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To cite this article: Joann M. Montepare, Kimberly S. Farah, Anne Doyle & John Dixon (2019):
Becoming an Age-Friendly University (AFU): Integrating a retirement community on campus,
Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, DOI: [10.1080/02701960.2019.1586682](https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960.2019.1586682)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960.2019.1586682>



Published online: 05 Mar 2019.



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Becoming an Age-Friendly University (AFU): Integrating a retirement community on campus

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ABSTRACT

As populations age at record rates, institutions must ready themselves to be more age-friendly. Institutions with an affiliated university-based retirement community (UBRC) are particularly poised to adopt the Age-Friendly University (AFU) campus concept. The partnership of Lasell College and Lasell Village is used to illustrate how AFU principles can be implemented to extend older adults' access to various educational opportunities. Specially-designed efforts such as the Talk of Ages program provide intergenerational exchange to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between different-aged learners and mitigate negative age attitudes. Programs such as Faculty Fellows build capacity to support greater attention to aging education and extend intergenerational connections across the curriculum. Challenges inherent in leadership, awareness, classroom dynamics, and ageism are also explored alongside opportunities that an AFU approach brings in light of such challenges.

KEYWORDS

Age-friendly; retirement community; intergenerational

The call for more age-friendly campuses

Changing age demographics are reshaping societies and challenging institutions of higher education to consider how they can respond to aging populations through new approaches to teaching, research, and community engagement (Talmage, Mark, Slowey, & Knopf, 2016). While traditionally geared toward younger adults, colleges and universities can offer an environment to engage adults across the lifespan in learning for personal and professional development that promotes well-being (Jenkins & Mostafa, 2015; Merriam & Kee, 2014). Through curricular innovation, institutions can help to address students' lack of aging literacy that has personal and professional implications beyond graduation (McGuire, Klein, & Couper, 2005). Institutions are also positioned to promote a research agenda that calls for broader attention to aging issues (Whitbourne & Montepare, 2017). As well, opportunities are emerging for institutions to engage with neighboring communities as they explore how to meet the needs of their aging populations (e.g., Neal, DeLaTorre, & Carder, 2014).

In this paper, we discuss the pioneering Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative that offers institutions of higher education a framework for developing programs, practices, and partnerships to address the challenges precipitated by aging populations. Although the initiative is still in its early development stages, over 45 institutions across the globe

have taken up the AFU charge and begun to explore how the AFU concept can inform their curricular efforts, community initiatives, research programs, and more. Our recently designated AFU Lasell College campus is distinct in that it is home to the university-based retirement community (UBRC), Lasell Village. In discussing our AFU approach we hope to serve as a catalyst for other UBRC partnerships to consider how the AFU framework can help to shape more effective partnerships and age-inclusive campus practices. To begin, we describe the AFU framework and why institutions with affiliated UBRCs offer fertile ground for age-friendly efforts in higher education. Next, we discuss programs developed on our campus aligned with AFU principles. Finally, we outline several challenges and opportunities to consider in AFU endeavors, especially those with UBRC partnerships.

The age-friendly potential of university-based retirement communities

Paralleling shifts in age demographics, UBRCs associated with educational institutions have emerged as another living option for older adults across the U.S. Since 1995, approximately 100 UBRCs have established partnerships with nearby colleges or universities, and Carle (2006) has noted that with the near “perfect storm” of expected retirees, housing needs, and educational wants on the horizon, opportunities for new affiliations will increase. With more than 4,000 universities and colleges in the U.S., even a 10% participation rate could yield over 400 UBRCs in the coming years (Carle, 2006). Though UBRCs vary in the strength of their institutional affiliation, their proximity offers opportunities for lifelong learning and social connectedness as part of an academic community (Smith, Rozak, & Moore, 2014). Indeed, a study of the future of university partnerships in senior living found that of those older adults who would consider moving into a retirement community, 62% indicated they would be most interested in a community affiliated with a college or university (Senior Housing News, 2017). Based on these and related data, experts in the senior housing industry suggest that partnering with an educational institution will be a mainstream option, especially with successive cohorts of older adults having more advanced educational backgrounds (Morgenroth & Hanley, 2015). Thus, while many adults express an interest to age in their homes, UBRC arrangements offer an appealing alternative. Adding to this appeal, the Age Well Study, the only national longitudinal study evaluating the impact of living in senior communities on residents’ health and well-being found that residents scored higher on measures of emotional, social, physical, intellectual, and vocational wellness, and engaged in more healthy behaviors, compared to matched community-dwelling peers (Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging, 2019).

Existing UBRC partnerships have been shown to offer opportunities for institutions to extend educational opportunities, faculty research, student internships, wellness programs, and provide training opportunities for students pursuing careers in health and medicine (Logan, 2012). In addition to enhancing students’ aging literacy, residents benefit from expanded social connections and access to wellness programs. Although some institutions have developed successful relationships with senior centers that allow for educational and research partnerships, the close proximity and shared campus connection of embedded UBRCs make for more sustainable relationships that can take a variety of forms – limited or extensive, informal or formal. Moreover, mounting initiatives like aging research can be enhanced when researchers can readily recruit participants across the health continuum

who are more likely to engage because of familiar surroundings. In turn, research outcomes can directly inform services for UBRC residents (Logan, 2012).

UBRC partnerships also offer financial benefits to subsidize broader institutional costs and student support (Halligan, 2004). Rent and fees paid to the institution are recurring revenue sources, along with ancillary revenue benefits such as money spent at campus events, fundraising and bequests, and in some cases licensing agreements of institutional names. Shared resources for technology, facilities, and security services are also benefits. Indeed, formal Lasell Village agreements generate as much as \$2 million annually in revenue to Lasell College. As well, UBRCs provide employment opportunities for students at a convenient location. UBRCs can also benefit financially from marketing visibility to alumni, faculty, staff, and families of current students seeking senior living options. In addition, UBRC staff can benefit from access to educational and training opportunities which in turn support service delivery. It should be cautioned that like any business venture, UBRC partnerships are not without risks that can include damage to the reputation of an institution or financial problems if the partnership fails to perform as planned. To minimize risk, Carle (2006) suggests that several components should be considered such as formalized programming that ensures integration of residents, students, faculty, and staff – which an age-friendly approach also advocates.

On a broader society level, UBRC partnerships can help to breakdown age-segregation given the age-diversity they bring to a campus environment. Winkler and Klaas (2012) showed that many communities are age-segregated, especially college towns. Considering the implications of this age-segregation Neyfakh (2014) suggested that “Though there’s no major movement back toward educating kids in mixed age groups, and senior communities are likely to keep flourishing, there are some imaginative experiments in creating new kinds of physical spaces where the young and the old can coexist. One intriguing trend has seen retirement communities being built near college campuses.” In addition to increasing age-diversity, opportunities for intergenerational interaction made possible through UBRC partnerships can have a positive impact on the age attitudes of older and younger individuals alike (Montepare & Farah, 2018). Given that positive age attitudes are of significant consequence for the well-being of aging adults, the disruption of ageism is more important now than ever with age stereotypes having become increasingly negative in recent times (Levy, 2003, 2009, 2017).

It is clear that aging populations are generating new challenges, and institutions must prepare to meet these needs within a contemporary framework that recognizes age diversity and values age integration. UBRCs are well-situated to do just that. However, as Harrison and Tsao (2006) aptly note: “Developing a university-linked retirement community is not simply a matter of building senior housing on or near a campus. In order to gain maximum benefit, colleges and universities must look at broader issues regarding the institution’s commitment to the community, its policies and programs, and the development of an enabling culture that will sustain and nurture older adults on campus and integrate them into all facets of campus life” (p. 27). The Age-Friendly University (AFU) framework described below offers a guiding framework for UBRCs partnerships. In this regard, the AFU concept can help to move older adults from the “margins to the mainstream” with respect to access to educational programs and the design of educational and research practices (Talmage et al., 2016).

The Age-Friendly University (AFU) approach

The AFU initiative reflects the work of an international, interdisciplinary team convened at Dublin City University to identify the distinctive contributions higher education can make in responding to aging populations (O’Kelly, 2015). The AFU team identified six pillars of institutional activity, teaching and learning, research and innovation, lifelong learning, intergenerational learning, encore careers and enterprise, and civic engagement – akin to the domains developed by the World Health Organization for characterizing age-friendly communities (AARP; WHO, 2017). A set of 10 AFU principles reflecting the pillars were then articulated (see Table 1) which can be used to map institutional assets, gaps, and opportunities. The AFU principles advocate that older adults should be enabled to participate in educational, career, cultural, and wellness activities at institutions. They also call for institutions to extend aging education to younger students and break down age-segregation, as well as promote age inclusion by bringing younger and older learners together in educational exchange. In addition, they call for institutions to support aging research by developing agendas informed by older adults’ diverse needs. The age-friendly principles also encourage institutions to develop partnerships beyond their campuses to address the needs and interests of the local aging community.

The AFU framework can be viewed from various theoretical perspectives, although research has not yet examined specific principles or practices within particular frameworks. Moving forward such research is needed as AFU partners look for evidence-based models to inform age-friendly program building. One contemporary perspective to consider in this work is the Positive Education about Aging and Contact Experiences (PEACE) model that posits that when aging education is combined with positive contact experiences with older adults that are individualized, promote equal status, are cooperative, involve sharing of personal information, and are sanctioned within the setting (such as on an AFU campus) negative social and personal age attitudes are reduced (Levy, 2018). The efficacy of the PEACE model was explored in two online experimental demonstrations which found that education combined with contact significantly improved age attitudes in adults from 18–59 years in age (Lytle & Levy, 2017). Much is to be gained from future explorations of AFU assumptions and practices in light of this and other frameworks.

Table 1. 10 principles for an Age Friendly University.

1.	To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programs.
2.	To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue second careers .
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).
4.	To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
5.	To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6.	To ensure that the university’s research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7.	To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8.	To enhance access for older adults to the university’s range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities .
9.	To engage actively with the university’s own retired community .
10.	To ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

Our AFU campus partnership

Our AFU campus reflects a partnership between Lasell College and Lasell Village, supported by the RoseMary B. Fuss Center for Research on Aging and Intergenerational Studies and a team of faculty, administrators, residents, and students. Lasell College is a small New England institution established in 1851 that enrolls approximately 1700 undergraduate students (93% 18–22 years, 65% female) pursuing professional majors within a liberal arts curriculum. Seeking innovative ways to serve its educational mission and engage the community in lifelong learning, the College built Lasell Village in 2000 on the edge of its campus. Lasell Village consists of 13 residential buildings adjacent to academic buildings and dormitories and is home to approximately 225 residents (age range 73–104 years, 72% female). Housing options include apartment style floor plans, ranging from a one – to two-bedroom layouts. A full range of onsite services is part of residents' living plan (e.g., housekeeping, transportation, healthcare, banking, postal services, etc.). Continued care is provided via arrangements including the Lasell Studios supported living residence and the Lasell House skilled nursing facility.

Designed around lifelong learning, Lasell Village features an individualized continuing education program requiring residents to complete 450 hours of learning and fitness activities annually. The recommended number of hours coincides with the number of in-class credit hours completed by full-time undergraduate students. When individuals move into the Village they sign a contract of agreement to the educational requirement. Accommodations are made if residents are unable to fulfill their educational plans because of medical or related issues they may experience over time.¹

In 2015, Lasell College became the second U.S. institution to join the AFU global network and endorse the AFU principles. At Lasell Village a number of the AFU principles were well-aligned with existing programs and practices (as may also be the case at other UBRCs). For example, in order to accomplish their individual plans, residents participate in Village educational activities, as well as core activities of the college, including educational and research programs (Principle 1). Specifically, residents may take 6–8-week classes with peers (reflecting a range of topics) at the Village or they may enroll as students in any 15-week, semester-long college course, in any major or program. Course exceptions include those specially designed for the undergraduate core curriculum (e.g., First Year Seminar) or required for major programs (e.g., Senior Capstone).² Residents enrolled in undergraduate courses are not required to take examinations or complete major assignments; however, they are expected to complete routine requirements and participate in daily class activities. In addition, occasional on-line educational opportunities (Principle 5) are arranged for residents who are interested in specialized content areas (e.g., poetry writing) and designated staff provide technical support. Access to health and wellness programs along with arts and cultural activities (Principle 8) is realized via physical fitness programs such as yoga, balance, and Tai Chi classes adapted for older adults, along with attendance at college lectures, workshops, exhibitions, gallery talks, performances, and other events across campus. Residents also have full access to all library services on campus.

Promoting intergenerational exchange to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages (Principle 4) is a key age-friendly campus practice. To this end, a roster of intergenerational courses is selected each semester to engage older and younger students across the curriculum. These courses have included *Generations in America*, *Global*

History of Childhood, Gardening for Sustainability, Ceramics, Wealth and Poverty, Lyric Poetry, Marine Biology, Juvenile Delinquency & Gangs, and Environmental Justice. Faculty teaching intergenerational courses meet during the semester to discuss how best to support and leverage intergenerational exchange, along with classroom dynamics and related issues.

Students in various courses engage in special projects that involve one-on-one intergenerational exchange. For example, students have conducted interviews with residents about diverse topics such as wartime experiences, interpersonal relationships and dating, social media and privacy, consumerism, family structure and work dynamics, and the personal meaning of truth, to name a few topics. In these exchanges the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners is emphasized (Principle 4). To this end, instructors work with students to prepare them not simply to interview older adults, but to engage in an exchange of experiences and perspectives. In addition, information gleaned from these exchanges is shared in final discussions or presentations of written work.

It is of interest to emphasize that not all exchange is intergenerational. There are a variety of peer-focused activities designed specifically for Village residents which offer additional opportunities for personal development (Principle 2). These include a large roster of shorter on-site courses developed on the basis of resident interest and taught by residents or adjunct faculty. Residents also contribute to educational programming by convening special interest peer group activities such as the Green Team (which supports environment issues) and the International Affairs group (which meets to discuss global issues).

Opportunities also exist for residents to participate in social activities with students and faculty. Student groups (e.g., Student Government Association) host an annual intergenerational dance. Residents attend plays, performances, and exhibitions by students and faculty on campus, and several have acted in theatrical productions. Students and faculty also attend events host by Lasell Village such as the Farmer's Market open to the entire campus community each fall. The campus is also home to a child study center where residents and students participate in intergenerational reading and activity programs with the children.

The Lasell Village education office oversees the implementation of curricular programs, management of residents' educational plans, and related activities. The Fuss Center coordinates efforts with the college and oversees AFU network connections. Working together, the directors of these units meet with administrators, faculty, residents, and students to discuss programming. Promotion is accomplished through the weekly publication of "News and Notes" as well online and posted announcements. Lasell Village residents are invited to attend monthly Village managers' meetings and college Town Hall meetings. The Fuss Center administers surveys at the end of each semester for formative feedback from residents, faculty, and students who have participated in intergenerational courses and modules.

Distinctive Lasell AFU programs – Talk of Ages and Faculty Fellows

Although a number of our curricular efforts have fallen in line with AFU principles, several challenges have called for inventive programs and practices (Montepare & Farah, 2018). In particular, over the course of discussions with faculty the potential negative consequences of age-focused or age-comparative activities became an issue of concern. Although empirical research has found evidence that intergenerational exchange in the college context can yield more positive age attitudes in younger students (Andreoletti & Howard, 2018; Chonody, 2015), less attention has been given to how age-focused

interactions may impact older adults' personal age attitudes. In light of age stereotyping research showing that attention to age can have a negative impact on older adults' self-perceptions and undermine performance as in the case of stereotype threat (Chasteen, Kang, & Remedios, 2012; Levy, 2003, 2009), there has been concern that bringing older adults' attention to their age has the potential to "backfire" and prompt negative attitudes. Such concern has stemmed in part from residents often voicing disinterest in lectures, events, exchanges, and the like that focus specifically on aging issues and generational differences. Indeed, recent experimental studies of age identification have shown that when older adults engaged in an activity associated with age differences they felt significantly older than when the activity was disassociated with age (e.g., Hughes, Geraci, & De Forrest, 2013).³ On a more practical level, the 15-week schedule of college courses can be inconvenient for some residents who are involved in a variety of other activities. As such, they may be reluctant to enroll in full-length college courses.⁴

Given concerns about inadvertent negative age attitudes and enrollment challenges, an alternative curricular Talk of Ages program was launched by the Fuss Center (Montepare & Farah, 2018). The vision of the program was to bring older and younger students together around topics of common educational interest, rather than around issues that brought age or age differences into explicit focus and might trigger negative self-perceptions. To this end, a Talk of Ages Speakers Series was developed around an annual theme (e.g., Healthy Living and the Environment, Exploring Life through Science and Art, Frontiers in Health and Medicine, People and Politics). When possible, speakers are invited whose work can lend an appreciation to life-span development as a way to enhance students' understanding of the longevity dividend and complexity of aging rather than a focus on overt age comparisons (Principle 7).

To address enrollment challenges, a Talk of Ages curricular component was created around course "modules" in which older and younger students participate in activities designed by faculty in their courses for 1 or 2 weeks (for more details see Montepare & Farah, 2018). To encourage faculty across the curriculum to participate, faculty were advised to use existing course content and planned activities. Using this age-friendly, faculty-friendly framework, a wide-range of modules have been implemented across disciplines. Consistent with the age-friendly recommendation regarding reciprocal learning (Principle 4), faculty have made good use of interactive activities built around varied strategies including interactive lectures, small group discussions, film screenings, invited speakers and panels, and collaborative art projects. Topics have been equally diverse. For example, the instructor in a first-year writing course used assigned readings to organize small group discussions between older and younger students around topics such as real and imagined heroes, clothes as memoir, artificial intelligence, and the culture of sports. The instructor then built the intergenerational exchange of information into students' essay writing assignments. The instructor in a social psychology course brought together groups of older and younger students to explore social attitudes around civil rights, sexual orientation, transgender development, and immigration by way of an invited speaker (with Q & A) in one class, a film screening in another class, and small group discussions in a final class. During the final class, input from small groups was reported back in a larger facilitated discussion. In a criminal justice forensics course, the instructor and a team of residents crafted a murder mystery case and staged a crime scene. Students investigated the case using scientific methods to evaluate evidence and presented their

“who did it” hypotheses alongside the mystery authors in a “CSI: Lasell” final presentation event open to an intergenerational audience (Farah & Montepare, 2018).

Faculty who have regularly participated in Talk of Ages programs were surveyed about their experience using open-ended questions. When asked about the value of the intergenerational exchange, faculty were overwhelmingly positive and felt the experiences deepened learning (*e.g. Depth in educational experience, richness of relationships, being at the cutting edge of social justice efforts, step toward being a more caring environment; Immense – students benefit greatly from the experiences of a population who grew up in a different time, have life-experience and, at our school, often also come from a different socio-economic environment than students, less restrained interaction than students might have with grandparents where family traditions and social expectations are different; for resident students the interaction with younger students is enriching, keeps them connected to social changes in the ways people think and interact in the modern society, it provides them great satisfaction to play a mentoring role.*). Intergenerational exchange was also indicated as a factor in reducing ageism in both younger and older students (*e.g. Over and over again, I have heard from the undergrads and residents that their stereotypes of each other have been shattered, that they have learned from each other, and that they have been fortunate to hear the perspective of another generation and the openness of the other generation; Breaks down ageist stereotypes both ways, brings greater appreciation of the individuals as individuals not just members of a social category.*) .

At institutions like Lasell College where large research programs and faculty with expertise in aging or intergenerational studies are few, creative means are necessary to build capacity to deepen and sustain age-friendly efforts. The Fuss Center (staffed by a director and 1–2 student interns) tackled this challenge by establishing a Faculty Fellows Program in which a full-time faculty member is invited to serve as a Fellow for a 1–2-year period. Prior aging or intergenerational experience is not required as the program aims to support faculty development in these areas. In addition to addressing capacity and sustainability, the program serves to support a research agenda informed by the needs of an aging society (Principles 6). During their tenure, Fellows receive a course release each semester with the understanding that the time will be used to develop and implement a research project. Fellows also agree to design a course that integrates aging content and/or makes use of intergenerational exchange. Funds are arranged so that Fellows can attend a professional conference or event to deepen their age-friendly learning experience.

The Fellows program has been successful on several fronts. In particular, Fellows have been able to extend their research work to include aging-related issues. For example, one Fellow broadened her research in family diversity to include questions about the intersections of caregiving and disability. Another Fellow extended his research on perceptual illusions to explore how age-related changes impact the processing of visual and tactile cues. Not only have faculty reported that the opportunity affords them time to conduct research with a new perspective, as one recent Fellow noted “*An added outcome of being a Fellow is that there has been a growing interest in aging research among my students – 5 students have joined my research team during my time as a Fellow, and 4 of them have presented their research findings at professional conferences. The opportunity for mutual learning and research collaboration between the Fellow and students is greatly valued and well-supported by the Fellow program*” (Farah, Montepare, & Zheng, 2016).

AFU challenges and opportunities

With the call for more AFU campuses and opportunities for UBRC partnerships, one needs to be mindful of challenges. With challenges, opportunities also become evident. One immediate challenge involves leadership. An AFU approach encourages the engagement of diverse stakeholders, rather than the sole activity of units such as gerontology programs that often drive age-focused efforts on campuses. While such units may certainly assume a leadership role, AFU efforts should aim to engage university and UBRC administrators, along with residents, faculty and students from different disciplines to explore the AFU vision, review existing practices, identify gaps, and shepherd new efforts. The opportunity arising from this challenge is enhanced communication about ongoing work (about which individuals may be unaware) and the identification of areas of common interest, which in turn can inspire collaborations. One such outcome on the Lasell campus that recently emerged from this approach was an interest in involving residents more directly in student support, such as working with international students to hone their language skills.

A common challenge all UBRCs will encounter is navigating their place in an AFU institution's broader vision, especially given that UBRCs vary in the nature of their relationship with their host institution. As well, UBRCs and institutions differ in priorities, along with how and when decision are made (for a more extensive discussion see Senior Housing News, 2017). We offer some organizational suggestions about navigating this challenge based on our own experience. Having a designated office of education (with staff experienced in higher education) at the UBRC is an important organizational component, along with a designated unit at the college such as Fuss Center that serves as the AFU convener and campus bridge to help develop, implement, and evaluate intergenerational programs. As well, the president of Lasell Village is a member of the Lasell College senior management team, and Village residents serve on the Lasell College Board of Trustees. Lasell Village also has resident committees devoted to art activities, cultural programs, and other efforts that support an educational focus and campus connection. In short, building organizational structures and leadership teams that reflect and connect both sides of campus are important elements for a successful age-friendly UBRC partnership.

Another challenge is extending the AFU initiative across campus programs. Collaborations with other hubs of campus activity can be leveraged to this end, especially those that share an AFU mission of diversity and service. For example, the Fuss Center has extended the AFU focus by co-sponsoring events that include the Lasell Village audience with other centers such as the Donahue Institute for Ethics, Diversity, and Inclusion (e.g., Women's History Month Celebration featuring an intergenerational panel with residents) and the Center for Community-Based Learning (e.g., an election-year intergenerational service project on voting). Students have suggested that cross-campus engagement can be expanded by actively engaging residents in campus service clubs (e.g., Empty Bowls Club, She's the First) and activities (e.g., blood drive) in addition to participating in more socially-oriented activities (e.g., bingo nights, sporting events). The opportunity intrinsic to this challenge is the chance to deepen multiple efforts and reach broader audiences – that can lead to greater program impact for all collaborators. In addition, ideas for new collaborative programs that may attract grant funding and sponsorship support are real possibilities. Forming collaborations with

established institutional programs is also an important strategy for infusing and sustaining AFU efforts.

An additional challenge is awareness and engagement. Frequent action should be taken to publicize AFU activity at campus and UBRC events, as well as at local and national professional meetings. As well, one cannot underestimate the importance of building personal relationships when launching an AFU initiative. It simply is not the case that “if you build it, they will come”. Personal invitations to individual faculty to participate in AFU efforts have been a useful strategy on the Lasell campus, as well as making time for residents and faculty to become acquainted outside of courses (e.g., at luncheon events). Moreover, it is important to respect the efforts exerted by faculty. This is one reason (in addition to the potential age-bias concern) why faculty were encouraged to draw on existing course content in the Talk of Ages modules rather than designing new activities. As well, small stipends for professional development can go a long way in encouraging faculty participation.⁵ Efforts to raise awareness and engagement offer excellent opportunities to celebrate faculty, student, resident, and campus accomplishments which can energize future involvement. Such efforts also provide AFU institutions and UBRC partnerships with distinctive promotional, profile-raising opportunities that can help to engage others such as alumni and community partners in age-friendly initiatives.

Developing best practices for teaching and learning is also a natural challenge, beginning with the realization that bringing generations together in a classroom is a first step, not an outcome. As Sánchez and Kaplan (2014) have noted “intergenerational learning goes beyond learning about others; there is also the potential for profound learning about oneself and one’s own generational and sociocultural bearings” (p. 478). To this end, faculty who have been involved in intergenerational teaching have identified several issues to consider (Montepare et al., 2016). For example, faculty have raised questions about how age is treated in the classroom – *“Should older adults’ age-related backgrounds be acknowledged and leveraged to promote teaching and learning? Is it acceptable to presume differences in experiences, views, and styles of discovery, and to incorporate them directly into discussions and class activities? Is it acceptable to ask older adults specifically about their age-related views, intentionally organize mixed-aged small groups, or separate out same-aged peers to be able to compare age differences?”* It is also worth noting that while intergenerational classrooms may add another level of course organization that requires planning and attention, we have observed that faculty have felt that their classrooms have benefited from the experience. For example, faculty have often reported that Village residents can be “teaching allies” who help to generate broader discussions, provide additional examples, and offer new insights related to the topic at hand. The AFU initiative, with its network of participating members from diverse educational environments, offers a rich opportunity to share perspectives and evaluate approaches to address questions such as these and related pedagogical practices for effectively integrating age diversity in the contemporary classroom.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges on both institutional and individual levels is ageism (Whitbourne & Montepare, 2017). Rather than expanding on the causes of ageism, we maintain that working with young adult students to raise awareness about ageist attitudes and practices through exposure to an age diverse campus and engagement in intergenerational exchange that UBRC partnerships can offer is a powerful strategy to tackle ageism. Similarly, older adults’ misperceptions of youth that perpetuate ageism can be challenged through positive intergenerational experiences. Moreover, inculcating

positive age attitudes at younger ages is of consequence for positive attitudes and well-being at later ages (Levy, 2003). It may also be speculated that students may be especially receptive to disrupting ageist beliefs given that individuals between ages 18 and 25 think of themselves as emerging adults, a stage during which they are open to exploring new ways of thinking, different life possibilities, and social relations (Arnett, 2000). During this life stage, intergenerational experiences can be both developmentally and socially impactful. Kaplan et al. (2017) further suggest that intergenerational connections during this stage support a sense of trust between generations at a time where social trust and capital are eroding. Moreover, young individuals can be especially sensitive to ageism given their experience of being stereotyped, profiled, and discriminated against for being young (Marchiondo, Gonzales, & Ran, 2016; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2000). Experiences with aging issues in families and an interest in career opportunities, are also factors that set the stage for tackling ageism during the college years (Whitbourne & Montepare, 2017). Many students are also concerned about prejudice and social issues on other fronts and in campus life. Indeed, social scientists have argued that creating multicultural educational environments can effectively lessen prejudice and discrimination on campuses – especially those that encourage interaction in varied and planful ways from organizing campus dialogs to creating collaborative projects (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). The same opportunities to shape positive age-related social attitudes can be expected to hold true when age-friendly activities are used to create intergenerational contact and age inclusion (Lytle & Levy, 2017). As well, the importance of considering how ageist attitudes intersect with sexism and racism, especially given the growing diversity of aging populations, should not be overlooked.

Another emerging challenge is developing programming that includes older participants who have experienced changes in their cognitive skills. The broader age-friendly community movement reminds age-friendly campus advocates to be mindful of the diversity of aging populations and the need to be inclusive of cognitive differences through efforts such as Dementia-Friendly Massachusetts. With this in mind, Lasell College and Lasell Village have begun to explore opportunities to extend age-friendly lifelong learning practices to residents with dementia, as well as provide students with knowledge about living with such complexities of aging. For instance, the semester-long course *Living and Learning with Dementia* was launched in which students met with residents with dementia living in Lasell Studios, the supported living unit at the Village. Following one month of class meetings focused on dementia research and theory, students visited once a week for two months as a group with residents to engage in poetry projects, collaborative story writing, reactive and constructive art activities, and other interactive undertakings. In a weekly class meeting following visits with residents, students and the instructor discuss personal reactions, interaction challenges, and other issues related to program goals and outcomes. In final course evaluations several students who had family members with dementia commented that this course should be required for all students, suggesting that age-friendly practices are relevant to personal as well as educational needs.

Final comments

Talmage et al. (2016) have cautioned that “Achieving a university that is age-friendly in practice would require nothing less than a cultural transformation for most higher

education institutions. The challenges are clearly considerable for institutions with an educational mission centered on young adults.” (p. 14). The American Council on Education (2007) has questioned how will colleges and universities adapt their policies and practices to meet the postsecondary needs for one-fifth of our nation. Indeed, much is to be done to these ends, and the AFU initiative offers a starting point to begin this hard work. With 10 guiding AFU principles in hand, along with a growing network of committed institutional partners, there is much to explore and accomplish locally and globally. It was noted that the AFU initiative follows in the footsteps of the WHO’s age-friendly communities initiative. Like that initiative, the AFU movement will have its drawbacks and limitations as it unfolds (Plouffe, Kalache, & Voelcker, 2016). For example, the AFU initiative will need to work with institutions that range in size, focus, location, and culture, along with issues of evaluation, fidelity, program (in)effectiveness, and information flow.

We believe that institutions that host retirement communities can help to shape the cultural shift advocated by Talmagea and colleagues. From a logistical perspective, the proximity of host institutions and UBRCs ease challenges that often arise in bringing intergenerational groups together. Additionally, they have an infrastructure and expertise in place for developing and implementing age-friendly educational programs. From a pedagogical perspective, both share a core mission that values educational engagement. Like the broader AFU initiative, these partnerships also will need to work through challenges such as management issues, financial obstacles, conflicting campus priorities, and related matters (Carle, 2006). Moreover, systematic empirical work is needed to validate further the positive observations discussed here.

Nelson Mandela said that “education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world”. No doubt there are many changes worth making, one of which is the need for more age-friendly approaches to higher education. It is hoped that the AFU initiative described in this paper will encourage other campuses to join the AFU network of change makers.

Notes

1. Although Lasell Village is one of a growing number of affiliated retirement communities, it is the only one to feature a formal individualized educational program. However, this format should not deter other UBRCs with different programming arrangements from joining the AFU initiative. The AFU initiative recognizes the diversity of educational environments and the principles have been developed to provide a range of opportunities for developing distinctive age-friendly practices and programs.
2. On the whole, residents more often opt to participate in on-site classes and intergenerational modules than intergenerational courses. Moreover, these courses are typically elective courses (rather than required or high demand courses) that are more able to accommodate a few resident participants. Thus, student enrollment has not been impacted by reserving seats for older learners.
3. A review of 58 studies found pedagogical interventions can improve attitudes toward aging and older adults (Chonody, 2015). However, not all studies show this effect, and existing studies may be limited in methodological ways that raise questions about confounding factors and underlying mechanisms (Lytle & Levy, 2017). Thus, more can be learned about the conditions under which positive versus negative outcomes result from intergenerational classroom engagement. This includes the focus or content of classroom

activities. It may be speculated that topics that call attention to fears of aging (declining change), historical differences (“older” times that lacked modern technologies), or age group differences (“us” compared to “them”) may lead to negative personal age perceptions and group attitudes as opposed to topics that call for less age-specific references and focus on topics of more mutual concern and individual interest (e.g., the environment, social justice, art, culture, etc.).

4. The impracticality of 15-week-long classes for older adults might be taken to suggest that the semester system of many universities does not work for the schedules of older adults. As such, some may argue that they are not so uniquely positioned to offer educational programs to the same extent as establishments outside of the university. Scheduling issues are not new concerns in lifelong learning and continuing education programs, and institutions presently make use of a variety of alternative options including online courses (that offer flexibility), 1–2 credit courses (that meet for fewer hours), non-credit courses that meet once a week for 4–6 weeks (as in Osher Institute classes), weekend seminars, and more. The emerging age-diverse student population that now also includes (working) adults aged 25–45 will add to the need for institutions to offer different course formats with a range of scheduling options.
5. Faculty are given a \$250 professional development stipend sponsored by the Office of Academic Affairs for participating in intergenerational courses and generating intergenerational modules.

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