

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A NEW PROGRAM AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY:**  
**Ph.D. PROGRAM IN GERONTOLOGY**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University to establish a new Ph.D. Program in Gerontology in the College of Human Sciences.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed program will offer new opportunities for students in the field of gerontology. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

- ◇ Description of program. The primary objective of the proposed program is to provide students a comprehensive education in gerontology. The program was designed using the guidelines for doctoral programs in gerontology established by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE). According to those guidelines, students take courses covering psychosocial issues, health aspects, research methods, and additional electives. A dissertation is required for doctoral students.
- ◇ Current program offering in Gerontology. Currently, there is no gerontology Ph.D. program option available at ISU.
- ◇ Relationship to institutional strategic plan. The mission of the Interdepartmental Gerontology Program is to provide instruction, promote interdisciplinary research, and provide services that advance an understanding of gerontology. The program currently offers an undergraduate minor, a graduate minor, and participates in a related online graduate degree and certificate program. It seeks to attract and educate students who will become leaders in both academic and applied settings to improve the quality of life for older individuals and their families in Iowa, the nation, and the world. The proposed program will initiate and facilitate interdisciplinary research in aging. A strong connection to Extension Outreach will facilitate dissemination of aging-related knowledge.

ISU’s strategic plan priorities include strengthening undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, increasing the number of programs that are among the best, translating discoveries into viable technologies, elevating the state’s appeal as a place to live, learn, work, and play, and ensuring that the university is a great place to learn and work.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.provost.iastate.edu/what-we-do-sp>.

To address these priorities, the department has strengthened graduate education significantly by adding courses on aging. The work on exceptional longevity is recognized around the country and the world. Discoveries have been translated into technologies by partnering with faculty in the Department of Computer Science to procure federal funding to continue research efforts to develop smart-home technologies that will assist older adults to stay longer in their homes in a healthy environment. Students are employed in Iowa, other states, and in several countries as service providers, community leaders, educators, and researchers. The Gerontology Program has sponsored conferences and monthly colloquia that add to the university as a great place to learn.

The College of Human Sciences' strategic plan reflects that of the University's.<sup>2</sup> The College vision is to expand human potential across the life span by improving science and technology that applies throughout people's daily living and learning. The College's mission is to create, share, and apply knowledge to improve people's lives through the science and technology of living and learning. Thereby, the College prepares transformative leaders for the nation and the world. A doctoral program in gerontology supports the College's vision and mission because it focuses on changes across the latter half of the life span and because it has the capacity to prepare transformative leaders.

- ◆ Relationship to existing programs at ISU. The proposed program will enhance the training of graduate students by augmenting their root disciplinary training with a life-span perspective. As noted by George Bugliarello, editor of *The Bridge: Linking Engineering and Society*, in a special issue on aging, "The unprecedented concurrence of plummeting birth rates in some parts of the world, a population explosion in other parts, and a large number of older people everywhere is a complex phenomenon that confronts us with multifaceted challenges: how to enable elderly people to function in a world designed by and large without them in mind; how to reduce the burden on the working population of supporting an increasingly large population of retirees; and how to engage retirees who have the capabilities and desire to continue working."<sup>3</sup>

As identified in the most recent University review of the Interdepartmental Gerontology Program, there is a need to have on-campus graduate degrees explicitly in gerontology. The proposed program offers an opportunity for advanced training in both Gerontology and a root disciplinary area. No such training is offered elsewhere in Iowa; the proposed program would be one of a few across the country offering this unique training. Gerontological training can assist students across disciplines, including science, technology, and engineering, by bringing the context of life-span development and aging to students' individualized subject matter. Understanding context and human factors can improve doctoral student education, and enhance research, product and technology development, and career marketability.

- ◆ Need for proposed program. There is a strong need in Iowa and across the U.S. to train more direct care and professional staff to work with older adults. The demand for a workforce which can incorporate life-span development and aging principles in their work is growing. Gerontology training can provide new opportunities for students in their careers.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hs.iastate.edu/about/planning/strategic/>.

<sup>3</sup> National Academy of Engineering; <http://www.nae.edu/File.aspx?id=12500>

- ◇ Duplication. There are no doctoral programs in Gerontology in any other Iowa post-secondary institution. The University of Northern Iowa offers a bachelor's program in gerontology; students graduating from that program could transition into the doctoral program in gerontology. At the undergraduate level, University of Iowa students focus on aging in the Interdepartmental Studies Program. These students also represent a pool of potential graduate applicants. At the graduate level, the University of Iowa offers an Interdisciplinary Graduate Fellowship in Aging (Center on Aging) and a graduate minor or certificate (Aging Studies Program in the School of Social Work). These programs are not majors and their focus is more clinically oriented.

At the Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 meetings of the Iowa Consortium of Aging Programs, members from the University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa, as well as Des Moines Area Community College, expressed support for the proposed program; their support has continued to the present time.

- ◇ Student demand. The increasing number of older adults is creating a need to support successful aging from a multidisciplinary perspective. ISU students need to understand aging and prepare for careers working with older adults and their families. In her 2007 book, "101 Careers in Gerontology," C. Joanne Grabinski outlined the demand and need to train gerontologists:

⇒ "Wanted: gerontology workers, gerontological specialists, and gerontologists for careers now and into the future. Work with, for, and on behalf of the growing population of elders (including centenarians) in a wide variety of settings. Required: training/education in appropriate field and at appropriate level for specific positions; specialization in aging studies/gerontology is highly desirable. Ability to rethink one's concept of old and deconstruct myths about old people and the processes of aging is mandatory."

An on-campus doctoral program in gerontology will address student demand. In a survey of Great Plains IDEA master's alumni, graduates commented on the need for a Ph.D. program in gerontology as well as more applied opportunities at the graduate level. An on-campus doctoral program will offer Great Plains IDEA master's graduates the opportunity to continue their graduate training.

It is anticipated that students will be recruited from a variety of sources: (1) ISU graduate students minoring in Gerontology; (2) ISU students who complete an Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies master's degree emphasizing aging-related studies; (3) online Great Plains IDEA certificate and master's students enrolled at ISU and the six partner institutions; (4) professionals working in the field who need specific training and credentials in Gerontology to advance; and (6) new recruits contacted through networking and academic and professional organizations, such as the Gerontological Society of America and direct care worker associations.

- ◇ Unique features. In 2006, there were 37.3 million older adults (65 years and older) in the United States. They represented 12.4% of the U.S. population. The number of older adults is expected to increase dramatically in the next 40 years to 20% of the U.S. population.<sup>4</sup> Iowa has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest percentage of older persons (65+) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage of oldest-old individuals (85+) in the U.S.

---

<sup>4</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2008.

Aging in a rural context presents unique challenges for older persons, their families, and care providers. As a land-grant university, ISU needs a Gerontology Program that addresses implications of these demographic changes of aging, and that prepares citizens in Iowa, the United States, and the world for an aging society.

With the increasing number of old and very old adults in Iowa by the year 2050, ISU needs to support the proposed program. Caring for this increasing number of older adults presents challenges of both cost and “manpower;” it will take technology and innovation and new multidisciplinary solutions. ISU is particularly well-positioned to offer such collaborations across departments reflecting basic, applied, behavioral, and technological science expertise.

An effective Gerontology Program will train students who will serve older Iowans, inform students and the public about healthy aging, and use state-of-the-art knowledge and technology to prepare for an aging society. This includes attracting outstanding faculty and students who will be at the cutting edge of research and training. ISU has the opportunity to be recognized nationally and internationally for its impact in addressing major aging issues. ISU will need to play a leading role in one of the most pressing social issues facing the world today – the graying of society.

- ◇ Resources. All but three of the required courses are available through either existing on-campus or Great Plains IDEA offerings. Web-based and on-campus elective courses are also currently available. Students in the proposed program will receive a greater research focus through existing coursework in research methods and statistics (Human Development and Family Studies 503 and Statistics 401).

The proposed program will not require additional faculty lines, facilities, or equipment. Fifty faculty members are already involved in the Gerontology Program.<sup>5</sup> An existing list of faculty members approved to serve on graduate minor students’ program of study committees is already in place.<sup>6</sup> These faculty, as well as other faculty, can serve as committee members for the proposed program. An approved Gerontology-related faculty member will be required to serve as major professor or co-major professor for students in the proposed program.

Gerontology and Gerontology-related courses already exist on campus. In addition, Great Plains IDEA courses can augment the on-campus courses. Only three new courses are needed to fill content needs in the curriculum and to form cohorts of Gerontology students. Therefore, the additional work load of faculty will be minimal.

All Great Plains IDEA courses are housed within Gerontology; additional courses will be cross-listed by other ISU departments. Students will register for these courses using the “Geron” prefix. Students will enroll in dissertation credits and will be supervised by a faculty member associated with the Gerontology Program. The Gerontology Program currently has student space and computer access for students in LeBaron Hall.

- ◇ Cost. The University projects that the cost for the proposed program will be \$21,646 in Year One, increasing to \$25,105 by Year Seven. This includes funding for a program assistant and course release support. This will support both the proposed master’s and doctoral programs.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gerontology.iastate.edu/faculty/>.

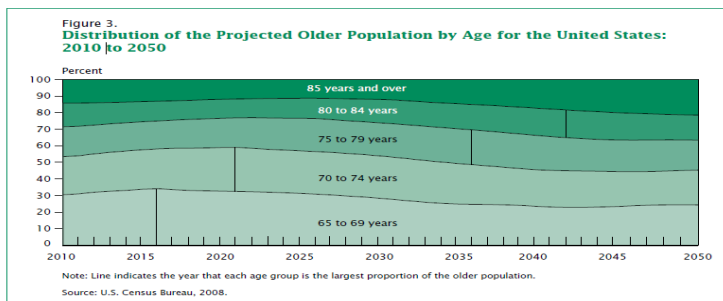
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gerontology.iastate.edu/faculty/pos-faculty/>.

*Existing support.* There are several sources of support already in place for the Gerontology program. These include program support provided by the College of Human Sciences; program space in LeBaron Hall provided by the College of Human Sciences; two-week summer salary support for the program director provided by the College of Human Sciences; support for three ¼ time graduate assistants provided by the Graduate College to recruit new students; and one course release for the director provided by the home department, Human Development and Family Studies. These resources will be shared across the existing programs as well as the proposed on-campus master’s and doctoral programs.

To guarantee alternate year offerings of the proposed Gerontology courses, consent will be requested from the Graduate College, College of Human Sciences, and participating departments to support faculty teaching of these courses as “on load.” GERON 630, Theories of Gerontology, can be taught online to broaden access to non-ISU students, including doctoral students at the Great Plains IDEA institutions. The Great Plains IDEA Gerontology faculty have expressed interest in such a doctoral-level course. It is anticipated that the three proposed courses can generate revenue to support participating colleges.

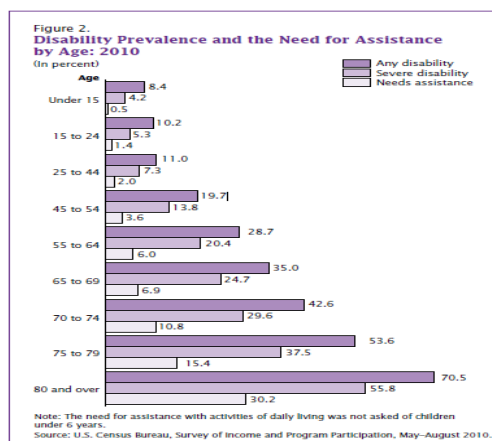
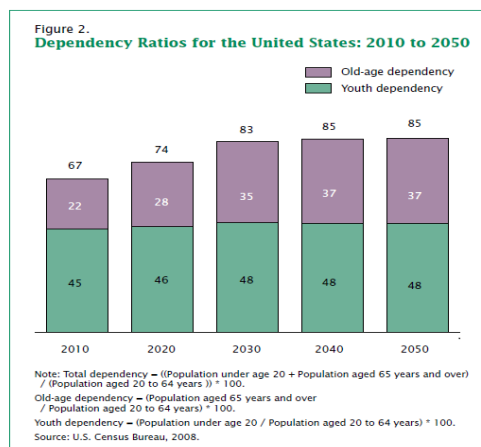
*Requested fiscal support.* Consistent with other inter-departmental programs which share administrative support resources, ¼ time administrative support has been requested from the Graduate College. A one-course release will be sought for the Director of Graduate Education (DOGE) of the proposed program. Currently, the Director of the Gerontology Program serves as DOGE for the on-campus graduate minor; the College of Human Sciences Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education serves as DOGE for the online MFCS students enrolled in the Gerontology track.

- ◆ Projected enrollment. In addition to new sources of students, the University anticipates that the proposed program will attract students who complete the online Great Plains IDEA master’s program as well as the proposed on-campus master’s program in Gerontology (Agenda Item ESAC 6). During the past seven years, the average enrollment of online master’s and certificate students has been 20 students. During that time, there has been an average of 18 students in the on-campus Gerontology minor. An observation of graduate cohort recruitment and enrollment at other institutions has provided an insight into enrollment projections for the proposed program. The projected enrollment in Year One is one student, increasing to 12-16 students by Year Seven.
  
- ◆ Workforce Need/Demand. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that between 2010 and 2020, “occupations in the doctoral or professional degree category are projected to grow by about 20%.”<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/About/Projections-Overview.htm>

The need to train professionals equipped in addressing age-related needs from a multidisciplinary perspective is great. As noted in the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report,<sup>8</sup> the dependence ratio of older adults to youth is increasing and within the older adult population, the oldest-old group is growing.



Within the older adult population, there is a diversity of needs as disability rates increase with age<sup>9</sup> and individuals require environments, technology, and professional services which support activities of daily living and enhance quality of life. Doctoral trained professionals are needed to provide critical education and training to meet the growing demand presented by an aging society and world. For example, many regions of the country, including Iowa, have shortages of physical and mental health care professionals.<sup>10</sup> Research, clinical work, and policy developments are needed to support successful or optimal aging which yields benefits not only for individuals, but also families, communities, and society as quality of life increases, family caregiving is eased, and medical expenditures are decreased. There is significant work to be done in the areas of engineering and technology to create sustainable environments which promote health life-span development.

- ◇ Accreditation for proposed program. Recommendations from the Association of Gerontology in Higher Education provided guidance in developing the proposed program; however, formal accreditation is not available.
- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed program will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the next General Catalog of the university. New students will be admitted for the entering class of Fall 2014.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Aging\\_Statistics/future\\_growth/DOCS/p25-1138.pdf](http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Aging_Statistics/future_growth/DOCS/p25-1138.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p70-131.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Department of Human Services, <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/>