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TOOLS FOR

ADVANCING AGE INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

TOOLS FOR ADVANCING AGE INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) and its Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) designed this toolkit, with support from AARP, to provide resources to advance age inclusivity in institutions of higher education. The suite of tools can be used by faculty, students, administrators, and other campus leaders.

The options for advancing age inclusivity are endless, especially given that each institution has its own strengths and talents. These tools and other resources may be adapted to meet your institution's approach to making the case, building relationships, addressing ageism, crafting new efforts, and conducting assessments.

Advancing age inclusivity can occur at different levels and junctures within an institution—for example, a course or academic program, within a specific college, or across an entire campus. This toolkit can be used as a foundation for institutions looking to be more age inclusive in these ways as well as for those interested in becoming members of the **Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network**.

Help keep the GSA-AGHE AFU informed of your institutional efforts toward advancing age inclusivity by sending your suggestions and tools to:
ageinclusive@geron.org.

HIGHER EDUCATION, AGE INCLUSIVITY, AND THE AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY MOVEMENT

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Why Advance Age Inclusivity

Shifting age demographics are reshaping our social structures with far implications for higher education and age-diverse students with new educational needs. This extended longevity has also produced a rapidly growing “longevity economy” calling for a trained workforce to provide services to support the health and functioning of individuals as they age, as well as a broader industry sector to provide goods and experiences in technology, fitness, travel, entertainment, home design, and other spheres (see GSA’s report on **Longevity Economics**). Thus, aging populations are creating career opportunities for which higher education must prepare students as future practitioners and professionals.

What Age Inclusivity Means for Institutions of Higher Education

Aging populations mean more older learners are looking to higher education to meet their professional needs as they experience longer work lives (see AARP’s report on **The Future of Work@50+**). Similarly, many older adults plan to stay engaged in some form of learning for personal development—with campuses being an appealing educational destination (see the American Council on Education’s report on **Framing New Terrain: Older Adults and Higher Education**).

Continued engagement is of consequence for the positive psychological, physical, and social well-being of individuals and for the well-being of institutions. Moreover, programs for age-diverse learners can benefit institutions by helping to offset the consequences of the shrinking enrollment of younger learners. Preparing for greater age diversity is also important on broader societal levels, especially given that traditional-aged students are seldom exposed to aging in their curriculum and rarely interact with older individuals. Thus, more must be done to educate students about aging issues as they prepare to enter their adult personal and professional age-diverse worlds.

Ageist beliefs permeate society, with the neglect of age in academia and its historic age-segregated structure sustaining negative attitudes and unconscious age biases that impact individuals of all ages. There are many ways higher education can shape teaching and learning environments that disrupt ageist beliefs and biases in constructive ways and promote intergenerational solidarity.

HIGHER EDUCATION, AGE INCLUSIVITY, AND THE AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY MOVEMENT

The Age-Friendly University (AFU) Initiative

One way to advance age inclusivity is to join the AFU Global Network. In 2016, AGHE responded to this call by endorsing the AFU initiative launched by Ireland's Dublin City University (DCU). The AFU initiative offers a set of 10 guiding principles for creating more age-inclusive campuses. The AFU initiative has grown steadily in a few short years to a global network of partner institutions.

Read more:

- **GSA-AGHE AFU:** www.geron.org/afu
- **DCU AFU:** www4.dcu.ie/agefriendly/

RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

- **AGHE Biblio Brief: The Global Age-Friendly University (AFU) Initiative.** (2020). The Gerontological Society of America. A comprehensive bibliography of works that describe how different institutions are approaching their age-friendly vision, along with overviews of special topics and projects.
- **Becoming an Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network Partner.** (2020). The Gerontological Society of America. A brief overview of the AFU initiative and information about how to join the network.
- **Longevity Economics: Leveraging the Advantages of an Aging Society.** (2018). The Gerontological Society of America.
- **Making the Case for Age-Diverse Universities.** (2020). Morrow-Howell, N., Lawlor, E. F., Macias, E. S., Swinford, E., & Brandt, J. *The Gerontologist*, 60(7), 1187–1193. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnz181
- **What's Hot: Higher Education and Aging: The Age-Friendly Movement—Building a Case of Age-Inclusivity.** (2019). The Gerontological Society of America.

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MAKING THE CASE

Overview

How can you build the case to become a more age-inclusive campus? Institutions differ in their needs, focus, and mission—all of which impact their readiness to mount programs and practices that serve age-diverse students and influence how the institution might approach joining the AFU Global Network.

In launching any campus initiative, a case must be made to inform the faculty and administration about a project's goals and its value. To establish the direction of an age-friendly initiative that works best for your institution, there are some overarching guidelines to consider, arenas for focusing your argument, brief tips to facilitate your efforts, practical tools for implementation, and resources to explore.

Overarching Guidelines

- Make your argument local by basing it directly on your institution's values, mission, and strategic plan.
- Document the age-inclusive activities that you are already doing right now, and indicate how they align with the AFU Principles.
- Clearly articulate the value proposition for expanding current efforts or initiating new projects.
- Identify and recruit your institution's current age-friendly champions.

Arenas for Focusing Arguments

- Establish recognition of the opportunities for external grants (e.g., public and private research funding) for issues focused on aging, older adults, and our aging society.
- Explain higher education's role in supporting longer educational lives as people live and work longer, return to work at all ages, seek encore careers, and look for enrichment and engagement throughout the life course.
- Illustrate the growing demand to educate students of all ages about issues of longer life, older adults, and our aging society through the gerontology/geriatrics curriculum as well as the need to increase students' competencies in multigenerational settings.
- Discuss the value of proactively responding to demographic shifts in higher education with reductions in the number of traditional-aged students and the need to serve an increasingly age-diverse student body, which may represent new revenue streams.

Brief Tips

- Directly link age-inclusive initiatives to your institution's strategic plan and mission.
- Connect student age diversity (or lack thereof) to broader campus efforts on increasing diversity and inclusion.
- Start with units, departments, and programs that already promote age-friendly efforts.
- Be specific about revenue-generating opportunities or the revenue-neutral aspects of being more age inclusive.

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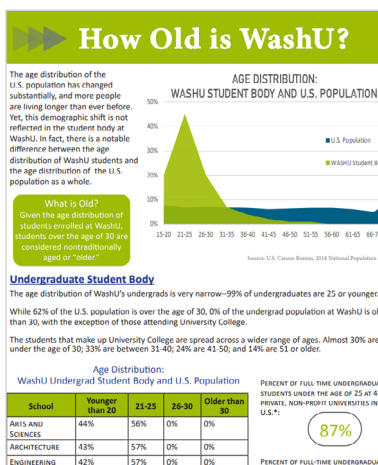
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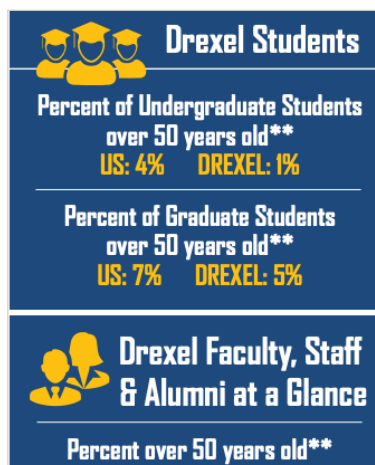
MAKING THE CASE

TOOLS TO CONSIDER

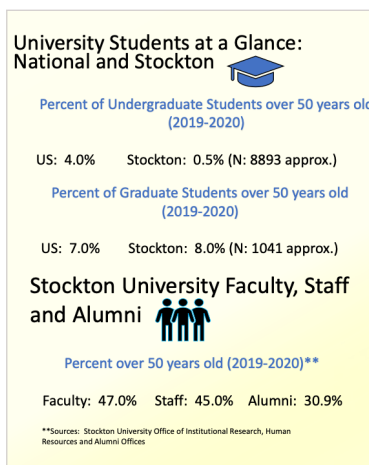
Infographics are effective formats for presenting information such as demographics and related institutional statistics, providing overviews of campus efforts, and illustrating opportunities to be more age inclusive. See some examples of dynamic infographics from these AFU partners:



Washington University
in St. Louis



Drexel University



Stockton University

RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

- **GSA Webinar: Becoming an Age-Friendly University Partner.** (2019). GSA-AGHE AFU. Learn how an age-friendly campus benefits multiple stakeholders, along with information about joining the AFU Global Network and carrying out the AFU Principles. Presenters: Joann M. Montepare and Kimberly S. Farah, Lasell College.
- **Introduction to the Special Issue—Age-Friendly Universities (AFU): Principles, practices, and opportunities.** (2019). Montepare, J. M. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(2), 139–141. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1591848
- **Making the case for age-diverse universities.** (2020). Morrow-Howell, N., Lawlor, E., Macias, E., Swinford, E., & Brandt, J. *The Gerontologist*, 60(7), 1187–1193. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnz181
- **New Normal for Higher Education: Understanding and Embracing an Aging Society.** Hear leaders in higher education and the aging field at this Drexel University workshop off examples of how to include age diversity in thinking about institutional inclusion efforts—and transform the “demographic cliff” into a “demographic lift.”

WHERE TO START

Overview

Determining where to start with advancing age inclusivity will depend on your institution's unique characteristics, the existing student population, current programs and practices, and the surrounding community. Some elements to consider at this stage are coalition building, identifying strengths and gaps, and reframing aging.

Engaging colleagues across disciplines and involving units across the institution are elements to consider in mounting an age-inclusive initiative and moving toward an AFU vision around the **10 AFU Principles**. A good place to start is to explore how you can build connections and leverage existing initiatives on your campus by connecting your age-friendly organizing to institutional strategic planning, accessibility initiatives, research programs, and community connections along with ensuring that age is acknowledged in your institution's diversity statement and inclusion efforts.

Each institution will naturally take a different approach that will unfold over time. As such, starting with a focus on select principles is a prudent place to start—and identifying your institution's existing strengths and gaps will inform this focus. Tools are provided to help you assess and track your success.

Because ageism can act as an explicit and implicit hindrance on many fronts, efforts devoted to addressing ageism should be included in your plans to advance age inclusivity. GSA's **Reframing Aging Initiative** and **Ageism First Aid** online multi-module course and AARP's **Disrupt Aging** campaign can assist.

TOOLS TO CONSIDER

- **Advancing Age Inclusivity on Your Campus: Where to Start**
- **Aligning With Your Institution's Strategic Planning: An Example From AFU Partner Ithaca College**
- **Crafting Your Press Release**

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WHERE TO START

TOOLS TO ADDRESS AGEISM

- **GSA Reframing Aging Initiative**
- **GSA Ageism First Aid**
- **AARP Disrupt Aging Classroom**
- **AGHE Biblio Brief: Ageism–Practice and Measurement**

RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

- **Age-Friendly Universities (AFU): Possibilities and power in campus connections.**
(2020). Montepare, J. M., Farah, K. S., Bloom, S. F., & Tauriac, S. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 41(3), 273–280. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2020.1726744
- **Becoming and being an Age-Friendly University (AFU): Strategic considerations and practical implications.**
(2019). Clark, P. G., & Leedahl, S. N. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(2), 166–178. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1579714
- **Charting a future for Canada's first Age-Friendly University (AFU).**
(2019). Chesser, S., & Porter, M. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(2), 153–165. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1579716
- **Coalition building to create an Age-Friendly University (AFU).**
(2019). Andreoletti, C., & June, A. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(20), 142–152. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1572008

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GAINING MOMENTUM

Overview

Perhaps you have already experienced some success with age-inclusive initiatives on your campus. You may have a strong gerontology program, a center on aging, or a robust lifelong learning program. Since the goal of the age-friendly movement is to advance age inclusivity beyond these existing efforts, what additional steps can you take at your institution to gain momentum and ensure that your initiatives are interconnected more broadly on your campus?

Building connections across disciplines and units on your campus along with fostering connections with people and organizations in the greater community are essential. Engaging students and providing faculty with resources to integrate age inclusivity into their work—whether it is teaching, research, or community engagement—are also key to being more age inclusive.

To these ends, learning groups, collaborative community events, intergenerational exchange, and other efforts can go a long way in building momentum.

TOOLS TO CONSIDER

- **10 Ideas for Gaining Momentum**
- **Start an AFU Learning Community**
- **A Hands-On Approach to Teaching About Aging.**
(2018). Baker, H. E., Kruger, T. M., & Karasik, R. J. (Eds.)

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RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

- **An Age-Friendly University (AFU) assists with technology learning and social engagement among older adults and individuals with developmental disabilities.** (2019). Stanley, J. T., Morrison, L. B., Webster, B. A., Turner, J. R., & Richards, C. J. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(2), 261–275. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1572009
- **Becoming an Age-Friendly University (AFU): Integrating a retirement community on campus.** (2019). Montepare, J. M., Farah, K. S., Doyle, A., & Dixon, J. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(2), 179–193. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1586682
- **The benefits of intergenerational learning in higher education: Lessons learned from two Age Friendly University programs.** (2017). Pstross, M., Corrigan, T., Knopf, R. C., Sung, H., Talmage, C. A., Conroy, C., & Fowley, C. *Innovative Higher Education*, 42, 157–171. doi: 10.1007/s10755-016-9371-x
- **Creating an intergenerational university hub: Engaging older and younger users in the shaping of space and place.** (2019). Vrkljan, B., Whalen, A., Kajaks, T., Nadarajah, S., White, P. J., Harrington, L., & Raina, P. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(2), 244–260. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1572010
- **Exploring intergenerational study abroad to promote Age-Friendly Universities (AFU).** (2019). Naar, J. J. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(3), 277–289. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1572007
- **GSA Webinar: One Vision, Many Paths: Making an Age-Friendly University Work for You.** (2019). GSA-AGHE AFU. Learn how institutions can begin to develop their own vision for age inclusivity. Presenters: Carrie Andreoletti and Andrea June, Central Connecticut State University.
- **Students' dementia experience, knowledge, and concern: An opportunity for Age-Friendly University (AFU) programming.** (2020). Montepare, J. M., & Pandolfi, G. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, Epub ahead of print. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2020.1793139

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ASSESSING & TRACKING SUCCESS

Overview

Assessment is an important component of advancing age inclusivity on your campus, and the **AFU Principles** are a useful guiding framework. This helps move the campus from making a commitment to endorse the principles to actually taking stock of current campus practices and movement toward achieving the vision of an age-friendly institution of higher education.

To establish a baseline of campus practices, assessment can be done before or after an institution joins the AFU Global Network. Evaluation also follows periodically to assess how well a campus is adhering to the AFU Principles once measurable goals are established and priorities are integrated within an institution's strategic plan. Moreover, assessment is an opportunity to engage intergenerational and cross-campus collaborations in addition to providing research projects for students. Each tool presented in this section provides an overview and materials to inform your assessment.

Mapping the Guiding Principles

In 2017, the University of New England (UNE) joined the AFU Global Network. Faculty across five UNE colleges expressed an interest in the field of aging and convened a workgroup. They were instrumental in establishing education and research on aging as a priority in eight of the UNE health professions programs—a priority now emerging in other health professions programs. To begin this work, the UNE workgroup used the strategy of “mapping the guiding AFU Principles” as the foundation to evaluate age-friendliness on its U.S. campuses as shown in **this example**. This broad-brushstroke approach aids in identifying where AFU Principles are in motion on campus in various programs—and where gaps and opportunities exist.

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ASSESSING & TRACKING SUCCESS

Conducting a Campus Audit

The University of Massachusetts Boston joined the AFU Global Network in 2017. To demonstrate what it means to be an AFU, a research workgroup of 12 volunteers from departments and constituencies across campus was convened in 2018 to operationalize the AFU Principles with the goal of designing and piloting **an audit tool**. Nineteen campus leaders were interviewed representing a wide range of campus life, including administration, career counseling, advising, communications, student life, campus services, distance education, and health and wellness services. Major themes relating to educational programming, accessibility, and inclusivity emerged. The importance of conducting the audit was evident in the opportunities it presented to increase awareness among diverse stakeholders who comprise a campus community about making the vision of age friendliness a reality. This audit served as the basis for the AFU Inventory and Campus Climate Survey (described on page 13), which is currently in development.

- **Developing an Age-Friendly University audit: A pilot study.** (2019). Silverstein, N. M., Hendricksen, M., Bowen, L. M., Fonte Weaver, A.J., & Whitbourne, S. K. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 40(2), 203–220. doi: 10.1080/02701960.2019.1572006

Doing a Photovoice Evaluation

The AFU Steering Committee at the University of Manitoba used a photovoice project to assess aspects of age friendliness on its campus after joining the AFU Global Network in 2016. Starting not long after its initial meetings, the committee designed the project to become informed about aspects of campus age friendliness and make initial recommendations for change. The photovoice assessment method can be used with many groups—students in a class, older adult learners, or other age-friendly stakeholders. **Sample instructions** for taking photos as well as the resources to share with participants to guide their picture taking of age-friendly barriers and supports are provided. There is also a two-page document for use as a **group-based classroom activity** with instructions and a place for students to record their photovoice observations.

- **Exploring university age-friendliness using collaborative citizen science.** (2020). Chesser, S. A., Porter, M. M., Barclay, R., Menec, V. H., Ripat, J., Sibley, K. M., Sylvestre, G. M., & Webber, S. C. *The Gerontologist*, Epub ahead of print. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnaa026

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ASSESSING & TRACKING SUCCESS

Holding Listening Tours

Faculty at Central Connecticut State University, which became an AFU partner in 2017, gathered information about their institution's strengths, gaps, and opportunities by conducting a listening tour inspired by the strategy communities have used to evaluate their age-friendly needs. See their [Listening Tour Tip Sheet](#) for planning your protocol, along with a sample [overview](#) and [survey](#) given to individuals on their tour, and a [message](#) to department chairs. In addition to being a great way to raise awareness about age inclusivity, listening tours offer opportunities to explore issues in more detail through interpersonal exchange.

The [Community Listening Session Tool Kit](#), which is Book 2 in the *AARP Roadmap to Livability Collection*, offers a step-by-step guide on establishing a timeline, supply list, flip charts, agenda, schedule, script, and evaluation form for listening tours that can be easily adapted to explore what age inclusivity means on your campus.

The AFU Inventory and Campus Climate Survey

Building on the campus audit approach described earlier in this section (Silverstein et al., 2019), the AFU Inventory and Campus Climate Survey (ICCS) is an assessment instrument currently in development; the ICCS is based on the premise that it is necessary to document both actual and perceived age friendliness at an institution along with its age-friendly campus climate. The ICCS will include an inventory of actual practices across campus units, a reporting tool designed to provide factual data on age-friendly campus practice. The climate survey will measure how faculty, students, and staff perceive these practices, along with assessing their beliefs about aging and older people. The ICCS is presently being tested in a study of age friendliness at more than 30 campuses across the United States, many of which are AFU partners, in a research project supported by the RRF Foundation for Aging. Questions about the ICCS may be directed to:

Umass.afustudy@umb.edu

RESOURCE TO EXPLORE

- **Webinar: A Starting Point for Looking at Age-Friendliness on My Campus: AGHE Can Help.** (2019). GSA-AGHE AFU. Learn about data-gathering approaches to explore your institution's age-friendly assets, gaps, and opportunities, along with how AGHE can be an AFU resource for you and your institution. Presenters: Nina M. Silverstein, University of Massachusetts Boston; and Marilyn Gugliucci, University of New England.

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