Washington University’s Response to Population Aging

Creating a University for Life

Over its long history, the academy has responded to changing social contexts. Now is the time for us to adapt to a new social reality: population aging. Life expectancy has doubled in the last century. Yet educational institutions remain largely age-segregated — focused on the first quarter to third of a person’s life. Now, educational needs can fluctuate over 50 years after first-degree completion. People are working longer into the extended life course and seeking opportunities for on-going development and engagement. Washington University in St. Louis has an opportunity to model a comprehensive response to population aging for other universities in this country and abroad. In the face of new demographics, we must expand the business of the academy to serve students of all ages and operate as an age-diverse community.

The Academic Foundation

Washington University has built a scholarly agenda around the topic of productive aging — maximizing the engagement of older adults in working, volunteering, caregiving and educational activities. This focus contrasts with the traditional focus of aging research — decline, disability, depression, and dementia. The productive aging perspective highlights the growing capacity of older populations and focuses on the requisite institutional supports to engage this potential. To truly achieve a productive aging society, we must transform many of our institutions, including universities.

We have the opportunity to be an international leader in higher education by engaging current and former students,

THE VISION

Washington University will be an international leader in transforming the academy and our university culture to engage and educate people of all ages.

Age-diversity will be a valued feature of academic life.

Later life will be viewed as a time of active engagement, learning and purpose as opposed to current perceptions of stepping back and diminishing relevance.
faculty, and staff across the extended life course through innovative programs and policies. We can break down the traditional age-segregated nature of education and increase age diversity on campus — in our classrooms, campus events, living quarters, and service to the community. We can strengthen habits of lifelong learning and offer opportunities to carry out these habits at any stage of life. We can change the vision of later life from one of stepping back and diminishing relevance to one of active engagement, learning and purpose.

The Innovation
To date, educational institutions have responded to older adults and aging in tangential, discretionary ways. There may be aging courses for students, a lifelong learning center, research centers focused on aging, and perhaps an association for retirees. These activities are important parts of a diverse menu of contributions, and there are many successful examples of these efforts at institutions such as Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, and our own. However, a comprehensive effort that fully addresses demographic changes and opportunities is missing.

No leading research university has built a reputation for innovation and excellence in age-diversity on campus and the promotion of later life as a time for active engagement, learning, and purpose. In the face of the new and permanent demographic shift in our society, we must prepare our faculty, staff, students, and alums for work and life in a multi-generational world and the increasing chance that they will live into their 9th and 10th decades.

We are well positioned to be a change agent; our institution already has many of the elements that can contribute to this work. However, we need an initiative that can make the connections and spur on innovation. This work is an opportunity to expand our current business in the academy — educating current and future leaders and building knowledge for a new demographic reality. Many elements of this work can be revenue generating. We will also study our experience and disseminate findings to lead this necessary change in other higher education institutions.

The Initiative and Target Audiences
Facilitated by the Harvey A. Friedman Center for Aging, an advisory committee is committed to Washington University for Life, to become a comprehensive age-integrated research university.

- **Victoria Anwuri** | Associate Director, Institute for Public Health
- **Carolyn Baum** | Elias Michael Executive Director, Program in Occupational Therapy; Professor of Occupational Therapy, Neurology, & Social Work, School of Medicine
- **Aaron Bobick** | Dean, School of Engineering & Applied Science; James M. McKelvey Professor
- **Lee Epstein** | Ethan A.H. Shepley Distinguished University Professor, School of Law
- **Mahendra Gupta** | Geraldine J. & Robert L. Virgil Professor of Accounting, Olin Business School
- **Cal Halvorsen** | PhD Graduate, Brown School
- **Stephanie Herbers** | Manager, Harvey A Friedman Center for Aging, Institute for Public Health
- **Edward Lawlor** | William E. Gordon Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Brown School; Special Assistant to the Provost
- **Ed Macias** | Barbara & David Thomas Professor, Arts & Sciences; Provost Emeritus
- **Nancy Morrow-Howell** | Director, Harvey A. Friedman Center for Aging; Bettie Bofinger Brown Distinguished Professor of Social Policy, Brown School
- **Bill Powderly** | Director, Institute for Public Health; J. William Campbell Professor of Medicine & Co-Director of Division of Infectious Diseases, School of Medicine
- **Ralph Quatrano** | Spencer T. Olin Professor Emeritus, Arts & Sciences; Special Assistant to the Provost for Corporate Engagement
- **Mark Rollins** | Dean, University College; Chair, Performing Arts Department, Arts & Sciences
- **James Wertsch** | Vice Chancellor for International Relations; Director, McDonnell International Scholars Academy; David R. Francis Distinguished Professor, Arts & Sciences
Although Washington University has many educational and research programs in place, there is still much opportunity to broaden and deepen our engagement of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community in life stage-appropriate opportunities on campus. We will start with three key Washington University stakeholders: 1) alumni, 2) faculty and staff transitioning to retirement from the University, and 3) retired faculty and staff. Many of our activities will also benefit current students. Our goal is to deepen Washington University’s relationships with our constituents in ways that will pay off intellectually, financially, and reputationally.

Washington University for Life Aims

**Aim 1**
Facilitate greater involvement of retired faculty and staff, alumni, and older community members in existing classes, degree/certificate programs, and campus seminars/lectures.

**Aim 2**
Build skills among faculty, staff, and students to thrive in multigenerational teaching, work, and community environments.

**Aim 3**
Institutionalize programs that facilitate transitions between jobs and into retirement, with focus on on-going purpose and meaningful engagement.

**Aim 4**
Conduct research on multigenerational education, age-stereotype in academia, and educational pathways for longer life course.

Other efforts under consideration to explore include development of 1) a housing community close to campus where retired faculty, staff and alum live and engage with activities of the University; and 2) an association for University retirees.

This work is in the early stages of development. The Friedman Center for Aging has begun the initial work to reach out to potential University constituents, build a steering committee to represent all schools at the University, and collect baseline data, inventory current University efforts, and identify model components.

We currently are using existing resources of the Center for Aging but timely progress and success depend on a greater commitment. We are seeking additional investment and support to conduct market analyses, develop business and marketing plans in conjunction with University schools and departments, pilot test concepts, and begin work on a research agenda. One of our goals is to incorporate some revenue generating programs, and grants, to reduce our percentage of direct institutional funds needed over time.
We anticipate the following activities for each aim would be carried out over the three-year time period. This would include continuance and expansion of our advisory group as well as collaboration with schools and departments across our campuses.

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<tr>
<th>Aim 1: Facilitate greater involvement of retired faculty and staff, alumni, and older community members in existing classes, degree/certificate programs, and campus seminars/lectures.</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
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<td>• Identify degree and certificate programs most attractive to older students to promote and facilitate enrollment/completion.</td>
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<td>Implement &amp; evaluate “Gateway to Engagement” program, including marketing to key audiences.</td>
<td>Implement and evaluate activities, including return on investment.</td>
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<td>• Identify individual courses that would be appropriate for non-matriculating students.</td>
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<td>• Assist current programs in identifying older adults who can support their work (e.g., guest speakers, mentors, etc).</td>
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<td>• Develop a “Gateway to Engagement” outreach and informational program.</td>
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<td>• Explore feasibility and interest in a University Retiree association. Develop a proposal to be considered by the University.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o In coordination with Public Affairs, Human Resources, Alumni &amp; Development, and University College to increase participation of older adults in current university offerings that have capacity and interest, whether it be attendance at public lectures or enrollment in a degree program.</td>
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<td>Aim 2: Build skills among faculty, staff, and students to thrive in multigenerational teaching, work, and community environments.</td>
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<td>• Develop a program for instructional resources and trainings to improve teaching in age-diverse classrooms in collaboration with University College.</td>
<td>Implement and evaluation programs.</td>
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<td>• Assist current programs and courses with including older adults in seminars, mentorship programs, and other activities as appropriate.</td>
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<td>• Facilitate programs and services for older students on campus in collaboration with schools.</td>
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### Aim 3: Institutionalize programs that facilitate transitions between jobs and into retirement, with focus on on-going purpose and meaningful engagement.

- Develop a business plan for new programming aimed at preretirement faculty, staff, and alumni to enable successful transitions between later-career jobs or into retirement.
  - This could include on-line opportunities, summer residential stays on campus, certificate programs, and leadership programs that engage alums and retired employees outside of the St. Louis area.
- Select and pilot most appealing workshops and programs that are feasible to carry out in short-term.

### Aim 4: Conduct research on multigenerational education, age-stereotype in academia, and educational pathways for longer life course.

- Complete baseline data collection on current age distribution of students, faculty, and staff as well as current beliefs and attitudes about aging and older adults.
- Conduct focus groups to deepen understanding about the educational needs and preferences of older faculty, staff and alums.
- Outline research agenda, identify key faculty with expertise and interest in carrying out research.

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<td>Develop a business plan for new programming aimed at preretirement faculty, staff, and alumni to enable successful transitions between later-career jobs or into retirement.</td>
<td>Adjust programming based on pilots and continue implementation of successful components.</td>
<td>Implement and evaluate activities, including return on investment and financial viability.</td>
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<td>Select and pilot most appealing workshops and programs that are feasible to carry out in short-term.</td>
<td>Begin development of larger, more resource intensive programming and prepare for pilot.</td>
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- Begin pilot projects on the costs/benefits of mixed-age classrooms and optimal teaching strategies for these classrooms.
- Implement Year 2 surveys with faculty, staff, students, and alum.
- Continue carrying out research agenda; add new projects as resources are available.
- Implement Year 3 surveys with faculty, staff, students, and alum.