AGHE Joins Age-Friendly University Initiative

The Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) — the educational unit of The Gerontological Society of America — is announcing its endorsement of the 10 principles of the Age-Friendly University Initiative, an international effort intended to highlight the role higher education can play in responding to the challenges and opportunities associated with an aging population.

The principles provide a valuable guiding framework for distinguishing and evaluating age-friendly programs and policies, as well as identifying institutional gaps and opportunities for growth.

“With the endorsement of the 10 principles of Age-Friendly Universities, AGHE encourages all universities and community colleges to build the vision of age-friendly campuses into their strategic plans,” said AGHE President Nina M. Silverstein, PhD.

The 10 principles are as follows:

- 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 ageing 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 that 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.

“Communities nationwide are responding to the call for more age-friendly living environments that address the needs of our aging population, said AGHE Academic Program Development Committee Co-Chair Joann M. Montepare, PhD, who also serves as director of the RoseMary B. Fuss Center for Research on Aging and Intergenerational Studies at Lasell College. “With the age-friendly principles in hand, our institutions of higher education now have the opportunity to be part of these efforts and to build educational environments that address the needs of more age-diverse campuses.”

The Age-Friendly University Initiative was launched in 2012 by Irish Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Dublin City University (DCU) President Brian MacCraith, PhD. DCU leads the effort with partner institutions in the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Ireland. Learn more at dcu.ie/agefriendly/index.shtml.

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“As the world grapples with the challenges and opportunities associated with our aging populations, higher education institutions are uniquely positioned to act as engines of change, working collaboratively and in partnership to transform society,” MacCraith said. “DCU is delighted that the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education, an international leader in gerontology, has recognized and endorsed our 10 principles of the Age-Friendly University and we look forward to working with the association and with all of the AFU network members to embrace the challenges and inform change.”

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The Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) is the educational unit of The Gerontological Society of America, the nation’s oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging. AGHE seeks to advance gerontology as a field of study at institutions of higher education through conferences, publications, technical assistance, research studies, and consultation with policy makers. It is currently the only institutional member organization dedicated to gerontology and geriatrics education worldwide. Learn more at www.aghe.org/about-us.