Confronting Ageism: Developing an age-friendly university

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Outline of presentation

Productive aging: A perspective on longer life

Ageism as barrier to achieving productive aging society

Transforming institutions to engage the potential of older adults: the case of universities

Some examples at Washington University in St. Louis
Another Reality: Age as Asset

Capacity of older adults is increasing
- Increasing number of healthy years after age 60
- Increasing level of education
- Older adults desire to use their later years in meaningful ways and to make contributions

This capacity is part of a solution to the demands of an older population.
Productive Aging

Any activity by an older individual that contributes to the production of goods or services, whether paid for or not.

# Potential Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Family</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• physical health/function</td>
<td>• engaged grandparents and caregivers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• mental health</td>
<td>• transfer of income and assets from older to younger</td>
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<tr>
<td>• self-efficacy</td>
<td>• healthier/happier older relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• purpose in life</td>
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<td>• economic well-being</td>
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<tr>
<th>Organizations + Community</th>
<th>Society</th>
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<td>• experienced workers/volunteers</td>
<td>• less reliance on public pensions and savings</td>
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<td>• loyal/dependable workers/volunteers</td>
<td>• more intergenerational exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>• age/generational diversity</td>
<td>• less demand for long-term care due to postponement of disability</td>
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<td>• mentors for younger workers</td>
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Productive Engagement in Later Life: Cross-Cultural Framework

Sociocultural Context

- Socio-Demographic
  - Physical Environment
  - Economic Environment
  - Programs

- Individual Capacity

- Institutional Capacity

- Productive Behaviors

- Outcomes
Productive Engagement of Older Adults

- Society can not afford “age drain” perspective.
- Productive engagement of older population is a necessity, not a luxury.
- We must optimize the engagement of older adults for the sake of everyone
- We must think and act differently about being old.
- We must change institutions, organizations, and attitudes in response to population aging.
Ageism is....

- discrimination against persons of a certain age group, especially older adults
- a tendency to regard older persons as debilitated, unworthy of attention, or unsuitable for employment

**Implicit ageism:** subconscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors one has about older or younger people, generally negative

**External and internal ageism:** perpetuated by others; perpetuated by the self
Confronting Ageism

https://www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging/stories/ideas/info-2016/what-is-old-video.html
Transforming institutions:
Extending education across a longer life course
Fewer Young People

Fertility Rate (Births Per Woman)

Source: United Nations Population Division, 2017
Demographic Imperative

Fewer young people

School's out ... for good?

Universities Struggle to Cope with Shrinking Population and Globalization

[2015.03.16]

Winter is the season of university entrance exams in Japan. It is a time of trepidation not only for the students but also for the universities, which today face the problem of population decline. Their survival hinges on their ability to attract students from a shrinking pool of young people while also meeting the challenges of globalization as institutions of higher education and research.

Thai demand for higher education cooling as population ages
Longer Lives

Life Expectancy at Birth

Source: United Nations Population Division, 2017
Demographic Imperative
Longer working lives

How Do You Envision Transitioning Into Retirement?

- Work as Long as Possible: 20%
- Phased Transition: 47%
- Immediately Stop: 23%
- Not Sure: 10%

Source: 2017 Transamerica Retirement Survey
Age Stratification & Structural Lag

Education

Work

Leisure
youth  adulthood  older adulthood (60+)
Redefining the Ages

young adulthood  mid life  third age (65-80)  fourth age (80+)
Age Integration

Educating for a Longer Working Life

- Education
- Employment
- Leisure
Response Globally

- Launched in 2012, an Age-Friendly University Initiative led by Dublin City University has promoted opportunities to serve people of all ages.

- Building a global network of universities based on 10 guiding principles.

- Washington University joined as a member in 2018.
What are the 10 AFU principles?

1. Encourage participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university.
2. Promote personal and career development in the second half of life.
3. Recognize the range of educational needs of older adults (from early school-leavers through to Master’s or PhD qualifications).
5. Widen access to online educational opportunities to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6. Ensure university’s research agenda is informed by needs of an ageing society and promote public discourse on how higher ed can respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7. Increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that ageing brings to our society.
8. Enhance access for older adults to the university’s range of programs and activities.
9. Engage actively with the university’s own retired community.
10. Ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the ageing population.
Washington University for Life
Vision

Washington University will engage and educate people of all ages.

Age-diversity will be a valued feature of our campus and our culture.

Later life will be viewed as a time of active engagement, learning and purpose as opposed to current perceptions of stepping back and diminishing relevance.
Aims

- **Create opportunities** for students, faculty, staff, and alumni to engage in education throughout the life course.

- **Build skills** among faculty, staff, and students to work in multigenerational environments.

- **Establish programs** that facilitate transitions between jobs and careers and into retirement.

- **Produce knowledge** on multigenerational education, age-stereotype in academia, and educational pathways for longer life course.
Focus for 2018-2019 Academic Year

- Collect baseline data.
  - Current demographics on campus; inventory of current practices/policies

- Plan and implement survey for students, faculty, and staff.
  - Attitudes about older adults and aging
  - Focus groups with instructors, students, career services

- Explore potential for “Gateway to Engagement” concept.
  - Connect older stakeholders to existing degree programs, courses, programs, etc.

[Graph: Baseline Example, Brown School Students]
Longer-term Efforts

- Comprehensive career transition and retirement programs for faculty and staff.
- Leadership and certificate programs targeted toward older adults.
- Multigenerational residential options and improvements to campus spaces and environment.
What Would Success Look Like?

- More older adults on campus, in degree programs, certificate programs, events, etc.
- Student age distribution is not as skewed; more students in mid to later life.
- Support for New Programs & Marketing
  - Certain degree and certificate programs specifically outreach to and support older students.
  - Residential Next Move program is established for alums to spend time on campus and orient for meaning and purpose in later life.
  - Faculty and staff have access to robust career and retirement transition programs.
- Age diversity is a common feature and important element of our thriving campus.
  - Importance of age diversity is highlighted in communications.
  - Age diversity is considered for representation in events, programs, etc.
  - Instructors feel competent in facilitating multigenerational classrooms.
  - Younger and older students are comfortable with, appreciate and learn from each other.
  - Multigenerational housing options exist for students, faculty, staff, and alums.
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<th>Student Groups</th>
<th>Retirement Planning</th>
<th>Purpose &amp; Engagement</th>
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<td>The Next Move Student Group at Brown seeks to support students as they return to school to redefine, restart, or advance their careers after significant work or life experiences.</td>
<td>Retirement transition program readies faculty and staff to plan for their next move and explore pathways to a successful retirement.</td>
<td>Certificate and leadership programs for alums and older adults to spend time on campus and orient for meaning and purpose in life.</td>
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When I’m Sixty-Four
Curious About Your Future Self?
Here’s the Deal

- You will most probably live into your 8th or 9th decade; many of you will live to 100.

- You will live in a “top-heavy” society where there are more old people than young people.

- You will live in a society where expectations, attitudes, organizations, and physical structures were developed when life expectancy was half of what it is today.
What Are YOU Going to Do About It?

Your aging society

- Finances
- Health care
- Consumer products & services
- Living with health problems
- Family
- Housing
- Transportation
- Work
- Community engagement