

October 2020: Volume 43, Issue #4

Welcome from AGHE Section Chair



Dear Colleagues:

It's that time of year again, although this year will be quite different. I am disappointed that we won't see each other in person, but grateful that we will be connecting virtually. Don't forget to register for the online meeting, which is less expensive than in-person meetings. We encourage you to register by October 28 when the On-Demand recordings become available. There are a number of posters, papers, and symposia on the AGHE track, which is noted in your program. Some of the symposia will be live streamed, including the Presidential Symposium on *Why Intergenerational Connections Matter in Higher Education* on Saturday, November 7 from 1:45-2:30 pm ET. The AGHE Business Meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 4 from 10:00-11:00am – read below for how to register. Also noted in this issue is our networking event, which will be held on Thursday, November 5 from 4:45-5:30pm, AGHE Live! Look for details about this event as well. Looking forward to seeing you all virtually next month!

Finally, the e-newsletter includes a conversation with Dr. Tamara Wolske, a senior gerontology educator, about her perspectives about teaching aging. She reflects on being passionate, authentic, and the need to be flexible.

“See you” next month!

Cordially,

Judy

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Register for the GSA Annual Scientific Meeting

The GSA Annual Scientific Meeting will be held virtually from November 4-7, 2020. Head to the meetings and events page on the GSA website to [register](#). The steps to follow in order to complete the registration process are included there for both member and non-member attendees. While there is no “early bird” registration period this year, we encourage folks to register by October 28 when the On-Demand recordings will be made available. These will be accessible until December 31.

If you would like to join GSA or renew your membership, please visit geron.org/join. For any questions about registering for the meeting, please email meetings@geron.org. Also, be sure to check out the [meeting program](#) to make note of the presentations, discussions, symposia, and exhibits you’d like to attend. In the meantime, continue to look out for additional updates about key events via the [AGHE Community in GSA Connect](#) leading up to the meeting.

Connect with Others by Registering for an Interest Group Meeting!

During the month of October, GSA will be featuring a variety of Pre-Conference Events. Among the events are 50 Interest Group meetings, including several that may be of interest to members of the AGHE Community.

- Age-Friendly University (AFU), Thursday, October 15, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm ET, [Register Here](#)
- Community College, Tuesday, October 13, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm ET, [Register Here](#)
- Directors of Aging Centers, Monday, October 19, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm ET, [Register Here](#)
- Geriatric Education, Friday, October 16, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET, [Register Here](#)
- Intergenerational Learning, Research, and Community Engagement, Friday, October 16, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET, [Register Here](#)

You can find a list of all 50 Interest Group meetings [here](#).

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Join Your Colleagues for the AGHE Networking Session and the Presidential Symposium

AGHE will be hosting a Networking Session on Thursday, November 5 from 4:45–5:30 pm ET. The session will provide AGHE members the opportunity to connect and network in small groups. There will be engaging programming, including a brief presentation to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Teaching Institute and a preview of the future. Mark your calendar and plan to attend.

Also, login to our Presidential Symposium on *Why Intergenerational Connections Matter in Higher Education* on Saturday, November 7 from 1:45-2:30 pm ET. There is no need to register – just join us!

Get on Board for the AGHE Business Meeting

Celebrate gerontology education during the Business Meeting for the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education. We will be meeting on Wednesday, November 4, 10:00 - 11:00am ET. [Click here](#) to register!

During the meeting, we will recognize AGHE award recipients and new AGHE Fellows, introduce the 2021 AGHE Leadership Group, and acknowledge programs that received the Program of Merit designation.

Explore AGHE's Educational Resources

If you haven't already bookmarked the [Education Center](#) on the GSA Website, please do so! There, you will find valuable information on the Aging First Aid course, Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network, and an online directory of educational programs in gerontology. Other excellent [resources](#) are also available, such as teaching briefs including those focusing on COVID-19, online instruction tips, and open educational resources. Biblio briefs focusing on dementia education, ageism, and online instruction in gerontology are also featured.

Teaching Aging: Perspectives from a Veteran Gerontology Educator
A Conversation with Tamara Wolske, MS, PhDc, CPG; University of Indianapolis



What are some key pedagogical considerations you keep in mind when teaching students about aging? How has your approach changed for you over the years?

I think about what the students need - both the background (historical and multidisciplinary) and the progressive information from the most current statistics and resources -- all the way to predictions of future trends. I learned over time that students in gerontology come from many varied backgrounds of life, work and experience, as well as various age groups and academic disciplines. I need to be sensitive to the mix of students in each class and flexible in my approach, while still providing the most current and relevant content that meets the course and learning objectives.

In your experience, what are some key barriers and facilitators to “reaching students” about the importance of aging, dispelling aging myths, and the relevance of these skills and knowledge in their respective fields?

The main barrier, in my opinion, to students’ understanding about aging, myths of aging, and how to counteract the stereotypes in their discipline or field of work is cultural conditioning. Research indicates how our society in the U.S. is youth-orientated and hyper-fixated on youth/beauty which sends older people ‘down the shuffle-board’ so-to-speak to the other end of the spectrum labeled with “undesirable” characteristics. The best way to help students understand the gross injustice of ageism and how it will one day hurt them personally, is to give them opportunities to interact with older adults and to try to put themselves ‘in their

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shoes'. Listening to the stories of older adults they interview and then thinking about themselves at an advanced age, and describing how they want their later life to look and feel can increase this understanding.

What motivates you to do this work (and how has this changed over time)?

After I experienced a back injury while working as a Certified Nursing Assistant (from 1993-1995), I had to quit that work, which I enjoyed tremendously. I went to college and fell in love with gerontology studies. I knew that was the path for me as an educator. After 15 years, I still love it because there is always something new to learn about getting older. As I age I understand and empathize more with older adults. It is a learning experience while I teach!

What is unique about teaching about aging in an online environment? How do you leverage and/or navigate these factors to strengthen your approach?

My first teaching assignments were face-to-face in the classroom. I loved the personal interactions with students (see the "light bulb"), but I also felt unprepared to deal with the myriad of social and psychological issues they presented on a day-to-day basis that had nothing to do with my role. In 2009, when we decided to transition all of our courses from a hybrid model into a completely online format, it was an adjustment and there was a *steep* learning curve. It was about learning the new skills I needed to **facilitate** student learning rather than "deliver" content to them. The need to develop content well in advance and structure the information with a strategy in mind (we use the [Quality Matters](#) approach) made me a much better educator and it gives me satisfaction that our online courses are providing a relevant learning experience. This is borne out from their comments in the course discussions and end-of-semester evaluations. I enjoy giving an occasional guest lecture in other classes, but I believe the depth and breadth of education we offer in our online courses is vastly superior to what we provided in the physical classroom because now everything is double-checked (and up-to-date) before students receive it and there is much better oversight in online courses. We are called to a higher standard which is good for teachers as well as students.

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What advice would you give to a new gerontology educator who is developing their first course about aging?

My best advice to anyone who is developing their first course about aging is to seek out the people who are excellent examples of success in your field. Don't try to reinvent the wheel (you can work on that later when you know the wheel better!). Some universities send novices into the classroom without the appropriate resources and guidance they need. I started teaching my first aging course with no experience, syllabus, or a book because the scheduled instructor died in a car accident on a Friday night, and they needed a teacher to show up on the following Monday night. I learned that you *do not* have to be perfect. You **DO** have to be authentic. If you love gerontology, tell the students and show them how and why you love it. They will appreciate your passion. I found out years later after I went to my former professor for my *Sociology of Aging* class that he had never taught it before and had no idea what he was talking about. What affected me was *how* he expressed the importance of the information he was discussing and, then, it mattered to me to learn more. **That's our job.** We can inspire students to *want to know more* about gerontology and understand why it's important to them. That's how learning happens -- and I would not trade this work for any other in the world!