



## **Endorsement of the 10 Age-Friendly University Principles**

**About us:** The Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging (BSCoA) is located within the O'Brien Institute for Public Health, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary. Our mandate is to both enhance the health and wellness of older adults and better inform public policy with regard to issues pertaining to the aging population. We achieve our mandate through coordinated interdisciplinary research, teaching and learning, and community outreach activities. The leadership of the BSCoA comprises an academic lead (Dr. David Hogan, an internationally-renowned geriatrician) and scientific coordinator (Dr. Ann Toohey, who holds a PhD in Community Health Sciences with a critical gerontology focus). The Centre serves as the administrative and collaborative hub for University of Calgary aging research and interdisciplinary educational programming undertaken by the faculties of **Kinesiology, Medicine, Nursing, Social Work and others as the Centre grows**. Our Web site address is [www.obrienIPH.ucalgary.ca/aging](http://www.obrienIPH.ucalgary.ca/aging).

The Centre is also a member of the Canadian Research Centres on Aging (organized by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Aging). Activities of this group include regular information-sharing update meetings as well as strategic meetings scheduled to take place during major gerontology conferences (e.g., the Canadian Association on Gerontology's annual conference).

The Dean's Office of the Cumming School of Medicine has endorsed (24 Sept 2018) our application to join the Age Friendly Universities Network. The following describes how we are currently engaged with the 10 Age-Friendly University Principles:

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programs.

*We advocate for participation of older adults in all of our own core activities, and in the activities of others where appropriate. Examples include (i) ensuring that our planning committee for our inaugural public event (see Web for more information) included an older adult perspective via membership – these planning committee members were also active participants and featured alongside academic researchers in a panel session exploring different disciplinary perspectives on resilience in aging); and, (ii) organization and financial sponsorship of a panel featuring three older adults who could share their own perspectives during an industry/research “reverse trade show” on the role of technology in supporting aging in place. We will continue to actively advocate across the University for the engagement of older adults in aging focused research, teaching, and public events.*

2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue second careers.

*Our University waives tuition for older adults (65+ years of age) who enroll in undergraduate, direct-entry bachelor's level courses. Our Centre's Scientific Coordinator completed full time graduate studies (MSc and PhD) as a mature student holding competitive funding, experiencing both the challenges and benefits of completing academic training at our institution for a second career in the latter part of one's professional life.*



3. 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).

*Our institution offers opportunities that range from Continuing Education and Professional Development through to Bachelors, Masters, and PhD qualifications, as well as MD and DVM training. Our Centre on Aging fulfills a need for education by both (i) hosting a public event every two (2) years promoted to the public as well as to practitioners, clinicians, and researchers, and by (ii) co-sponsoring events hosted by others to ensure that an aging perspective is represented (e.g., we identified a keynote speaker with expertise in health promotion and aging – Dr. Peggy Edwards – as part of our sponsorship arrangement with the 2017 International Walk21 Conference that was hosted by our University.)*

4. To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.

*As described above, our Centre is a strong advocate for the inclusion of older adults' voices and perspectives in both academic and community events.*

5. To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.

*This is an area that we have not yet fully explored. At our inaugural public event we did live-stream select presentations for those who could not attend in person. This was a widely used and appreciated option. While online educational opportunities will broaden the ways people can participate, it may continue to exclude those who do not have access to technology and/or support to take advantage of such opportunities.*

6. To ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an ageing society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.

*Through our Centre on Aging, we are involved in several policy-level discussions with our local and provincial governments. These include both Age-Friendly Calgary policy implementation (a municipally-led initiative) as well as planning for the health and social needs of the aging population (provincial jurisdiction). We have spearheaded a research partnership between our municipal government's administrative staff and a major national longitudinal study (the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging or CLSA) in relation to evaluating age-friendly strategies on an ongoing basis. Our Academic Lead, Dr. David Hogan, is also an advisor to our federal government in relation to developing and implementing a national dementia strategy.*



7. To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.

*One of our priorities is to both facilitate and invest in inter-disciplinary gerontology and geriatrics education. In addition to providing competitive scholarship support at the Masters, Doctoral, and post-doctoral levels, we distribute funds on an annual basis to support student-led initiatives in faculties across the University. One of the flagship initiatives that we support is the Faculty of Social Work's "Gerontology Interest Group". Monthly sessions are organized by student co-leads and cover a range of topics relevant to trainees in social work and beyond. Some of the past sessions have included Indigenous perspectives on aging (presented by a local Elder), older homelessness, age-friendly initiatives, companion animals and aging, and elder abuse. We have also dispersed funds to support student-led initiatives in faculties of Nursing, Kinesiology, and Medicine and are actively establishing similar arrangements for departments of Psychology and Sociology in the Faculty of Arts and other faculties where there are aging-focused scholarly activities taking place.*

8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities.

*As described above, our primary contribution to this principle is the organization of bi-annual public events that are widely publicized. These events include public talks as well as breakout sessions that address contemporary aging-related topics. Our premier event, which took place in 2017, was titled "Resilience in aging: Exploring people, places, and policies." Over 500 persons, including older adults in the community, practitioners from local service providers, government, and the healthcare system, students, and academic researchers, registered and over 300 persons attended the 2 day event in-person. This included an evening public talk as well as a full-day symposium-style gathering. Keynote speakers were both national (Dr. Andrew Wister, Sociologist) and international (Dr. Janine Wiles, Critical Gerontologist and Geographer) experts in the study of resilience and aging. Particularly because of inclement weather for one of the days, in addition to those who attended in person, we had over 50 people attend the public lecture component virtually, via a livestream, and have archived several of the talks and panels on our Web site.*

9. To engage actively with the university's own retired community.

*We have yet to explore this initiative in depth. As mentioned above, we actively recruit older adults from the community to be involved in activities that we organize and/or sponsor.*

10. To ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

*We have regular dialogue with several organizations that represent the interests of the aging population. In addition to the different levels of government mentioned above, we are*



*an active member and supporter of the Alberta Association on Gerontology and are regularly involved with an initiative titled “Long Term Care Culture Change Collaborative” that has brought together several major long term care providers as well as academic researchers and representatives of the provincial health care system. The intent of this latter initiative is to move towards changing the culture of long term care facilities so they become more person- and family-centred without compromising safety and standards of care. We have also fostered a research collaboration with seven other academic institutions in Canada as well as the Public Health Agency of Canada. This is a project that is using Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) data to explore and compare the age-friendliness of communities across Canada. We also have strong connections with several community agencies, including the Alzheimer’s Society of Calgary; Trinity Place Foundation (a major local Seniors Subsidized Housing provider); Calgary Seniors (supporting low-income, socially isolated seniors to age-in-place); Kerby (Seniors) Centre; Calgary Food Bank; Calgary Humane Society; Calgary Association of Lifelong Learners; among others. We also have close ties to our provincial healthcare system through personal membership in the “Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network.” We maintain communication with these different organizations, particularly to promote local events of interest to both organizations and their clientele.*