COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The Gerontology Minor

Gerontology is an area of study that focuses on the bio-psycho-social-cultural-spiritual well-being of older adults.

It takes a diverse group of professionals to care for the complex needs of older adults. The likelihood that you will be working with or in some other way helping older adults is greater than ever before.

A minor in gerontology is a great idea if you are interested in areas such as:

- Psychology
- Human Nutrition
- Health Care Management
- Social Work
- Family & Consumer Sciences
- Sociology
- Exercise Science
- Political Science
- Biology
- Visual & Performing Arts

Growing older isn't what it used to be! The demographics in the United States reflect dramatic growth in the number of older adults and in the range of diversity they represent. In 2010, individuals age 65 and older numbered 40.4 million – an increase of 5.4 million since 2000. It is predicted that by 2030, there will be 72.1 million older adults living in the United States! (Department of Health & Human Services/Administration on Aging, 2012).

Along with this growth, we are seeing a dramatic shift in the norms associated with aging. Many older adults are experiencing unprecedented longevity with good health and vitality. Yet, the increasing potential for longevity is also resulting in alarming numbers of older adults who are struggling – those that are living longer with serious illnesses, complex losses, and deepening levels of isolation and poverty. Historically, providing care for this population was predominately seen as a medical specialty called geriatrics and was characterized by focusing on the expected trajectory toward debilitating illness, loss of vitality, and death. Because people are living longer, matters of quantity vs. quality of life are taking on new and complex considerations that require the involvement of a multidisciplinary team of professionals.

In light of the current demographics, predictions of growth over the next 30 years, and the needs associated with this population, professionals entering the career world today will likely work with or on behalf of adults age 65 and older in some manner. This means that there will also be tremendous employment opportunities for people from multiple professions who have a solid foundation of knowledge in aging!

Program of Study

To meet this challenge, Winthrop University offers an interdisciplinary minor in gerontology that is designed for students in any field of study who wish to gain knowledge needed for careers that involve working directly with or in other ways caring for older adults. The 18 semester hours of study required for the minor are structured in a way that provides opportunities to learn about the diverse concerns and needs of older adults. Students learn about the experiences associated with aging using a multidisciplinary approach that relies on coursework in psychology, social work, biology, sociology, human nutrition, gerontology, and health care management. One of the more popular aspects of the gerontology minor is the field practicum experience. In this course, students actually spend time in an agency that serves older adults. This allows students opportunities to actually see and apply what they are learning through the coursework in real world experiences.

Scholarships

There are two scholarships available for eligible gerontology students. These are competitive awards that require students to complete an application in order to be considered. The application process is typically announced to gerontology minors in the spring semester. Selections are made in May and the award benefit is given for the fall semester of the following academic year.

For more information, contact:

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