

**Gerontology Academic Program (GAP)  
Program Performance Review (PPR)  
Response to Site Visit Report**

This report is in response to the PPR Report submitted in February 2017 by Dr. Dana Rutledge (CSUF), Dr. Kelly Niles-Yokum (University of Laverne), and Dr. Susan Charles (UCI). The GAP is extremely grateful to this team for their helpful observations, insights, and recommendations. We believe the report accurately illustrates the strengths and challenges of our program and offers several suggestions for enhancement and growth. While some of the suggestions are feasible currently, many require additional resource investment from the college or university. Below we have summarized some of the strengths and concerns highlighted in the 6 major categories reviewed. Our specific responses or suggestions to these concerns are in bold.

*Overall Strengths*

The reviewers noted many strengths of our program. Of particular significance was the comment that our core faculty possesses tremendous leadership, dedication and passion, which are clearly reflected in our commitment to support and advise students, and are apparent in our relationships with our associated faculty and donors. They were pleased with our multi-disciplinary curricula for both minor and MSG students and our goals of achieving Program of Merit (POM) and Accreditation status through the Association of Gerontology in Higher Education.

*Areas of Concern*

Program Mission, Goals and Environment

It was clear to the committee that enrollment is an issue. It was suggested that building exposure of the program is essential, such as through establishing POM and Accreditation status via AGHE, and obtaining a dedicated recruiter/marketer to assist with program promotion. It was also made clear that the program needs more resources/support, including stable, consistent staffing and shared knowledge, and increased course releases for the Coordinator and Associate Coordinator positions; such enhancements would free up necessary time to focus less on day-to-day operations and more on critical issues such as program exposure and growth.

**We have already begun working on a procedural manual that addresses operations in order to ensure a shared understanding of day-to-day processes and provide stability for when there is staff turnover. We will also continue to work with the dean's office to find a suitable solution to our staffing issue. Access to a qualified and competent staff member with access to campus systems will go a long way in easing some of the burden on the program leadership. We will continue to work with upper level administration to find ways to increase course release options for the program coordinators and assistant coordinators. We anticipate that one-time course releases for particular projects (e.g., working on POM/Accreditation materials, outreach/website projects) also will be essential for success of the program and could have an added benefit of opening up opportunities for gero-**

**affiliated faculty to become more invested in the program. It will be important, however, to ensure that any additional faculty releases do not impact our ability to offer courses; in the past, funding for additional course releases came from a preset faculty budget and at the expense of course offerings. If we have to reduce the number of courses we offer in any given semester, we run the risk of not meeting our enrollment targets.**

#### Program Description and Analysis

Of major concern were the limited resources and support for the Program Coordinator and Assistant Coordinators. All are housed in other departments and are therefore maintaining obligations and service requirements in their respective departments. Additionally, the majority of support comes from the College of HSS; the program would benefit from support of other colleges, especially since many colleges offer or cross-list aging courses. Increasing communication and collaboration with other colleges, as well as University-wide age-focused centers and programs, may also help to increase student completion of the gerontology minor. **We recognize the need to improve inter-college communications and to reduce the workload to more manageable/sustainable levels for the program's leadership. We look forward to discussions with the Dean of HSS regarding time commitment and course releases, as well as strategies to incentivize other colleges to help support the Gerontology Academic Program. One consideration is to provide incentives for faculty to serve on student theses/projects.** It was also noted that greater student outreach to students on campus about the gerontology program is necessary. **We currently are forging relations with other faculty/departments (e.g., Communicative Disorders) and will be introducing Gero to students through classes and club meetings.** Additionally, the reviewers indicated that greater financial investment for faculty support and outreach should be provided. **We hope our ongoing conversations with the Dean of HSS, and eventual support from other colleges, will bring greater commitment to the program overall. We would like to host a University-wide lunch for deans and department chairs to explain the importance of gerontology infusion into each college's disciplines. We also will look into applying for an incentive or mission grant (if made available again) for faculty to be trained on how to infuse gerontology content into their courses and/or research. Additionally, we will seek opportunities to become part of a university-wide lecture series with a focus on aging. We would appreciate assistance from the deans to help us organize such activities.**

#### Student Academic Achievement and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The committee recommends that we enhance our evaluation measures and plans to include systematic evaluation of employment after graduation and completion of project/thesis. They also recommend that we put in place a plan for evaluating outcomes among undergraduate gerontology minors. **We intend to discuss strategies for expanding and enhancing our assessment plan, including better tracking of MSG students and minors, as well as consideration of using graduation rates as an independent student learning outcome. We will continue to work with the CSUF Office of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness,**

with whom we have already forged a relationship. We hope that the University will develop a formal system for tracking graduate students and minors as we are fully aware of how critical this process is. We are struggling to figure out such logistics on our own.

#### Faculty

The committee is concerned that the leadership team, including the advisor, will not be able to maintain their pace and will experience burn-out. **This concern accurately describes a major concern among the program leadership. We are stretched too thin and struggle to find time for research or other creative activities. Day-to-day operations, especially without a formal, well-trained staff member available, prevent us from dedicating time to long-term or growth-related projects, making it difficult for us to advance the program. Having an established ASC or ASA and therefore someone with administrative time and access to documents and processes (e.g., issuing course permits, CMS, grade change forms, library space reservation, scheduling of rooms for student defenses) would relieve undue burden.**

It was pointed out that more communication between the leadership team and faculty is necessary, particularly regarding resources available. **All of our part-time faculty members pre-date the current leadership, but we intend to enhance our exchange of information. For example, we will offer more time at our annual program retreat and council meetings for the concerns of our part-time faculty. Furthermore, we intend to put a plan in place to “on-board” all new part-time faculty and we would like to discuss the possibility of securing professional development funds for our part-time faculty (for conference attendance, etc.).**

#### Student support and Advising

Students raised concerns that they need more advising on “next steps” or educational options, as well as quicker responses to advising-related issues. Graduate students also indicated that they want more support for graduate theses/projects especially regarding how to secure a chair. It was also shared that some minor students are not receiving gerontology-related emails. **We have heard these concerns from our students previously. We now offer a yearly “mixer” (to introduce 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year MSG students to both core gero-faculty and affiliated faculty). We have added a discussion of the project/thesis process to GERO 500. Nonetheless, there still seems to be anxiety among many students. We feel this reflects a lack of face-time or access to advising. In terms of formal academic and career advising, Prof. Wong makes a valiant effort and serves our students to the best of her ability. But she currently receives 3WTU/semester to advise *and* coordinate the internship class. And unlike other graduate programs who have a dedicated staff member assisting with student- and advising-related paperwork, Prof. Wong completes and files all documents herself. Consequently, with nearly 70 students (masters and minors), she has very limited time for each student. As indicated above, dedicated staff can help reduce the advisor’s load by assisting with student-related paperwork and procedural issues that are ongoing and time-consuming.**

**Furthermore, we know we need to find a way to get affiliated gerontology faculty to have more engagement with our MSG students. The leadership team has already begun discussing ways to integrate non-core gerontology faculty into MSG experiences, but the lack of incentives to offer them has left us struggling. As it currently stands, the faculty/course budget is not large enough for meaningful financial stipends for every faculty who supports our MSG students in their projects/theses. We would like to discuss with the HHS dean ways to incentivize affiliated faculty to serve as chairs and committee members. We are willing to make presentations to deans and chairs about the importance of our program and how a background in aging makes their students more marketable.**

**Finally, we have updated our email lists and will ensure that gerontology minors are receiving emails from the program.**

### Resources and Facilities

The committee suggests that we have better classroom access, particularly for large rooms to house our larger lower-division minor classes. It was also encouraged that we anticipate space issues when Environmental Sciences “claims” its space in H424, as well as discuss how we can maintain presence at the Ruby Gerontology center. Finally, it was suggested that our website create a more personal nature of the discipline by perhaps sharing student/alumni testimonials via video. **We continue to work with the scheduling office as well as other departments (i.e., making room trades) to optimize our room assignments. We are encouraged by the recent attempts by the associate dean to facilitate room-swapping in order to maximize our college’s space allocations. In terms of our new office space, we are happy to have found gerontology a new “home”. We have been utilizing a bit more than 50% of the space in H424, but we have reserved half of the filing cabinets and cupboards for Environmental Studies. Regarding the Ruby Gerontology Center, we considered the pros and cons of leaving the RGC prior to moving to our new space in Humanities. Whereas there were numerous advantages to moving (i.e., superior space, central location), the only disadvantage was leaving the one building on campus with Gerontology in its name. However, the RGC is not a CSUF academic or research “center” in the traditional sense. Rather, it is a group of buildings that house the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, to whom we do maintain an affiliation. Thus, we do not believe an increased presence in the RGC complex is even possible. Finally, we have already begun reaching out to alumni to interview them for our website and have a few interviews completed.**

### *Conclusion*

Our program is grateful for the reviewers’ contributions and agrees with them that our “path towards success is within reach.” We look forward to working with the College and University to implement these goals and create a more visible and sustainable Gerontology Program.