

Highlights 2006, UNC Institute on Aging
Submitted by Victor W. Marshall, Director, June 13 2006

I. Mission of the IOA:

The UNC Institute on Aging (IOA) is an Inter-institutional Program, established by the legislature and located at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The IOA's mission is to enhance the well-being of older North Carolinians by fostering statewide collaboration in education, research and service.

II. Major Accomplishments in the Past Academic Year

1. Strengthening the foundation for research

The IOA has strengthened its research presence by enhancing its staffing, expanding the pool of aging researchers and extending its portfolio of research topical areas. We appointed Dr. Jennifer Craft Morgan as Associate Director for Research, a position that had been assumed by the Director due to previous budget cuts. Four new Research Scientists were appointed to the IOA, bringing our total to eight. One, Dr. Lloyd Edwards, will establish a statistical consulting core within the IOA. Research Scientists are provided office or lab space and may be assisted through a portion of their salary or through a research stipend, with the understanding that they will actively develop research through the IOA. Through the IOA's Center for Aging and Diversity, Dr. Dilworth-Anderson, Associate Director for Aging and Diversity, trains junior faculty from UNC and other universities in the UNC system through her NIA-funded K-07 Career Development Award, "*Closing the Gap on Minority Aging & Health Research*".

A new initiative is our "*Research Stimulus Program*", financed with returned indirects and supplemented with additional IOA funds. We will be mentoring and supporting with seed funds four interdisciplinary investigator teams (selected from nine letters of intent), led mostly by junior scholar applicants. They will develop proposals to external agencies for research to be housed in the IOA. The innovative program features active, structured mentoring, as the applicants are mostly junior scholars and new to the field of aging.

A second new initiative, our "*Aging@UNC Directory*" of research, education and service activities at UNC at Chapel Hill, was launched in the spring of 2006. Users can search the directory by name or program, and our goal is to include all aging-related activities, no matter how minor, across the entire campus. Response to the directory has been very positive.

Our new funding this year rose to about \$2.8 million, up from an average of about \$1.25 million in the previous few years. Given the cumulative effect, our annual research budget is now close to \$4 million. New projects include a \$832,000 grant to Senior Research Scientist Joanne Gard Marshall from IMLS for a study of workforce aging in librarianship, a second IMLS grant for \$185,000 to evaluate a national program promoting civic engagement of seniors through public libraries, and a contract to Dr Craft Morgan and Senior Research Scientist Dr. Thomas R. Konrad for \$1million from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for evaluation research building on the IOA's strength in research on the long term care workforce. Dr. Mary Altpeter, Associate Director for Program Development, received a \$250,000 CDC grant to continue the Healthy Aging Research Network, as well as contract support for related projects of about \$90,000 from the National Council on Aging, Grantmakers in Aging, the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, and the John A. Hartford Foundation. With solicited donations, we have also established a longitudinal study of a continuing care retirement community and its residents.

The range of research interests is noteworthy. While we maintain a strong presence in diversity research through our Center on Aging and Diversity, new grants strengthen our existing research programs dealing with the workforce providing care for the aging, a distinct program on general aspects of aging and work, and healthy aging. We have made a beginning in a new area, “*Aging and the Community*”. We are working closely with the School of Information and Library Science (Professors Joanne Gard Marshall, Distinguished Research Chair in SILS is also a Senior Research Scientist in the IOA) to develop *a niche area linking aging and library and information science research*, a niche which we anticipate will give us the leadership nationwide in this area.

2. Strengthening our educational activities on the UNC Chapel Hill campus and statewide

The Institute’s ongoing contributions in education are to: 1) administer and support the North Carolina Gerontology Consortium, which now has 10 approved online graduate courses; 2) co-sponsor, with the School of Social Work, the Certificate in Aging Program, which has more than 125 students from 12 campus departments; 3) conduct research training through the Carolina Program on Health and Aging Research (CPHAR); and 4) sponsor the annual Aging Exchange research day, with other aging-related units and financial support from several of the professional schools. The event increases campus communications and recognizes graduate student and postdoctoral fellow work in aging research, education and service. At the 3rd annual Aging Exchange this year, the 6th annual *Gordon H. DeFriese Career Development in Aging Research Awards* were presented to faculty member, Dr. Sharon Williams, Department on Allied Health Sciences and Research Scientist in the IOA; and to doctoral student, Jean Munn, School of Social Work. Well over 100 faculty, students and community members attended the event.

Statewide, and nationally, the Institute’s *Healthy Aging Network (NCHAN)* (co-funded by CDC to the IOA and the Program on Aging) links applied research with research translation and provider capacity development. This program develops peer reviewed publications, conference workshops, training modules, manuals and issue briefs on evidence-based health promotion for local, state and national audiences. The NCHAN established the NC Healthy Aging Coalition, a major state collaborative involving 40 representatives from 25 state, regional and local agencies, professional and consumer organizations. Our Center on Aging and Diversity’s project (funded by Glaxo-Smith Kline) under the leadership of Dr. Dilworth-Anderson, offers ‘training the trainers’ programs to enhance caregiving for persons with dementia in African-American communities.

3. Extending our contributions to service and engagement

IOA Associate Director for Public Service, Bill Lamb, continues to coordinate *The North Carolina Conference on Aging*. The 4th annual Conference in New Bern in October 2004, was attended by more than 500 service providers, policy-makers, faculty, students, and senior advocates. This conference grows each year in participation and we anticipate 600+ participants this coming year. Lamb also coordinates our *Senior Leadership Program*, which provides a 15-month mentored traineeship program, this year to a cohort of four.

Associate Director for Aging and Diversity, Peggye Dilworth-Anderson was appointed by President Bush to the advisory committee for the White House Conference on Aging and Associate Director for Clinical Affairs, Dr. Jan Busby-Whitehead, was a delegate. In the spring of 2006 the Institute held a successful event on the UNC campus to discuss the implications of the White House Conference on Aging both in this state and nationally.

As part of our goal to increase the visibility of the IOA with community stake holders, IOA service staff participate in a wide array of working groups and boards of organizations including: the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging; Wake County Human Services Aging Committee; Duke School of Nursing Evidence Based Nursing in Geriatrics; NCSU Cooperative Extension; Partners in Wellness; the NC Department of Health and Human Services Consumer Directed Care Initiative; the Division of Aging and Adult Services SAFE in Long Term Care Task Force; Mid-east Commission Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board; Triangle United Way Wake County United Way Senior Issues Team; Division of Medical Assistance CAP-DA Standards Work Group; Division of Aging and Adult Services Funding Formula Committee; NC Institute of Medicine LTC Quality Work Group; NC Coalition on Aging; NC Association on Aging; NC AARP Executive Committee; Resources for Seniors Board and Executive Committee; Wake County Adult Care Home Community Advisory Committee; Shepherd House Assisted Living board; Advisory Committee, Joint Masters Program in Gerontology and Business, UNC at Greensboro; Advisory Committee, North Carolina AARP Older Worker Initiative.

Extending beyond the state, IOA senior staff serve in leadership roles in professional associations, including: the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education, the Southern Gerontological Society (including editor of its Journal of Applied Gerontology), and the Gerontological Society of America. External advisory committees on which senior staff serve include the Research Advisory Committee of the Boston College Center for Aging and Work, the AARP Business and Aging Advisory Committee, the Gerontological Advisory Council of Veterans Affairs Canada, the John A. Hartford Foundation Faculty Scholars Program, and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

The Institute's *Information Center* supports research development as well as being a resource for the broader aging service network. The IOA website now averages over 62,000 "hits" per month (a gain from 48,000 in the previous year); the IOA library increased its hard copy holdings to 1846 this year and its digital collection to 1898.

III. Goals for Coming Academic Year

These goals coalesce to broaden the financial and institutional support base beyond our current heavy reliance on state funds.

- develop more in-house research in the areas of health promotion, rural aging, diversity and aging, aging and the community, the aging workforce and retirement , and the long term care workforce; and continue to develop niche area linking aging research to library and information science.

- continue to add active researchers through the Research Scientist mechanism and the Research Stimulus Program.

- in partnership with the Program on Aging of the UNC School of Medicine, develop a campus-wide aging research retreat.

- collaborate with other aging research units in any NIH Roadmap initiatives.

- secure stable funding for administration and educational development for the NC Consortium on Aging, with continuing development of distance education initiatives.

- continue to increase visibility of the Institute with community stake-holders and, in particular, at the state political level and among state government agencies in addition to the Division of Aging and Adult Services (where the relationship is already very strong). To this end, I intend to appoint a part-time communications director.

- hold 10th anniversary celebrations of the Institute on Aging (founded August 1996)