Directors Notes

As I begin my second year as Director of the Gerontology Program and Center on Aging at Minnesota State University, Mankato, I am excited about this year ahead.

The field of aging, especially aging baby boomers, has certainly been in the news lately. Many articles, including one in MSU’s Reporter Tuesday October 18th, talk of “the unprecedented number of aging baby boomers”. At 77 million, it is amazing to think that comprises more than 1 in 4 of all Americans. Even the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), has recognized this “longevity revolution”, with the recent airing of a two hour program, “The Boomer Century”. This special deals with such boomer issues as “Middlecence” “Retiring Retirement”, “In Sickness and In Health” and “Giving Back to the Community”. We hope to set up a film series to share segments of this PBS special with the MSU community this year.

For the first time in a number of years, we have two Graduate Assistants in the Gerontology Program, Katie Gripp and Sanjay Sarkar. They will be assisting in the development, strengthening and implementation of a wide variety of activities for both the Gerontology Program and Center on Aging. Please see more about Katie and Sanjay on page 5 in this newsletter.

We intend to grow and expand both the Gerontology Program and the Center on Aging during this next year. In addition to many new students in the Gerontology Master’s Program and as Gerontology minors, we have undertaken a major initiative regarding our Certificate in Gerontology Program. During the year, we plan to offer courses toward the Certificate in Gerontology both online and off-campus. Our first online Gerontology course Public Policy and Aging will be offered next spring.

Finally, in reference to the Center on Aging, the Center Subcommittee will be identifying funding possibilities for the Center, working on plans for next spring’s Chesley Lecture on Aging and developing additional Center activities and programs.

To learn more about us, stop by the Gerontology bulletin board outside Armstrong 113, check out the Gerontology website at www.mnsu.edu/gero or stop by our new office in 215 S Morris Hall.
Projections indicate that by 2030, the composition of the older population in the U.S. will be more diverse: 72 percent non-Hispanic White, 11 percent Hispanic, 10 percent Black, and 6 percent Asian. -U.S. Census Bureau (2000)

Sigma Phi Omega

Sigma Phi Omega is the National Honor and Professional Society in Gerontology. It was formed in 1980 to recognize the excellence of those who study aging. Sigma Phi Omega seeks to promote scholarship, professionalism, friendship, and services to older persons, and to recognize exemplary attainment in aging studies and related fields.

The Minnesota State University Beta Mu chapter is currently welcoming new members. If you are interested in joining Sigma Phi Omega or want to be informed about our upcoming events, contact Katie Griep at katherine.griep@mnsu.edu or Jim Tift at james.tift@mnsu.edu.

Gerontology Club

The Gerontology Club had their first meeting on Tuesday, October 2nd. We are very excited to announce the new 2007-2008 club officers at Minnesota State University:

President—Katie Griep
Vice President—Johanne Bradley
Secretary—Anne Elvecrog
Treasurer—Ashley Evans

We had great attendance and some really good, fun ideas for the semester! Some activities we will be participating in include an information booth in the CSU, video conferences held by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, volunteer activities at long term care facilities throughout Mankato, and much more!

The Gerontology Club is open to all MSU students who may have an interest in learning about the study of aging. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month unless otherwise specified in the Centennial Student Union. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 13th at 2pm in CSU 202 "Cooper Room. It is never too late to join, so anyone interested is welcome to attend! If you need more information, contact Katie Griep at katherine.griep@mnsu.edu. Or check out our bulletin board located in Armstrong Hall by the Sociology Department for upcoming meeting dates and come sit in on a meeting!

THE GERONTOLOGY NEWSLINK
Spotlight on Gerontology Minors

Gerontology is a multidisciplinary field of study that draws upon perspectives of many diverse academic fields. For this reason, students choose a minor in Gerontology for different purposes. We decided to ask the MSU gerontology students to find out why they chose the gerontology minor, and how they plan to integrate it with their major and future career plans. Below are some of the many ways that a Gerontology minor can be incorporated with different academic majors.

Anne Elvecrog is a Senior Social Work major who is minoring in Gerontology because she intends to be a social worker in long term care or any type of agency that specializes in working with older adults. She chose the gerontology minor because she’s had an interest in working with older adults since she was in high school. Ever since then she has wanted to increase her education on the older adult population to be more knowledgeable about issues they face. Anne says that “Older adults are a joy to work with and have a lot to teach you if you are willing to listen!”

Junior Catherine Wolf is a Nursing major who chose a Gerontology minor because she has an interest in older adults. She plans to pursue a job as a hospice nurse, and the knowledge of older adults Catherine will receive from the gerontology minor will help her in her work.

When asked why she chose a Gerontology minor, Senior Sheri Saltzer said, “I love the elderly from their personal histories to their quirky personalities to how they dress and interact with others in society. I figure if I can love the way someone is without even meeting them there is obviously something there for me.” As an Ethnic Studies major with minors in Gerontology and Art, Sheri is unsure what her future plans will be. Since there is an influx of people from all of the world here in the United States and the elderly population will be at a record number due to all the Baby Boomers, Sheri believes that having a solid knowledge base in both areas will benefit her no matter the population of people she will end up working with.

Ann Strommer is a Senior Communication Disorder major who has chosen a minor in Gerontology because she has an interest in people and wanted to learn more about the older population. She feels that with incorporating her Gerontology minor with her future plans of working in a hospital or clinical setting, she will be able to understand and relate to the older population better since she could be working with older adults that have Traumatic Brain Injuries, have had strokes, or have Dementia.

Sophomore Han Lee is a Pre-Nursing major who chose a minor in Gerontology because he has a desire to “understand his parents more deeply and systematically.” He plans on integrating the Gerontology minor with his future career plans of becoming a nurse specialized in gerontological care. Han says that, “So far, through the experience of Gero 200, it is an interesting study.”
Life Expectancy Figures at New High

A new federal study found in September that the life expectancy for Americans is at its all time high of 78 years due to a decrease in heart disease and stroke; two of the nations leading killers. This means that individuals who are born in 2005 are expected to live until they are at least 78 years old, according to the report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2005.” Americans, however, still fall lower compared to the life expectancy of other countries. Japan continues to hold the highest life expectancy for women (86 years), and the European republic of San Marino has the world's greatest life expectancy for men (80 years), according to the World Health Organization.
Meet the New Graduate Assistants

The Gerontology program would like to welcome Katie Griep and Sanjay Sarkar as the new 2007-2008 Graduate Assistants. Katie recently graduated from MSU this past May with a Bachelors of Science in Sociology, and a minor in Gerontology, while also achieving the Nonprofit Leadership Certificate. Currently, she is pursuing the Gerontology Master’s program at MSU while also working on completing the Nursing Home Administration Licensure. Katie is extremely excited to be working with Jim Tift, the program director, in addition to the diverse group of people that are involved in the Gerontology Program and Center on Aging. Once completing her Master’s degree, Katie plans to utilize her education and training towards her long term goal of becoming a director in long-term care.

Sanjay is from India and is also a first year Gerontology Masters student. He graduated in Physical Therapy and also has a Masters in Orthopedic Physical Therapy from India. Once receiving his Masters, Sanjay became a college instructor teaching undergraduate Physical Therapy along with being a licensed clinician practicing in several hospitals. His research interests include developing sociological tools for the elderly post retirement and memory enhancement of the older individuals using alternative therapies.

Upcoming Events

**What:** Minnesota Department of Human Services is having a video conference entitled “Alternative Care, Caregiver Support, and Long Term Care Consultation Basic Program Overviews”.

**Where:** Blue Earth County Human Services 410 S 5th Street, Basement Level - Voyager Room in Mankato, MN. Pre-registration is required at http://agingtraining.dhs.state.mn.us/

**When:** Thursday November 8, 2007. The Alternative Care and Caregiver Support programs will be presented in the morning from 9:00 – 12:00. The Long Term Care Consultant program will be presented in the afternoon from 1:00 – 4:00.

**What:** Gerontology Club and Sigma Phi Omega Meeting

**When:** Tuesday November 13th, 2007 from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

**Where:** CSU 202 * Cooper Room

By 2030, Minnesota will have 1.2 million persons over 65, or one out of every four Minnesotans.

- Minnesota Department of Human Services 2007
Fewer Seniors Living in Nursing Homes

According to an article printed in the USA Today on September 27, 2007 based on a study done by the Census Bureau in 2006, fewer elderly people are living in nursing homes due to improving health and more choices for living arrangements. Many older adults are utilizing at-home care, assisted living facilities, along with adult children taking their parents into their home, which is causing this decrease number in nursing homes. Statistics show that “About 7.4% of Americans aged 75 and older lived in nursing homes in 2006, compared with the 8.1% in 2000 and 10.2% in 1900” (Nasser, USA Today). To see the complete USA Today article, check out the Gerontology bulletin board located outside the Sociology Department in 113 Armstrong Hall.

Dates to Remember:

November 8 - DHS Video Conference 9:00-12:00 and 1:00-4:00 Blue Earth County Human Services Building in Mankato
November 13 - Gerontology Club/SPO meeting 2:00 CSU 202 *Cooper Room

We’re on the web!

www.mnsu.edu/gero