



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Centre on Aging

2025-26

Annual Report

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Message from the Scientific Director

This past year marked a period of momentum and meaningful impact for the Centre on Aging, as we continued to turn vision into action across our three strategic priorities: advancing age inclusivity, strengthening transdisciplinary aging research, and building a strong organizational culture to support this work.

A major focus of the year was advancing UCalgary's commitment to being an Age-Friendly University (AFU). Through new strategic collaborations, targeted funding, and campus-wide engagement, we continued to make progress toward our AFU goals. The launch of the AFU Project Grants Program empowered faculty and staff to lead age-friendly initiatives across campus, while forums, guides, aging-focused education, and community-engaged research efforts helped raise awareness of ageism and promote more inclusive practices. Beyond campus, our work to improve system navigation for older adults in Calgary reflects the Centre's commitment to applying academic expertise to real-world needs.

We sustained and expanded a strong portfolio of transdisciplinary aging research. This year, the Centre supported 47 research projects spanning multiple faculties, while building capacity among students and early-career researchers. Our work continues to emphasize collaboration, knowledge translation, and impact—ensuring research informs both practice and policy.

Equally important was our focus on strengthening the Centre's organizational foundations. We invested in governance, visibility, and collaboration by forming new leadership bodies, enhancing our communications, deepening relationships within the O'Brien Institute for Public Health, implementing a formal membership system, and supporting the creation of Canada's first Gerontological Society of America Student Chapter. These efforts reflect our belief that sustained impact is built through strong leadership, clear communication, and intentional collaboration that brings together faculty, students, and partners in shared purpose.

We are grateful to the faculty, staff, students, and community partners who make this work possible. Together, we are building a Centre that not only advances innovation in aging, but also models the inclusive, collaborative, and forward-looking culture needed to support an aging society.

Dr. Jayna Holroyd-Leduc

Scientific Director



About the Centre

The Centre on Aging was established at UCalgary through a founding donation from The Brenda Strafford Foundation. The Centre was created to enhance the health and well-being of older adults and inform public policy pertaining to the older adult population by coordinating and advancing UCalgary's work in the area of aging. The Centre is a cross-faculty aging hub embedded in the O'Brien Institute for Public Health within the Cumming School of Medicine.

Staff

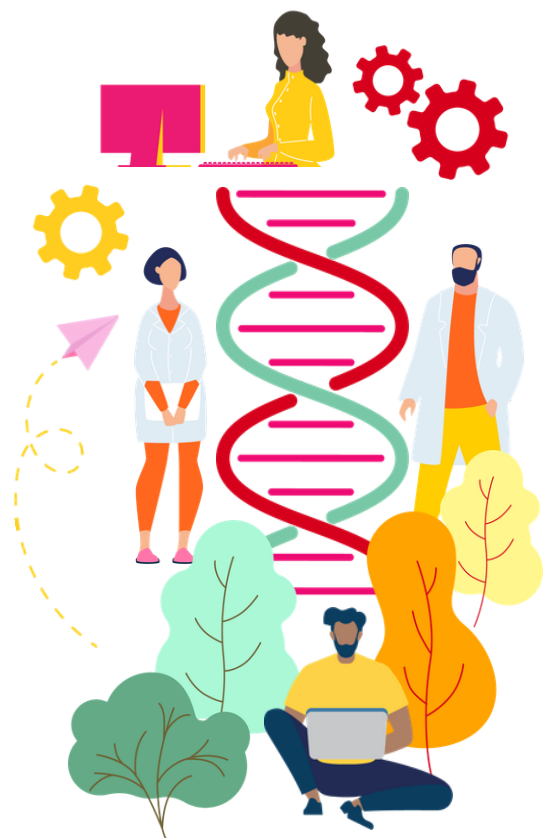
- **Scientific Director** (0.2 FTE, funded by UCalgary academic salary)
- **Senior Manager** (1.0 FTE)
- **Project Coordinator** (1.0 FTE)
- **Research Coordinator** (0.8 FTE)
- **Educational Advisor** (0.6 FTE)

Scientific Advisory Committee

Co-Chairs: Scientific Director & Senior Manager

Faculty Representatives (Dean or Delegate):

- Arts
- Engineering
- Kinesiology
- Medicine
- Nursing
- O'Brien Institute for Public Health
- Science
- Social Work



Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

Optimal health and well-being for older adults.

Mission

We foster innovations that improve the health and well-being of older adults by catalyzing connections and collaborations through research and education.

Values

Inclusivity: Working with compassion, integrity, and humility to promote an age-positive and age-inclusive culture guided by the needs and interests of diverse older adults.



Collaboration: Establishing intergenerational, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral partnerships to build capacity in research and education in the field of aging.



Innovation: Developing and translating evidence on age-inclusive technologies, environments, practices, and policies to improve the health and well-being of older adults, in a sustainable manner.



Leadership: Being recognized as a valuable hub within our institution, our community, and beyond for catalyzing connections and advancing innovations to better serve the older adult population.



Year in Review

47 Research Projects Supported

Including:

- **21** funding applications
- **12** new projects
- **14** ongoing projects

6 Faculties Engaged in Research Collaborations

Spanning arts, engineering, kinesiology, medicine, health sciences, nursing, and science.

3 Public-Facing Events Hosted

Focusing on research translation, dialogue, and community engagement.

11 Students and Early-Career Researchers Trained or Directly Supported

Representing:

- **2** Bachelor's students
- **5** Master's students
- **2** PhD students
- **2** Postdoctoral fellows

An additional **100+** students were also indirectly supported.

24

Academic and Community Initiatives Supported

Through partnerships, advocacy, events, and knowledge exchange activities.

30 Communications Distributed

Including:

- **10** newsletters
- **20** announcements

113 New Subscribers Gained

Expanding our growing community of supporters by **17.6%**.

Priority 1:

Age Inclusivity at UCalgary and Beyond

The Centre on Aging's first strategic priority is to **enhance age inclusivity at UCalgary and beyond**. We advocate for and support the implementation of age-friendly initiatives at UCalgary and within the broader community, fostering a more inclusive and respectful environment for individuals of all ages.

Annual Highlights

- **Advanced UCalgary's Age-Friendly University (AFU) commitment** by establishing strategic collaborations with the Office of Institutional Commitments and the Institutes for Transdisciplinary Scholarship, and co-launching a targeted funding competition that supported age-friendly projects aligned with institutional priorities.
- **Integrated aging perspectives into key institutional initiatives** by aligning Centre activities with campus-wide efforts focused on mental health, well-being, and public policy to enhance cross-unit collaboration and impact.
- **Laid the foundation for age-inclusive education across faculties** by leading the development of frameworks that define essential aging-related knowledge and skills to support the preparation of undergraduate healthcare and non-healthcare students for an aging society (led by Amber Dukart, Educational Advisor, Centre on Aging).
- **Expanded understanding of community-engaged research practices** by leading an academic review that examined how older adults living with frailty are currently engaged in research (led by Erin Davis, Research Coordinator, Centre on Aging).

Annual Highlights Continued

- **Built campus-wide capacity for age inclusivity** by developing a higher education guide, informed by students, staff, and retired faculty, to help reduce ageism and promote inclusive practices (led by Lindsay Morrison, Project Coordinator, Centre on Aging).
- **Extended age-friendly impact beyond campus** by leading an Age-Friendly Calgary initiative to develop a user-friendly approach to system navigation for older adults, while strengthening community partnerships and civic engagement (supported by Kate Checknita, a practicum student in the Master of Public Health program at the University of Toronto).

➤ Challenging Ageism in Higher Education

As part of our commitment to advancing age inclusivity at UCalgary and beyond, the Centre on Aging facilitated a session on ageism in higher education for UCalgary's School of Public Policy Forum Series.



The forum brought together faculty, students, and members of the public to explore how ageism shows up in post-secondary settings—and how age-inclusive policies and practices can lead to better outcomes for individuals and society as a whole.

The session opened with an overview of ageism by Dr. Chantelle Zimmer (Senior Manager, Centre on Aging) who emphasized the growing urgency of this conversation. As societies age and people learn, work, and contribute across longer lifespans, assumptions about age increasingly shape experiences in education, employment, and civic life. She highlighted how age-related bias often goes unnoticed in higher education, influencing interactions, norms, and policies in ways that can limit opportunity and inclusion.

Dr. Zimmer also demonstrated how the AFU initiative provides a global framework for addressing these challenges. The AFU approach encourages institutions to reflect on how aging is understood and valued, and offers guidance on how campuses can be designed to support participation at every stage of life. At its core, she emphasized that age-friendliness is about fostering a culture that values the contributions of individuals across generations.

The presentation was followed by a fireside chat between Dr. Jayna Holroyd-Leduc (Scientific Director, Centre on Aging) and Dr. Sandra Davidson (Provost and Vice-President Academic). Their discussion underscored the importance of leadership in advancing age-inclusive change. Together, they explored how age-friendly principles can be embedded into institutional policy and practice, and how universities can serve as powerful drivers of social change.

By convening this forum, our Centre helped raise awareness of ageism as a critical and often overlooked equity issue within higher education. The event provided attendees with a foundational understanding of ageism, introduced the AFU initiative as a practical framework for change, and demonstrated how institutional leadership can translate age-friendly values into action. Building on this work, the Centre developed an age-inclusive guide for higher education, led by Lindsay Morrison (Project Coordinator, Centre on Aging), which will support UCalgary's campus community by enhancing understanding of aging and ageism and offering practical strategies for integrating age-inclusive practices across campus life.

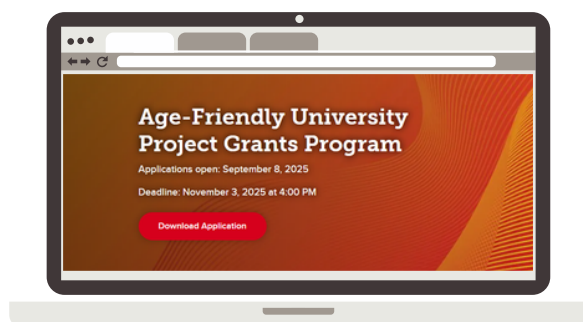


» Funding Change to Advance Age-Friendly Innovation at UCalgary

In September 2025, the Centre on Aging co-launched the AFU Project Grants Program in partnership with the Office of Institutional Commitments, with administrative support from the Institutes for Transdisciplinary Scholarship. The program was designed to fund projects that enhance the University's age-friendliness and strengthen its commitment to being an AFU.

The program invited faculty and staff to take an active role in shaping a more inclusive culture and environment by developing and leading their own age-friendly initiatives. Recognizing that meaningful change requires shared effort, the program built on the Centre's foundational work by mobilizing creativity and leadership from across UCalgary's campus community. Through focused projects that promote accessibility, inclusion, and intergenerational learning, the program helps translate the Centre's AFU action plan into tangible action and embed age-friendly principles into campus life.

The impact of the AFU Project Grants Program is intended to extend beyond UCalgary. By championing age inclusivity within a post-secondary setting, the Centre aims to influence how aging is understood more broadly. Universities play a powerful role in shaping social values, and when they prioritize accessibility, inclusion, and intergenerational learning, they can help challenge ageism and model practices that other organizations and sectors can adopt.



Two projects were awarded \$50,000 each through the program:

- 1) Intergenerational Conversation Cafés**
- 2) The Intergenerational Mentorship Hub**

1 Intergenerational Conversation Cafés: The Academic Library as a Hub for Dialogue and Learning

Intergenerational learning has been shown to promote age diversity and inclusion, enhance learning experiences, and support positive social and emotional outcomes for people of all ages. While public libraries have begun to adopt intergenerational learning practices, there is limited research to guide how these approaches can be implemented within academic libraries.

Led by Dr. Diane Lorenzetti, this project will use an intergenerational conversation café participatory research approach to engage library staff and undergraduate and graduate students in shared learning and dialogue. Through structured conversations and collaborative activities, participants will exchange knowledge, build relationships across generations, and identify practical strategies for embedding intergenerational learning into academic library policies, services, and resources.

The project includes intergenerational learning education sessions for library staff and a conversation café speaker series open to UCalgary students of all ages. The research team will collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to better understand participant experiences and identify effective practices for intergenerational engagement.

This initiative will strengthen a culture of intergenerational learning at UCalgary and generate actionable insights that can be shared with other academic libraries. In doing so, it supports institutional efforts to foster more age-friendly and inclusive learning environments.



2 The Intergenerational Mentorship Hub: Connecting UCalgary with Our Community

Despite growing global momentum around the age-friendly movement, ageism and social isolation remain significant challenges for older adults. Universities are uniquely positioned to address these issues by serving as spaces for connection, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning across generations.

Guided by the AFU framework, the Intergenerational Mentorship Hub will create structured opportunities for older adults to formally mentor members of the university community. By recognizing older adults' knowledge and lived experience as a core social resource, the Hub promotes meaningful social participation and connection across the lifespan.



Led by Dr. Joseph Abinader, the project will foster reciprocal mentorship relationships by connecting older adult mentors from the university and broader community with student and junior faculty mentees, based on shared interests and goals.

- For students and early-career professionals, these relationships can improve aging literacy, support professional identity development, and be particularly beneficial for individuals from underrepresented groups.
- For older adult mentors, participation offers renewed purpose, social connection, and continued engagement with the university and broader community.

The Intergenerational Mentorship Hub aligns strongly with the AFU principles and will contribute to the knowledge base on intergenerational mentorship as a strategy for addressing ageism and social isolation. Insights from this work will help inform future age-friendly initiatives at UCalgary and beyond.

✦ Connecting Older Adults to the Supports They Need

Calgary is recognized as an Age-Friendly City and is a member of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. This designation reflects a strong commitment to supporting healthy aging.



Yet for many older adults, awareness of and access to available programs and services remain significant challenges. Information is often scattered across multiple sources, making it difficult to find and navigate. Bridging this gap between age-friendly intentions and everyday lived experience is essential to ensuring older adults can fully benefit from the supports available to them.

To address this challenge, the Centre on Aging spearheaded a research project to improve access to information about programs and services for older adults in Calgary. The study is led by Dr. Chantelle Zimmer (Senior Manager, Centre on Aging) and conducted in partnership with Calgary Seniors' Resource Society and Carya, community organizations with extensive experience supporting older adults and families. The project also includes the involvement of a former member of the City's Older Adult Advisory Table, whose participation brings invaluable lived experience to the work. In addition, the project provided a meaningful training opportunity for Kate Checknita, a Master of Public Health student from the University of Toronto.

Purpose: The study aimed to build a strong evidence base to inform the development of a centralized, user-friendly digital information tool tailored to the needs of older adults.

The research team conducted an environmental scan of community-based programs and services across the city and surveyed Calgary residents aged 55 and older to better understand their information-seeking behaviours, the barriers and facilitators they encounter, and the features they would value most in a digital platform.

The environmental scan identified hundreds of programs and services provided by different organizations, highlighting both the breadth of available supports and the complexity of navigating them.



700+
programs and services



300+
organizations

Survey findings revealed strong interest in information related to physical health, physical activity, and social connection—key areas for maintaining well-being as people age. Participants identified major barriers, including scattered information sources, limited awareness of programs and services, and concerns about the trustworthiness of information. At the same time, they emphasized the importance of clear, reliable information presented in accessible formats. Most participants indicated they were confident using digital tools and were supportive of the development of one.



User
Testing



Digital Information
Tool

These findings will be applied through a user-centred design process to guide the development of a digital tool that better connects older adults with programs and services that support healthy aging.

By grounding innovation in the lived experiences and preferences of older Calgarians, this work advances age inclusivity in a practical and meaningful way. It also demonstrates how partnerships between UCalgary and community organizations can help translate age-friendly commitments into concrete solutions that improve daily life—both in Calgary and as a model for other age-friendly communities.

Priority 2:

Transdisciplinary Aging Research

The Centre on Aging's second strategic priority is to **advance transdisciplinary research that addresses aging-related challenges**. We foster collaborative, transdisciplinary research to support the development of innovative, scalable, and sustainable solutions. The Centre also promotes the translation of research into actionable policies, programs, and practices to improve the lives of older adults.

Annual Highlights

- **Sustained a strong and diverse aging research portfolio** by supporting 47 research projects, including funding applications, new projects, and ongoing studies, through expertise, letters of support, participant recruitment, and knowledge mobilization.
- **Catalyzed transdisciplinary aging research at a national level** by providing financial and in-kind planning support for a two-day pan-Canadian research meeting focused on developing a response framework for late-life homelessness.
- **Expanded research capacity among emerging scholars** by providing direct research support to 11 students and early-career researchers and indirect support to more than 100 students through Centre-led and Centre-supported initiatives.
- **Facilitated the translation and sharing of aging research** by featuring member and student projects in newsletters and creating a dedicated website page with research-based tools and resources for diverse knowledge users.

► Collaborating Across Systems to Address Late-Life Homelessness

In March 2026, the Centre on Aging co-hosted a two-day forum with Centre member Dr. Lara Nixon to strengthen dialogue, collaboration, and coordination in responding to late-life homelessness across Canada.

The ExCHANGE Calgary Forum built on Dr. Nixon's ongoing research and collaborative work with The Exchange—a group of community co-researchers with lived experience of late-life homelessness—as well as a transdisciplinary network of leaders, practitioners, and researchers from across Canada focused on this population.



25
partners



7
cities

The forum brought together partners from cities across British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants represented government and public agencies, housing and continuing care organizations, health agencies, academic and research institutions, community-based organizations, and individuals with lived experience.

By convening diverse perspectives rooted in systems-level, practice, and lived experience knowledge, the forum created a valuable space for shared learning and collective problem solving. This collaborative approach supported meaningful dialogue aimed at catalyzing more coordinated, system-level responses to late-life homelessness in Canada.

Each day of the forum opened with a prayer led by an Elder from the Kainai Nation (Blood Tribe), grounding the gathering in respect, reflection, and relational accountability. The agenda included presentations, facilitated large- and small-group discussions, and co-design sessions. Together, participants explored promising practices across supportive housing, shelter-based healthcare, outreach, and continuing care, with a strong emphasis on cross-sector and cross-jurisdictional collaboration. The forum concluded with discussions to identify priority interventions, strategic collective actions, and partnership opportunities to support both short- and long-term implementation. Strong participation across both days reflected deep engagement and a shared commitment to learning and action.

Dr. Nixon and her team are preparing a post-forum report to synthesize key insights. She was also recently awarded a CIHR Partnering for Impact Catalyst Grant, which—together with the report—will inform ongoing efforts to strengthen Canada’s national response to late-life homelessness.

Through our support of the ExCHANGE Calgary Forum, the Centre strengthened strategic partnerships and contributed to a growing national dialogue aligned with our commitment to collaboration, inclusion, and knowledge mobilization in aging research. The Centre’s contributions included in-kind planning support and a \$20,000 financial investment, underscoring our role as a catalyst for transdisciplinary, community-engaged initiatives addressing complex aging-related challenges, locally and beyond.



➤ **Driving Change Through Knowledge Mobilization in Aging**



Dr. Jayna Holroyd-Leduc, Scientific Director of the Centre on Aging, was awarded the 2025 CIHR Institute of Aging Betty Havens Prize for Knowledge Mobilization in Aging. This national award recognizes individuals who advance the use of aging research.

Dr. Holroyd-Leduc is an academic geriatrician and knowledge translation researcher at UCalgary who has dedicated her career to improving healthcare for older Canadians. Her innovative work has bridged the gap between research and practice, reshaping how acute and continuing care are delivered across Alberta and beyond.

Her leadership has resulted in province-wide implementation of the Elder Friendly Care Hospital Program and a provincial Hip Fracture Care Pathway, both of which have improved patient outcomes and strengthened health system performance. She also led the development of the Long-Term Care–Emergency Department Care Pathway, reducing unnecessary hospital transfers while improving care for long-term care residents.

Dr. Holroyd-Leduc continues to supervise graduate students and collaborate with researchers across UCalgary and nationally on initiatives aimed at improving the lives of older adults. As Scientific Director of our Centre on Aging, she is helping to shape a healthcare workforce equipped to meet the needs of an aging population. Her leadership has influenced provincial and national policy and has earned her recognition as a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Through her research, mentorship, and advocacy, Dr. Holroyd-Leduc has significantly transformed how older adults experience healthcare in Canada—leaving a lasting impact grounded in compassionate, evidence-based, and age-friendly care.

Priority 3:

Organizational Culture and Operations

The Centre on Aging's third strategic priority is to **strengthen its organizational culture and operations**. We foster a culture that emphasizes collaboration, professional development, and operational efficiency. By cultivating a supportive, inclusive, and connected environment, the Centre advances interdisciplinary aging initiatives across research, education, and community engagement.

Annual Highlights

- **Strengthened governance and leadership structures** by establishing a Scientific Advisory Committee with representation from 7 UCalgary faculties, as well as initiating a Community Advisory Committee to broaden support for research, education, and community engagement.
- **Improved organizational clarity and engagement** by implementing a formal membership system that provides consistency, transparency, and expanded opportunities for faculty involvement.
- **Deepened collaboration within the O'Brien Institute for Public Health** through active participation in its institutional review and co-delivery of events focused on aging, gender, and health.
- **Enhanced the Centre's identity and visibility** through updated branding, a redesigned website with improved functionality, and the publication of regular internal and public newsletters highlighting UCalgary aging-related initiatives.
- **Supported the next generation of aging leaders** by helping to establish a graduate student club focused on aging to enhance training, networking, and professional development opportunities.

➤ **Advancing Accountability and Alignment through External Review**

This past year, the O'Brien Institute for Public Health underwent an external review of its research activities over the previous 5 years. As a hub within the Institute, the Centre on Aging actively participated in this process as part of our commitment to reflection, accountability, and continuous improvement. The Centre contributed to a written report for the Institute's International Scientific Advisory Group and engaged directly with external reviewers to discuss our research and scholarly activities.

The review provided valuable external validation of the Centre's work. Reviewers highlighted the strength of the Centre's research and broader scholarly contributions, and encouraged continued engagement in strategic initiatives with high-impact potential. While no specific recommendations were directed to the Centre, reviewers underscored the importance of aging as a critical public health issue and emphasized that it should remain a priority within the Institute's fundraising and strategic planning efforts.

Participation in this review reinforced the Centre's role as an interdisciplinary hub for advancing aging-related public health research.



» **Fostering Interdisciplinary Dialogue through Women and Aging Programming**

Deepening relationships with other hubs within the O'Brien Institute for Public Health has been a priority for the Centre on Aging, recognizing that collaboration maximizes resources and enhances impact.



This year, the Centre partnered with the Sex, Gender and Women's Health Research Hub to co-host two public film screenings that explored issues at the intersection of aging, gender, and health.

The first screening featured *The M Factor*, a documentary that challenges stigma and sparks conversation about the physical, emotional, and social experiences of menopause. The second event was an advanced screening of *Tough Old Broads*, a documentary celebrating trailblazing women who broke barriers earlier in life and continue to lead change as they age. Each screening was followed by a panel discussion featuring academic experts and community leaders, creating space for thoughtful dialogue, learning, and connection.

These events strengthened relationships across research hubs, fostered interdisciplinary exchange, and reinforced a collaborative and inclusive organizational culture. By bringing together researchers and community members, the Centre helped bridge scholarship and lived experience—advancing our mission while supporting the broader goals of the O'Brien Institute and the University.

Together, these efforts reflect the Centre's commitment to internal collaboration, organizational learning, and efficient use of resources, all of which are essential to sustaining impactful aging-related work.



➤ **Building a Community of Emerging Leaders in Aging**

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) is the oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization in North America dedicated to advancing research, education, and practice related to aging. To support the next generation of leaders in the field, GSA has recently introduced new mechanisms that enable universities to establish Student Chapters. These student-led groups promote professional development in aging-related research, education, advocacy, and policy, while offering valuable opportunities for networking and mentorship within institutions and across the broader GSA community.

Over the past year, the Centre on Aging has worked to establish a GSA Graduate Student Chapter at UCalgary, which will be the first in Canada. This milestone reflects the Centre's commitment to fostering a supportive, connected, and forward-looking culture for trainees engaged in aging-related work.



The Chapter creates a formal structure for graduate students from diverse disciplines to come together, build leadership skills, and engage with national and international peers who share an interest in aging.

The Graduate Student Chapter also has the potential to play a leadership role within the University by supporting and mentoring undergraduate student groups focused on aging and older adults. By strengthening connections across levels of training, the Chapter helps cultivate a vibrant community of learners and emerging professionals, expanding student interest and engagement in the field of aging at UCalgary.

This initiative strengthens the Centre's organizational culture by investing in student development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and professional connectivity. In doing so, it supports a sustainable pipeline of researchers, educators, and practitioners equipped to address the complex challenges and opportunities of an aging population—locally, nationally, and beyond.

Financial Summary

2025-26	Actuals
Revenue	
Centre on Aging Operating (Includes Surplus from Previous Year)	\$235,878.63
Centre on Aging Endowment Interest	\$86,644.47
BSF Chair in Geriatric Medicine Endowment Interest	\$248,249.45
Geriatric Endowment Interest	\$13,500.00
Other	\$350.00
Total Revenue	\$584,622.55
Expenses	
Staff Salaries & Benefits	\$353,784.60
Studentships	\$25,152.16
Operating	\$3,426.48
Research & Education Sponsorship	\$21,372.27
Events	\$4,513.77
Conferences	\$7,777.42
Total Expenses	\$416,026.70
Surplus (Deficit)	\$168,595.85

Note: The AFU Project Grants Program was held in 2025-26, but funds (\$100,000) were not transferred to successful recipients until 2026-27. Therefore, this expense is not included in the summary.

Contact Information

Centre on Aging

University of Calgary
GD01, Cal Wenzel Precision Health Building
3280 Hospital Drive NW
Calgary, AB T2N 4Z6

 obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/aging

 aging@ucalgary.ca



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Centre on Aging