



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
O'Brien Institute for Public Health  
Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging

## **Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging Self-Appraisal of Operations and Initiatives 2011-2021 (with an emphasis on 2016-2021)**



Dr. David Hogan, academic lead, facilitates a panel the Centre organized during the 2017 “Reverse Trade Show” held by the University of Calgary W21C and Alberta Health Services. Panelists (from left) Diane Bon Bernard, Sylvia Teare, and Lois Faris reflected on their experiences of technology and aging-in-place. (Photo: Julia McGregor).

**Prepared by Dr. Ann Toohey, Dr. Chantelle Zimmer, and Dr. David Hogan  
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## I. Background

The purpose of this self-appraisal is to provide information that will help our reviewers assess the extent to which the Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging (“the Centre”) is achieving the vision and goals set forth in its Terms of Reference (TOR):

*The Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging will be a cross-faculty, interdisciplinary organization embedded within the O’Brien Institute for Public Health (the “O’Brien Institute”). The objectives of the Centre are to build capacity in aging-related research and education at the University of Calgary, engage in community outreach activities, and inform public policy as it relates to population aging. By aligning aging-related initiatives within the University and creating opportunities for collaboration, the Centre aims to enhance the health, wellness, and quality of life of older persons.*

Within this self-appraisal, attention will be paid to what has been successful, what could be improved, gaps in current activities and initiatives, and emerging opportunities. Specific objectives that will be addressed in this self-appraisal report include the following:

- i. Evaluating University-wide impact of the Centre in building capacity in relation to aging-focused research, training, and outreach activities.
- ii. Reviewing alignment with current trends, issues, and challenges linked to the aging population.
- iii. Reviewing alignment with University of Calgary priorities, from the Growth Through Focus vision and relevant research priorities, to Faculty and Department-specific goals and interests.
- iv. Reviewing alignment of the Centre with the current interests of the primary donor, the Brenda Strafford Foundation (BSF).
- v. Considering opportunities for securing sustainable funding while actively planning for leadership succession.

## II. Approach

There are two components of the Centre’s self-appraisal. This self-appraisal report offers a comprehensive review of objectives, process, scope, and impact of the different initiatives that the Centre has developed and delivered since its inception in 2011. While impact can be challenging to quantify, we present selected metrics from our electronic records, data held in the contact management system of the O’Brien Institute, and data on the research activities of Centre affiliates provided by the Cumming School of Medicine Office of Faculty Development and Performance.

To supplement our quantitative assessment, we contracted a consultant to conduct and analyze focus group discussions with our stakeholders. These were researchers whom we have supported; trainees who have been involved with our programs, including scholarship funding; and community organizations with whom we have close links, including our municipal government. Focus group findings are the subject of a separate report.

## III. Overview of Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging operations

Prior to 2016, the Centre was based in the Office of the Vice-President of Research, reflecting the commitment of the Centre to support inter-faculty aging-focused activities. During this time, the academic lead, Dr. David Hogan, was able to provide 0.1 FTE (i.e., 0.5 day per week) to managing the

Centre, but there was no administrative infrastructure to support Centre activities. A student group (Interdisciplinary Students in Aging Research [ISAR]) led by Social Work doctoral students Cari Gulbrandsen and Anna Azulai was established with Centre support. They organized several events between 2012 and 2015 and launched a website. The two most significant events were full day research symposia consisting of invited keynote speakers and student presentations. The Centre supported other meetings including an international workshop in 2012 exploring policy issues related to older adult drivers organized and hosted by the academic lead. Relating to education, a post-doctoral fellow was supported and there were exploratory talks about an interdisciplinary course in gerontology that did not come to fruition.



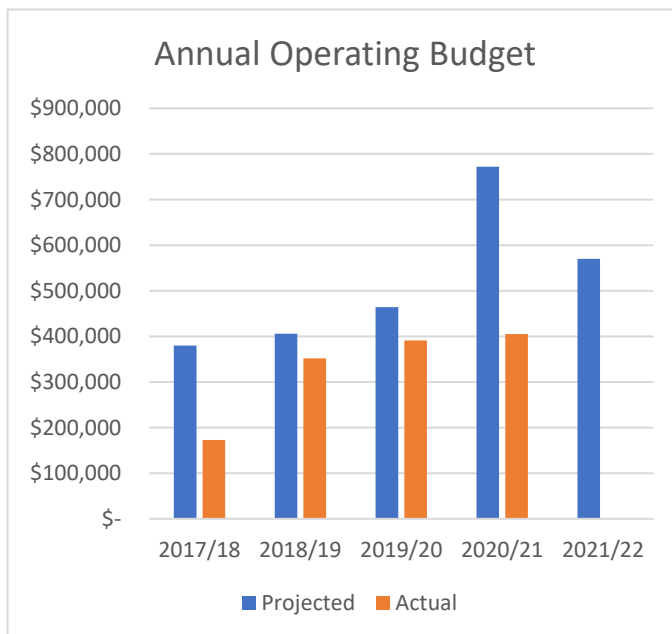
Dr. David Hogan, inaugural academic lead of the Centre, pictured with Dr. William Ghali, former Scientific Director of the O'Brien Institute for Public Health. (Photo: O'Brien Institute for Public Health).

Initially it was thought that initiatives originating from faculty and students, coupled with financial and organizational support from the Centre, were all that would be required to expand interdisciplinary aging-related activities within the University. It became clear that the Centre had to take a more active role. A series of meetings between Dr. Hogan, Mike Conroy (CEO and President, BSF), and Vivien Lai (then Vice-President of Strategic Development, BSF) were held in 2014-15 to review the situation. This led to the creation of a work plan that included hiring staff and moving to a setting within the University where more day-to-day assistance could be provided. These recommendations were acted upon with an administrative move into the O'Brien Institute, which occurred in 2016-17, and a manager being hired in early 2017 (Dr. Ann Toohey). This move enabled the Centre to launch several programs aligned with the TOR and the spirit of the original gift agreement. A combination of student assistantships, field placements, and casual appointments were implemented to supplement human resource capacity for specific projects. In October 2020, a project coordinator was hired at 0.6 FTE (Dr. Chantelle Zimmer). This position became 1.0 FTE in April 2021. This new position has enhanced both research and administrative capacity, including an effort to retool our Web site to better convey our role and programs. Further information regarding the Centre's governance and organizational structure can be found in the Appendix of this report.

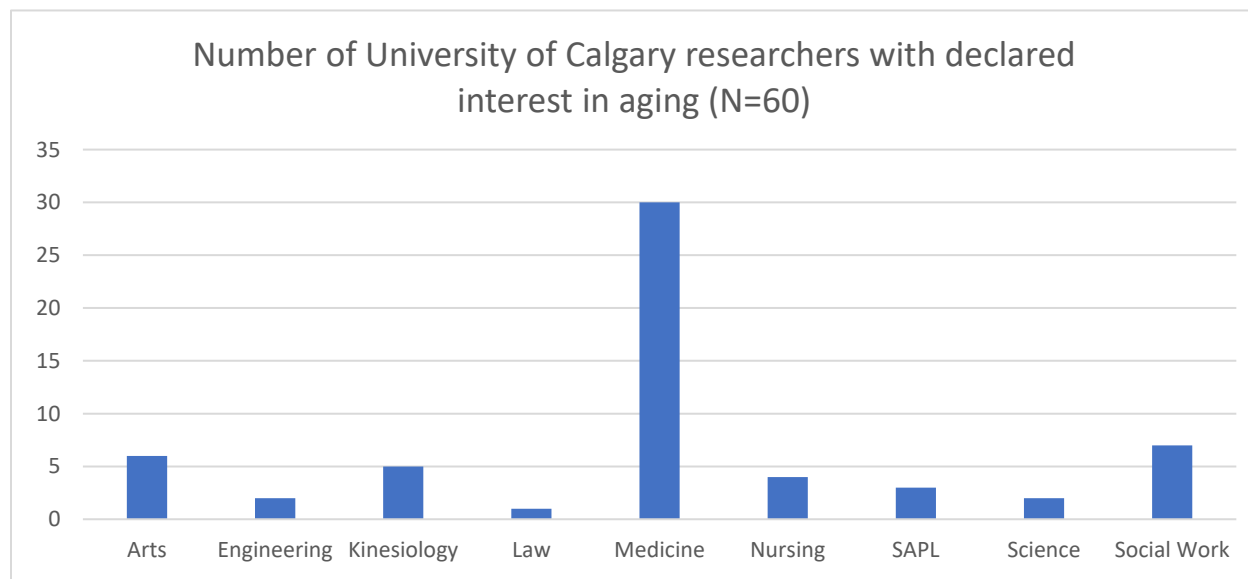
The Centre's current operating budget consists of an annual operating fund installment payment from the BSF (ranging from \$200-\$300K per year) in addition to interest from the endowment of the Centre (currently just below \$100K per year) and a historical Geriatric Medicine endowment (providing

approximately \$12K per year). These funds are supplemented by competitive grants garnered by student researchers, as described elsewhere in this report. Over the last few years, the Centre has been spending down accumulated surpluses, leading to annual expenditures being intentionally greater than yearly revenues.

At the start of the 2017-18 fiscal year (i.e., the first fiscal year operating within the O’Brien Institute) the Centre’s operating budget sat at a balance of approximately \$665.5K. Subsequent annual budgets intentionally reserved about one year of operating funds to assist with the anticipated financial transition following the end of the gift agreement. In April 2021, the operating balance was approximately \$420K, enabling us to also deal with any unexpected expenses related to a physical move into new office space within the BSF Cambridge Manor facility. The Foundation requested this reserve be spent down though instead of receiving the operating fund installment payment scheduled to support activities during the 2021-22 fiscal year. At the end of this year, most of our reserves will be spent.



#### IV. The University of Calgary’s aging-focused community

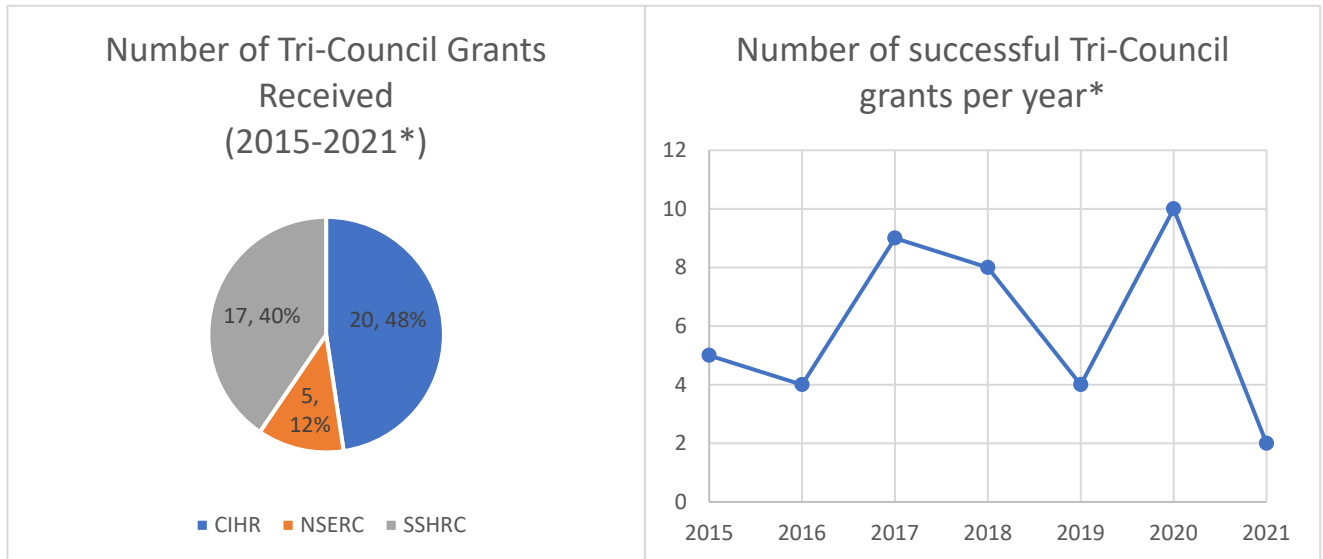


**Notes:**

- (i) SAPL = School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape
- (ii) While we aspire to remain apprised of faculty with a declared interest in aging, the virtual environment resulting from the pandemic has hindered this effort in 2020-21, and thus this analysis may have missed faculty members who either joined the university or else have shifted their research interests since early 2020.

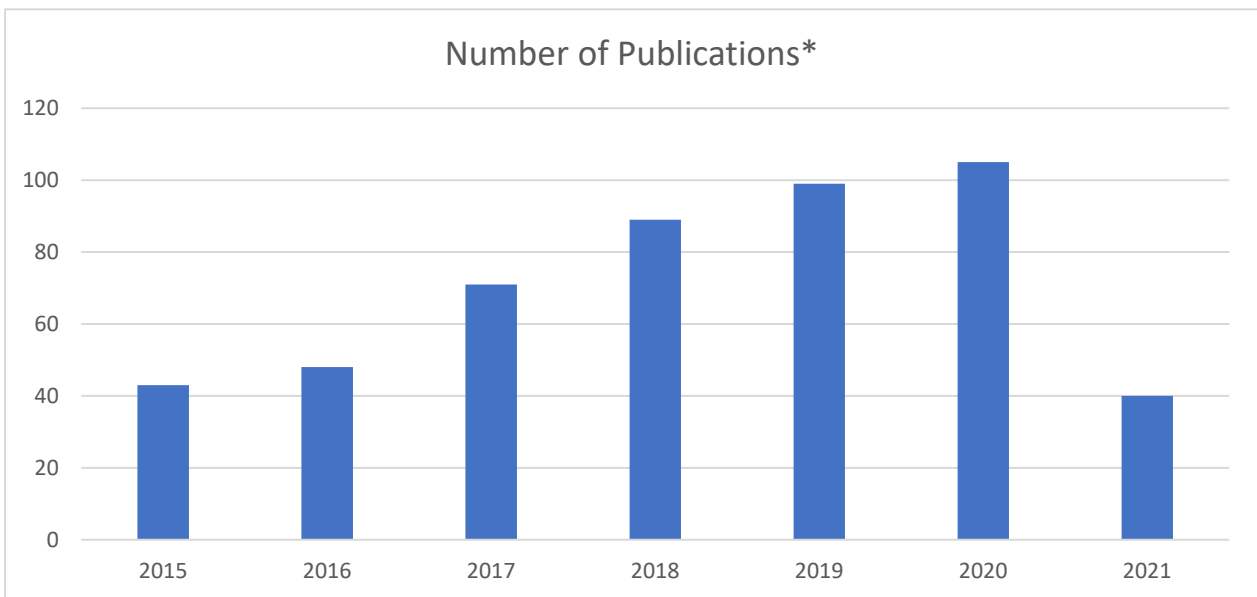
i. Tri-Council funding and bibliometrics

Across University of Calgary Faculties and Departments, we estimate that there are 60 researchers with aging as a primary research focus. As the above figure illustrates, about half have primary appointments in the Cumming School of Medicine, while the other half is distributed across the campus. This distribution is reflected in Tri-Council funding awarded. Of the researchers we have identified, the breakdown of grants by agency awarded between January 2015 and May 2021 (total=\$9.537M) follows:



\* Note that data reflects results only through May 2021

There was a total of 495 peer-reviewed publications related to aging credited to these faculty members. As shown below, the number of papers has more than doubled since 2015.



\* Note that data reflects results only through May 2021

The increase in publications over the last 5 years illustrates a growing body of age-related scholarship within the University of Calgary and demonstrates the need for an entity like the Centre to support this broad community of talented faculty members. The Centre cannot take credit for the extent to which age-related research outputs have grown. However, based on the implementation of a number of programs that we describe later in this report (e.g., catalyst funding; internal peer-review; and others), we believe the Centre helped position many of these researchers to receive external funding and publish research. In the future, we hope to play a bigger role in developing strong interdisciplinary teams and approaches to studying aging in all its complexity and inform aging-relevant policy.

## ii. Priority areas identified by researchers

To better understand our community of researchers with a focus on older adults, the Centre hosted in 2019 a series of five open houses across the University of Calgary to connect with faculty members and students in Faculties we primarily engaged with (i.e., Kinesiology, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work) as well as those in Arts and Sciences. In these sessions, we described the Centre and our programs before having an interactive conversation with attendees to understand ways we could better support them. Thirty-seven faculty members and students attended, and five priorities were identified. While these priorities do not drive our major activities and programs, which are derived from our TOR, they have helped us ensure that our activities are aligned with the needs of the academic community:

1. Actively promote interdisciplinary connections across the campus community of aging-focused researchers. Specific suggestions raised included an interdisciplinary aging course or summer school, aging research days for students, and hosting formal research/networking opportunities.
2. Realize the vision for the Centre's geographic home in BSF's Cambridge Manor as a "hub" to build both capacity and cohesion across the academic aging-focused community.
3. Raise the profile of the aging agenda within the University community and provide opportunities to connect those in isolated pockets (e.g., biology of aging laboratories) to the wider community.
4. Formalize and strengthen links with the community outside of academia. These efforts could help identify prospective advisors on research projects, research participants, and funders. It was felt that the Centre should assist with reducing barriers for older adults accessing the University campus (e.g., covering parking fees; better wayfinding) and events (e.g., more use of online presentations).
5. Leverage the Age-Friendly University concept, as described further along in this report.



Brenda Stafford Foundation's Cambridge Manor facility is the new location for the Centre as of Fall 2020. The vision for this space is to become a new hub that builds both capacity and cohesion across the academic aging-focused community and stimulates community engagement. (Image: Brenda Stafford Foundation).

## V. Summary of Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging activities (2011-2021)



Dr. Ann Toohey and panelists featured in the 2020 “Beyond Housing: We’re not ready for the shelf” public event on the need for appropriate supports for older adults experiencing homelessness. (Photo: O’Brien Institute for Public Health).

Centre activities in this self-appraisal report are organized by our four priority areas: building capacity in interdisciplinary research on aging; building capacity in interdisciplinary training on aging; promoting community engagement in ways that align with our vision; and, informing public policy to better support older adults and the aging population. Within each area, several programs and activities will be described.

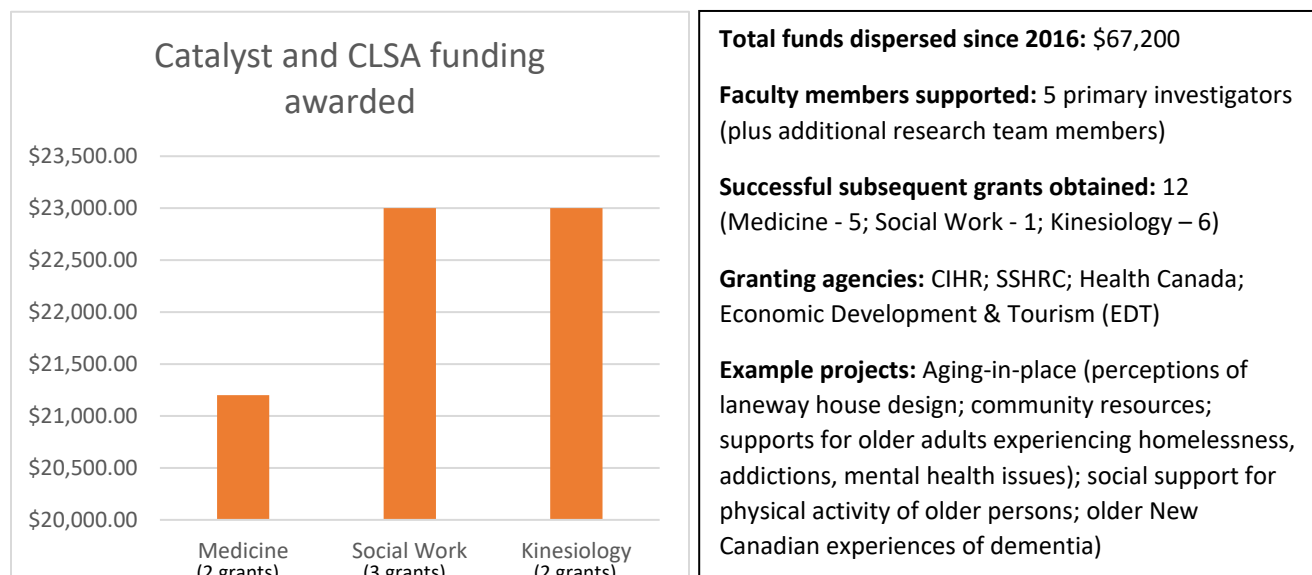
<p><b><u>Building capacity in interdisciplinary research</u></b>                      Research funding                      Research collaborations and in-kind support (including networking)                      Centre-led research projects</p>	<p><b><u>Building capacity in interdisciplinary training</u></b>                      Funds for student-led initiatives                      Post-doctoral and graduate scholarships                      Summer research assistantships                      Graduate assistantships and placements                      Interdisciplinary aging summer program</p>
<p><b><u>Community engagement</u></b>                      Centre events                      Sponsorships                      Centre-led initiatives (Age-Friendly University and Indigenous Aging)</p>	<p><b><u>Informing public policy</u></b>                      Age-Friendly Calgary/City of Calgary partnership                      CIHR Institute of Aging/Canadian Research Centres on Aging                      Interactions with the Government of Alberta                      Interactions with other organizations</p>



### i. Building capacity in interdisciplinary research

#### Research funding

The Centre has two main funding programs to support faculty members' research. Catalyst grants are relatively small amounts of funding (\$10-20K) for pilot projects that are provided to catalyze opportunities for faculty to garner external funding for a developed research program. Due to the small size of the aging-focused community and the high likelihood of conflicts of interest, the Centre does not review these applications for scientific rigour; this is done by O'Brien Institute leadership. For applications they consider fundable, the Centre confirms relevance to our goals. COVID-19 disrupted these grants in 2020. Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) support grants cover data access fees (\$3K) for faculty members using data from this national study. We recruit catalyst and CLSA applicants, often early career investigators, via networking opportunities, e-mail communications, and our website.



In addition to the catalyst and CLSA funding programs, we also support major initiatives being led by faculty members on a case-by-case basis. To date, we committed **matching funds of \$50K** for a proposal to develop a major training program to promote innovation and commercialization of future neuro-technologies (i.e., [NSERC BRAIN CREATE](#)). One of the program's directors, Dr. Marc Poulin, is an affiliated researcher and holds the Brenda Strafford Foundation Chair in Alzheimer Research. The matching funds are being used to support for 2 years a post-doctoral fellow of the program's choosing.

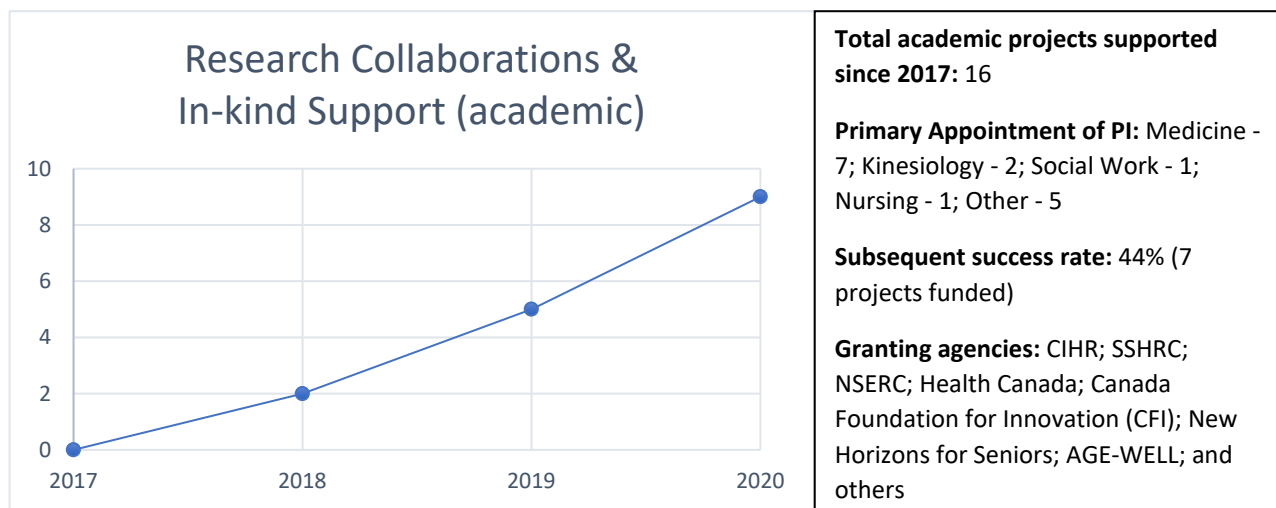


Centre-funded researcher, Dr. Lara Nixon (Medicine), speaking with lived experience panellist Anne Cartledge following the 2020 "Beyond Housing" public event. (Photo: O'Brien Institute for Public Health).

### Research collaborations and in-kind support

The Centre and its personnel are increasingly requested to support interdisciplinary research projects with an aging focus in a variety of ways, other than providing funding support. These requests often come from academic research teams and, at times, community organizations. Of the latter, most of these organizations are local seniors-serving agencies that deliver affordable housing, social services, and other types of programming. Some of the requests we receive involve providing a letter of support for inclusion in a research funding application, which have on occasion been provided to researchers from other institutions (e.g., University of Alberta, Simon Fraser University). Other requests of the Centre are more substantive. Such examples include providing background literature or resources to support organizational activities, clinical and methodological input for the development of research proposals, methodological input for evaluating community-based program impacts, connecting researchers with prospective community partners (or vice versa), assisting with participant recruitment, contributing to analyses, and supporting knowledge mobilization activities. All projects supported by the Centre align with the priorities outlined in our TOR. The value of the research support we provide to researchers and community organizations are further discussed in the Focus Group Report.

The most substantial collaboration to date was the Centre’s role in developing the 2020 Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) proposal. This contribution involved being the “hub” for the creation of the proposal, which required coordinating with numerous University entities (e.g., Research Services, technicians with the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape [SAPL], Facilities [Real Estate], Risk Management & Insurance, Supply Chain Management, Campus Architecture, Information Technologies [Data Computing]), the interdisciplinary research team [10 members and 25 other users], and external partners, primarily the BSF [leadership, staff, and contractors involved in constructing Cambridge Manor]).



Another form of research support not reflected in the figure above is having Centre personnel with relevant content expertise reviewing O’Brien Institute members’ external funding applications before submission. The academic lead completed most of these internal peer-review requests between 2015 and 2020, with 12 applications, and the manager has reviewed 3 applications since 2017. The primary appointments of most O’Brien Institute applicants are in Medicine, though we have also reviewed

applications for aging-focused researchers in Kinesiology and Sociology. Data on the success rates of these funding applications are incomplete; however, a substantial improvement in success rates has been observed by the O'Brien Institute since implementing the program. Centre personnel also review funding applications informally, by request, for University of Calgary faculty and community partners.

In addition to more direct research support, making productive connections between researchers in different Faculties and Departments, or between researchers and community organizations, is a key priority of the Centre. We make these connections through a variety of communication channels. In terms of formal e-mail announcements of relevant internal and external opportunities (e.g., funding, training, etc.) and special events (e.g., symposia, community workshops and initiatives, etc.), we have dispersed over 150 messages since 2017 to both our academic and non-academic distribution lists. Our role in facilitating informal networking has been challenging to realize during the pandemic due to reduced opportunities for in-person interactions. In the past, this form of support has had a significant and positive impact on our research affiliates and community partners, as described in more detail in the Focus Group Report. Examples of our range of networking activities are noted in the following table.

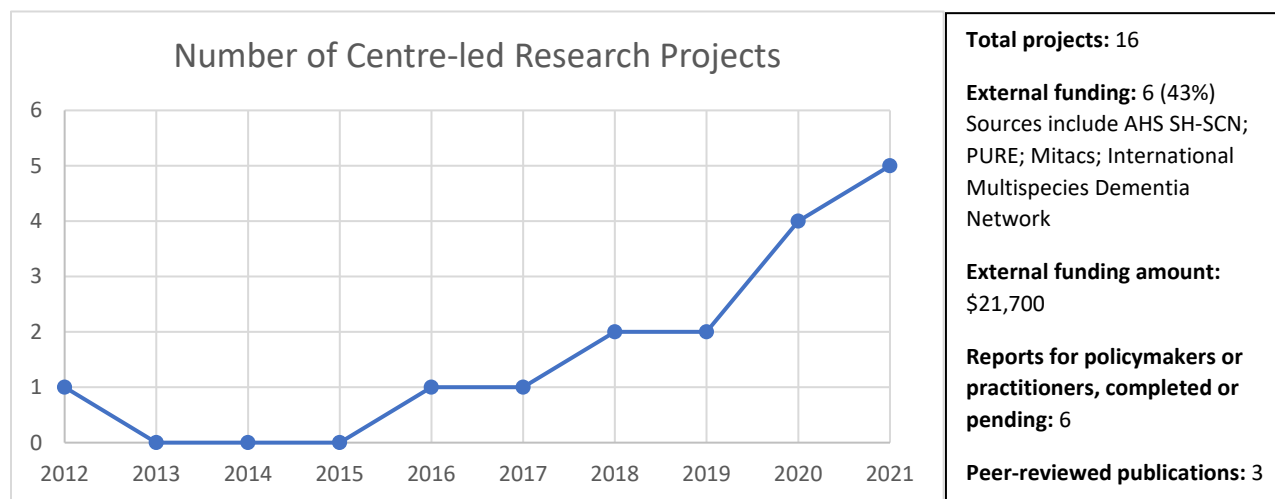
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Examples of various processes used to recruit and connect</b>
Catalyst grant applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mail announcements and reminders promoting opportunities</li> <li>• In-person recruitment of affiliates, particularly new faculty s whose interests align with our TOR and faculty whose interests have shifted to aging</li> </ul>
Research partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both proactive and reactive facilitation of meaningful research connections via in-person or e-introductions of researchers with shared interests</li> <li>• Both proactive and reactive facilitation of meaningful connections via in-person or e-introductions of researchers and community organizations with shared interests</li> </ul>
Training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mail announcements and reminders promoting relevant internal and external interdisciplinary training opportunities</li> <li>• Funding support offered to students to attend professional development opportunities (competitive and non-competitive)</li> <li>• Making connections between organizations with project funding available and prospective supervisors/trainees</li> </ul>
Knowledge mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active facilitation of opportunities to highlight faculty and student research activities at both internal and external public events related to aging</li> <li>• Participation in local, regional, and national initiatives to raise the profile of UCalgary's expertise and training in the area of aging (e.g., exhibitors' booths)</li> <li>• Ensuring that UCalgary faculty with appropriate expertise are available to respond to media requests or opportunities for feature articles</li> </ul>



Dr. David Hogan takes advantage of a research networking opportunity during the 2017 “Reverse Trade Show” event. (Photo: Julia McGregor).

### Centre-led research projects

The Centre leads or co-leads several research projects that align with our TOR and address our research interests, which include age-friendly communities, One Health, and the use of CLSA data. Half of these projects are funded wholly by the Centre, with most projects involving collaborations with faculty members or representatives of community organizations, including the municipal government. Three projects have involved national or international collaborations. These projects create meaningful roles for students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Please see the following section on building capacity in interdisciplinary training for additional details of projects with a student role.



**Notes:** AHS SH-SCN = Alberta Health Services - Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network; PURE = University of Calgary's Program for Undergraduate Research Experience.

Descriptions of specific Centre-led projects and outputs are provided in the following table and figure:

Year	Project Title	Collaborators	100% Centre Funded	Student Role
2012	Global perspectives on assessing older drivers: Science informing public policy	UCalgary researchers and Alberta Motor Association	✓	✓
2016	A tale of eight cities, age-friendliness and the CLSA	National interdisciplinary researchers		
2017	Building capacity in aging-focused research and training opportunities at the University of Calgary: A systematic environmental scan	None	✓	✓
2018	Assessing the impact of municipal age-friendly policy implementation in Calgary, Alberta	City of Calgary		✓
2018	Indigenous aging in Southern Alberta	None	✓	✓
2019	University of Calgary Age-Friendly University initiative	None	✓	✓
2019	How do natural disasters impact the aging population? Using CLSA data to explore the effects of the 2013 Calgary flood	None	✓	✓
2020	Forging human-animal bonds? Robotic pets in care settings for people living with dementia	UCalgary and international interdisciplinary researchers		✓
2020	Tools for eradicating structural ageism: A rapid review with recommendations	City of Calgary		✓

## Brenda Stafford Centre on Aging Self-Appraisal Report, 2011-2021

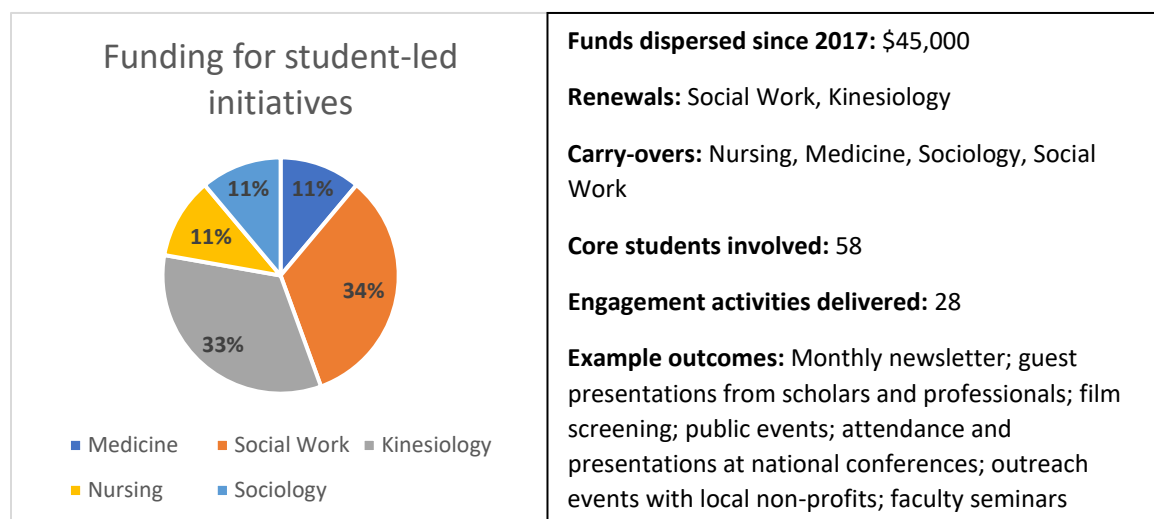
2020	Supporting aging-in-place: Exploring older adults' housing needs and preferences, age-friendly principles, and adaptable housing options	City of Calgary		✓
2020	Developing an evidence-based virtual falls prevention program for delivery to older patients in Calgary, Alberta	Alberta Health Services	✓	✓
2021	<i>In progress:</i> Exploring the health promotion implications of a volunteer-based pet assistance program for socially isolated, lower income seniors in Calgary	Calgary Seniors		✓
2021	<i>In progress:</i> Older adults' perspectives on falls: A scoping review of international literature	Global Taskforce for Falls Prevention	✓	✓
2021	<i>In progress:</i> Changes in alcohol intake during the COVID-19 pandemic in older adults. Results of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) COVID-19 Questionnaire	UCalgary interdisciplinary researchers		
2021	<i>Under development:</i> A critical narrative review of the concept of thriving in older adulthood	UCalgary interdisciplinary researchers	✓	
2021	<i>Under development:</i> A longitudinal assessment of the impact of municipal age-friendly policy implementation in Calgary, Alberta	City of Calgary	✓	

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS	REPORTS	PRESENTATIONS
<p>Hogan, D. B., Scialfa, C. T., &amp; Caird, J. K. (2014). <i>Consensus Statements on the Assessment of Older Drivers</i>. <i>Canadian Geriatrics Journal</i>, 17(2), 76-81.</p> <p>Norberg, S. J., Toohey, A. M., Jones, S., McDonough, R. A., &amp; Hogan, D. B. (2021). <i>Examining the municipal-level representativeness of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) cohort: An analysis using Calgary participant baseline data</i>. <i>Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention in Canada: Research, Policy and Practice</i>, 41(2), 48-56.</p> <p>Norberg, S., Toohey, A. M., &amp; Hogan, D. B. (n.d.). <i>How do non-catastrophic natural disasters impact older adults? Using data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) to explore the effects of the 2013 Calgary flood</i>. <i>Canadian Journal on Aging</i>, Accepted for publication, Jan 2021.</p>	<p><b>2017:</b> <i>Building capacity in aging-focused research and training opportunities at the University of Calgary: Findings from a 2017 systematic environmental scan</i></p> <p><b>2018:</b> <i>Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy: Community-Wide Indicators Baseline Report (report to the Standing Committee on Community &amp; Protective Services/Calgary City Council)</i></p> <p><b>2018:</b> <i>A Tale of Eight Cities: General report on the age-friendliness of eight major Canadian cities</i></p> <p><b>2019:</b> <i>Aging in Calgary: An assessment and report on the age-friendliness of Calgary using CLSA data</i></p> <p><b>2020:</b> <i>Supporting aging-in-place: Exploring older adults' housing needs and preferences, Age-Friendly principles, and adaptable housing options (report for Age-Friendly Calgary/City of Calgary)</i></p> <p><b>2020:</b> <i>Tools for eradicating structural ageism: A rapid review with recommendations (report for Age-Friendly Calgary/City of Calgary)</i></p>	<p><b>2017:</b> <i>Campus Alberta Student Conference on Health (CASCH) – Edmonton AB</i></p> <p><b>2017:</b> <i>University of Calgary Undergraduate Research Symposium</i></p> <p><b>2017:</b> <i>Resiliency in Aging – Brenda Stafford Centre on Aging public event</i></p> <p><b>2018:</b> <i>Canadian Association on Gerontology Annual Scientific Meeting – Vancouver BC</i></p> <p><b>2021:</b> <i>Age-Friendly Calgary Meet-Up</i></p> <p><b>2021:</b> <i>Age-Friendly Calgary Anti-ageism Work Group</i></p> <p><b>2021:</b> <i>City of Calgary Older Adult Advisory Table (OAAT)</i></p> <p><b>2021:</b> <i>Age-Friendly Calgary/City of Calgary Work Group</i></p>

## ii. Building capacity in interdisciplinary training

### Funds for student-led initiatives

Our student-led initiative funding program was devised to enrich opportunities for students to explore aging-focused research, practice, and policy. Each year up to \$5K is available to support students in different Faculties and Departments. These funds are provided to a specified faculty lead or advisor. Some Faculties or Departments have declined this funding (e.g., Arts - Psychology), did not spend down their initial grant (Medicine, Nursing, Arts - Sociology), or have refused subsequent grants (Social Work). We review the carrying over of funds on a case-by-case basis. While Social Work and Kinesiology have renewed in the past, both groups are currently carrying funds over. If after 12 months these funds have not been spent down and there are no substantive plans to do so, they will be returned to the Centre.



### Post-doctoral and graduate scholarships

We support interdisciplinary training through three streams of scholarship funding. The total investment since 2017 has been \$256,100 for 7 trainee awards; with two 2021-22 scholarship recipients recently selected, this will extend to a total of \$343,600 for 9 awards, unless external funding is received.

#### **Barrie I. Strafford Post-doctoral Scholarships:**

Our post-doctoral scholarships are managed through the O'Brien Institute's competitive funding program. Trainees from across the University are informed of the competition via e-mail announcements and word-of-mouth. Trainees must be supervised by an Institute member to apply. The scientific review is conducted by an O'Brien Institute panel, and promising candidates with an interdisciplinary aging focus are identified for our consideration. Post-doctoral scholarships provide matching funds of \$25,000 per year for two years.

Year	Recipient/Supervisor	Faculty	Awarded	External Funds	Final Award
2017	Veronica Guadagni/ Marc Poulin	Medicine	\$50,000	Alzheimer Society of Canada	\$47,000
2018	Helen Tam-Tham/ Jayna Holroyd-Leduc	Medicine	Declined (medical school)	N/A	N/A
2019	Tatiane Piucco/ Juan Murias	Kinesiology	Declined (employment opportunity)	N/A	N/A

**Barrie I. Strafford Master’s and Doctoral Scholarships in Interdisciplinary Aging Studies:**

These prestigious graduate awards were established in 2017 and are administered by the Graduate Awards Committee. Any master’s or doctoral student at the University can apply, but their application is reviewed for merit, as well as for the interdisciplinary nature of their research project and how it will improve the lives of older adults or the aging population. The Manager, Graduate Awards noted:

*We compete nationally and internationally to attract and retain world-class students and scholarships and awards are a determining factor for students when selecting UCalgary for graduate studies. The Strafford scholarships are among the top valued awards at UCalgary.*

Master’s awards are valued at \$20,000 for one year, plus a \$2,500 research stipend managed by the graduate supervisor. Doctoral awards are valued at \$30,000 per year for two years, and include a \$2,500 per year research stipend, also managed by the supervisor. Excluding the 2021 scholarships which were just announced, we had awarded \$262,500 since 2018 but dispersed just \$209,100 due to students being successful in obtaining external funding. Should we disperse the full amount awarded to the 2021 recipients, this total will become \$296,600.

Year	Recipient/Faculty or Dept	MASTER’S		DOCTORAL		
		External Funds	Final Award 1-year term	Recipient/Faculty or Dept	External Funds	Final Award 2-year term
2018	Julie Gorenko/Psychology	Yes	\$22,500	Devon Boyne/Medicine	No	\$65,000
2019	Chantai Minet/Education	No	\$22,500	Danielle Whittier/Medicine	Yes	\$44,100
2020	Kayla Atchison/Medicine	No	\$22,500	Kelsey Cnudde/Psychology	Yes	\$32,500
2021	Philip Ciunkiewicz /BME	No	\$22,500	Julie Gorenko/Psychology	No	\$65,000

**Note:** BME = Biomedical Engineering

**P. June Rock Memorial Graduate Scholarship:**

Following a distinguished career supporting higher education for Alberta nurses, Mrs. P. June Rock’s untimely passing led to an opportunity for the Centre to help the Rock family establish a \$1,000 scholarship for mature graduate students seeking added professional development. For the scholarship, a mature student is defined as one who has been away from full-time studies for minimally two calendar years after the completion date of their last degree. The competition is administered by the Graduate Awards Committee, and the first recipient of this annual award will be announced later in 2021.

Summer research assistantships

Starting in 2017, the Centre introduced a summer research assistantship program to provide undergraduate students with valuable opportunities to develop research and administrative skills while being involved with local aging-focused events and/or community agencies. Some of the studentships have been hosted by the Centre alone. Others have involved research partnerships, primarily with Age-Friendly Calgary.

Our summer research assistants are required to apply for internal and external funding for most projects, except for those identified past the funding submission deadlines. External funds have

<b>CENTRE FUNDS INVESTED: \$47,625</b>
<b>NUMBER OF STUDENTSHIPS: 7</b> Sciences (1) Social Work (2) Medicine (4)
<b>COMPETITIVE FUNDS AWARDED: \$21,000</b>  <b>External:</b> AHS SH-SCN (1), Mitacs (1) <b>Internal:</b> PURE competition (3)

**Note:** A single Social Work trainee held two consecutive studentships (2018-19) reflecting their exceptional analytic skills and experience working with CLSA data.

been obtained from the Alberta Health Services – Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network (AHS SH-SCN), Mitacs Research Training Award, and University of Calgary Program for Undergraduate Research Experience (PURE) competitions. In addition to the students hosted by the Centre, in 2020 we provided top-up funding (\$4,000) for a student being supervised within Kinesiology, working on a project that supported the City of Calgary’s Age-Friendly Strategy. This student also attained competitive external funding. Note that details on projects with student involvement were provided earlier in this report, under Centre-led research projects.

#### Graduate assistantships and practicum or field placements

In addition to summer placements, the Centre has offered supervision to undergraduate and graduate students to promote interdisciplinary training while also advancing our initiatives and priorities, including Indigenous aging, Age-Friendly Universities, and One Health.

Placement (Year)	Program	Project Title	Outcomes	Professional Development
HSOC 408: Field Placement (2018-19)  <b>Unfunded placement</b>	Bachelor of Health Sciences/Health & Society	The public health implications of aging-in-place with pets for older adults in Calgary, Alberta: A case study	Final report for class  Presented at Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG)	Qualitative interviews with key community stakeholders  CAG 2019 conference (Moncton NB)
Vulnerable Populations Graduate Assistantship (Dec 2018-May 2020)  <b>Funded:</b> \$2000/month (10 hr/week)	PhD, Community Health Sciences	Indigenous Aging in Southern Alberta	Report and action plan (currently being updated based on input of Dr. Michael Hart, Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement)	2019 Gathering of Indigenous Elders (Winnipeg MB)  Enhanced relationships with local Elders
SOWK 696: Advanced Practicum (2019-20)  <b>Unfunded placement</b>	Master of Social Work/Leadership specialization	Age-Friendly University Initiative	Age-Friendly University briefing and action plan for senior leadership (Vice President-Research, Provost, Vice-President-Advancement)	CAG 2019 conference (Moncton NB)  Interviews with comparable Canadian Age-Friendly Universities  Developed aging module for HSOC 311
Doctoral Graduate Assistant (Sep 2020-Aug 2024)  <b>Funded:</b> \$1000/month (5 hr/week)	PhD, Community Health Sciences	Age-Friendly University Initiative  Robotic Pets for People Living with Dementia	Report on older students enrolled in UCalgary’s continuing education programs	Quantitative analysis of mature students seeking higher education  Qualitative interviews on phenomenon of robotic pets for people living with dementia

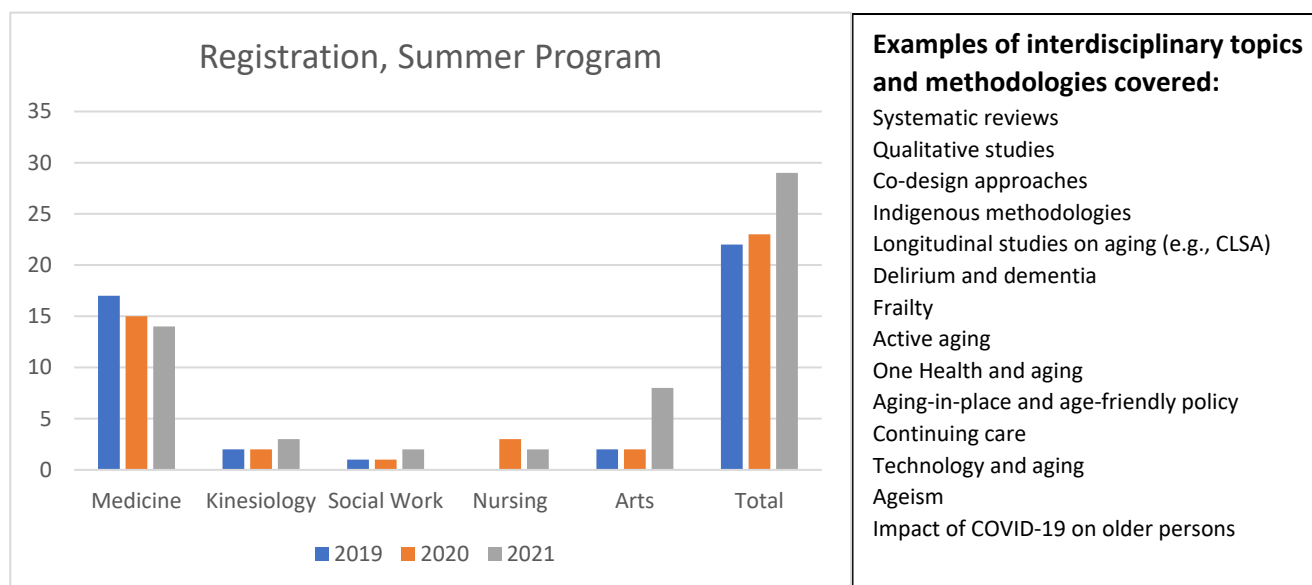


### Interdisciplinary aging summer program

In 2019, we introduced a summer program on interdisciplinary aging. In its first iteration it emphasized critical appraisal skills and exposed students to a range of research topics, methodologies, and interdisciplinary approaches to aging. Students also had opportunities to present on their summer research projects. Expenditures were **\$3,250**, which included hiring a doctoral student to coordinate the program and produce an evaluation report, as well as provide light lunches.

Based on student evaluations and our own assessment, the 2020 program (offered via Zoom) incorporated conceptual presentations by faculty experts prior to student-led critical presentations on papers aligned with topics they had learned about. Once again, students had opportunities to present on their summer research projects. Expenditures were **\$1,500**, which included hiring the doctoral student to coordinate the program and produce an evaluation report.

Responding again to student evaluations as well as our own reflections on the program, the 2021 Zoom-based offering combines presentations by researchers, community organizations, and older adults in an interdisciplinary and interactive offering. We are also providing participating students opportunities for professional development (e.g., covering registration fees for interested students to attend the virtual Healthy Brain Aging and Preventing Dementia conference) and to attend aging-focused public events (e.g., distributing complimentary tickets to the THIRD ACTION Film Festival). The program will culminate in a ½-day student research symposium. Expenditures are anticipated to be **\$1,500**, which will include honoraria for guest speakers with lived experiences (older adults, family care partners), professional development fees, and prizes for the research day.



- Examples of interdisciplinary topics and methodologies covered:**
- Systematic reviews
  - Qualitative studies
  - Co-design approaches
  - Indigenous methodologies
  - Longitudinal studies on aging (e.g., CLSA)
  - Delirium and dementia
  - Frailty
  - Active aging
  - One Health and aging
  - Aging-in-place and age-friendly policy
  - Continuing care
  - Technology and aging
  - Ageism
  - Impact of COVID-19 on older persons

**Note:** Faculty assignments are based on primary appointment of summer project supervisors.

### iii. Community engagement

#### Centre events

In March 2012, the Centre hosted its inaugural major event, a full-day research symposium dedicated to interdisciplinary aging. The program featured a keynote presentation delivered by the CIHR Institute of Aging, Scientific Director, Dr. Anne Martin-Matthews. This keynote presentation was followed by student research presentations on a range of aging topics, representing the exciting scope of aging-focused research taking place in disciplines across the University.

Since that initial launch, the Centre has continued to host public and stakeholder events that advance our vision of improving older adults' lives. Centre events range from intimate meetings of trainees, researchers, and/or targeted stakeholders, to major events with upwards of 300 in attendance. A 2012 symposium held in partnership with the Alberta Motor Association (AMA) titled "Global Perspectives on Assessing Older Drivers: Science Informing Public Policy" was attended by 41 stakeholders and several students. A white paper was produced, which was distributed to provincial policy makers.

In 2017, the Centre celebrated its move into the O'Brien Institute by hosting a public event and research symposium titled "Resilience in Aging: Exploring People, Places, and Policies." Keynote speakers included internationally recognized gerontologist, Dr. Janine Wiles, from the University of Auckland/New Zealand, and an expert on resilience and aging from Simon Fraser University, Dr. Andrew Wister. An interdisciplinary panel discussion, concurrent sessions and poster presentations provided added opportunities to showcase local research and initiatives. Over 350 attended the 2-day event.

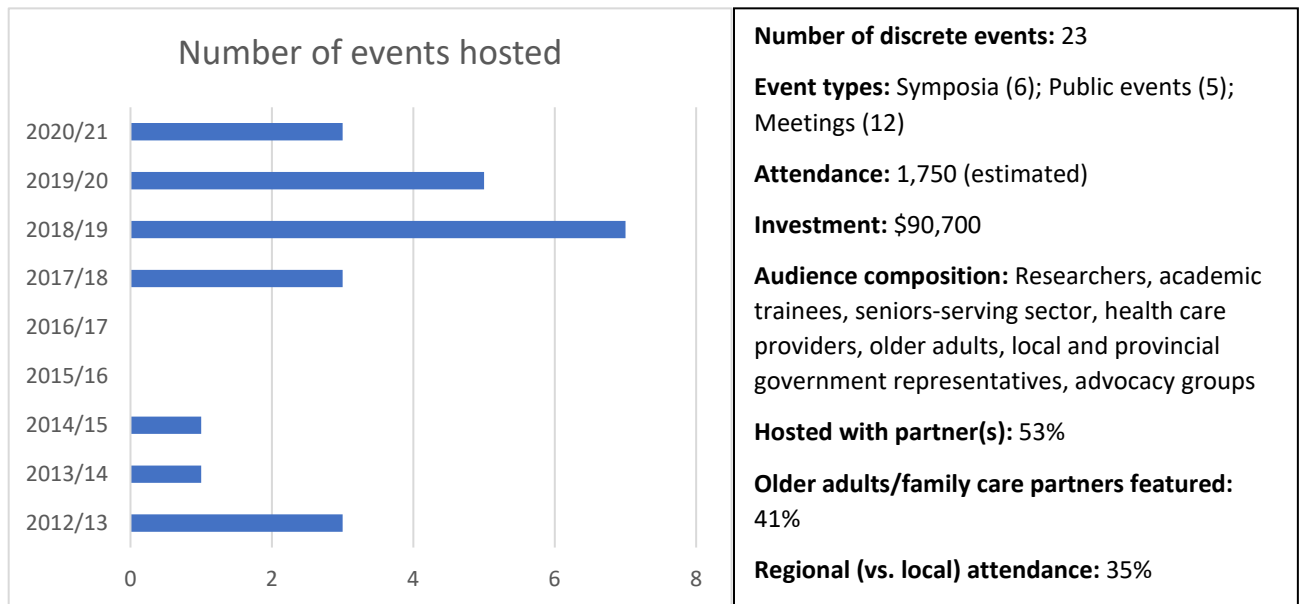
In 2019, the Centre was approached by the Canadian Frailty Network (CFN) to support their efforts to better understand perspectives on frailty and aging across Canada. We ultimately hosted a full day event that provided the CFN leadership with an opportunity to meet in person with Alberta Health Services (AHS) leadership and staff during the morning and participate in a public event titled "Frailty & Resilience in an Aging Alberta" in the afternoon. The audience of over 150 heard keynote presentations by CFN and AHS leadership on the topic of frailty and the aging population, a panel of older adults sharing perspectives on resilience, and relevant presentations by three leading local researchers.



Dr. David Hogan listens as keynote presenters Dr. Janine Wiles and Dr. Andrew Wister share their perspectives on resilience in aging during the 2017 public symposium. (Photo: Pablo Fernandez).

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we hosted or co-hosted three online events, two of which were dedicated to understanding the impact of the pandemic within long-term care and congregate living settings and exploring technological solutions. The third was an online film screening followed by a panel discussion highlighting the perspectives of professional musicians and researchers, exploring the role of music in relation to cross-cultural aging experiences and trajectories.

Centre events provide networking and knowledge mobilization opportunities, and we are committed to involving older adults and others with lived experience whenever appropriate and feasible. We promote age-positive framings such as resilience, while recognizing that deficit-oriented issues such as frailty also merit prevention and intervention. The Centre hosts approximately half of its events in partnership with others. Internal partners have included the O’Brien Institute, W21C, Faculty of Social Work, StreetCCRED, and makeCalgary, while external partners included the CFN, AHS, THIRD ACTION Film Festival, the Glenrose Rehabilitation Centre, the BSF, the AMA, and the Calgary chapter of the Alberta Association on Gerontology (AAG).



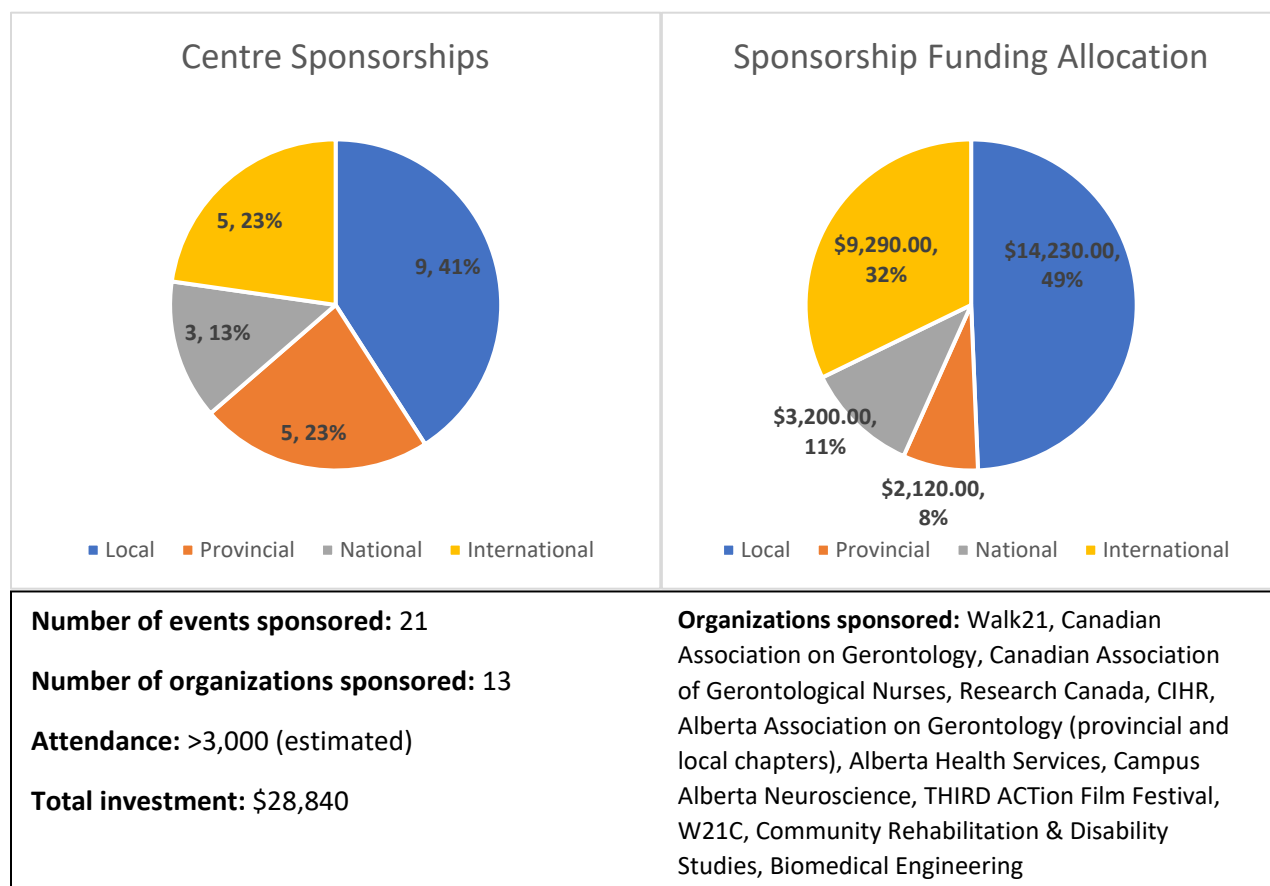
Approximately 200 people attended the second day of the 2017 symposium on “Resilience in Aging” that was hosted by the Centre. (Photo: Pablo Fernandez).

### Sponsorships

The Centre sponsors local, provincial, national, and international events that align with our vision and goals. Organizers of these events may include other University of Calgary entities. As a sponsor, we provide funding support for these events but have minimal or no input into program development, which distinguishes our role as sponsors from our role as event partners.



One long-standing sponsorship agreement that has evolved since 2018 is with the THIRD ACTION Film Festival. We initially sponsored an award for a film submission that represents resiliency in aging, selected by the festival judges. Starting this year, we also became the named sponsor of the festival’s “Reel Research Speaker Series.” This series involves speakers hosting post-screening discussions related to the aging topics that appear in the films. The Centre assists the THIRD ACTION organizers by recommending and facilitating connections with researchers and other community members from our network who we feel can offer appropriate expertise for these discussions.



### Centre-led initiatives

The Centre has spearheaded two cross-cutting initiatives with implications for the University of Calgary community and older adults living in Calgary and beyond.

#### **Age-Friendly University Initiative:**

At a 2018 CIHR-led meeting of Canadian Research Centres on Aging, we became aware of the Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network. After exploring the organization, we received permission from the University of Calgary to apply to join this growing movement. Our application was endorsed by the former Provost of the University, Dr. Dru Marshall, and we were accepted as a member in early 2019. To develop our action plan to address the principles of the AFU Global Network, we created a practicum placement for a Master of Social Work student that entailed an environmental scan of Canadian universities with an AFU designation, similar in size and scope to the University of Calgary (i.e., Maclean's Medical Doctoral category - universities that offer a broad range of PhD programs and research plus have a medical school). In 2020, this action plan was approved by the Vice-President, Research; Vice-President, Academic (Provost); and, Vice-President, Advancement. Recently we provided advice to colleagues at the University of Alberta who are also interested in pursuing an AFU designation.



**Age-friendly  
University**  
Global Network

We continue to be supported by the same student, who has now entered the doctoral program in the Department of Community Health Sciences, in implementing activities linked to the action plan. As we work towards improving the age-friendliness of our campus, early activities we hope to implement include: (i) a survey of current mature students at the University to better understand needs and experiences; (ii) a survey of campus infrastructure to better understand accessibility; (iii) a broader study of current trends regarding higher education for mature students; (iv) creation of a speakers series on aging topics open to the public; and, (v) creation of a Seniors Advisory Forum.

#### **Indigenous Aging in Southern Alberta:**



Location: Nose Hill Park October 2017, Calgary, AB (Photo: Ashley Cornect-Benoit)

Our Centre is one of a few in Canada that is actively working towards creating stronger links with local Indigenous communities to understand aging in this population. In late 2018, we provided funding to an Indigenous doctoral student to explore Indigenous peoples' perspectives of resources needed to

support aging in a good way within Indigenous communities and point to gaps in support. This project culminated in a report with recommendations for ways forward. Our report has been endorsed by Dr. Michael Hart, the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement. Dr. Hart is poised to assist us with making appropriate connections with Indigenous Elders and agencies as we begin to build relationships with the urban Indigenous community. This Indigenous community will be our initial attempt to better understand how we can support Indigenous aging. Centre personnel are also actively participating in training opportunities linked to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

#### iv. Informing public policy

##### Age-Friendly Calgary/City of Calgary partnership



The Centre has established an ongoing partnership with members of the City of Calgary's Age-Friendly team. This team of City employees facilitates the Age-Friendly Calgary initiative through (i) coordinating municipal government activities aligned with age-friendly goals and (ii) managing working groups and committees composed of a broad representation of stakeholders involved in guiding and implementing different components of a Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy (SAFS). Our academic lead, Dr. David Hogan, has been a steering committee member since the inception of Age-Friendly

Calgary, which pre-dates the 2015 launch of the SAFS. In 2017, the Centre accessed CLSA baseline data to determine which data could be used to examine indicators identified in the SAFS evaluation plan.

In 2018, we created a summer studentship to analyze key age-friendly indicators collected by the CLSA, which were included in a report to City Council's Standing Committee on Protective and Neighbourhood Services. Further, we assessed the extent to which Calgary's municipal level CLSA data represented the true population of Calgary. A third year Bachelor of Social Work student garnered funding through the AHS SH-SCN summer studentship competition for the analyses. This student was also competitively selected for a final year practicum placement with the City's Age-Friendly team, furthering the CLSA indicators analysis that had begun during the preceding summer.

In 2019, the Centre struck a research advisory table comprising an interdisciplinary group of researchers to support the evaluation of the SAFS. The researchers provided content and methodological advice. This led to the City proposing three policy-relevant summer projects in 2020. One project, hosted by a researcher in the Faculty of Kinesiology, compiled evidence-based age-friendly indicators and metrics. Two other projects, hosted by the Centre, led to reports on age-friendly housing needs and training tools to reduce structural ageism within City governance and services. Leveraging these investments, the age-friendly housing project led to establishing a master's level summer project being funded by the United Way – Calgary and Area and being co-supervised by researchers in SAPL and City planners. The second report informed the City's expansion of its gender-inclusive training to include modules dealing with ageism. The City is currently reviewing its leadership role within the Age-Friendly Calgary initiative, including implementation of the SAFS. At this time there are no tangible roles for the researcher advisory table to play, and thus we have found it difficult to maintain the interest of its members, outside of Centre staff and leadership.

Despite the unknown future of Calgary's Age-Friendly initiative, our Centre continues to promote it whenever possible. We have supported the pending launch of a social isolation awareness campaign through attending workshops, contributing an evidence-based information sheet promoting responsible dog-walking as a means of addressing social isolation (developed in collaboration with the University's Office of One Health), and promoting the campaign through our network. We are also in the early stages of requesting longitudinal CLSA data to examine changes in age-friendly indicators, to understand their policy impact (see Centre-led research projects).

#### [CIHR Institute of Aging/Canadian Research Centres on Aging](#)

Twice a year the CIHR Institute of Aging convenes meetings of the Directors of Canadian Research Centres on Aging. At these meetings, each centre is allowed a brief amount of time to share updates on their activities. The remainder of each meeting is dedicated to discussing specific issues or projects. For example, in October 2020, attendees participated in a facilitated exercise to provide input on the next steps of the CIHR Dementia Research Strategy. In May 2020, there was a lengthy conversation about methodological problems encountered with COVID-19 and possible solutions to conducting human research during pandemic lockdowns. In previous years, the spring/summer meetings were traditionally conducted via teleconference, while the fall meetings took place in person during the annual Canadian Association on Gerontology conference. These in-person meetings offered additional opportunities for Research Centres on Aging personnel to meet and discuss their mutual interests.

Insights that have arisen from our participation in this group include our observation that centres vary markedly in form and function, with some having annual budgets in the multi-million dollar range and others less than \$50,000 (we appear to be in the upper mid-range). To the best of our knowledge, no other Canadian Research Centre on Aging has prioritized Indigenous aging or One Health frameworks. It was through this series of meetings that we became aware of and applied to join the AFU Global Network. In the future, there may be opportunities to create satellite meetings on research methodologies and other topics. Preliminary conversations about this are taking place between our Centre and the University of Victoria's Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health. Through our membership, our Centre also participated in an environmental scan of Canadian Research Centre on Aging compiled by Memorial University, and Centre personnel were recruited to be peer-reviewers for the 2019 New Brunswick Healthy Seniors Pilot Project funding competition.

#### [Interactions with the Government of Alberta](#)

From 2015-19, under the previous provincial government, the Ministry of Seniors and Housing was developing a plan to address the future needs of older adults and an aging population. To further this effort, the ministry held roundtable discussions that brought together over 40 representatives from across the province representing senior-serving organizations, researchers, policy makers and advocates that address the needs of older adults. The purpose of the Seniors Advisory Forum was "to provide a standing platform for the Minister of Seniors and Housing to engage with stakeholders and receive input on matters relevant to Alberta seniors." We participated in the following roundtable sessions:

- **2017:** Alberta Seniors Advisory Forum roundtable discussion focused on Alberta's seniors and the government's response to ageism via rethinking the K-12 curriculum
- **2018:** Alberta Seniors Advisory Forum roundtable discussion focused on caregivers, financial supports for seniors, and diverse senior populations - LGBTQ+ seniors

After the election in early 2019, which resulted in a change in government, these sessions did not continue. As described in the next section, our Centre supported the provincial board of the AAG in producing a report that was presented to government officials in 2020 since they disbanded the Office of the Seniors Advocate. Older adults were instead instructed to use the Office of the Health Advocate. This was concerning as many of the issues that the Seniors Advocate addressed (e.g., financial issues, housing, social supports) fell outside of the scope of the Health Advocate. The Centre also supported an effort led by the Calgary chapter of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) to reinstate the Office of the Seniors Advocate and have it report directly to the Legislative Assembly. Similar requests are being made in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

#### Interactions with other organizations

Our Centre has supported activities led by the AAG provincial board and Calgary chapter board. At the local level, we sponsored events including annual general meetings; “Nibble Nosh & Network” poster presentation events aimed at bringing together trainees, faculty members, and the community; and public events linked to research and practice, such as a 2019 event titled “Celebrating the Natural Environment and Aging Well.”

At the provincial level, we took part in the Vision 2030 for Seniors Services Symposium in 2019. Our academic lead, Dr. David Hogan, delivered a keynote presentation on dementia while our manager, Dr. Ann Toohey, facilitated a priority identification exercise. Following this public forum, both Dr. Hogan and Dr. Toohey contributed to a policy recommendation document exploring the priorities identified during the symposium. Titled “[Older Albertans Living Well: A Call to Action to Enhance Care and Services](#),” this document was presented to the Ministry of Seniors and Housing in September 2020. Dr. Hogan has also recently contributed to the [Continuing Care Legislative Review](#) made by a local advocacy group, Dementia Network Calgary. This review was submitted to the Ministry of Health in February 2021. Dr. Hogan is also a member of the Strategic Council for Dementia Network Calgary.



Our Centre summer research assistant, Samantha Norberg, overseeing our exhibitor booth at the 2018 “Shades of Grey” conference. (Photo: Ann Toohey).



## VI. Discussion

In the following section we offer our initial interpretation of the impact Centre activities have had, and could have in the future, in relation to the stated objectives in our TOR. It should be noted, though, that the original signatories of the Centre's gift agreement have moved on: Dr. Strafford passed away in 2016 and Dr. Cannon's term as President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calgary concluded in 2018. Both the world and the respective organizations have changed, making it important to early on either re-confirm or else modify the vision and goals outlined in our current TOR.

### i. University-wide impact of the Centre



The 2017 “Resilience in Aging” symposium featured an interdisciplinary panel exploring concepts of resilience. Pictured here are moderator Dr. Jennifer Hewson (Social Work) and panelists Ron Foyer (retiree), Dr. Candace Konnert (Psychology), and Dr. Meghan McDonough (Kinesiology) (Missing from photo is Dr. Cari Gulbrandsen (Social Work). (Photo: Pablo Fernandez).

#### ***Objective i: Evaluating University-wide impact of the Centre in building capacity in relation to aging-focused research, training, and outreach activities.***

Our Centre focuses on interdisciplinary work because we feel it is critical to more fully understand and address aging, and we do not want to duplicate the excellent discipline-specific work taking place within our Faculties and Departments. Our team is committed to both the potential and need for authentic and productive interdisciplinary approaches. We feel that our efforts are beginning to advance both an awareness of their potential benefits and the implementation of interdisciplinarity within the University's research and educational activities.

Our initial bibliometric and Tri-Council funding analyses point to an upward trajectory in scholarly work on aging taking place at the University of Calgary, though we are less certain about how interdisciplinary this work might be. Most publications of our aging-focused faculty members involved collaborations within, but not across, Faculties. However, all the catalyst grants we funded involved collaborations between researchers in different Faculties. Because these projects are just reaching the completion stage, their outputs were not captured in our bibliometric data. We plan to do a more intensive exploration of this bibliometric data though over the coming months to get a better sense of how research teams have evolved over the last 5 years to be more interdisciplinary. Likewise, our networking efforts have sought to make connections between researchers with common interests working in

different disciplines. Our work on the CFI application entailed recruiting, engaging, and integrating an interdisciplinary research team. Without exception, the major public events that our Centre hosted have provided a range of disciplinary perspectives on aging issues. We will continue nurturing interdisciplinarity and capturing our impact within our performance measures.

Our Centre actively promotes and supports interdisciplinary aging-related training and professional development and tries to do this in novel ways. Recently, we offered to off-set registration fees for University of Calgary students who were accepted into the 2021 CIHR Summer Program on Aging. We also paid registration fees for students involved in our interdisciplinary aging summer program to attend the 2021 Healthy Brain Aging and Preventing Dementia conference organized by Campus Alberta Neuroscience. We are also building a library of resources available on our website, including things like video recordings of keynote speakers at our events, copies of reports, and educational content from our summer programming (<https://obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/student-summer-program>). While our funding to support student-led initiatives across key Faculties has led to several worthwhile activities, we feel this program merits reconsideration.

We also note that two Faculties (Nursing and Social Work) are introducing stackable certificate programs to improve accessibility for practicing professionals. We plan to support these and other disciplinary training options with an aging focus to enrich the experiences of students. We also hope there may be an opportunity to explore resurrecting an interdisciplinary gerontology certificate.

While these efforts are gradually contributing to building interdisciplinary capacity across the University, we recognize this endeavour is an area where growth must continue. Especially as we emerge from the constraints created by the pandemic, it will be important for our Centre to continue to promote opportunities for both formal and informal networking within our research and trainee communities as well as the non-academic community, particularly seniors-serving agencies. A key perspective that must be included when planning and implementing these interdisciplinary activities is that of the older adult. While we have involved older adults in sharing their expertise and experiences, we feel we can and must do better.



Ron Foyer shares his retiree perspective on resilience later in life during the Centre's 2017 public symposium on "Resilience in Aging" (Photo: Pablo Fernandez).

## ii. Alignment with current trends linked to the aging population



Dr. Ann Toohey and panellist Hilary Chapple pictured during a January 2020 public forum exploring the lived experiences of older adults experiencing homelessness titled “Beyond Housing: We’re Not Ready for the Shelf” (Photo: Pablo Fernandez).

### ***Objective ii: Reviewing alignment with current trends, issues, and challenges linked to the aging population.***

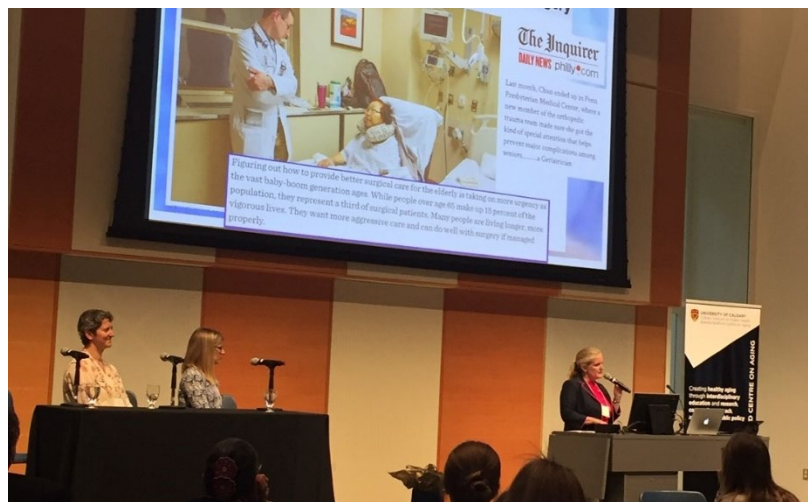
Our Centre has focused our activities and initiatives on research and practice coalescing around salient issues facing older adults, the aging population, and activities of many organizations that address the interests of older persons. We have been especially mindful to recognize and promote the assets of older people, while recognizing challenges to their health and well-being. A key theme for us has been the resilience that comes with age, recognizing that it can be enhanced by supportive communities. The video recording of Dr. Janine Wiles’ keynote presentation, titled “[Resilience in older age: What can we learn from older people?](#)” (featured during our “Resilience in Aging” public symposium) has been viewed over 750 times. This interest reflects the appetite for connecting research and practice, while respectfully recognizing that we *must* include the voices of older people.

We have also supported research and knowledge mobilization activities that aim to redress the disadvantages faced by marginalized populations of older persons, whose lives reflect the intersection of older age with other forms of discrimination. Our interest in this area pre-dates the recent movement to address equity, diversity, and inclusion. We acknowledge that we need to continue to both educate ourselves and promote research and training that advances these efforts for older adults.

We have continued to play an active role in advancing the concept of age-friendly communities. We participated in a national research symposium on the topic of age-friendliness and have also assisted the City of Calgary with evaluating baseline age-friendly indicators – an effort which we hope to advance with longitudinal analyses of CLSA data. We have attempted to align our projects with City priorities, including social inclusion and age-friendly housing, where possible. Our work with local seniors-serving agencies is another way we invest in the age-friendliness of Calgary.

Finally, COVID-19 has brought to the forefront many long-standing issues for older persons, such as social isolation, ageism, and the under-resourcing of health and social care systems. We hope this increased recognition will enhance efforts to mobilize knowledge and advocate for research, practice, and policy that improves the lives of older adults.

### iii. Alignment with University of Calgary priorities



Panelist Dr. Jayna Holroyd Leduc presenting while panelists Dr. Jessica Simon and Kristen Feist look on during the 2019 event titled “Frailty and Resilience in an Aging Alberta”. (Photo: Ann Toohey).

#### ***Objective iii: Reviewing alignment with University of Calgary priorities, from the Growth Through Focus vision and relevant research priorities, to Faculty and Department-specific goals and interests.***

“Growth Through Focus” is the University of Calgary’s institutional plan to navigate through the uncertainty of Alberta’s recession and post-pandemic climate. It charts a way for the University to become more entrepreneurial and identifies three key avenues for driving growth and innovation: trans-disciplinary scholarship, deeper community integration, and future-focused program delivery. Our activities are well-aligned with these avenues, given our emphasis on interdisciplinarity, efforts to nurture meaningful engagements with older adults and seniors-serving agencies, and our focus on adapting our communities to meet the needs of an aging population. Our AFU initiative aligns with future-focused program delivery, as we anticipate older adults will make up a larger proportion of students and be the focus of both knowledge creation and mobilization.

Our Centre has led or supported events and initiatives that speak to the entrepreneurial spirit of the University. These include Reverse Trade Shows and the CFI application previously mentioned. There is growing interest in using technological advancements to support older adults aging-in-place through delivering care and monitoring health and well-being. There is local interest in testing non-traditional models of housing and care facilities for the aging population. We currently have a strong relationship with the BSF and the W21C (a healthcare systems research and innovation initiative of the O’Brien Institute and Alberta Health Services). We hope to build on our relationship with researchers located in the University’s Biomedical Engineering program, which has recently introduced a bachelor’s level training program. In the future, we see a role for the Centre in facilitating stronger links between older adults and aging-focused innovators and researchers.

The Centre is currently finding new ways to work with the University’s BSF Chairs in Geriatric Medicine and Alzheimer Research. As an example, the current Chair in Geriatric Medicine, Dr. Jayna Holroyd-Leduc, has used funds to create a new research coordinator position to help bridge University and BSF research, which will be introduced in summer of 2021. The Centre will manage the position and provide the infrastructure needed for success. We have also supported public events and grant applications initiated by Dr. Marc Poulin, the BSF Chair in Alzheimer Research.

We bring awareness of ageism to institutional equity, diversity, and inclusion conversations. Ageism is commonplace and has been internalized by society to the extent that few recognize it in themselves, or else may misconstrue benevolent ageism (i.e., paternalistic acts that are done in the interests of older persons, but without involving older persons and considering their perspectives) as being a positive force. In addition to our efforts to raise awareness around both ageism and resilience, we are making strides towards better supporting aging in Indigenous communities. Our interest in growing our capacity to support Indigenous aging is well-aligned with University of Calgary’s hard work in fostering respectful and appropriate Indigenous engagement and inclusion.

And last, the University has recently made a substantial investment in the rapidly growing One Health approach to solving complex public health and environmental problems. One Health is a cross-cutting paradigm that recognizes the interconnectedness of human, non-human animal, and environmental conditions (as shaped by socio-ecological factors) in ways that influence health and well-being from the molecular through to the population and planetary levels. As part of this initiative, we promote ways that One Health issues entwine with issues linked to health and well-being of older adults and the aging population. Specifically, we promote a recognition of multi-species factors that shape the age-friendliness of communities, as is rarely considered at the research, practice, or policy levels.

#### iv. Alignment with the Brenda Strafford Foundation



Panellist Sylvia Teare shares experiences with technology and aging-in-place during the 2017 “Reverse Trade Show” organized by W21C and the Glenrose Rehabilitation Centre. (Photo: Julia McGregor).

***Objective iv: Reviewing alignment of the Centre with the current interests of the primary donor, the Brenda Strafford Foundation. (Note: Centre personnel met with BSF leadership on June 1, 2021)***

As noted in the introduction of this report, much has changed for both the University and the BSF since the Centre was established in 2011. A notable development within the BSF has been the more active integration of research and innovative into its own operations, with the goal of improving and transforming the continuing care system provincially and nationally. As a charitable organization, the BSF does not view its interests in this domain as being proprietary. It envisions effective solutions developed and/or tested within the BSF becoming freely available throughout the continuing care

system. Another important development has been a desire for the BSF to be a partner or provider in its charitable activities, rather than a funder.

While BSF leadership acknowledge the progress that the Centre has made in addressing our current TOR, they also note some issues that merit consideration. While the BSF recognizes that the move of the Centre under the O'Brien Institute and the hiring of staff was helpful in moving things forward, the BSF also feels that institutional support for the Centre has been more modest than expected, which has restricted its impact and ambitions. The initial gift agreement suggested that the establishment of a cross-cutting aging institute be considered, but discussions about this have not occurred. Based on recent meetings between the BSF, the new Scientific Director of the O'Brien Institute, and the new President of the University, there is a sense of optimism that a renewed partnership arrangement with the University can be built by converging each entity's strategic priorities. The governance and focus of the Centre could evolve to reflect a clearer commitment to areas of mutual interest to the aging-focused scholarly community of the University and the BSF, supported through enhanced communication and coordination between the BSF Research & Innovative Practice Manager and Centre personnel.

BSF leadership is interested in exploring a partnership arrangement modelled on Canadian examples such as the Schlegel-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging and the Baycrest Centre in Toronto. While recognizing that the objectives, scope, and scale of the financial platforms and the organizational structures of these entities are not comparable to the Centre, the BSF believes that attributes of these and other national research centres on aging could be explored and adapted for use by the Centre in the future. While the BSF recognizes that the Centre has established a range of local partners, it urges developing more national and international partnerships with entities involved in research and innovative practice in the continuing care environment. Stronger partnerships with industry players would also be beneficial for ensuring that technological advances that contribute to both improved operations and experiences in continuing care are championed and promoted.

The move of the Centre into dedicated space within the BSF's new continuing care facility, Cambridge Manor, is mutually viewed as an excellent opportunity to hone the "hub" model of the Centre. It is hoped that the Centre will grow as a physical and virtual gathering spot for researchers, trainees, BSF staff, residents and families, and the greater community. While this new geographic home will hopefully provide research, training, and public event infrastructure that the Centre can utilize, it will also require Centre staff to work hard to maintain active relationships with the University's academic community and bring scholarly activity into its new physical home. As the Centre settles into its space, the BSF hopes to see growth in integrating research, education, and practice, as the Centre has begun to catalyze.

Lastly, we discussed briefly the challenges that have arisen due to the similarities in our names. Although the names suggest otherwise, the Centre is not part of the BSF. Both entities recognize the challenges associated with this situation. The Centre is independent of the BSF and part of the University of Calgary. It is a component of the O'Brien Institute with a mandate laid out in its TOR, which has been referenced throughout this report. We gratefully acknowledge that the Centre was only made possible by the financial support of the BSF, and both organizations value our ongoing relationship. Unfortunately, there tends to be confusion about the distinction between the Centre and the BSF, even within the University of Calgary. We need to consider how to identify the Centre as being arms-length yet collaborative with the BSF.

v. Sustainable funding and succession planning



Dr. Ann Toohey at the O'Brien Institute for Public Health 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and farewell to inaugural Scientific Director Dr. William Ghali, who moved into the role of Vice-President, Research in March 2020. (Photo: O'Brien Institute for Public Health).

***Objective v: Considering future opportunities for securing sustainable funding while actively planning for leadership succession.***

The current gift agreement between the University and the BSF, which governs the payment schedule for \$2.5M (total) in operating funds and \$2.5M (total) in an endowment fund, will come to an end in December of 2023. Whether this agreement will be extended, modified, or not renewed is unknown at this time. Even if it is renewed, there is a need to develop a business model as part of our strategic plan to ensure the Centre has sustainable finances in the future.

Additionally, Dr. David Hogan is planning to step down as academic lead of the Centre in June of 2022. O'Brien Institute leadership will need to identify his replacement. This recruitment will offer opportunities for the University to re-consider its role and support for the Centre and its activities.



Dr. David Hogan shares highlights of his formidable research career with O'Brien Institute membership upon receiving the 2018 O'Brien Research Excellence Award. (Photo: O'Brien Institute for Public Health).

## VII. Overall self-appraisal: A brief synopsis



Dr. David Hogan and Dr. Ann Toohey in an animated conversation during the 2019 O'Brien Institute members' forum. (Photo: O'Brien Institute for Public Health).

### i. Activities that are enhancing the Centre's impact

- Changes made to staffing and placement of the Centre since 2016.
- Involvement of older adults, although this is an area requiring further development.
- Implementation of various programs and initiatives that support and promote interdisciplinary aging-related research and education, though there is more work to be done.
- Leadership in initiatives to enhance and support age-friendly communities, aging in Indigenous communities, age-friendly housing, and redressing systemic and internalized ageism.

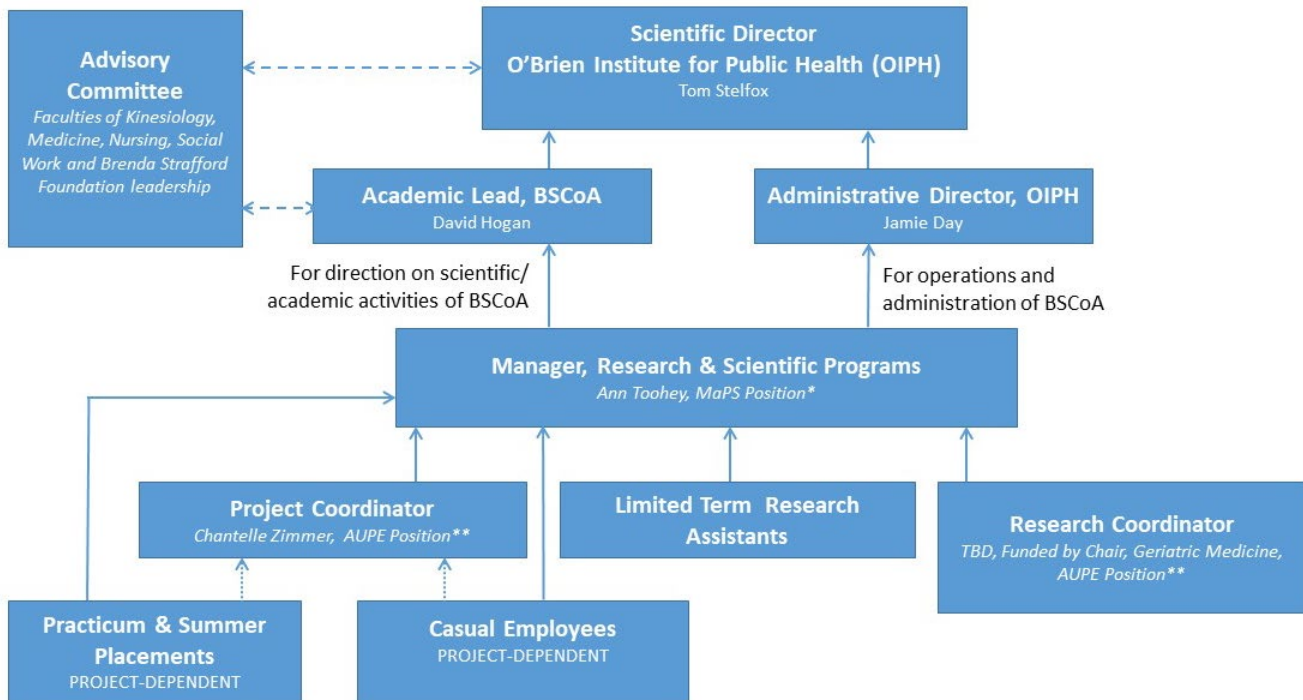
### ii. Areas for growth and evolution

- Developing greater brand recognition – our Centre is not widely known within the University community or outside of it, and confusion between the Centre and the BSF persists both internally and externally.
- Enhancing our activities, and clarifying our role and strategic focus (see below) in relation to:
  - Centre-led interdisciplinary research grants.
  - Centre-led public events and community outreach.
- Being more proactive versus reactive in our operations. Given our limited capacity, taking on externally driven priorities detracts from activities we believe in, have identified as priorities, and want to move forward.
- Developing a strategic/business plan informed by this review process, our learnings from it, recommendations made by the review panel, and advice from our Advisory Committee, University and BSF leadership, and other stakeholders (faculty, students, community partners).
- Developing a long-term and sustainable funding model.
- Recruiting a new academic lead.



## Appendix: Centre governance and organizational structure

Governance and Organizational Chart  
Brenda Stafford Centre on Aging (BSCoA), June 2021



\* Management and Professional Staff

\*\* Alberta Union of Public Employees

This figure illustrates the Centre's organizational structure as of June 2021, with recruitment for the new Research Coordinator position (funded by the Chair in Geriatric Medicine but managed by the Centre) underway.

Note that the Centre is governed by an advisory committee as described in the Terms of Reference, comprising the following: the Scientific Director, OIPH; two representatives of the Brenda Stafford Foundation; and Deans or delegated representatives of Kinesiology, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work. Non-voting members include the Administrative Director, OIPH, and Centre personnel.