**Directors of Aging Centers Meeting Minutes – 05/15/2023**

* **In person Meeting at GSA in Tampa:**
  + November 9th, 3-4:15pm
* **Challenges posed to centers**
  + Julie Masters discussed the database she had her research assistants create.
  + It consists of all the gerontological programs currently running in the US. One of the assistants is actively working on how many are in place still and how many have been dissolved. Link to the database can be found under the Career Center tab on the geron.org homepage. You can also find it here: [Gerontology Program Database | Department of Gerontology | University of Nebraska Omaha (unomaha.edu)](https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/gerontology/engagement/gerontology-programs.php)
  + Looking to add potential categories to the database, what else can they add, what should they remove?
    - Feedback from Neil Charness: would be great to add an easy access contact list to recruit more folks to this group.
    - Pamela Sanders extended her gratitude for the spreadsheet. Could they collect data on students in these programs?
    - Dawn Carr asked if they could send out a survey to obtain more information? She also asked how the information was obtained and Julie responded it was all obtained via websites.
    - Patricia Heyn asked if they can evaluate key information from the website like a mission statement or what the program is centered around.
    - Julie dropping down to just one in the summer but she will do her best to implement the suggested updates.
* **Training the next generation of directors**
  + Congratulations and a big thank you to the new group Co-Leaders Pamela Saunders and Pamela Teaster. The transition to new leadership will take place next year after Neil Charness’ retirement.
    - Should we decide to go to GSA connect only instead of using both GSA Connect and the listserv? Would surely streamline communications, however, folks who aren’t a part of GSA and only the listserv will need to join GSA. We will make a formal decision in the future.
  + Patricia Heyn helps run a sub group to tackle this challenge.
    - Minority in Network training through NIH, very brief workshop with focus on executive leadership, it was well received and lots of enthusiasm for it.
    - Maybe start with a mentoring program? Informal at first, they can contact directors who volunteer, they can share their wisdom and match them with those who have similar interests.
* **Challenges posed to our Centers- Cont’d**
* Previously it was a COVID issue, how to stay active despite this challenge. Now that things are normalizing out, what are some current challenges you as a director or the centers as a whole are facing?
  + Pamela Sanders had a hybrid symposium last summer; it was challenging but it kept the inclusivity intact. They plan to do the same thing this summer. A committee member can’t attend so the whole panel is going to be hybrid.
    - Neil Charness has been trying unsuccessfully for about 3 semesters now, to encourage folks to attend in person. Hybrid can surely be difficult to set up. Have tried to incentivize with food to attend in person, but still people favoring virtual. Any thoughts on how to wean people away from Zoom?
    - Michelle Porter has continued to do their smaller events virtually and they will probably continue to do so. They are better attended on average and you can get a greater range of folks joining. Early May they held their 40th Annual Spring Research Symposium and it was hybrid and they were expecting more in person guests as it seemed that’s what people wanted, but there were about 100 in person and 100 virtually. Lots of researchers joined virtually. Plan moving forward is smaller space and continue hybrid. Too many do not want to join in person.
    - Peter Lichtenberg said they have been targeting certain events for virtual and in person. He does not prefer hybrid events. Level of discussion isn’t as good and the coordination of it all, hybrid can be a tough go for real conferences. Issues on Aging conference was held in person, we sold out at 300 people and folks were happy to be back in person, its surely tougher with faculty, they prefer virtual.
    - Neil Charness agreed. We still put on a Lecture Series and we plan to do it hybrid. Want to be sensitive to seniors who are still wary of the virus, targeting specific events to be in person vs virtual sounds like the best bet.
    - Carlisle Shealy shared her experience with their Futures In Board meeting. Held in the fall virtually, in the spring it moves to in person and it’s on the same day we have our Center Celebration. This year they found that the majority of Futures Board wanted to attend virtually. Only about 3 people came in person for the board meeting. If this is the preferred method of meeting, we need to adapt it. 3 hour board meeting is too long. If this is the consensus we need to break these up. They will probably keep the option open for in person for spring, but they are leaning into the desire for virtual meetings and making them more approachable. Adapt to the new way and preference is their route.
    - Diane Martin said they have about 2200 people on their listserv, they put out a survey and got a 15% response rate. They got an overwhelming majority of folks wanting to do an person events. First in person event in June coming up so we will see, last time they tried they only had 3 people wanting to show up in person so they had to cancel. Hopefully folks show up this time around.
    - Pamela Saunders said going back to her original comment, done well a hybrid meeting can go well. She said coming back, its not going to be the same. Peter asked why she preferred hybrid over just in person? She replied that she wants to please all parties. She knows she would like to return to in person but others cant. Neil agreed that we have opened up pandoras box with these Zoom meetings.
* Neil Charness asked how everyone’s budgets have fared post pandemic? Asked for thumbs up and thumbs down reacts to reflect where they stand budget wise. For those in thumbs down, any strategies for coping? What are you doing with central administration?
* **How to communicate effectively with administrators**
  + Peter Lichtenberg said he has spent the last 6 years where it was defined by the book “Getting Past No.” You can never give up but you do have to understand the different strategies potentially working against you and how potentially to counteract them.
  + Neil Charness asked if anyone had a fool proof “Getting Past No” strategy?
  + Katy Abbott came on to share. Our center is all about external funding so if I can craft a good argument that this is going to increase external funding, I can get around that. We also help support academic programs in gerontology and that’s where we are seeing the most challenge. The university is trying to reduce the number of on campus programs, gerontology is a discovery major, not something that a high schooler is googling and saying “Oh I want to do that!” Pressure also coming from grad programs for masters and doctorate in gerontology. It’s expensive to offer grad programs and to offer graduate assistantships which means cut backs and in turn faculty has to write more grants and then the university tacks on tuition which we have to then cover. How do we support our academic programs as a center? We are contributing a considerable amount of resources to these programs to keep them afloat.
  + Neil Charness said administrators will invest if they think it will pay off further down the road. He also identified with the notion of cutting programs. We have a lot of institutes and centers, consolidation and streamlining is their goal. They recently merged two independent colleges, so heads up that this notion of efficiency and consolidation might be heading your way.
  + Jodi Waterhouse said they are slightly different as they are an academic medical campus. When she joined the university, the business model was that the colleges put in certain dollar amounts each year to stand up the center. In turn they become an attractive grant partner. They also have been very involved in legislative process with the first bill passing in 2021 and another passing this recent legislative session, providing 1.8MIL to provide geriatrics training programs, allowing them to work with other higher ed institutes who have grad level training programs across the state to add geriatrics programs to their roster. They also have an aging Chancellor who has become very interested in aging so that doesn’t hurt.
* Esme Fuller-Thomson said part of their issue is not enough students coming in, its also about having the demand. She had turned some interviews into a video during the pandemic to showcase their program and that has helped to disseminate information about their program. Success with working in media and press releases and getting the word out about our institutes. About 400 articles or news releases mentioned us. She offered to help anyone looking to learn more about how to get in the news so please reach out to her if you need assistance.
  + Patricia Heyn said that it would be great for the ongoing training programs through GSA and Esme agreed she would be more than happy to help get a training program set up.
* Wendy Rogers asked, how do people engage their advancement offices and their fundraising? Topic of interest to aging alums, they’ve had good success with people sponsoring fellowships or awards for students etc. What are other folks doing?
  + Katy Abbott said they have a couple things, one being the Move in Miami Day where they try to get that day dedicated for alums to support students in terms of travel to conferences. Need funding for students, they get nothing. Travel, conferences, presentations and research. Dedicated campaign for that. Also trying to work with advancement around specific programs like their “Opening Minds through Art” program, saying hey, here’s a specific fund to donate to. So, several different targeted asks, if you will.
  + Leah Buck reached out to development at her university and placed a development officer on her leadership team. Said hey, we want to raise funding for student projects and to issue more grants. Also, center for advancement had issued a new alumni award 8 over 80, she reached out and said they would like to co-sponsor, how do we make it happen? What also helps is offering her expertise when possible and looking for opportunities, calling the advancement office when traveling and saying “Hey, I am going to be in Scottsdale, anyone I can make a visit to.”
* In person meeting, spending a little time finding a way to talk about what the institutes have as their greatest strengths, while yes we are all aging related, it would be interesting to hear where people have strengths and where our specialties cross over.
* Leah Buck agreed this would be great to not only discuss strengths but to come together to establish best practices. It would be great to come together to be seen as a group who is not only at the forefront but who are establishing good citizenship practices in what we do.