

## **Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Gerontology MS program**

The 2023-2024 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the Gerontology MS program in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) concluded with a culmination meeting on January 24, 2025.

The following people attended the meeting: Amir Dabirian (Provost), Sean Walker (Deputy Provost), Aimee Nelson (Director of Graduate Studies, DGS), Jessica Stern (Dean), Carl Wendt (Associate Dean), Laura Zettel-Watson (Associate Dean), Melanie Horn Mallers (Program Coordinator), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost congratulated the program for completing the PPR process and commended the program for leading and advocating a critical field of study on campus. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The program is an interdisciplinary program that serves students from five colleges and prepares students with both applied and theoretical coursework and experiences.
- The program receives over \$10,000 a year from private donors, all of which is utilized to support students with academic scholarships. The Provost commended the program for integrating philanthropy into program development.
- The program maintains a positive collaboration with Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) members, and OLLI members support the program by serving as tutors, research participants, and more.
- In 2022, Drs. Zettel-Watson and Piazza received a \$1.6M Research/Education Training Grant from the National Institutes of Health that supported the creation of the Aging Science Minor, which is designated as a Program of Merit by the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE).
- The program faculty and staff demonstrate dedication and passion for the program's success.
- The program has a strong academic advising system that supports students in the program and minor.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

### 1. Enrollment growth:

- All parties involved in the PPR process recommended the program to continue working with college leadership and campus partners to expand marketing and recruitment efforts, such as the recruitment of international students, promotion of new GE course, and allowing prospective graduate students to change to gerontology if rejected from their intended programs.
- The DGS reported that the institutional barrier has been removed to allow applicants who are denied from other relevant programs to enroll in Gerontology (if they choose to). This change has contributed to the growth of program enrollment from 0 to 8 in two years' time.

### 2. 4+1 program and/or certificates:

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- The external reviewers recommended the program to consider developing a 4+1 MSG degree program and/or certificates.
  - The Associate Dean shared that the program is exploring the possibility of a 4+1 cross-university program with Sac State and Long Beach, where students complete their undergraduate degree at Sac State and continue their graduate studies at Fullerton or Long Beach.
    - o The Program Coordinator reported that she has been working with on-campus programs (e.g. HUSR) to explore similar partnership opportunities too, with the goal of “plastering” aging studies across the disciplines.
    - o The Deputy Provost recommended the program to work with the Office of Academic Programs to navigate the process.
  - The Program Coordinator asked for the possibility of creating multi-disciplinary minors.
    - o The Associate Dean asked the university to help resolve the issue that the Aging Science minor is not showing up for students to register; The Deputy Provost will work with the Registrar to resolve.
    - o The Provost recommended the program to work with targeted departments (e.g. Psychology, Sociology) to add a minor specializing in gerontology; To assist this effort, the Office of Academic Programs will provide a list of majors that have room for minor participation.
  - The Provost also recommended the program to consider incorporating aging modules into the curriculum; The Program Coordinator said that she has already been doing so through the FDC workshops.
  - The SAVPIEP suggested the program to consider certificates that could be concurrently pursued while students take classes for their majors; The Deputy Provost added that the certificates could also be developed for community members through Extensions.
  - The Dean commented that program growth ideas need to be evaluated to see which ones have higher “return” and recommended the growth to focus on the degree program (with a possible goal of 50-100 students in 3-5 years).
    - o The Program Coordinator concurred that the MS program is indeed the focus, and there should be a parallel process to grow minors because students in the minors tend to feed into the MS program.
    - o The Program Coordinator voiced the need for stronger relationship with alumni and businesses to expand awareness of gerontology; The Provost recommended the program to 1) connect with the Alumni Office and the philanthropy board (both in University Advancement); 2) work with OIEP to obtain alumni list in appropriate industries for outreach purposes.
3. Faculty need:
- All parties involved in the PPR process recognized the need to review current faculty release time for coordinating the program and to develop dedicated faculty lines for the program.
  - The external reviewers recommended the program to continue working with the Dean’s Office to secure the support needed for the program to operate efficiently, such as revision of faculty pay, search criteria, and meeting succession planning needs.

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- The Program Coordinator emphasized that the faculty assigned time (3WTUs) to run the program is not enough.
  - o The Provost concurred and asked the program to identify a budget for the near future that shows what it takes (resource wise) to run the program. The budget should include what is needed on a one-time basis for the program to grow sufficient enrollment to support itself, as well as a budget for 3-5 years that demonstrate the program can self-sustain.

The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking the college and program leadership and faculty for their contribution to the university and the community.