

Institute on Aging

University of North Carolina 1999-2000 Annual Report

Division of Health Affairs

Major Services Delivered to NC:

Major services during the past year are summarized into three categories:

- activities that span and link aging education, public service and research activities;
- research and research development; and
- the Institute's information service.

1. Activities that Span and Link Aging Education, Public Service and Research Activities

The Institute on Aging's community service mission focuses on disseminating information from the Institute's aging-related research and educational efforts, and applying this information to the service and education needs of communities. Several mechanisms are in place for disseminating and applying research findings. These activities include:

1.1 Distinguished Lectures Series:

The Institute has permanently established the *Distinguished Lecture Series* intended for scholars, providers, and activists in the aging field throughout the state. Distinguished lecturers now visit multiple campuses in the UNC system to offer lectures and confer with faculty and students. Audiences for various presentations across the state have ranged from small groups of students to lecture audiences up to 150 faculty, students, providers, and older adults. The first event of the year, held in October of 1999, was presented as the inaugural lecture of the new Director. Titled, "Enhancing Well-Being of Older North Carolinians", the lecture was followed by the annual poster presentations of the Institute's exploratory grant projects, funding 12 faculty and students from the UNC-CH and other campuses.

Two other Distinguished Lecturers were sponsored during 99-00: Dr. K. Markides, Annie and John Gnitinger Research Professor of Aging, Director, Division of Sociomedical Sciences, Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health, University of Texas Medical Branch; and Dr. V. L., Bengtson, AARP Andrus Chair, Andrus Gerontology Center, University of Southern California. Professor Markides' lecture on the Chapel Hill campus, "America's Growing Hispanic Population: Trends in Health Status and Policy Implications" attracted a large audience from the Hispanic and Latino communities, as well as academics and service providers. He also lectured at Winston-Salem State University on "Minority Aging and Health: An Overview of the Field", and met with several university officials there. Professor Bengtson also drew large audiences for his presentations at UNC-Chapel Hill ("Does Family Matter? Generation "X" and Their Elders") and at Appalachian State University ("The Seven Great Myths of Aging").

1.2 Seminars:

In addition, the Institute has sponsored or co-sponsored numerous seminars on this campus to continue its mission to provide educational opportunities that link academic disciplines and service provider interests. These included:

“Marked Racial Differences in the Use of Psychotropic Medications in an Elderly Community Cohort - A Ten-year Review” (with the Carolina Population Center and the Dept. of Epidemiology)
Celia Hybels, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow Center for the Study of Aging, Duke University
Dan Blazer, MD, PhD, J.P. Gibbons Professor of Psychiatry, Duke University

“The Future of the Social Security Disability Program: Disability and the Aging Workforce” (with the Program on Aging)
Patricia Owens, MPA, Consultant in Health and Disability Programs, Former Associate U.S. Commissioner of Disability for the Social Security Administration

“Asynchronous Lives: Work and Family Contingencies in the Retirement Transition”
Angela O’Rand, Ph.D., Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Duke University.

“Retiree Health Insurance and the Labor Force Behavior of Older Men in the 1990s”
David Blau. Professor, Dept. of Economics, UNC-Chapel Hill

“Paid and Unpaid Work: Patterns of Continuity and Change in Multigenerational Families” (with the Dept. of Sociology and the Carolina Population Center)
Julie McMullin, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Western Ontario

“The Sociology of Work and Retirement in Britain”
Philip Taylor, PhD. The Business School, The Open University

1.3 Curriculum development activities:

The Institute provided the administrative and fiscal support for the development and offering of three-credit, interdisciplinary *Aging and Health* course to UNC-CH undergraduate and graduate students of all disciplines. The course consisted of lectures, seminars and demonstrations by a multi-disciplinary faculty drawn from the UNC-CH campus. The Institute also began planning for a graduate interdisciplinary course in *Aging and Policy*. Further, the Institute also supported the implementation of the interdisciplinary graduate *Certificate In Aging* program at the UNC-CH School of Social Work that attracted 10 graduate students from social work, physical therapy, dentistry, rehabilitative counseling, and health policy administration.

1.4 Outreach support for leadership development:

The Institute provided financial support to the *Leadership in an Aging Society* program at the Duke University Center for Aging and Human Development. This program, in turn, funded three graduate student internships to UNC-Chapel Hill students.

1.5 Regional, statewide, and inter-campus conference activities:

The Institute co-sponsored and supported state and regional conferences that help to establish its role in North Carolina as a leader in aging-related activities. The Institute staff chaired the *21st Annual Meeting of the Southern Gerontological Society*, held in Raleigh in March with participants from all over the Southeast; and it also supported (administratively and financially) the Fourth Annual North Carolina

Summer Symposium on Aging, held in July in Fayetteville. Both of these conferences bring together faculty, students, service providers and consumer advocates from around the state. This support continued in preparation for the 5th Summer Symposium, for which V. Marshall, IOA Director, was co-chair of the program committee. The Institute also provided administrative, organizational and financial support to assist in the development of a Symposium on Rural Aging, for the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging. This was held in April 2000 to audience of about 75 participants from throughout North Carolina. The Institute will publish the proceedings of this symposium.

1.6 Strengthening gerontology on the UNC-Chapel Hill Campus

In February, the Institute co-sponsored the first-ever UNC-CH campus-wide retreat for faculty with interests in aging research, public service and education. More than 50 faculty attended a half-day session to discuss ways to enhance departmental and interdisciplinary aging-related efforts on this campus and to communicate these activities to the policy-makers, service providers and the public. Given the strong interest by faculty in continuing these collaborative efforts, the Institute will continue to hold these events on a periodic basis, working in partnership with other campus aging-related entities including the School of Medicine's Program on Aging, the School of Social Work's Certificate in Aging program and its Center for Aging Research and Educational Services (CARES), the Carolina Population Center, and the Program on Aging, Disablement and Long Term Care of the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research.

2. Research and Research Development

The Institute is attempting to expand its in-house research activities, while also promoting research activities and linkages across the state. The Institute is carrying out its research mission by partnering with several other departments and problem-focused centers and institutes co-located in the Division of Health Affairs on this campus, through its Center on Minority Aging, and with other campuses in the state.

2.1 IOA current research projects

The Institute staff and affiliated faculty received three grants during the year, including: (1) a grant from Carol Woods Retirement Community to support applied research on service delivery to underserved older people in Durham; (2) a contract from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) to prepare a report on the occupational career experiences and economic circumstances of clients of VAC while in the Canadian Forces and following release; and (3) a contract research project in conjunction with the NC Division of Facilities Management, and funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, investigating factors associated with turnover or retention in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) workforce in North Carolina.

2.2 Workforce Survey

Working with the NC Divisions of Aging, Social Services, and Facilities Management, as well as the State Cooperative Extension Service and the Community College System, the Institute coordinated the first phase of a statewide survey to determine current and future workforce needs for the aging field. Two surveys were constructed and were disseminated to students and aging services personnel throughout the state. The surveys explored the need for education and types of courses desired and the capacity and interests for distance education in aging. The findings from this phase of the survey are posted on the IOA's website.

2.3 Interdisciplinary and Interdepartmental Research Development Activities:

The Institute collaborated with the Carolina Demography Center to resubmit a five-year grant proposal to the National Institute on Aging for a Career Leadership Award in the demography and economics of aging (funding has been awarded). This new project will provide substantial resources for faculty investigators interesting in studying aging issues. A major application has been submitted to the National Institute on Aging, led by an interdisciplinary team of investigators from the Dept. of Health Behavior and Health Education, the Thurston Arthritis Center, the Departments of Statistics and Biostatistics, and Duke University. This project will investigate the mechanisms through which socioeconomic status influences health. The Institute also resubmitted a proposal for a five-year NRSA/NIA training grant for pre- and post-doctoral students representing multiple disciplines on the UNC-CH campus to study aging and health research. The IOA submitted an application for National Science Foundation (NSF) funding for a project, "The social utility of information technology training for a multi-racial, older rural community population." Co-investigators are from the School of Information and Library Science, the Cecil B. Sheps Center, and the Program on Aging of the School of Medicine. A collaborative team of dental researchers from the IOA and Duke University Medical Center submitted a proposal to the National Institute on Aging for research on "Periodontal disease and stroke in older veterans." A collaborative team of investigators from the School of Public Health, the Injury Prevention Research Center, the Department of Exercise and Sports Medicine, the School of Nursing and the Department of Allied Health Sciences of the School of Medicine submitted a proposal through the Institute on Aging to the National Institute on Aging to pilot an eight-week intervention with older adults that combines a module on balance training with a module on sensory integration and management of attention demands. In addition, the Center on Minority Aging submitted an application for continuation funding for its intercampus activities.

2.4 IOA Exploratory Grant Awards

During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the Institute on Aging has funded nine additional exploratory research grants. These allow junior faculty and doctoral students to investigate new areas of research and education in aging. The Institute conducted a 'zero-based' review of the exploratory research grants program and is replacing it with a Small Research Grants Program for faculty of any rank, with priority given to proposals with active student involvement, interdisciplinary and intercampus linkages, and linkages between the academic and service sectors.

3. The Institute's Information Service

The staffing complement has since been expanded and restructured. In order to advance and expand the Institute's information service initiative, a full-time Librarian, Danielle Borasky, MLS, was hired in February. Three student internships were also created to assist with this information service. Responsibilities of the Information Service includes: (1) conducting information searches for research, education or public service projects of the Institute; (2) developing and maintaining the Institute's Internet connections and on-line and hard copy information resource systems; (3) overseeing the organization, categorization, and display of the Institute's web page; and (4) locating aging resources within and outside of the state. Since its inception in February, the Information Center has achieved the following:

3.1 Web-based Collaboration

The Information Center participated in a collaborative effort between the North Carolina Association on Aging (NCAOA), the School of Information and Library Science (SILS) and the NC Division of Aging, and funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, to develop a website and

database of "best practice" models of aging services and to form a web-based communications network to support state-of-the-art practitioner-based knowledge and skills.

3.2 Faculty Training in Information Technology

In conjunction with the Schools of Social Work and Information and Library Science, the Center coordinated a two-day workshop, "Incorporating Technology into Teaching and Learning about Aging", which was offered to all faculty interested in aging on this campus and other campuses statewide. Funded by a distance education grant awarded by the Provost's office, this workshop provided classroom and on-line resources to help faculty to enhance their instructional methods and to extend the reach of their courses to a wider student population.

3.3 Funding Alerts

The Center established a statewide *Community of Science (COS)* "funding alert," available to providers and faculty across the state. The COS is a database available on the worldwide web, but requiring membership to access its extensive national and international listing of funding opportunities and directory of individuals engaged in a wide variety of research endeavors. Each week the Institute's Information Center posts funding alerts in aging for its associated faculty and campuses and service providers to notify them of new grant initiatives for aging-related education or research projects.

3.4 IOA Website Development

In support of the education, service and research activities noted above, the Information Center has redesigned the Institute's world wide web home page, <www.aging.unc.edu>. This web page is designed to provide information to the public about aging resources, campus-based and community-oriented educational programs, aging-related events, aging-related databases and other state and national resources on aging.

Examples of Most Significant Accomplishments:

Three of the Institute's most significant accomplishments for the period of 99-00 pertain to its mission of service and research, including the development of its

1. The Institute on Aging Information Center – the first ever aging information clearinghouse for North Carolina

As noted above, the Institute has been establishing and expanding its information services as part of its public service mission. During this past year, it established the first central source of aging-related information for researchers, educators, legislators, and service providers in North Carolina. The Center houses the Institute's collections of aging-related materials, offers an on-line catalog of aging-related resources, provides research tools in aging, and staff are available for technical assistance services to conduct searches. Providing a service nowhere else available in the state, the Center is conducting a "digitization project" that is creating electronic versions of unpublished materials including reports and student theses prepared in or about North Carolina's aging population.

2. The Institute on Aging Disaster Relief Response

In October 1999, the IOA invited proposals and ultimately funded three collaborative efforts linking North Carolina community agencies with academic institutions in an effort to ameliorate the

suffering and disruption experienced by North Carolina seniors in the recent hurricanes. The purpose of the competition was to provide targeted disaster relief in a framework that would assist the Institute on Aging to assess the factors that might enhance disaster relief for seniors. The three projects were:

- (1) the "Senior Edgecombe Project", which partnered Edgecombe Home Care & Hospice, a Division of Edgecombe County Health Dept., the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, NC State University and the School of Social Work, UNC-Chapel Hill;
- (2) the Senior Citizens Outreach Recovery Effort - S.C.O.P.E., which partnered the UNC Center on Minority Aging, the Upper Coastal Plain Area Agency on Aging, the Nash Edgecombe Economic Development, Inc., the VOICE Volunteers, the Dept. of Health Education and the Dept. of Social Work at North Carolina Central University; and
- (3) the Retaining Nursing Assistants at Risk of Leaving Employment in Flood Devastated Long Term Care Facilities project, which partnered the UNC-CH Dept. of Family Medicine, the Upper Coastal Plain Area Agency on Aging and the Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital of Asheville, NC.
- (4) Subsequently, the Odum Institute funded a set of small grants on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus to investigators studying the impact of the flood. The IOA provided a match to two of these grants that focused on aging and later life issues in relation to the disaster. The Institute anticipates using project reports from these five small research projects to assist its development of a more systematic applied research initiative to enhance agency preparedness to assist older persons in similar situations.

3. The Center on Minority Aging – expanding the understanding of the aging of minorities in North Carolina

A chief component of the mission of the Center on Minority Aging (CMA) is to encourage and support studies on issues pertaining to minority elders. The CMA has been building its knowledge base of minority aging issues by each year funding studies that focus on a range of clinical and psychosocial issues. This year six grant applications were approved that study such topics as: the effects of racism on diabetic care, cultural mediators of health, measurement of social support provided by African American women, the effect of neighborhood transitions on health status.