

Program Review Executive Summary

Kathleen Cassity, Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Western Oregon University: Gerontology Program (Behavioral Sciences Division)

Majors Reviewed:

- Gerontology (B.S. and A.B.)

Minors and Certificates Reviewed:

- Gerontology Minor
- Gerontology Certificate

Dates of Program Review: Academic Year 2019-20

Report Submitted: February 2020

(External review waived due to COVID-19)

Date of Executive Summary: July 2021

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM (BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES DIVISION)**

The Gerontology Department conducted a formal program review during the 2019-20 academic year, submitting its self-study report in February 2020. (The external review by Dr. Jan Abushakrah, originally scheduled for May 2020, was postponed several times due to the COVID-19 emergency and was subsequently waived when Drs. Manoogian and Cannon determined it was in the program's best interests to move ahead with their self-study recommendations.) The LAS Dean visited virtually with Dr. Margaret Manoogian to discuss the report. At that time, implementation of most initiatives was already underway.

The program review emphasized the following programmatic strengths:

- a. Strong interdisciplinarity
- b. Excellent post-graduate placement into careers
- c. Effective use of Advisory Board and community partnerships
- d. Highly regarded Careers in Aging Week
- e. Experienced, outstanding TT faculty members who work well together, are active in research and engaged with the broader community
- f. Unique to state of Oregon
- g. Attractive to older and returning students
- h. Hybrid course offerings that tailor course scheduling to student needs
- i. Strong practicum and student research components
- j. Somewhat "protected" from low number of majors by its affiliation with robust Psychology program
- k. Aligned with national Standards of Excellence in field
- l. A.B. degree facilitates degree completion
- m. Active faculty engagement with HSI initiative
- n. Engaged in continual improvement through effective assessment practices
- o. Excellent alumni engagement

The following challenges were identified:

- a. Small number of majors
- b. Tenured faculty stretched thin for service and advising—though small number of majors makes it impossible to expand faculty ranks at the present time
- c. Lack of student familiarity with program and nomenclature, especially for incoming freshmen
- d. More practicum sites available than there are potential students to fill them
- e. Curriculum does not emphasize physiological/biological aspects of aging
- f. Small presence in Gen Ed (a good recruiting ground for prospective majors)
- g. Small faculty inhibits involvement in initiatives such as the Salem campus
- h. Lack of robust marketing

Opportunities include:

- a. Projected job growth in related fields
- b. Possibility of delivering coursework to adult learners in Salem area
- c. Recent programmatic name change and curricular modifications may attract more students
- d. Natural interdisciplinarity makes gerontology a good choice as a minor/certificate for majors in other fields
- e. Potential to leverage Advisory Board and community connections to raise visibility of program, and of WOU generally
- f. Ability to build on already-excellent community college connections
- g. Recent “Age Friendly University” designation could be further developed and publicized
- h. Development of potential new Work Force Certificate
- i. Opportunity to receive Program of Merit designation

As a result of the self-study, the Gerontology faculty has already begun pursuing several of its own recommendations, all supported by the Dean and outlined in the Implementation Matrix below.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

New Program-Driven Initiatives	Completed/ Ongoing	Underway (Target Completion Date)	To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)
Pursue Program of Merit designation		X (Summer 2021)	
Develop additional coursework in biological/physiological aspects of aging		X	
Establish an alumni connections program		X	
Create/revise curriculum based on recommendations of Advisory Board		X (2021-22)	
Create additional coursework for the Gen Ed program		X (2021-22)	

Continuation of Ongoing Effectiveness	Completed/ Ongoing	Underway Target Completion Date)	To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)
Continue to engage in exemplary assessment and continuous curricular improvement	X		
Continue to engage with community partners, community colleges, and Advisory Board	X		
Finalize and market new certificate program	X		

LAS Dean Recommendations	Completed/ Ongoing	Underway Target Completion Date)	To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)
Update web site and marketing materials to appeal to diverse students; engage in vigorous marketing efforts			X – Start in AY 2021-22
Brainstorm ways to offer coursework in Salem, especially programs that will attract new students			X – Start in AY 2021-22
Begin long-range planning for faculty transition			X – Start in AY 2021-22
Use alumni network as resource for retaining and recruiting additional students		X	

The Gerontology Department has already proactively initiated many of the above initiatives and is making great strides, especially considering the challenges created by the pandemic and the need to deliver all coursework remotely. Given the challenge of increasing the number of Gerontology majors while faculty FTE is constrained, it would be worthwhile to coordinate with the Psychology Department, and possibly other departments/divisions as well, in future hires in order to hire faculty who can teach courses that span more than one program. A diligent marketing and recruiting effort will likely make a positive difference when it comes to bringing more students into the program and keeping Gerontology sustainable into the future.