

ASSESSING THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY'S AGE-FRIENDLINESS



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
O'Brien Institute for Public Health
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BACKGROUND

The older adult population is increasing as the global population rises and individuals live longer.

The vision of the Age-Friendly University (AFU) movement is to foster an age inclusive culture in higher education settings, with a focus on adults 50 years and older. Ten principles have been developed to guide the efforts of post-secondary institutions belonging to the AFU Global Network.

The Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging led UCalgary in joining the AFU Global Network in late 2018. One of the Centre's goals has been to evaluate UCalgary's age-friendliness to inform future initiatives that move our institution towards realizing the full vision of an AFU.

Purpose

To assess UCalgary's age-friendliness to identify strengths and gaps by examining its age-friendly campus practices and environmental features.

METHOD

The Age-Friendly Inventory and Campus Climate Survey was selected for our assessment because it is a comprehensive research instrument that operationalizes the AFU principles. The instrument consists of two measures: (a) an inventory that captures the objective or actual elements of age-friendliness in post-secondary settings, and (b) a survey that captures the subjective or perceived elements of age-friendliness.



Inventory

Completed by administrators to determine the presence or absence of age-friendly campus practices and environmental features at the university.



Survey

Completed by current faculty, staff, and students to understand their awareness of the AFU initiative, awareness of age-friendly campus practices related to their role at the university, perceptions of the university's age-friendliness, and personal beliefs about age inclusivity.

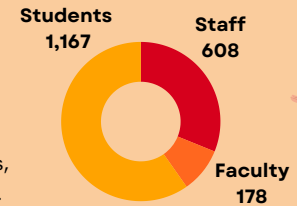
PARTICIPANTS

10 administrators completed the inventory.

1,953 faculty, staff, and students completed the survey.



The EDI data for the survey participants illustrated that there was greater representation of equity deserving groups, such as older adults, women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+ persons, than UCalgary's overall population.



RESULTS



One-third

of participants were somewhat familiar with the concept of an AFU.

59.0 - 70.8%

of participants felt ageism directed towards older adults was a serious problem in society.

Less than one-third

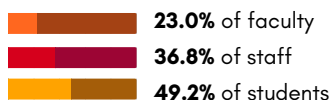
of participants reported that courses are available on topics related to aging and older adults.

Participants thought **facilitated intergenerational activities** would foster a more age inclusive campus community and society.

65.0% of the environmental features assessed are present, with more age-friendly features in new and updated areas of campus.

61.6% of the age-friendly practices and features in the inventory are present, reflecting moderately high age-friendliness.

Despite this, relatively few participants perceived UCalgary to be age-friendly.



16.9 - 39.8%

of participants believed older adults feel welcome at UCalgary.

Two-thirds

of faculty and staff were concerned they would face age biases at UCalgary as they got older.

12.4%

of faculty perceived research across disciplines to regularly include the perspectives of older adults.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

UCalgary was found to be moderately age-friendly. However, most faculty, staff, and students who participated in the survey had limited knowledge of an AFU and were generally unaware of the status of the university's age-friendly campus practices and environmental features.

Results from the inventory and survey revealed both strengths and gaps in age-friendly practices across all AFU principles, with 5 of 10 principles having the most areas meriting improvement. These principles are concerned with:



Encouraging the participation of older adults in all core institutional activities, including education and research.



Promoting intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise among learners of all ages.



Ensuring the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and promoting public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.



Increasing students' understanding of the complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.



Ensuring regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.