Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging

An overview for makeCalgary

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03 May, 2017

makeCalgary Event on Aging
Historical overview
External context
Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging
Key requirements for successful centres
University context
Next steps
History at the University of Calgary dates back to the mid-1960s
  — A.E. David Schonfield, Donald Spence, Victor Marshall, and Gloria Gutman all on campus

Ad hoc committee struck to investigate the possibility of a centre in 1968 – interdisciplinary research group struck

Ad hoc committee in 1977 that evolved into a President’s Committee on Aging & Gerontology in 1978 (disbanded by 1983)
  — Held symposium in 1979 of the form and function of a proposed institute
Rapid population aging called a “game changer” leading to a number of grand challenges

- Potential of extending life span
- Promoting healthy aging (healthy brain aging)
- Living well with chronic conditions (dementia & mental health)
- Housing, transportation, and supportive technology
- Income security, sustainable expenditures, and ensuring fair allocation & an equitable society

50+ gerontology programs and aging research centres in Canada (visited and reviewed a few)

- Vary greatly in objectives, form, and functions (and success)
- A number of common functions but need to differentiate
2011 an endowed gift agreement signed establishing the Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging
- Initially inter-Faculty centre (most centres are intra-Faculty)
- Recently moved by mutual consent into the O’Brien Institute for Public Health

Administrative and collaborative hub for interdisciplinary research and educational programming
- Age-related research
- Advocacy and public policy development
- Interdisciplinary teaching and learning
- Community outreach
ACTIVITIES TO DATE

- Development work
  - Accrue endowment
  - Environmental scan and work plan
  - Alberta Association on Gerontology (AAG) consultation meeting

- By areas
  - Research (funding of post-doctoral fellows)
  - Public policy (older driver symposium, meeting with parliamentarians)
  - Interdisciplinary education (student research meetings)
  - Community outreach (co-funding exercise & aging symposium)
CORE RESEARCH PROGRAMS

1. Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging

2. Age-friendly Calgary
ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL CENTRES ON AGING

- **Pre-conditions**
  - Critical mass of faculty, adequate funding, infrastructure

- **Key elements**
  - Interdisciplinary leadership
  - Engagement and support from institutional leadership
  - Linking activities to broader institutional initiatives
  - External funding (research studies)
  - Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY CONTEXT

- **Strategic direction**
  - Eyes High – “global intellectual hub” (research focus)
  - Seven academic priorities – includes *Interdisciplinarity* and *Connection with Community*
  - Six strategic directions – links with four (*Brain and Mental Health, Engineering Solutions for Health, Chronic Diseases, Human Dynamics*)

- Complex organization with other calls for institutional support & the commitment of faculty
VALUE PROPOSITION FOR THE UNIVERSITY

- **Vision:** Healthy aging within supportive communities

- **Core areas**
  - Age-related research
  - Advocacy and public policy development
  - Interdisciplinary teaching and learning
  - Community outreach
NEXT STEPS

- Establish/ implement ✓
  - Supportive governance structure
  - Leadership and administration model

- Ensure clear alignment with the mission, vision and research themes of the University ✓

- Obtain support from ✓
  - University leadership
  - Faculty (with their active participation)

- Create presence (footprint) in University
  - Strong profile
  - Inspiring goals
  - Demonstration of success

- Funds development
Emerging opportunities

- Becoming part of the O’Brien Institute for Public Health
- Strong relationship with W21C
  - Biomedical Innovations in Home Health Care for an Aging Population
- Strong relationship with Strafford Foundation
  - West Campus Development
NEW INITIATIVES

- Sponsor of **Walk21 Conference** plenary session featuring Peggy Edwards, age-friendly walkability and winter walkability expert from Ottawa (Sep 2017)
- Barrie I. Strafford Masters and Doctoral **Scholarships** for Interdisciplinary Studies on Aging (under review for 2018 Open Competition)
- Funding for **faculty-specific** interdisciplinary aging initiatives (2017/2018)
- **Catalyst Grants** for aging-focused researchers (ongoing)
- Fall 2017 public talk and research symposium celebrating **Resilience & Aging** (more to come soon)
- And others…
COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?