergenerational teaching and learning experience. One faculty member commented, *“The strange becomes familiar and enables students to build skills to navigate difficult and/or complex situations.”*

“Lori’s Hands expanded our nursing knowledge by preparing us to talk with clients, navigate local resources, and build rapport. These are important skills I will take with me in my future profession.”

Interviewees also shared some barriers to intergenerational learning. These include:

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

Several faculty reported having had ongoing, long-term projects that could not continue during the pandemic and have been difficult to reignite. *“Obviously, going into a nursing home was not an option when all your classes have to shift to online,”* stated one faculty member. Another described trying to connect students with older adults through Zoom and meeting a variety of barriers. *“Some older adults couldn’t always figure out how to turn their cameras and audio on or off. It was a bit of a mess that made everyone frustrated, so I stopped doing it.”* However, with proper training and support, many intergenerational programs run successfully using different video conferencing platforms.

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT WORKING WITH OLDER ADULTS

Getting students on board to work with older adults is often a challenge. Some faculty reported that students may pursue opportunities other than those in the aging field when given the choice. A service-learning program advisor indicated that a long-standing opportunity to work with older adults who have early dementia is usually the last to be filled. However, at the end of the semester, *“It is the session that students talk about most. They have nothing but wonderful things to say and want more of it.”*

FINDING OLDER ADULTS AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH AGING ORGANIZATIONS

Larger universities tend to have service-learning or community engagement offices that can identify and coordinate intergenerational placements. However, many of these offices primarily respond to requests from community-based organizations rather than proactively creating new opportunities. If aging organizations do not request students, intergenerational options are limited. Most of the service-learning directors interviewed indicated that they have very few community partners that serve primarily older adults.

Faculty who do not have access to community engagement offices may struggle to engage older adults. Intergenerational learning emerges most often from faculty who are interested in the older adult population. In this case, faculty develop their courses individually and with little support. *“If I go away, the class and the program go away,”* said a physical therapy professor who has students and older adults work together to explore functional fitness and rehabilitation outcomes.

Interviewees also shared some barriers to intergenerational learning. These include:

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT WORKING WITH OLDER ADULTS

FINDING OLDER ADULTS AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH AGING ORGANIZATIONS

TIME CONSTRAINTS

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES



TIME CONSTRAINTS

Although most faculty expressed their belief that intergenerational education is valuable, they indicated that the lack of time available in the curriculum was a major challenge. *“I really think this is the best and maybe only way to get young people to want to work with older adults. Failure to do this represents a failure to prepare students for working in a world where the old are only getting older faster.”* Another stated, *“I think intergenerational learning needs to have a place in higher ed, like how DEI work has become commonplace and expected. We need better, more clear ways to do this work.”*

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

Another challenge relates to the barriers faced by older adults coming to university campuses. *“Sometimes people have a hard time getting here in the snow or just don’t want to leave their home. Even going to them is hard because sometimes they forget or decide they aren’t up to it,”* offered one instructor of a social work class that partners with older adults to talk about fraud and scams.

“I think intergenerational learning needs to have a place in higher ed, like how DEI work has become commonplace and expected. We need better, more clear ways to do this work.”

PROMISING PRACTICES

The following promising practices were identified in research studies⁴⁰ related to intergenerational learning, from interviews with faculty and staff, and from the experiences of the report authors.

Framing Intergenerational Learning

When presenting intergenerational learning as a concept, focusing on the underlying values and principles of this work rather than a specific activity is helpful. Reciprocity, relationships, respect, inclusivity, and mutual benefit should be at the core of the messaging. Some researchers suggest shifting the language from “giving back,” “service, and working for” to more participatory language such as “two-way exchange,” “engagement,” and “working with” to foster empathy and authentic relationships rather than purely transactional interactions.⁴¹ It is also important, particularly for students who collaborate with frail elders, to emphasize the strengths and resilience of older adults rather than just focusing on their vulnerabilities.

Building and Sustaining Community Partnerships

Authentic partnerships between community organizations that serve or represent diverse groups of older adults and institutions of higher education are critical to high-quality intergenerational learning opportunities. It is important to clarify partner roles and responsibilities, develop a shared vision of the nature of the learning experience and expected outcomes for students and older adults, and create strong vehicles for planning, communication, and problem-solving. When selecting a community partner, understanding how students can address the needs and/or interests of older adults, the number of students the agency can accommodate, supervision responsibilities, and ways to assess the effectiveness of the activities are critical issues. Organizations that are geographically proximate to a college/university or can be reached by public transportation are preferable.

The following promising practices were identified:

FRAMING INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

ENGAGING FACULTY

ENGAGING STUDENTS

ENGAGING OLDER ADULTS

ADDRESSING AGEISM

FACILITATING INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

Engaging Faculty

Identifying faculty members from across the college/university who have connected students with older adults or are interested in intergenerational learning is a critical first step. This group can serve as a community of practice and/or champions for engaging other faculty members. Institutions designated as “age-friendly” or seeking that designation may already have collected this information through the assessment process.

Offering faculty workshops that focus on principles of intergenerational learning, strategies for integrating intergenerational approaches into courses, and ways to facilitate cross-age interaction is an effective way to encourage and support high-quality intergenerational teaching and learning. These can be integrated into other faculty development vehicles (e.g., teaching and learning institutes, service-learning training). Providing faculty stipends for attending training and developing intergenerational learning experiences can help motivate faculty to participate.

Engaging Students

The process for initially engaging students varies based on the degree to which intergenerational experiences are integrated into the curriculum. However, due to the reluctance of many students to work with older adults, it is important to develop motivating and inspiring messaging. Presenting this work as a unique opportunity to learn from and with older adults rather than focusing only on skill development is a message that resonates with many young people. Equally important is sensitizing students to issues of ageism and ableism, reducing anxieties about interacting across generations

and race and ethnicity, and exploring the best ways to communicate with different generations. Using an intersectional framework that considers the ways that various forms of inequity operate together, exacerbate each other, and sometimes create unique challenges can enrich the learning experience for all participants.⁴²



Photo credit: Katy DeZeller



Engaging Older Adults

Exposing students to diverse older adults regarding age, ability, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status is an important strategy for dispelling stereotypes and exploring the vicissitudes of aging. Outreach to older adults should include messaging about what they can offer based on their life experiences and what they want to learn from the experience. Clarifying expectations of older adult participants and creating opportunities for them to function as partners in learning are ways to foster authentic intergenerational exchange and mutual respect.

Addressing Ageism

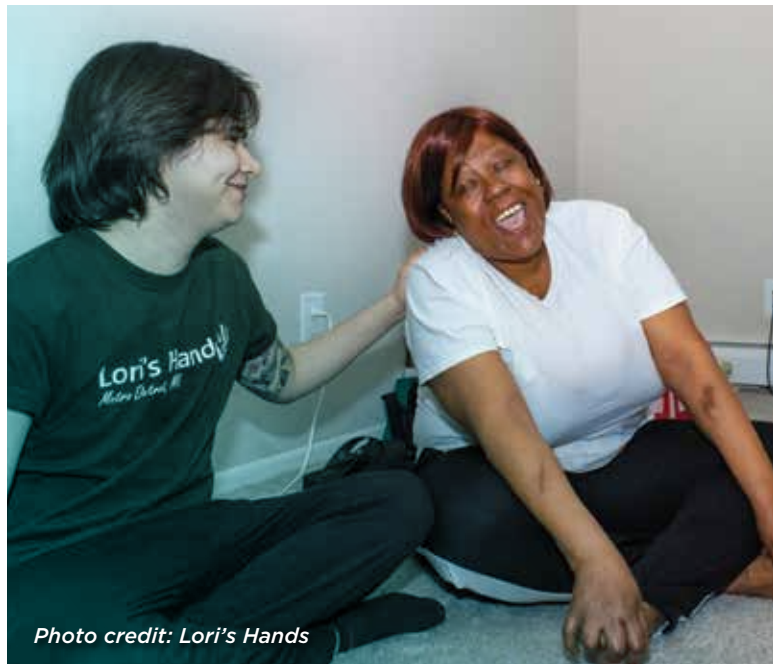
Addressing the issue of ageism among students, faculty and older adults is a critical part of intergenerational learning. In our interviews, faculty rarely mentioned combatting ageism as one of their goals. One nursing faculty member explained, *“Teaching with seniors is a good way for students to become familiar with the frailty of older adults that may be seen as scary in clinical settings. This course has them face that fear, but ageism isn’t something we include in it.”* The Gerontological Society of America has created an online course called *Ageism First Aid* that provides foundational knowledge about aging, explains ageism awareness, and offers training on effective ways to communicate with older adults. There are also a number of scales that assess the prevalence of ageism.

“The truest and best learning I’ve seen from my students has been at the side of real people who have lived long lives and are willing to talk honestly and candidly about it.”

Facilitating Intergenerational Learning

Although service-learning, field placements/practica, and intergenerational classrooms may differ in goals, structure, and content, they all have the potential to break down age-related stereotypes, build understanding, generate new knowledge, address community problems, and foster trusting relationships. However, limited contact is not enough to change how we think, feel, and act across generations. The following are practices that faculty members can utilize to enhance intergenerational learning experiences in a variety of contexts:

- Creating a safe, welcoming environment that promotes mutual respect and reciprocity by role modeling and ensuring all participants feel free to express themselves. It is important to highlight all generations' strengths and balance all participants' needs, abilities, and interests.
- Providing opportunities for students and older adults to build trusting relationships by sharing life experiences through meaningful intergenerational dialogue.⁴³ Self-disclosure and perspective-taking are effective strategies for fostering empathy.
- Facilitating ways for generations to work together as equals and draw upon each other's perspectives to address critical social issues.
- Focusing on enhancing communication across generations, identifying mutual interests, and engaging in collective problem-solving.
- Exploring the extent to which students display benevolent and hostile forms of ageism.
- Engaging participants in 1:1 or small group discussions rather than only large group lectures.
- Incorporating a life span approach to teaching about issues that affect people across the life course.
- Creating guided reflection opportunities that encourage critical thinking to help students combat negative age-related stereotypes.
- Utilizing culturally responsive and anti-racist practices that acknowledge differences, values, and norms across race, ethnicity, and other identities.





MOVING FORWARD

Intergenerational learning provides a vital opportunity to address the complexity and consequences of 1) a rapidly changing culture and eco-system of higher education 2) an aging and multicultural population, and 3) dynamic, ongoing challenges to equity at local, regional, and national levels that impact health and well-being for all. It spans across disciplines and can serve as a vehicle for combatting loneliness, transmitting culture, fostering empathy, and promoting a sense of belonging and attachment to a place. Engaging people of different ages, from different races, ethnicities, and other identities in relational, meaningful learning affirms the value of lived experience and builds the skills and knowledge necessary for living in a rapidly changing world.

“If we are to use education to address contemporary concerns, we must start by enabling participants from different generations to be more reciprocally responsive to each other and the places they collectively inhabit.”⁴⁴

Realizing the promise of an age-diverse society will require major institutional, cultural, and attitudinal changes. These include focusing on education across the life course rather than only in the early part of life, increasing access to learning for people of all ages, and creating opportunities for meaningful intergenerational exchange. Intergenerational teaching and learning can help create a world that embraces generational interdependence, reciprocity, equity, empathy, and social connectedness as core societal values.

Moving forward, higher education institutions need to identify current and potential intergenerational opportunities, assess the level of interest among faculty, administration, and community partners, and explore how this approach can help them achieve their mission.

The following are some questions to address as you consider how to integrate intergenerational teaching and learning into your institution:

- *What intergenerational opportunities currently exist at your college/university (e.g., service learning, field placements, joint classrooms, informal intergenerational exchange, research)?*
- *How does intergenerational work fit into your institution's mission and strategic plan?*
- *What kinds of internal partnerships exist across departments and/or programs that engage with older adults in some way (e.g., health and social work departments, retired faculty and/or alumni offices, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Center on Aging, Age-Friendly University)?*
- *What are the connection/entry points for intergenerational learning (e.g., community engagement/service-learning offices, age-friendly initiative, individual faculty)?*
- *What external partnerships exist with organizations serving older adults (e.g., affordable senior housing, retirement communities, senior centers, assisted living, Area Agency on Aging, AARP)? Is there an infrastructure for coordinating community partnerships?*
- *How can you get input from diverse populations of students and older adults to better understand the kinds of intergenerational learning opportunities that would be most effective at your institution?*
- *What is the most effective way to build the capacity of faculty to develop high-quality intergenerational learning experiences? Are there existing mechanisms through which this material could be presented?*

Our next steps in this initiative include:

- Offering a series of webinars to help build the capacity of faculty to develop and assess in high-quality intergenerational work;
- Creating a repository of tools, curricula, activities, and research to support faculty interested in intergenerational learning;
- Facilitating connections between institutions of higher education and local aging organizations; and
- Developing a community of practice to share promising practices and engage in collaborative projects.

To learn more about this initiative or to share information about your intergenerational efforts, please contact Heather Renter, PhD hmwall3@gmail.com or Nancy Henkin, PhD nzhenkin@gmail.com.

Generations United is a leading advocate for intergenerational policy and programming in the United States. The Generations United website (www.gu.org) provides a comprehensive database of over 700 intergenerational programs in the US and worldwide and in-depth information on how to develop and cultivate intergenerational programs and activities.

APPENDIX A

Faculty Advisory Group

- Decky Alexander, Eastern Michigan University, Communication, Media, and Theatre Arts
- Denise Brothers, Madonna University, Aging Studies
- Paul Freddolino, Michigan State University, Social Work
- Sheryl Groden, University of Michigan - Flint, Social Work
- Alicia Jones, Eastern Michigan University, Occupational Therapy
- Mark Luborsky, Wayne State University, Gerontology, Social Work, Anthropology
- Kimberly Simpson, Mott Community College, Occupational Therapy
- Chad Sutcliffe, Grand Valley State University, Allied Health Sciences
- Shawn Tenney, Western Michigan University, Service Learning
- Christina Topolewski, Eastern Michigan University, Social Work

APPENDIX B

Age-Friendly University Principles

- To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programs.
- To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue “second careers.”
- To recognize the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue master’s or PhD qualifications).
- To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
- To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
- To ensure that the university’s research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
- To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness aging brings to our society.
- To enhance access for older adults to the university’s range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities.
- To engage actively with the university’s own retired community.
- To ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

To learn more about the Age-Friendly University Global Network visit www.afugn.org

APPENDIX C

Intergenerational Learning Examples from Other States

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

In 2020, Mirabella at ASU, a university-based Senior Living Community with 238 independent-living apartments and 58 skilled nursing, memory care, and assisted living units, was developed on the campus of Arizona State University at one end of the campus arts and culture corridor. Because of the community's location on campus, a wide range of opportunities are available for older residents to be involved with ASU students. Residents can take classes with ASU students, participate in campus social and research activities, and serve as mentors and guest speakers for faculty and students. A Director of Lifelong University Engagement creates on-ramps for residents to engage in university life. For example, a group of residents hosted an intergenerational conversational Spanish group with students; residents participated in an ASU study researching how social robotics can be used to address loneliness, isolation, and depression; the Honors College matched students with Mirabella resident pen pals to build intergenerational connections; and retired physicians have shared their real-world experiences with pre-med students. Students in various clinical disciplines get pre-licensure supervised clinical experience on-site that strengthens the education to career pipeline for aging-related professions. Semi-structured "mixers" introducing residents to ASU students have been organized to facilitate cross-generational interaction. Over the past year, four students from the ASU School of Music, Dance, and Theatre moved into the building as "musicians-in-residence." They live there rent-free in exchange for weekly performances and interactions with their neighbors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Lindsey Beagley, MPA

Lindsey.Beagley@asu.edu or visit retirement.org/mirabella-asu/asu-connections

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Since 2001, Project SHINE has involved college students in teaching English as a second language (ESL) to older immigrants and refugees, increasing their participation in the community and helping them prepare for the citizenship exam. Currently, college students are working with adult ESL learners at North Orange Community Education for at least two hours per week. The college students assist ESL teachers in various ways and assist participants by teaching English, teaching citizenship, providing written histories in their native language, and serving as conversation partners. College students participate through courses (e.g., Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, sociology) and as volunteers. They receive 3 hours of initial training and are supervised by the Community College ESL teachers. A Community-Engaged Learning Specialist oversees the placements. Approximately 30 students participate in this program each year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Katie Herbst

kherbst@fullerton.edu or visit www.fullerton.edu/cice/programs/shine

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

The WISE (Working Together: Intergenerational Student/Senior Exchange) program is a brief intergenerational service-learning program designed to bring together college students and older adults to build connections and increase understanding across the generations. The program aims to reduce ageism and increase feelings of generativity through small-group intergenerational discussions around topics of mutual interest, such as relationships and technology. Three sessions involving students and older adults from a local senior center are held per semester, all during the 75-minute class time. The first meeting consists of an ice-breaker exercise called “speed greeting,” during which participants can discuss a series of questions in small groups. The other two sessions typically revolve around a theme such as love and relationships, family, technology, finances, or the environment. Regardless of the topic, the instructor provides a list of questions to facilitate the discussion and divides participants into small intergenerational groups that rotate halfway through the class. The WISE model has been integrated into other departments, such as Exercise Science and Nursing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Carrie Andreoletti, PhD

andreolettic@ccsu.edu or visit ccsu.edu/gerontology/wise-program

DREXEL UNIVERSITY

In 2014, Writers Room, a literary arts academic and community-based program, was co-created by students, faculty, and community members at Drexel’s Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships in Philadelphia, PA to amplify voices and stories, archive histories, and celebrate diverse perspectives. Since the program’s founding, ten anthologies, several conference proceedings, articles, and a book chapter have been produced. Undergraduate and graduate students are involved through credit-bearing courses, funded research, public arts programming, and staff positions. All of these are designed to be immersive, intergenerational learning experiences. In response to the illegal eviction of one of the members of Writers Room, the group co-developed the Second Story Collective—artists and scholars, activists and architects, and West Philadelphia residents committed to creating a co-housing network in which Drexel University students and neighbors live together in intentional communities rooted in storytelling and sharing. Goals include: 1) providing viable affordable rental, housing, and anti-displacement options—with students paying below-market rent that subsidizes the homeowners’ mortgages; 2) helping neighborhood families become homeowners by partnering with a developer to produce new homes that are designed from the foundation up as intergenerational co-housing; and 3) helping older members of the community remain in their homes longer through age-friendly home repairs and encouraging connection and community-building across generations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Rachel Wernick, MFA

rw346@drexel.edu or visit writersroomdrexel.org or secondstorycollective.org

LASELL UNIVERSITY

Lasell Village is a university-based retirement community housed on the Lasell University campus in Newton, MA. It has a formalized educational program, requiring residents to complete 450 hours of learning and fitness activities each year. The Rose Mary B. Fuss Center for Research on Aging and Intergenerational Studies promotes intergenerational connections between the Village and the University through research, education, partnerships, and programming. Initially, the university offered courses like Generations in America, specifically designed to engage younger and older students around aging issues. Although younger students enjoyed the courses, some older participants felt the courses focused too much on age. To address this problem, a new framework called Talk of the Ages was created to bring older and younger students together around other topics of common interest rather than age-related issues. Faculty across the curriculum design 1–2-week modules within existing courses that engage younger and older participants in interactive lectures, small group discussions, art performances, book groups, and other educational activities. To foster intergenerational exchange, older and younger learners are given time to interact and develop personal connections. All learners receive information about the intergenerational modules in advance to increase their comfort level. Beyond building intergenerational relationships, faculty say bringing these age-diverse perspectives to the classroom enriches the learning experience.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Joann Montepare, PhD

jmontepare@lasell.edu or visit lasell.edu/academics/academic-centers/rosemary-b-fuss-center-for-research-on-aging-and-intergenerational-studies.html

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

The Healthy Aging Specialization at NYU Silver School of Social Work's Center for Health and Aging Innovation (CHAI) is designed to increase knowledge in aging and intergenerational theories, research, policies, and programs. Students gain different perspectives on intergenerational social work practice through academic courses, field placements, seminars, mentoring from intergenerational scholars and practitioners, and capstone projects. The program prepares students to work with individuals, families, and groups across the lifespan. In addition to intergenerational theories, the program draws upon intersectionality, critical race theory, anti-oppressive practices, and other social justice approaches.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Ernest Gonzales, PhD

geg2000@nyu.edu or visit nyuchai.org

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

As part of the Insights into Healthy Aging Undergraduate Certificate program, the Department of Psychology offers an online, 7.5 week Fundamentals in Aging course focused on intergenerational relationships. For the final project, called Life Lessons Mentorship, each student meets with an older adult to whom they are not related, either face to face or virtually, for a minimum of 3.5 hours over the term. Students can select their older adult partner or be matched with a Tucson Medical Center for Seniors (TMC for Seniors) program member. At the end of the course, the students create a presentation about their mentors' lives, share it with their mentors, and complete a final reflection paper, which is submitted to the instructor. General guidelines for interacting with older adults and for the final project are provided by faculty. Other requirements for the course include creating non-ageist greeting cards and developing electronic time capsules for their older partners that highlight major life milestones. In the Fall of 2024, this course's faculty will oversee an intergenerational undergraduate internship opportunity with the UArizona Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). The intergenerational internship will focus on the wisdom of older adults and will be run by a graduate student.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Linda Hollis, PhD

lindahollis@arizona.edu or visit online.arizona.edu/programs/undergraduate-certificate/online-undergraduate-certificate-insights-healthy-aging-ugcert

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Undergraduate Adulthood and Aging students at UCONN (Waterbury campus) participate in an intergenerational service-learning project with UCONN's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). The class focuses on positive aging and the building of cross-generational relationships. Students from human development and family sciences, business, allied health, psychology, and sociology spend 20 hours per week engaging in various intergenerational activities (e.g., reciprocal life histories, technology assistance, co-teaching OLLI classes) over a semester. At the end of the course, students are asked to write a letter from their older self to their younger self and reflect on what they have learned about aging and how they intend to live the old age they want. Qualitative findings from intergenerational participants include an awareness and change related to bi-directional ageism, an understanding of andragogy and appreciation of lifelong learning, and a positive influence on views of career options in the field of Aging. While intentional intergenerational interactions were initially aimed at demystifying older adults and the aging process, the outcomes illuminate an appreciation of lifelong learning and eradicating ageist attitudes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Laura Donorfio, PhD

laura.donorfio@uconn.edu or visit hdfs.uconn.edu/grad/areas-of-specialization/adulthood-aging-and-gerontology

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Chicago, and the senior services program staff at Center on Addison at Center on Halsted have partnered to create the LGBTQ+ Intergenerational Dialogue Project. The project brings together racially, socioeconomically, and gender-diverse cohorts of LGBTQ+ college students and older adults (60+) for a year-long series of bi-weekly themed dialogues, creative work, and shared dinners. The two-course sequence provides students an opportunity to learn LGBTQ+ histories both through a seminar setting and in conversations with LGBTQ+ elders. The intergenerational dialogues use storytelling to transmit and preserve the histories of sexual and gender minorities. Storytelling is done through themes that connect participants' daily lives with broader themes that inform and impact LGBTQ+ lives, such as HIV/AIDS, gender, ageism, religion and spirituality, race, and popular culture. The LGBTQ+ Intergenerational Dialogue Project recognizes that older and younger people have much to teach one another and learn from one another.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact lgbtqdialogues@gmail.com
or visit www.generationliberation.com

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

The Center of Excellence in Aging and Health at UNE in Maine engages older adults and students in various intergenerational activities. Through a partnership with the Westbrook Housing Authority, pharmacy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy students conduct screenings and mini-health fairs with older residents at Westbrook's Wellness Center. Social work students also facilitate support groups for older adults participating in the Center's Legacy Scholars, a program that engages adults aged 55+ years in research and lifelong learning about healthy aging. The Geriatric Education Mentors pairs 165 older adults with UNE's medical students to help them become better practitioners. The Center is also a practicum placement for Social Work and MPH students in the Interprofessional Certificate Program at UNE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Tom Meuser, PhD
tmeuser@une.edu or visit une.edu/ceah

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

The Engaging Generations (eGen) Cyber-Seniors program at URI integrates service-learning components into existing courses/curricula within Human Development and Family Sciences, Pharmacy, and Sociology, develops University partnerships with community organizations providing services to older adults, and collects quantitative and qualitative information for program evaluation and research. The objectives of the URI Cyber-Seniors program are to 1) promote civic engagement, 2) help prepare health and human service professionals for careers in an aging society, and 3) improve social connectedness and enhance technology skills for older adults in Rhode Island. University students provide technology training to older adults through primarily in-person appointments. Students and older adults meet regularly for 2-3 months, building trusting relationships and technology skills. A research study where older adults were provided iPads and technology mentorship from students showed statistically significant improvements for older adults in digital competence, technology use, quality of life, social isolation, loneliness, and depression. The program also helped participants feel more connected within their community and improved their health behaviors. Other studies have shown that students build professional skills and improve attitudes towards older adults (reduced ageism) due to program involvement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Skye N. Leedah, PhD, FGSA, FAGHE

skyeleedah@uri.edu or visit web.uri.edu/human-development/outreach/cyber-seniors

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

When I'm 64 is a 3-credit course offered to freshmen at Washington University in St. Louis, MO. It is part of the Beyond Boundaries program that offers students opportunities to explore significant social issues before they commit to a major. When I'm 64 emphasize both the personal (how might they plan differently) and professional (how might their careers be influenced) implications of longevity through weekly lectures, small group discussions, and weekly reflection papers. Three faculty from social work, psychology, and occupational therapy share the instructor role. Older volunteers from two local organizations participate in the class as co-learners. Topics include Your World, Your Body, Your Health, Your Mind, Your Family, Your Community, Your Transportation, Your Career, and Your Society. Among the assignments for the course, the younger students complete an interview with an older person focused on significant life course events, major challenges, sources of strength/resilience, and significant life lessons. A formal evaluation assesses the course's impact on students' knowledge of aging, attitudes toward older adults, anxiety about their own aging, and thoughts about their future coursework and career choices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Nancy Morrow-Howell, PhD

CenterForAging@wustl.edu, visit artsci.wustl.edu/beyond-boundaries, or listen to the faculty members talk about the class on this podcast beyondboundaries.wustl.edu/7-brian-carpenter-nancy-morrow-howell-susan-stark

APPENDIX D

Bibliography

A comprehensive bibliography on intergenerational teaching and learning is available at www.gu.org/resources/intergenerational-teaching-learning-bibliography.

APPENDIX E

Resources

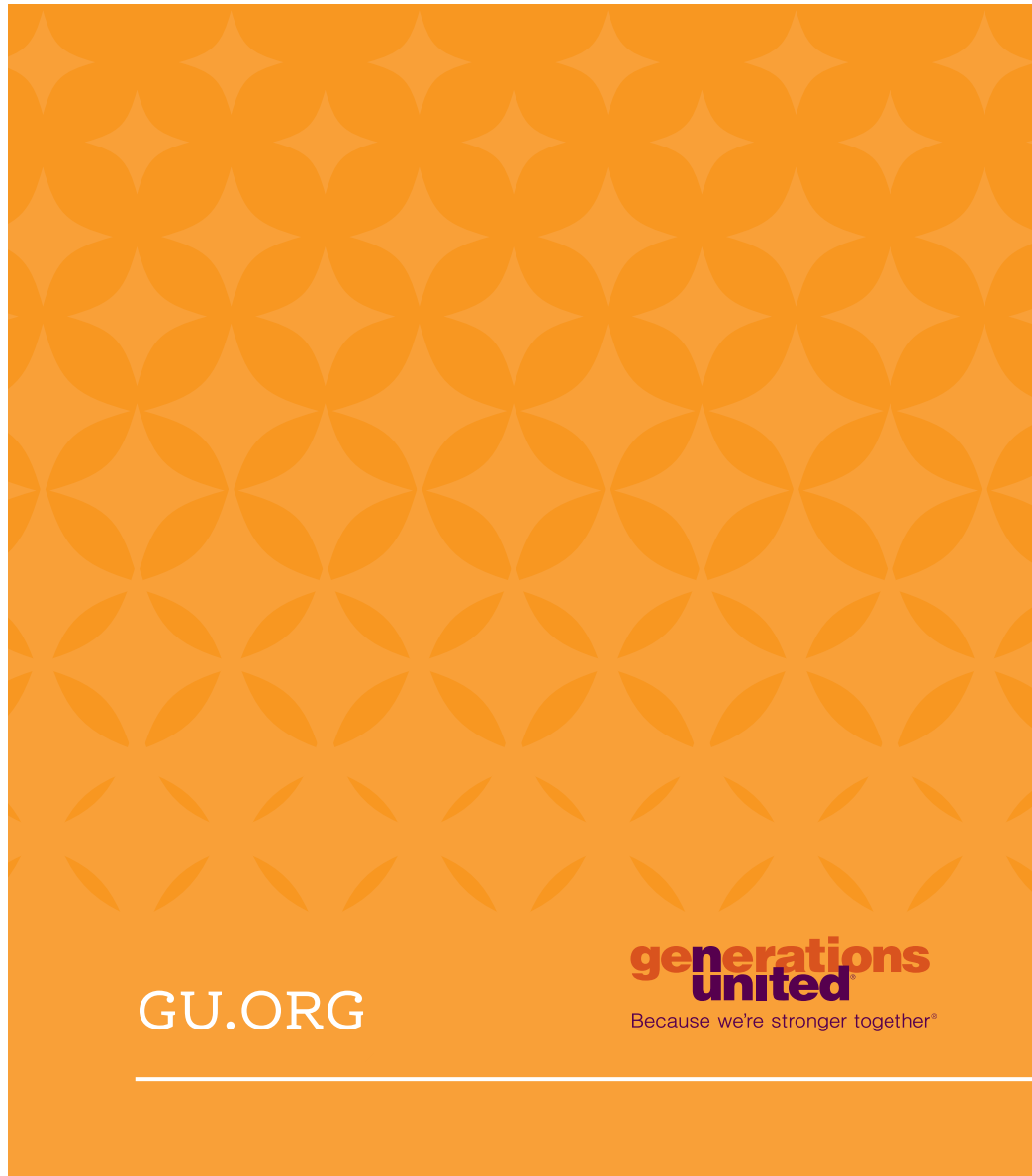
- Generations United – Connecting Generations In Michigan
michigangenerations.org
- Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE)
geron.org/Membership/Member-Center/Member-GroupsAcademy-for-Gerontology-in-Higher-Education-AGHE
- Age-Friendly University Global Network
afugn.org
- Campus Compact
compact.org/news/introducing-campus-cogenerate
- CoGenerate
cogenerate.org/what-makes-college-based-intergenerational-programs-successful
- Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Intergenerational Learning, Research & Community Engagement (ILRCE) Interest Group
geron.org/Membership/Member-Benefits/Interest-Groups
- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) Network
sps.northwestern.edu/oshernrc/about/osher-lifelong-learning-institute-network.php
- Penn State University Intergenerational Program
aese.psu.edu/outreach/intergenerational

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