

# AGHEXCHANGE



## **Reflections from AGHE Section Chair, Judith L. Howe, PhD**

*What are some of the most pressing issues facing AGHE in 2020?*

As the crisis of COVID-19 pandemic created the need for battlefield medicine across the country, for AGHE, we entered a period of battlefield education. Literally overnight, education was transformed from classroom to virtual learning, with AGHE educators scrambling to convert curricula to online learning. And then there was the challenge of internships and practica that were suddenly terminated. While many AGHE colleagues are seasoned at designing virtual learning strategies, others were unprepared and looked to the AGHE community for support. Without delay, the AGHE community in GSA Connect shared tips, resources, and engaging approaches for online instruction. This unprecedented time was indeed a challenge, but the solutions arising from this crisis will serve to expand the impact of gerontology education in the future because of the new array of virtual learning options which will be made available to learners.

*What are ways that institutions can advance gerontology education on campuses?*

The knowledge, competencies, and skills are multi-dimensional and appropriate for integration into other fields of practice as well as specialization in the field of gerontology. We have opportunities to promote “little g” and “big G” gerontology, so that schools and departments of business, architecture, public administration and so forth can bring gerontology into their curricula, as well as to promote degree-granting programs that prepare educators, researchers and human service professionals to advance gerontology in a multitude of ways. The Age Friendly University (AFU) initiative, which GSA and AGHE are championing, has proven to be a valuable framework for advancing gerontology and the benefits of age-integrated campuses. I see the AFU movement as one of the most promising vehicles for the advancement of gerontology education on campuses in decades.

*What have been some of the most gratifying aspects of being AGHE chair?*

The period of transformation from an association to an academy was extremely challenging for all of us, including me. It has been a period of dramatic change and soul searching as we navigated uncharted waters. It was imperative that we faced the realities of the situation and the need to construct a new reality for AGHE. I did not know what I signed up for when I agreed to run for the AGHE presidency (before I became a Chair). I am glad I did; I feel that I grew as a leader during this time, and I am appreciative to so many colleagues who figured it out together. I feel gratified that I helped to successfully navigate a tricky period in the long history of AGHE.

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*How do you see AGHE evolving in the years ahead?*

AGHE seems to have staying power. I think that the new, transformed AGHE will be more nimble and have increased impact as a fully integrated organizational unit of GSA. We now have the ability to tap into the expertise of GSA staff members, and we also have a dedicated staff liaison, Gena Schoen, who is experienced and creative in membership engagement. I think that AGHE will now be at the table more frequently and that will enhance our reach as well as our ability to underscore the importance of gerontology and geriatrics education in the big picture of aging.

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## **AGHE Connect Live! – A Great Success!**

On April 23, AGHE hosted its first-ever virtual gathering, AGHE Connect Live! More than 55 people registered for this Zoom event – a great turnout! The interactive conversation was informative, insightful, and engaging with participants discussing a range of topics from supporting students who could not finish their external placements due to COVID-19 to where to find guidance about using copyright videos for teaching materials (suggestion: work with your school’s library staff!). Participants expressed a desire to continue the conversation with their AGHE colleagues in a follow-up session; to that end, a survey was sent to identify potential discussion topics of interest for the next discussion. Please stay tuned for more information.

For those who could not join the initial conversation, you can find the link to the recording [here](#).

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## **Resource News: AGHE Briefs Provide Valuable Information**

**AGHE Biblio Briefs** provide an overview of articles published in *Gerontology and Geriatrics Education* organized around specific topics. Explore them to learn about course design, teaching activities, approaches to assessment, and more for your in-class and online educational efforts.

**AGHE Teaching Briefs** offer “one page” easy access to information about a wide-range of resources for teaching and learning about gerontology in a variety of educational settings.

For access to the AGHE Briefs, please visit the [GSA Resources web page](#).

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## **First Nursing Program Awarded the AGHE POM Designation**

The AGHE Program of Merit (POM) Review Team has conducted its final review of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University Baccalaureate in Science of Nursing (BSN) program for the AGHE Program of Merit (POM) Health Professions (HP) designation. The vote was unanimous in



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favor of this achievement. They successfully integrated gerontology and geriatrics competencies and applied other program components to meet the POM Standards and Guidelines for Health Professions Programs. Congratulations to Lindsay Mullins, PhD, FNP-BC, Endowed Chair of Gerontology, Baccalaureate in the Science of Nursing Program, and her team for their work in becoming the first nursing program to achieve the AGHE POM designation. This AGHE Program of Merit honor will remain in place until April 2025.

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## **AGHE Member Shout-Out:**

### **Joann Montepare Represents Age Friendly University Initiative at Pass It On Network's United Nations Virtual Side Event**

In early April, the Global Ageing Network co-sponsored Pass It On Network's United Nations (UN) side event. The focus of the virtual event was innovations in "Lifelong Learning and Earning", with attendees sharing and exploring ways in which older adults can gain access to the labor market. AGHE's own Joann Montepare, from Lasalle University, discussed the tenets of the Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative; its role in higher education; its wide-ranging benefits from students to industries; and common hurdles to embracing/establishing the AFU model. For more information, visit: <https://globalageing.org/global-ageing-network-sponsors-pass-it-on-networks-united-nations-virtual-side-event/>

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### **Tele-Medicine Check-Ins During COVID-19 at Wayne State University School of Medicine**

John Sherwood, YR2 medical student; Daniel VanZweden, YR2 medical student; and Jennifer Mendez, Ph.D.

With COVID-19 hitting the United States, we had to make quick decisions about how to provide online telemedicine opportunities for our students. In the past, older adults have participated with an interprofessional team of eight different health professionals' disciplines during in-person home visits. Having a large pool of older adults, we decided to pilot a project for our students to reach out to members of our community to check in with them during this crisis. Fourteen medical students were provided with the phone numbers of 190 older adults, 100 of which had also provided email addresses. Students first called the numbers and if there was no response, they left a voice mail message or sent a follow-up email. Some of the follow-up calls were done by Zoom, Skype etc.

For the virtual meeting, a standardized script was provided with a few online resources to be shared with the older adults. While talking with the students, the older adults shared what they



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have been doing while social distancing in their homes, and any issues or concerns that had arisen due to the pandemic and social distancing guidelines. After ten days, all students met via Microsoft TEAMS to share their experiences.

The activities in which the older adults were engaged ranged from reading, talking to family by phone, and waiting for groceries to be dropped off by family or friends. A few were in the process of moving prior to the pandemic and were disappointed that they could not finish moving, others were trying to figure out how to wear a face mask for precautions, and some were learning how to stay safe when out buying groceries. One person who previously engaged in group yoga classes now uses online classes on WebEx or does movement exercises on YouTube. Another person shared that it is troubling for older individuals to sleep and, if the person wakes up, how difficult it is to get back to sleep. One individual makes her own masks at home to prevent waste, while another decided to do some repairs around the house. Others missed traveling. Some were receiving their medications via mail or had them dropped off by their pharmacies. Those who enjoy the outdoors were walking in their gardens. Many discussed ways to stay connected to their friends, family, and churches, through phone calls and video chat services. These included church group meetings via Zoom, daily phone calls, or social media groups.

When asked what they would like help with most, assistance using Zoom was a common request as older adults looked for ways to stay connected. One student decided to assist with this request and, after 45 minutes, was able to help the older adult use Zoom. After a week, the older adult had retained this skill and actually called the student back via Zoom. Overall, the check-ins lasted from a few minutes to an hour and a half.

Faculty followed up with the older adults within two weeks of the initial call. Most of the older adults were eagerly awaiting another call from the students but had to be informed that they would be in touch again in the fall, as the students were reassigned to use the virtual visits to help families who may be at risk of food insecurity. The faculty will continue to occasionally send the older adults links to items of interest such as live concerts, visits to world museums, and resources which they can utilize during quarantine. Some students have also remained in contact with the older adults via email.

This experience allowed the students and faculty to prepare for a class-wide project that included virtual visits with vulnerable families to assess food insecurities as well as conduct assessments focused on social histories.

We would like to thank the older adults and other students who volunteered their spring break time.

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## Community College Corner

### Completion & Retention: Fostering an Environment that Leads to Student Engagement

Janice Velazquez  
Full-Time Faculty  
East Los Angeles College

The Family and Consumer Sciences Discipline at East Los Angeles College (ELAC) was recently ranked top ten in the nation in granting degrees by the Top 100 Colleges and Universities for Hispanics, Hispanic Outlook on Education magazine. The discipline currently offers a Gerontology/Health Certificate of Achievement and an associate degree in Nutrition and Dietetics. The Gerontology discipline has awarded more certificates than any other college in the Los Angeles and Orange County regions, granting twenty-four out of forty-five certificates for the last six years and ranking 4th in course offerings. The Nutrition and Dietetics program has awarded at least 50% of the certificates in the region facilitating the exposure of our programs. The retention rate is equally distributed among ethnic groups including 85.5% women and 84.4% men.

These milestones have been possible because of faculty engagement and emerging developments that shape the academic environment at the college. One of the contributing factors to the program's success is the variety of support services students receive making them feel valued and safe. Some of these services are available at satellite campuses, evenings, and Saturdays. They range from having an active Student Union, Welcome Center, and Financial Counseling, among others. Furthermore, student services help engage students academically, assist with books, eye care, meal vouchers, and scholarships, which are some of the unique services students receive at East Los Angeles College.

As an additional effort to increase enrollment, we offer classes at our satellite sites including dual enrollment courses at local high schools. Course offering times have been extended from 8:50 am to 10:00 pm, including Saturdays, short-term, summer/winter semesters and distance education. The faculty also plays an important role in the success of the programs by remaining flexible, assessing student learning outcomes, contributing to disciplinary ideas, staying current; and incorporating innovative teaching modalities such as laboratories, research, student club, and online teaching as an attempt to accommodate students' needs.

Trust is also an essential component of the success of our disciplines. The trust established with our Advisory Board leads us to fine-tune the content of our program with current workforce demands. This is based on communication, feedback and annual reporting about the programs

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and goals. Information about student employment success is also shared as well as the collective success of the programs, such practices promote a sense of inclusiveness and pride. Moreover, students are aware of our program's success by sharing information regarding students' completion and retention as well as regional or national rankings. I firmly believe the combination of these strategies and institutional support creates a healthy environment that promotes enrollment growth by strengthening student's retention and completion. To think that seven years ago I did not know what I was doing or where to start I can confidently say that with professional development, support groups and hard-work it is possible.