

*Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA)
Alaska's Geriatric Education Center
Grant Proposal Overview*

The aging of the population is well recognized nationally and continues to grab media attention. According to recent Center for Disease Control report (Health, United States 2002), women and men who live to the age of 65 will live on an average to age 84 and 81 respectively. The United States now devotes 13.1 percent of its gross domestic product to health care, more than any other industrialized country. This demographic and health phenomenon represents major challenges in our society, particularly in Alaska where the number of older Alaskans is expected to triple in number by 2018; at which time they will comprise 12% of the total population.

Professionals, paraprofessionals, and students will need to understand more about the implications of an aging society that will require innovative social and economic responses. Research and program development efforts are needed to explore effective ways to implement statewide gerontology and geriatric training, to make social policy, and to evaluate the impact of such efforts.

Alaska's aging society, coupled with the lack of gerontological training and education programs available in the state, represents an opportunity for the University to become more actively involved in an area with broad implications for social policy, as well as creative health care and service provision. The recent focus by the Anchorage Daily News detailed critical shortages of health care workers in the state. There is an increasing number of physicians who are retiring and/or limiting the number of Medicare patients they serve. In addition there are numerous reports indicating critical shortages in the long-term care workforce. In order to address these critical shortages, a University of Alaska consortium has been developed and proposes to take a leadership role in the development and implementation of training, education, and research in the field of geriatrics. The university-statewide consortium include:

- University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) academic community including Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Human Services, Adult Education, Nursing, Center for Human Development, Family Service Training Academy, Alaska Center for Rural Health, Institute for Circumpolar Health, WWAMI
- University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) College of Liberal Arts Psychology, Social Work, Allied Health, College of Rural Alaska, Alaska Area Health Education Centers
- University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) Community Education – Sitka Campus
- University of Alaska (UA) Statewide Health
- Partnerships with Alaska Commission on Aging, Division of Senior Services, AARP, Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association, Division of Longevity Program, Division of Health and Human Services

The Geriatric Education Center will be housed within the University of Alaska Anchorage College of Health and Social Welfare with administrative support provided by the Center for Human Development – a University Center for Excellence in Disabilities. Satellite centers will be located within the University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Liberal Arts and the University of Alaska Southeast (Sitka Campus) in the department of Community Education. The academic portion of the gerontology program (i.e., minor for currently matriculating students) will be housed in the Department of Sociology in the College of Arts and Sciences. Partnerships with the Northwest Geriatric Education Center at the University of Washington and the University of Southern California Division of Geriatric Medicine will support medical and pharmacy training through their existing programs.

Mission Statement
Alaska's Geriatric Education Center Complements, Enhances,
and Fills the Gaps in Training, Education, and Research

Goals:

1. Improve access to quality health care through appropriate preparation, composition and distribution of the health professions workforce; and
2. Improve access to a diverse and culturally competent and sensitive health professions workforce.

Objectives:

Through collaborative partnerships:

1. Identify and develop needed interdisciplinary geriatric academic and community based training programs for health professionals and aspiring health professionals to advance provision of accessible quality health care for older Alaskans, particularly for those living in medically underserved areas.
 - Build on existing interdisciplinary global, national, state and community-based linkages.
 - Establish a multi-cultural network of regional gerontology centers throughout the state.
 - Develop needed geriatric curricula.
2. Develop cost effective and sustainable methods for developing and disseminating needed cultural competent geriatric healthcare curricula in medically underserved areas of Alaska.
 - Infuse geriatric training into existing and developing long distance training modalities.
3. Develop needed technical assistance in promoting learning opportunities for students and faculty.
 - Develop and support exemplary interdisciplinary clinical training opportunities in medically underserved areas.
 - Develop and implement student placement and scholarship programs for students serving in medically underserved areas.
 - Partner with GEC's nationwide, develop and coordinate a "GEC Faculty Exchange" program.
4. Develop capacity for applied and basic research in aging.
 - Establish statewide Aging Research Seminars.
 - Promote and establish interdisciplinary applied aging research program projects attracting academic and community involvement.
5. Develop initiatives that promote leveraging of resources and enabling self-sufficiency.
 - Coordinate statewide collective grant writing projects.
 - Develop proactive strategies in attracting major external support in the form of interdisciplinary program project grants relating to applied research in aging.

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