INFORMATION ITEM:
The UNCG Gerontology Research Network

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
On October 29, over 60 faculty members, along with graduate students and staff, representing 19 schools, departments or programs gathered for the inaugural meeting of the UNCG Gerontology Research Network (GRN). Sixteen posters featured a diverse group of faculty researchers in aging representing many disciplines and several schools. The working session which followed the research networking time captured the general enthusiasm of the group to continue to share and collaborate in specific ways. A second meeting will be held on January 30, 2008.

Among the suggested ways that the GRN could facilitate that interaction was by supporting research working groups around major datasets in aging where faculty members from different disciplines would seek to answer related questions from a common dataset. The Health and Retirement Survey was discussed as one such dataset that would provide a rich base for research from diverse disciplines.

Other ideas that build on the strength of the network included providing multidisciplinary training in aging at the graduate and professional level through training grant support; encouraging and featuring students’ research and practice in aging across disciplines; and communicating more broadly the depth of community engagement and service embodied by students and faculty in aging-related disciplines.

Five goals and related activities emerged from the proceedings of the initial working session as viable initiatives for the GRN in Year One:

- Facilitate and support logistically a multidisciplinary research working group around a common dataset. The goal for the group would be to generate a grant proposal by the end of Year One. Activities to support this group would include “how to” sessions related to use of datasets and tangible support to identify funding sources, organize a team submission and develop the common elements of such a grant proposal. Dr. David Weir from the University of Michigan will be coming to UNCG late spring to discuss potential opportunities in the longitudinal NIA Health and Retirement Survey.
- Bring national expertise on developing interdisciplinary research and training in the field of aging to the UNCG campus through a visit by a senior faculty member from one of the recognized centers of aging who would both consult with the network and speak to a broad audience.
- Sponsor the first annual research symposium that would feature the work of UNCG faculty and students in the field of aging. Ideas for such an event include poster categories for graduate and upper level undergraduate students in both research and
practice (with awards for travel to national professional meetings to recognize top students in each category) and research presentations by a senior faculty member, junior faculty member and doctoral student each year.

- Provide the **web presence and other communication support** necessary to both keep the members of the network connected to each other and to showcase the activities and contributions of the network as well as foster connections with the Greater Greensboro community and beyond.

- **Plan and seek funding for future endeavors of the network** including the submission of a multidisciplinary training grant by the end of Year Two.

At the January 30, 2008 meeting, those attending the GRN meeting will review and comment on the above goals, a steering committee will be formed and the Health and Retirement Survey will be introduced.

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