White Paper

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
GERONTOLOGY CONSORTIUM

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The rapid growth in the numbers of older Californians has been referred to as the “Graying of the Golden State”. Approximately 5 million older adults (age 65 and over) live in California—the largest population in the nation. It is also one of the most diverse in terms of race/ethnicity. In the next two decades both the size and diversity of the older population will increase dramatically. The California State University (CSU) system is uniquely positioned with 23 campuses across the state to ensure that we have sufficient professionals working with older adults who have training in gerontology. For example, the University of California system has emphasized health care-related programs, social work programs, and biomedical research, but they do not offer masters degrees in gerontology (MSG). Currently there are five CSU campuses that offer a masters degree in gerontology.

This white paper proposes the development of a California State University Gerontology Consortium. Action is needed on a system wide level to expand the capacity of CSU Gerontology Programs to respond to these changes in the age structure of the population. The paper addresses four main considerations:

1. Why develop a CSU Gerontology Consortium?
2. What are the potential activities that would benefit from collaborating in this way?
3. What resources are needed and what options are there?
4. What are the next steps?

1. Why develop a consortium?
There are a number of reasons why a CSU Gerontology Consortium should be developed.

- **Build Capacity.** First, a CSU Gerontology Consortium can help build capacity to address the needs of aging Californians by fostering collaborative activities among CSU gerontology faculty. The expertise and scholarship among CSU Gerontology Faculty will provide a unique opportunity to design and implement a gerontology program, which can be one of the best in California and the United States. California is different from almost all other states with a population that is highly diverse in geographic location, gender, race/ethnicity, and class. A varied gerontological curriculum that addresses the instructional needs of our large and diverse aging population is needed.

- **Advocacy for Equity.** Second, The CSU system generates the largest number of graduates preparing to work in the field of aging in the state through educational programs that include minors, majors, certificates, and graduate programs. Yet, there is considerable variation in the size, breadth, and institutional placement of these
gerontology programs. For example, estimates of program size range from 4 (Chico) to 340 students (Los Angeles). Gerontology programs also differ in their breadth with older and more established gerontology programs (e.g., Fullerton, San Francisco, Sacramento) offering a broader continuum of degrees (e.g., minor, major, graduate, and certificate programs) in contrast to newer programs which may offer only a certificate. A longitudinal study of the CSU Gerontology Programs found that only 5 campuses had fully developed gerontology programs offering a continuum of degrees (Gilford, R., CSU-Fullerton, 2002). Her study found that many of the rural areas of California (e.g. Humboldt, Monterey Bay) lack access to academic gerontology programs. These differences in gerontology programs across the CSU suggest that the time has come for system wide advocacy to ensure that the growing importance of gerontology programs is recognized and all areas of the state receive more equal access to gerontology education.

- **Raise Visibility and Awareness.** Although most of the public is aware of the aging phenomenon, most remain unaware of the importance of gerontological education. A gerontology course can be taken to gain knowledge of personal aging, issues affecting older family members or to pursue a professional career in aging. A CSU Gerontology Consortium can help raise the visibility of the field of aging and awareness of the importance of gerontological education and scholarship.

- **Aging Network:** A CSU Gerontology Consortium can help foster a “learning community” of faculty, students and professionals in the field of aging. It can do this by developing alumni associations, sponsoring student awards in gerontology, and other cooperative efforts

2. **What are the potential activities?**
The types of activities a CSU Gerontology Consortium might undertake vary in the resources needed and depend on the interests of the members. Some of these potential activities might include:

- **Collaborate at national gerontology conferences by sharing an exhibit booth and developing a CSU Gerontology brochure**

At the major conferences related to aging (e.g., Gerontological Society of America, American Society on Aging) the University of California schools and the private universities (e.g., University of Southern California) of California are usually represented. Indeed, many gerontology programs from other state universities present themselves for recognition as major players in the academic arena of aging education and research. However, the CSU system has not had presence at conferences as a unified entity even though it has the largest number of gerontology programs and is one of the largest university systems in the nation.

A CSU Gerontology Consortium would provide a unified representation through an exhibit booth with shared expenses to demonstrate at a national level the significant educational opportunities available within the California State University System.
Publish the CSU Gerontology Program Directory
One of the products developed by the CSU Gerontology Summit was a CSU Gerontology Program Directory that identifies CSU Gerontology programs and many of the CSU gerontology faculty. The directory reflects our best efforts to develop a comprehensive list of gerontology programs and faculty. It provides contact information on gerontology faculty as well as their gerontological interests. An on-line version will be available soon with links to faculty and programs, however the information should also be published in hard copy and widely disseminated at conferences and on campuses. The Directory is a valuable resource not only to faculty but also to students, and community organizations.

In addition, the next step in developing the directory is to include all faculty who identify themselves as involved in teaching classes and/or doing research related to aging. This resource would facilitate inter-campus contacts around specific research areas. The interdisciplinary nature of gerontology means that faculty are located in a variety of departments which is why we do not know all of the faculty involved in teaching aging specialty courses. These faculty ought to be identified and invited to be a part of the CSU Gerontology Consortium.

Launch Alumni Associations
Alumni of gerontology programs are integral to furthering the field of aging and the support of existing programs. It would be advantageous for the CSU Gerontology Consortium to pilot the development of a gerontology alumni association at several campuses. In addition, the Consortium should consider developing a system wide alumni advisory board that would be in close contact with the campus based gerontology alumni groups. Program graduates are important resources for career development and networking of students and recent graduates, as well as internship site development, and as a contributing resource base for advancement and endowment fundraising. Scholarships, gifts tagged for gerontology, and an alumni fund to support student and faculty research could be developed. Alumni are inclined to feel an alliance toward their special discipline at the graduate level versus the campus affiliation of undergraduates. There is also a strong association with peer involvement and a formal structure that brings campus-based graduates together system-wide has the potential for a more prestigious affiliation to the field of gerontology. Further, working collaboratively with faculty and alumni who are employed in gerontology and aging careers provides an invaluable opportunity for input to academic program development that will keep the CSU gerontology programs at the forefront of the field of aging.

Initiate on-line certificate in gerontology
In an effort to improve the availability of gerontological education across the state, the Consortium might consider an initiative for an on-line certificate program in gerontology. If successful, this program might later be expanded to a graduate program. There are a number of consortium models which have been successful through Extended Education in the CSU system that might be replicated to address this programmatic gap.

Develop White Papers. Promote collaborative work to develop the excellence of gerontology programs on a system wide level by commissioning white papers to provide
reflective and integrative analytical research on gerontology issues affecting CSU gerontology programs. For example, a study on the work force needs of California organizations providing programs and services for older adults would be useful for gerontology programs across the state.

**Annual Gerontology Teleconference**

An annual gerontology teleconference, sponsored by the CSU Consortium, might further the dialog between faculty, campuses and students. While the annual meeting of the California Council on Gerontology and Geriatrics (CCGG) brings together many of the CSU gerontology leadership, many other gerontology faculty do not attend this state association meeting. In addition, CCGG represents all of the higher education systems (University of California, private, community college). It would be beneficial to create a forum to facilitate communication across CSU gerontology programs that would help enhance an opportunity to dialog on system specific issues.

**Sigma Phi Omega**

Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) is an academic honor and professional society in gerontology. Its purpose is to promote scholarship, professionalism, research and excellence in gerontology and aging services, and to recognize high attainment in the pursuit of academic and clinical excellence in these areas. The California State University campuses with a Sigma Phi Omega Chapter are listed below:

- California State University, Fullerton, CA - Gamma Kappa
- California State University, Long Beach, CA - Delta Eta
- California State University, Northridge, CA - Delta Epsilon
- California State University, Sacramento, CA - Gamma Chi
- San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA - Beta Xi.

SPO hosts a student paper session at the national conference of the Association of Gerontology in Higher Education to highlight outstanding theses, dissertations, and projects. The CSU Gerontology Consortium might consider taking this opportunity to recognize and highlight the work of undergraduate and graduate students who develop outstanding theses or project by providing support for a presentation at a national conference. This is particularly relevant because a Past President of the National Association of SPO and the candidate for President Elect are both members of the CSU faculty.

Initially, a pilot SPO event could be established to host a state level SPO event to recognize outstanding theses and/or projects at both the bachelor and masters level. This would be further enhanced by the opportunity for the awardees to be hosted by the Chancellor and to be recognized at a special event such as that for the STARS recipient awardees.

### 3. What resources are needed and what options are there?

Clearly the resources needed will depend on the activities selected and whether the CSU Consortium is successful in obtaining a comprehensive grant that will allow a multi-pronged and integrated approach rather than finding piecemeal funding for specific activities. One
possibility for comprehensive funding is the Archstone Foundation which has funded the creation of the Geriatric Social Work Education Consortium (GSWEC). The GSWEC is an interorganizational collaboration of four accredited social work graduate programs in Southern California, four social work agencies, and other selected provider sites. Two of the GSWEC members are CSU campuses (i.e., Long Beach, Los Angeles). The goals of the GSWEC include: (1) increasing the numbers, diversity and leadership of geriatric social work students; (2) developing an integrated curriculum which reflects best practices; (3) developing Centers of Excellence; and (4) establishing, evaluating, and sustaining an innovative consortium model for geriatric social work education. A CSU Gerontology Consortium seems to have much in common with this project that might interest the Foundation. Funds might also be obtained for a limited period from federal agencies such as the Administration on Aging or from the California Department of Aging.

Finally, funding might be developed with specific targeted sources in mind. An on-line certificate program in gerontology might be funded through a variety of sources including Extended Learning, the CSU, Office of the Chancellors, private organizations, etc. Similarly, it is often possible to get funding for publishing directory’s and other resources.

4. What are the next steps?
The CSU Gerontology Consortium will require a core group of gerontology faculty representing at least 4 campuses initially who are committed to collaborating on some of the potential activities discussed above. Ideally the campuses should be distributed across the state rather than reflecting one region. The CSU Consortium presents an exciting opportunity to take Gerontology in the academic arena of CSU to a new level of recognition and development.

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**Fall 2002**

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<tr>
<th>Funding Issues</th>
<th>Membership Issues</th>
<th>Administrative Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify possible sources of public and private funding for CSU Consortium (e.g., Grantmakers in Aging as well as more general foundations, federal or state agencies, etc.)</td>
<td>1. Create a list of CSU Gerontology Faculty and Programs committed to developing the CSU Gerontology Consortium</td>
<td>1. Deans from participating programs will need to be involved.</td>
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<td>2. Explore CSU and other public and private resources by targeting funding for certain activities proposed by the consortium</td>
<td>2. Prioritize activities</td>
<td>2. One campus will need to take the lead on administrative issues including printing of brochures, booth reservations at national conferences, etc.</td>
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<td>3. Form working groups to develop action plan and explore resources for activities</td>
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<td>4. Develop an Executive Committee to provide leadership</td>
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Spring 2003

Present a full proposal to the Archstone Foundation and any other possible sources of funding