



Working Together for Elder Friendly Futures

A UW Gerontology Conference

The Event:

The inaugural **Working Together for Elder friendly Futures Conference (EFF)** was held on September 11-12, 2013 at the Husky Union Building on the University of Washington campus.

The conference was attended by 216 people from both the UW campus as well as local and regional organizations representing healthcare professionals, care facility administrators, faculty from other colleges/universities, students, government agency officials, and industry representatives. They participated in two days of panels, roundtables, and presentations to discuss innovative ways to support aging in place, health disparities, the latest research and science related to dementia and pharmacogenomics, and how the Affordable Care Act will affect older adults. The conference also hosted an **Innovation Showcase** of creative practice and research developments presented via a two- or three-dimensional interactive display as well as a more traditional **Poster Session** related to research, quality improvement, program evaluation, or other community-based projects.

It was a successful interdisciplinary effort thanks to leadership from the Schools of Social Work, Nursing and Pharmacy as well as a 10 member planning committee. Key to the success was the participation of the University's Provost who gave the opening welcome and two geriatric leaders from national organizations: **Dr. Nancy Whitelaw**, Senior Fellow, National Council on Aging and **Dr. Cheryl Phillips**, Senior Vice President for Advocacy, LeadingAge who were the keynote speakers.

Conference Objectives:

The two-day conference was an in-depth opportunity for practitioners, researchers, administrators, policy-makers and educators to examine the opportunities for and challenges to building elder-friendly futures in which all older people can thrive. The focus was to explore evidence-based practice and state of the science, learn about translating emerging knowledge on critical issues into practice, gain multiple perspectives on elder-friendly communities, and network with potential collaborators across disciplines and professions. The conference overarching goal was to ensure that all older adults, regardless of their race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, or functional ability, have opportunities and choices in their living environments. It was also designed so participants would leave the conference not only with enhanced knowledge and skills to create elder friendly futures, but also with new collaborators to address questions that emerge from conference sessions.

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Background:

This conference builds upon the 2012 *Research Forum on Creating Elder-Friendly Communities* and the 2009-12 cross disciplinary work by faculty from nursing, pharmacy and social work who aimed to identify possible future directions for gerontological education, research and community engagement for Washington State. This group recognized the imperative of bringing together researchers and providers across disciplines to share their expertise to ensure that all adults have options to age in the community they prefer. The conference planning committee strategically designed a mix of learning opportunities to foster such cooperation as well as productive engaging discussions.

Future:

The EFF Planning committee is looking toward October 8 & 9, 2014 to hold a similar conference and will be making more information available on the website: www.elderfriendlyfutures.org

Any questions, please contact Kate Lorenzen, UW Professional and Continuing Education: klorenzen@pce.uw.edu

What attendees had to say about the 2013 event:

“It was useful helping me educate my client’s families, and has inspired me to collaborate more with other providers serving the elderly in my community”

“It really helped me think about what it means to support people in aging, beyond just tending to their medical needs.”

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