



Age-Friendly University Report 2019



Institute for
Research on Aging

Table of Contents

Executive summary	1
Background	3
Findings	4
Communications and outreach	4
Accessibility and inclusion	7
Programming and engagement	10
Recommendations	12
Communications and outreach	12
Accessibility and inclusion	14
Programming and engagement	20
Considerations for this study	25
Next steps	27
Appendices	29
Appendix A: McMaster Community E-Mail Survey	29
Appendix B: Focus Group Questions	32

Executive Summary

In October 2017, McMaster became the second Canadian university to join the international Age-Friendly University (AFU) network, a global body made up of higher education institutions that are committed to becoming more universally accessible. As a member of the network, McMaster is committed to working towards the 10 guiding principles of an age-friendly university (see “Background” for a list of the 10 principles).

McMaster has a robust history of building strength in aging research and knowledge translation. It currently houses several platforms focused on aging research from multiple perspectives and disciplines. The McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) was established in 2016 as a means to better coordinate, facilitate and amplify research in aging across all faculties at McMaster. It is firmly committed to exemplifying the principles of the AFU network within existing platforms and research centres and the University as a whole.

In order to better understand the university’s current age-friendly strengths and programming, MIRA research staff surveyed members of McMaster’s community (staff, faculty members, students, alumni and Hamiltonians). As well, MIRA research staff facilitated focus groups with older adults that included retirees, senior class assistants, program participants, and Hamiltonians. These surveys and focus groups allowed MIRA to identify areas with well-developed programming, research, and activities aligning with the principles of the AFU network, as well as areas that could use further programming to build on its strengths.

The focus groups and surveys that MIRA conducted confirmed that McMaster University has a well-developed research program focused on improving the lives of older adults and keeping people in good health as they age. Survey and focus group participants were able to identify a broad array of programs and activities that older adults outside of McMaster University can participate in, as well as programs that can support McMaster employees as they age and progress through their careers.

Going forward, McMaster University aims to focus its efforts in three key areas to improve its alignment with AFU principles and continue developing the campus into a welcoming and inclusive space for people of all ages:

1. **Communications and outreach:** McMaster University aims to ensure members of the public are made aware of relevant events on campus, including research on aging and aging-specific programming; online information must be accessible and easy to find and navigate for the public, including older adults.
2. **Accessibility and inclusion:** McMaster University aims to ensure accessibility features on campus are installed and maintained; continue developing the experience of first-time visitors to campus; communicate the value that older adults can contribute in society and the McMaster community.
3. **Programming and engagement:** McMaster University aims to develop educational programming that appeals to older adults and allows this group to learn about McMaster’s diverse research strengths; create new opportunities to bring older adults on campus; encourage older adults to become or continue to be part of the McMaster community as a means to support the creation of new social networks and combat social isolation.

Executive Summary

Older adults are living longer, healthier lives. Many members of this growing demographic are looking for ways to remain active and engaged after retirement, expand interests, and build new networks. Developing programming, improving access to existing programs and events at McMaster University, and ensuring our campus is a welcoming space that older adults are interested in visiting will open the university to new communities it has not traditionally engaged with. Expanding programming and improving community outreach will allow the university to tap into an engaged and energetic group, as well as ensuring older adults can see themselves in the university and its programming.

Bringing older adults on campus may have positive long-term impacts on building community and decreasing social isolation, both of which are growing concerns. Opening up the university to this new audience will also create opportunities to connect students with a group of passionate individuals who have a wealth of experience and knowledge in varied fields and paths in life.



Background



The Age-Friendly University network is a global body of higher education institutions committed to being more accessible to older adults. The AFU network was developed in 2012 by Dublin City University (DCU) in Ireland as a way to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the world's aging population. It builds on the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Communities Initiative, which encourages all communities to shape their physical and social environments to support people of all ages.

The AFU principles identify the distinctive contributions institutions of higher education can make in responding to the interests and needs of an aging population.

The **10 guiding principles of an age-friendly university** are as follows:

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including **educational and research programs**.
2. To promote **personal and career development** in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue second careers.
3. To recognize the range of **educational needs of older adults**.
4. To promote **intergenerational learning** to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
5. To widen access to **online educational opportunities** for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6. To ensure that the university's **research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society** and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7. To increase the understanding of students of the **longevity dividend** and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of **health and wellness programs** and its **arts and cultural activities**.
9. To engage actively with the university's own **retired community**.
10. To ensure **regular dialogue with organizations** representing the interests of the aging population.

The online survey and focus group questionnaires developed by MIRA were shaped around these principles in order to collect baseline data on McMaster University's work that currently aligns with these principles, as well as targeting efforts around future age-friendly programming.

Findings



Communications and outreach

Universities naturally promote intergenerational interactions for those who are open to them

The MIRA-AFU survey of the university community provided an excellent reminder about one of the age-friendly benefits of universities: by design, they bring young people together with older people so that knowledge can be shared and transferred. Survey respondents from each Faculty noted that their faculty included members over 65 who still regularly teach and supervise students. This finding reveals one of the benefits of trying to design on-campus opportunities for intergenerational learning and sharing. Many of the necessary pieces to develop these opportunities are already in place on university campuses, even if they are not currently being used to directly support age-friendly programming. Survey respondents who identified as older adults enjoyed the opportunity to exchange ideas and insights with younger people: “It was always interesting to hear what young people had to say about various topics; they were always interested to hear what we had to say as well.” These casual interactions suggest there is a rich opportunity to encourage the development of intergenerational programming and relationship building.

Both survey respondents and older adult participants in the focus group noted that current intergenerational exchanges are often one-sided—largely based on older adults providing their knowledge to students without reciprocal exchange, sharing or mutual learning. Even though people of all ages come together on campus, interactions tend to be very structured. This structure discourages different generations from learning about each other. Providing more casual opportunities on campus for people of different ages to socialize with one another and learn from each other would help each group to build valuable skills and a better understanding of one another.

McMaster has a strong portfolio of research on aging

Survey respondents and focus group participants were aware that McMaster researchers from a variety of departments and fields are doing research on aging. More than 40 per cent (43.45 per cent) of survey respondents answered “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” when asked about the sixth AFU principle: “To ensure that the university’s research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education

Findings

can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.” (27.34 per cent of respondents answered they did not know). As noted later in the considerations section of this report, respondents to the survey largely came from Faculties that are actively engaged in research on aging and the over-representation of participants from these areas suggests that awareness of this research may not be university-wide. Focus group participants in each session independently mentioned that MIRA’s communications and events were an important conduit to their learning about research on aging and connecting them with current research that was of interest to them. In each session, participants also mentioned that they have learned of McMaster researchers’ work supporting healthy aging through various television, radio and newspaper outlets.

Several survey respondents were aware of the work of specific researchers in aging, including: Andrew Costa (Assistant Professor and Schlegel Research Chair in Clinical Epidemiology and Aging in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact at McMaster University, Associate Member of the Division of General Internal Medicine in the Department of Medicine, Research Lead at the Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine’s Waterloo Regional Campus, and Member of the Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis (CHEPA)), Lauren Griffith (Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact, and Associate Scientific Director at the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging), Parminder Raina (Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact, Lead Principal Investigator of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA), Scientific Director of the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA), Canada Research Chair in Geroscience, and the Raymond and Margaret Labarge Chair in Research and Knowledge Application for Optimal Aging), and Brenda Vrkljan (Associate Professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science, Lead Investigator of the McMaster-Candrive team, and Co-Investigator on the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging). Some respondents mentioned knowing of specific McMaster platforms in aging research, such as the McMaster Physical Activity Centre of Excellence (PACE), the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA), the Labarge Centre for Mobility in Aging (LCMA), the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA), Health Tapestry, the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal and the Canadian Driving Research Initiative for Vehicular Safety in the Elderly (Candrive). As well, many survey respondents were familiar with research topics, such as the impact of diseases on older adults, social work with older adults, menopause, geriatric mental health, bone strength and hip fractures, cognitive decline in older adults, and the impact of specific health conditions such as heart disease and cancer on older adults.

Internal communications

MIRA aims to stimulate and facilitate interdisciplinary research on aging, as well as to develop innovative educational programs for students within the academic and clinical realms. The Institute’s approach is to conduct research in cross-Faculty teams and to engage with older adults, their families, health care providers and other key stakeholders through every stage of the research process, from design to evaluation to the implementation of interventions and technologies. Since its launch, MIRA has expanded and has more than 1,000 Twitter followers, 100 members and 80 trainees. Its most recent annual research day attracted more than 120 registered attendees.

Findings

Despite the growth of MIRA and other Faculty-based research centres focused on aging, conversations about aging remain most common within Faculties and departments with existing strengths in research on aging. The distribution of survey respondents from each Faculty reflected this finding, and Faculties with strong existing research programs were more likely to participate in this survey. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents (210) identified either their Faculty or the area of university they worked in. Twenty-seven per cent of these respondents (57) were from the Faculty of Health Sciences; 16.67 per cent (35) were from the Faculty of Social Sciences; and 13.33 per cent (28) were from the Faculty of Science. These Faculties have the highest number of MIRA researchers and trainees and conduct many research projects directly related to aging. They also house departments that directly work with aging populations, such as the Department of Health, Aging & Society; the School of Rehabilitation Science; the Life Sciences program within the Faculty of Science; and the School of Social Work. Response rates were lower for the Faculties of Engineering (7.6 per cent or 16 respondents), Humanities (9.5 per cent or 20 respondents), and Business (6.2 per cent or 13 respondents).

Sixty-one per cent of survey respondents (162) answered “I don’t know” to at least one question. Respondents answered “I don’t know” more often to questions that focused on more specific initiatives, programs, or areas of service that may not apply to all members of the university community, and to questions related to areas where the university does not have existing programming. For example:

- 33.33 per cent of respondents answered “I don’t know” when asked whether the university actively engaged with its own retired community (principle nine).
- 45.68 per cent of respondents answered “I don’t know” when asked whether the university ensured regular dialogue with organisations representing the interests of the aging population (principle 10).
- 35.96 per cent of respondents answered “I don’t know” when asked about the availability of online educational opportunities.

The high rate of “I don’t know” responses to areas where McMaster currently has programming indicates that information is not reaching everyone, despite strong programming in some areas. Effective communications are key to improving the perception of McMaster as an age-friendly university and to gaining support and momentum around age-friendly initiatives. MIRA’s social media following and media reach has grown significantly since its founding. However, information about its work and initiatives still are not reaching everyone in the McMaster community, especially staff and members of Faculties that are not directly engaged in research on aging.

Findings

Accessibility and inclusion

Navigating the university as an older adult

MIRA conducted three focus groups to ask older adults about their perceptions of how well McMaster was meeting the principles of an age-friendly university. These focus groups were largely drawn from groups that are already part of the McMaster community, such as PACE, the McMaster University Retirees Association (MURA), and Senior Class Assistants from the Department of Health, Aging & Society. Even though most attendees had existing connections to the university, all felt that access to programming as well as navigating the university physically and online was a challenge.

In each group, participants agreed that there were programs on campus that older adults could participate in and that would be of interest to many people in the community. Participants were interested in a broad range of activities including lectures, concerts, plays, research studies and physical health activities. When it comes to participating in events, one of the largest obstacles identified by participants was that there is no central posting location that could be used by community members to access information about what is happening on campus. Participants spoke about difficulties they had locating information on the university's website, which does not have an easy-to-find central location for learning about things that are open to the community. One participant knew to look at the Daily News for big events, and others received information through the McMaster Alumni Association website, MIRA's interested citizens email newsletter, or through the McMaster University Retirees Association. In general, they found that information was posted in varied locations, generally by department, area or program, but that there was no central portal for the public to find information about programs that were open to them. McMaster and its Faculties and departments often promote events and programs informally through social media, especially Twitter. This communication tool is low cost and allows for flexible marketing, but it is likely missed by some older adults, who are less likely to use social media and tend to use it differently and less often than other demographic groups.¹

Older adults were also interested in enrolling in courses, either for credit or as listeners. However, they found the current application process to be frustrating. Currently, listeners must first find a course they are interested in, apply to be a listener in that course, then wait to hear whether they can join the course as a listener. Under this system, if a seat is not available in

1 Though internet and social media usage rates are increasing in adults over 65, older adults, especially among those over 75, remain less likely to use social media than university students and professionals that social media marketing is designed to target. Greysen SR, Chin Garcia C, Sudore RL, Cenzer IS, Covinsky KE. Functional Impairment and Internet Use Among Older Adults: Implications for Meaningful Use of Patient Portals. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2014;174(7):1188–1190.



Findings

the selected course, some participants were offered a listener's seat in a similar course, while other participants were not. Participants who were more familiar with the university called departments directly to enquire about whether listeners would be accepted in a course. Three participants indicated they had stopped applying to participate as a listener after this process proved too frustrating. Overall, the older adults surveyed found this system frustrating, preferring to know which courses accepted listeners before applying. They noted that this system would be more efficient. Participants also noted that attending a class as a listener did not feel like an inclusive experience. Two participants were told by instructors they could not speak in class or participate in group discussions, which made them feel like their opinions, input and feedback on materials were not valued or welcomed in the classroom.

Physical accessibility for older adults improves accessibility for everyone

As part of MIRA's AFU initiatives, MIRA recently undertook a study on campus walkability in partnership with facility services. The study identified a number of design choices and maintenance issues that made it difficult for older adults to safely access campus, and impacted their impression of the university as a safe place for them to access and navigate. These findings are detailed in a separate report; but some of the feedback on specific accessibility features included the following: no signage indicating publicly available washrooms in public spaces on campus; lack of or poorly maintained curb cuts; poorly maintained paths; lack of or not working door openers and heavy doors; and unclear signage for safe crosswalks. Facility Services is actively working with MIRA to address the concerns identified by older adults, including improving signage and making maps more widely available for visitors, identifying commonly used informal pathways on campus, and repairing specific infrastructure concerns identified by visitors. MIRA and Facility Services would like to carry out follow-up visits to look at the progress that has been made, and examine the feasibility of options that may make it safer and easier for older adults, and anyone with accessibility needs, to use campus.



Findings

Older adults participating in focus groups as part of the AFU study highlighted similar accessibility issues on campus. These included door openers that were difficult to find or not functioning on buildings, exterior doors that were too heavy to open, including buildings that have two sets of exterior doors. One focus group session was held in the Michael DeGroot Centre for Learning and Discovery (MDCL), a newer building on campus completed in 2005. Participants had difficulties finding the accessible door opener (only the most eastern door of the eight doors at the main building entrance has an opener, and it is located on the exterior wall of the building and may blend in with the metallic posts used in the glass exterior), and four of the participants noted they ended up asking students for help opening the heavy exterior doors instead. Participants also spoke about congestion on formal pathways and in heavily trafficked buildings. They noted people often moved quickly and bumped into them or complained if they were walking slowly, and it made them feel unwelcome and like an annoyance. This feedback was explicitly mentioned in five survey responses.

The physical accessibility issues noted by the older adults surveyed and in the walkability study are issues that are experienced universally, regardless of age or ability. Even individuals experiencing temporary physical disabilities would encounter many of the issues identified to be a challenge. Ensuring McMaster's main campus is accessible to everyone ensures the university is a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Staff support programs

Survey respondents spoke positively about the programs offered by the university that support older adults to stay in the workplace and continue to grow their careers, such as seminars, short topical courses, departmental professional development opportunities, counselling services, and the Faculty of Health Sciences' Continuing Academic and Scholarly Career Development (CASCaDe) program. Many employees spoke about opportunities they had experienced around professional development in their jobs, though some employees felt there was room for growth. This feedback demonstrates McMaster's strength in programming that supports employees throughout their careers until retirement but it is important to ensure that all employees are aware of these programs, as well as being supported by their departments and managers to access them.

One benefit employees receive through the university is the ability to enroll in programs using tuition support programs. Employees spoke positively of the effect that tuition support has had on their ability to pursue new skills and interests through courses offered by the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) and as part of McMaster's core educational programming. They identified these programs as important supports that enabled them to move to new positions and keep up-to-date in the workplace as they progressed through their careers at McMaster.





Findings

Programming and engagement Older adults do not feel like they belong at McMaster

Older adult participants in each of the focus groups and some survey respondents spoke about their feeling that McMaster was not open and welcoming to older adults. Some felt discouraged, or at least not openly encouraged, to participate in campus life. Campus survey respondents felt that universities in general, and some departments in particular, seemed more focused on young people, and young students in particular. Respondents noted: “Virtually all of our students are under 25, so I don’t see much catering to anyone older.” “My department is very much for younger students.” “Most departmental programs are oriented to young learners.” “My department mainly has a younger generation; most of the time the older adults feel left out.” This finding demonstrates that, in its current state, McMaster is not perceived by older adults as a welcoming and open space to participate in a range of activities, such as formal classes, arts and cultural programs, as well as student-focused out-of-classroom educational activities.

All older adults surveyed had university degrees, which is not statistically representative of the population as a whole. Only 20 per cent of Canadian adults aged 55 to 64 report having a university certification or degree at or above bachelor.² Older adults who have already been to university at some point in their life may be more likely to access programming at a university than older adults who had not, especially at the university they attended. For example, McMaster alumni receive targeted communications and are specifically invited to on-campus programming and receive communications that highlight events. However, these older adults still found the university difficult to navigate and described it as closed to their participation in general. In each focus group, participants noted that given their own difficulties in accessing programming, they could not imagine the difficulty someone without a degree and existing ties to the university community would face. This finding suggests that significant efforts will have to be made to change the perception of universities as a space that is open and welcoming to everyone, especially older adults who do not have university degrees.

Older adults want to learn about research, not just serve as subjects

The older adult participants in our focus group expressed an interest in learning about McMaster research on popular topics and information that may impact their health as they age. Older adults noted that they receive most of their information about research at McMaster through word of mouth and community connections, the newspaper, television news stories on topics of public interest, and on-campus advertising.

2 Statistics Canada; statistics not available for adults over 65.

Findings

When participants were asked about AFU's first principle, "To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research program," and its sixth principle, "To ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults," they told researchers that they wanted to learn more about the university's research agenda and to be involved in public discourses about that research. However, participants felt the university was more interested in using them as research subjects than hearing their input or sharing information about research. This feedback suggests that if McMaster researchers hope to learn from older adults, they should also endeavour to involve them in conversations about that research and share the results back with them in an engaging fashion. The turnaround time from research to results is sometimes quite long, but better engagement with older adults will allow them to feel more involved in the process and encourage more opportunities for open dialogue and intergenerational learning. Individual units at the university are already working to rectify this imbalance. For example, the Aging, Community and Health Research Unit (ACHRU) actively engages with patient and caregiver research partners to ensure that the populations the unit is engaging with benefit and learn from the research being conducted, and the research reflects and addresses their concerns and challenges. This approach should be encouraged across the university to ensure that older adults are involved in reciprocal and equitable knowledge exchanges.



The Optimal Aging Portal shares the findings of global research studies, which can include research conducted by McMaster researchers, to provide trusted information for users in easy-to-read formats that can be accessed by older adults. In each focus group session at least one participant mentioned that they were familiar with the portal. MIRA's newsletters and communications also share the findings of research conducted by its members on its website, through the Daily News, Brighter World and Faculty-specific platforms, and through social media. However, older adults noted that digital media was a passive form of communication that did not encourage participants to ask questions and engage with researchers in an equal back-and-forth exchange.

Recommendations



Communications and outreach

Conduct targeted follow-up with low-responding faculties

The bulk of respondents to this survey were from the Faculties of Health Sciences, Social Sciences, and Science, which MIRA has strong existing relationships with. These statistics align to some extent with undergraduate enrollment in these programs, with enrollment as a per cent of the whole as follows: 24 per cent Science; 18 per cent Health Sciences; 16 per cent Social Sciences. Health Sciences respondents were overrepresented in this survey's responses, and response rates were low for the Faculties of Engineering (7.6 per cent or 16 respondents), Humanities (9.5 per cent or 20 respondents), and Business (6.2 per cent or 13 respondents).

These omissions are significant because each of these Faculties plays a unique role in meeting age-friendly principles and at the university itself. The Faculty of Engineering has the second highest enrollment levels at the university, conducts research related to aging, and was praised by two focus group participants for its mentorship program, which allows older adults to share knowledge and life experience with students. The DeGroote School of Business provides students with valuable opportunities to build on their careers later in life, and incorporates mentorship and learning from practicing professionals into its teaching. Focus group participants expressed interest in enrolling as listeners in classes in the Faculty of Humanities as it hosts many arts and cultural events on campus. Gaining a better understanding of how the work of these Faculties fits into the larger picture of the university's existing age-friendly initiatives will aid in developing plans to introduce or expand programs that support older adults looking to participate in programming.

MIRA will conduct targeted follow-ups with administration from the Faculties to discuss the AFU initiative and better understand the status of age-friendly principles in these areas. Conducting these interviews will allow MIRA to better understand the status of these principles across the university. It will also help MIRA to better understand the support that these Faculties may need to incorporate programs that will support age-friendly principles in their areas. Given that many of these initiatives are university-wide, it will be important to gain a strong understanding of existing initiatives and the current state of programming across the campus before introducing changes.

Recommendations

Implementation Considerations:

- Identifying engaged partners in low-responding faculties;
- Identifying relevance of research in aging, and engaging older adults in faculties without existing programs;
- Identifying current research aligned with MIRA's mission.

Assess current approaches to internal communication regarding research on aging

Since MIRA was founded in 2016, the Institute has made great strides to develop a robust media and social media presence. MIRA is a regular presence at community events and has a strong relationship with community partners working with older adults on a day-to-day basis. The Institute also regularly attends national and international conferences to communicate with external researchers and build bridges outside of Hamilton. However, the high number of respondents who answered “I don’t know” to at least one question, or who answered otherwise but then noted in their qualitative comments that they were not sure about what programming existed, suggests that information communicated by MIRA’s communications team is not reaching all members in the McMaster community, especially staff and researchers in areas that do not directly engage in research on aging.

MIRA’s communications to this point have largely been outward facing, focused on sharing news about its research externally, and building a network of interested researchers from every Faculty. For example, MIRA shares news updates through Twitter, the McMaster Daily News and Brighter World websites, as well as Faculty-specific websites. When large announcements are made, local media, including the Hamilton Spectator, AM800, Zoomer Media and more, often publishes coverage as well. MIRA connects media to experts in aging at McMaster University as well. Partnering with other areas on campus, such as Human Resources, the Equity and Inclusion Office, unions and labour organizations on campus, and individual Faculties, could improve MIRA’s ability to reach McMaster community members (especially staff members) and extend its reach to people who are not already actively interested in research on aging. MIRA could develop messaging in partnership with researchers to promote pre-existing programs and services that could support employees and McMaster community members as they age or be of interest to aging family members or friends. For example, MIRA could help promote attending classes as a listener, platforms in aging, such as PACE, the Optimal Aging Portal and MURA. Reaching out to employees before they retire may help them understand they do not need to wait until they turn 65 to start accessing these services. It may also help community members to connect interested citizens with pre-existing services that are available to them. A proactive approach and messaging may help interest new audiences in research on aging, and will improve on-campus knowledge about programs and services that support older adults. This outreach could be challenging, given that employees receive a large number of emails already and may not open or read additional emails, especially if they do not view them to be immediately relevant to their needs and interests. However, MIRA could explore other communication strategies such as on-campus information sessions, posters and cross-promotion through existing on-campus partners.

Recommendations

Implementation Considerations:

- Identifying information that is relevant for staff and retirees;
- Ensuring communications do not over-saturate the audience, given high volume of emails staff and faculty receive;
- Identifying which communication strategies resonate most with this audience;
- Identifying partners with shared goals to cross-promote communication with these audiences.

Accessibility and inclusion

Support Human Resources to develop best-practice guidelines to support employees 55 and older

More than one-third of respondents who answered question two on the campus survey, “My department or Faculty (or the university as a whole) promotes career development for older adults, including those looking for career change later in life,” either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (35.58 per cent or 95 respondents), while 24.34 per cent or 65 respondents answered “I don’t know”. Those who agreed highlighted positive programs or support from McMaster University and individual supervisors that allowed them to grow in their careers. These included career growth opportunities, support for participation in education and training programs, opportunities to learn new skills and change roles, and support for employees seeking promotions.



This feedback indicates that many workers feel well supported by McMaster and its Human Resources as they move forward in their careers. McMaster has over 50 departments and additional service delivery offices. Management of these departments and offices is spread out and varies across these areas. Currently, these best-practices are not being implemented in offices across the university. For example, 45.60 per cent (122 respondents), the highest rate for any question in this survey, selected “I don’t know” when asked how McMaster interacts with its retirees. This high rate suggests that many employees are not familiar with the strong programming offered by the McMaster University Retirees Association (MURA) and Human

Recommendations

Resources to support employees as they move towards this milestone. This high number can in part be attributed to employees not opening emails or links they do not view to be immediately relevant to them, but also speaks to the importance of ensuring employees are supported and aware of programming in place to support them at the university as they age.

Human Resources and unions at McMaster are already making robust efforts to provide employees with a strong and supportive workplace as they age. At the University, employees have a unique opportunity to participate in training and learning to support their career development. Developing communication materials and training programs for managers to support employees as they age would ensure best-practices are shared and spread across all areas of the university, and are available well in advance of employee retirement. Developing best-practice guidelines will help to support current employees; establishing these guidelines will provide critical support and guidance for managers and administration as McMaster's workforce continues to age and a larger percentage of employees reach retirement age.

Implementation Considerations:

- Identifying information that is relevant for staff and retirees;
- Ensuring best-practices are understood and adhered to;
- Determining ownership and responsibility for developing and implementing best practice guidelines.

Ensure older adults feel explicitly welcome and included at public events

Older adult focus group participants uniformly felt unsure about whether existing programming at McMaster, such as lectures, performances, concerts, the McMaster Museum of Art (MOMA) and other publicly accessible offerings, was open to them. Participants noted they had not attended an event on campus that they heard about and that otherwise interested them on multiple occasions because they were unsure if they were welcome. Including older adults in on-campus events promotes intergenerational interactions and learning, and brings new perspectives to events that may otherwise go unheard. It also encourages older adults to build new communities, which could help combat social isolation. It is critical that older adults feel their opinions, insights, life experiences and knowledge are valued and that people recognize their value. Encouraging older adults' participation in events can help provide a space where they feel they can share knowledge and speak with like-minded individuals, while also creating more inclusive spaces. Ensuring events are welcoming for older adults may also encourage other members of the public who are interested in accessing programming on campus but are uncertain if they are welcome.



Recommendations

Members of the university community should ensure events designed for the public explicitly advertise that they are open to the public. Focus group participants mentioned that they occasionally saw posters or advertising, especially while on campus, but were often unsure if the events were meant for the public because they did not explicitly state that they were. Groups should ensure that advertising material explicitly includes wording that makes it clear an event is open to the broader community, such as “open to the public” or “members of the community welcome”. McMaster may consider developing and marketing one central posting site for events that are explicitly open to the public. The McMaster Daily News could add a tag to its events page for events that are explicitly open to everyone, allowing members of the public to search and easily access these events. Clear directives from Communications and Public Affairs would encourage departments and campus organizations to think about the messaging they send, and whether they would be willing and open to members of the public attending.

It is also important that public event material be posted in public places outside of the University. Focus group participants noted they mostly saw advertising for arts, cultural and public education events when they were already on campus for another reason, or through word-of-mouth from campus organizations that they were already involved with, and that members of their peer group were not aware of these events. Participants suggested advertising public events at the public libraries, recreation centres, churches and senior’s centres, and also including listings in the “What’s Happening” section of the Hamilton Spectator. Focus group participants also suggested that events that are meant to attract seniors should be advertised in places where seniors already go, since many members of their peer group do not come to McMaster or Westdale and may miss out on events.

Implementation Considerations:

- Determining ownership and responsibility for developing guidelines for communicating regarding events open to the public;
- Communicating with campus partners to ensure guidelines are implemented and followed;
- Determining feasibility and cost of developing a central public events listing site;
- Identifying cost-effective, high-impact avenues for advertising events to older adults.

Develop communications materials regarding university enrollment targeting older adults

People over 65 are able to enrol in classes at McMaster for free, provided they meet the academic requirements of the program. Additionally, anyone is able to apply to register as a listener in a course even if they don’t meet the academic requirements. However, this information is difficult to find, especially as the university’s website is currently being rebranded and information is not static. There is also no clear list of courses that accept listeners, and participants found this part of the process especially frustrating. Some focus group participants who were more familiar with the University contacted the departments they were interested in directly, but other participants did not register at all after having all their initial course choices rejected. Most participants noted the experience was so unclear and bureaucratic it put them off trying again. Developing clear guidelines for which courses listeners can apply for would provide clarity for older adults and reduce workload

Recommendations

for the Registrar's Office in processing these applications. Concordia University's website, for example, explicitly states listeners can enroll in undergraduate level lecture courses in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the 200- or 300-level, and that special permission can be sought to enroll in School of Business and Faculty of Fine Arts courses.

MIRA is developing an educational section of its website and will include clear, accurate information on the different types of educational programming available to older adults, how they can participate and what costs are involved. The Registrar's office is also preparing material that will be developed into a one-page handout that can be shared at events. MIRA will liaise with campus partners to assess if there is a more effective way of identifying courses that are willing to accept listeners, since the current system is not clear or consistent. Additionally, MIRA will liaise with on-campus partners, including the McMaster Association for Part-time Students and the MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in teaching, to support the creation of on-campus networks that will allow older adults and mature students to connect with peers on campus. This will provide peer networks for social support, and a campus community to help connect individuals on campus who can share their academic experiences.

Implementation Considerations:

- Ensuring information is current and kept accurate prior to distribution;
- Determining ownership and responsibility for communicating with older adult students;
- The costs and administrative burden of maintaining a database of the classes listeners can access;
- Determine if easier access to enrolment in a program as a listener or student would increase interest among older adults.

Continue to highlight the importance of installing and maintaining accessible infrastructure on campus

Focus group participants and survey respondents highlighted the need for ensuring campus is physically accessible to everyone. Participants recognized that efforts were being made and that improvements were taking place. Focus group respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining infrastructure that is put in place to ensure it remains accessible. Some examples include fixing automatic door openers, repairing cracked or damaged sidewalks and accessibility ramps, and making sure accessible entrances and features are easy to find and clearly marked. Participants in each of the three focus groups highlighted difficulties they had physically navigating and using campus features. They cited broken or hard to find elevators, a lack of public washroom signage, broken or difficult to find door openers, heavy doors (especially those that open outward), lack of seating in public spaces, and congested pathways and halls.

McMaster University must adhere to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and under the McMaster University Accessibility Plan, 2012-2025 is working to address identified barriers, develop plans for their removal and take steps to prevent future barriers. The McMaster Accessibility Council is working to ensure the plan is implemented, reporting on progress made towards implementing the plan, and reviewing work done and issues identified on campus as the plan is implemented.



Recommendations

The McMaster Accessibility Hub currently allows anyone, including members of the public, to report an accessibility issue on campus. However, this can be difficult, especially for members of the public, because many campus walking paths are not labelled, and many buildings have multiple entrances, which can make it challenging to accurately report information. The new McMaster University Safety, Security, and Transit application for cellular phones currently allows users to report safety and security issues, but it is not location-based and may remain difficult for users to accurately report issues.

An application for cellular phones that would allow users to geotag physical accessibility issues on campus would improve the ability of all members of the McMaster community to share this information with relevant bodies, such as Facility Services and the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO). However, developing this application would require adequate funding, decisions regarding functionality and reporting structures (who gets the information, who responds, etc.), and time to thoughtfully develop a reporting system that is user-friendly, sustainable, and fills a need. Cellular phone applications are not universally accessible, some older adults may not own cellular phones and first-time or casual visitors may not have the application installed; still, this tool would increase the ability to accurately report issues. In the meantime, it would be useful to publicize the Accessibility Hub's reporting page broadly and gain a better understanding of how these issues are responded to so that this information can be shared with members of the public expressing concerns about accessibility.

Implementation Considerations:

- Cost of maintenance and installing new accessibility features;
- Ensuring information and maintenance is current due to ongoing construction at McMaster;
- Determining ownership and responsibility for managing reporting visitor accessibility concerns;
- Cost of developing and responsibility for managing and maintaining an application.

Liaise with Parking Services to examine options to improve parking accessibility for older adults

The focus groups hosted by MIRA repeatedly highlighted the importance of the availability of affordable and conveniently located parking on campus. All focus group participants identified parking affordability and accessibility as one of the major contributing barriers to participating in on-campus programming and events. Participants in the MIRA-supported study on campus walkability, survey respondents, and members of the public who interact with MIRA staff at events have also voiced similar concerns about parking on campus. While some participants said they would not mind paying for parking on campus, they find that the first lots they encounter (A, B, C, D, and the underground Wilson Building parking lot) are often full and that further lots are often hard to find and too far away from places they want to go. Lots M and N have shuttle buses, but these buses stop at Mary Keyes, which is at least a 500 metre walk from most of the buildings older adults surveyed said they would like to go to.

Recommendations

Currently, MIRA hosts some public events at its offices at the McMaster Innovation Park (MIP) on Longwood Road South in Hamilton, where parking is significantly cheaper (\$1 to \$1.25 per hour), free after 5 p.m., located immediately adjacent to the building, and more widely available. When focus group participants were offered a choice of holding sessions either at MIP or on main campus, all participants chose to hold their session at MIP and indicated that their decision was influenced by the ease of finding parking. Holding events at MIP encourages members of the public to participate in MIRA's programming and makes programming more accessible to its target demographic. The decision to hold events at MIP doesn't encourage older adults to take advantage of McMaster's on-campus programming or create a welcoming environment on main campus.



Focus group participants offered a number of suggestions to improve the accessibility of on-campus parking. These suggestions included free or reduced parking rates for older adults, designating parking spots for older adults, or priority access to certain lots. However, McMaster's current transponder-based parking system and the casual nature of non-academic programming would make it difficult to apply these solutions. Older adults may not be coming to campus on a regular basis and, as such, it would be difficult to provide free or discounted rates via transponders. Currently, individual groups may offer parking passes to campus visitors, but these are costly and are not an effective way to reimburse individuals looking to come to campus on a regular basis. Older adults participating in the PACE program receive lower-cost parking in the stadium parking lot. This lot is convenient to the Ivor Wynne Centre and located underground which ensures older adults are able to safely access their cars in inclement weather. Retired staff and faculty members are also able to apply for free on-campus parking. These programs suggest that there may be options that can accommodate older adults looking to come to campus.

Parking is in high-demand for all groups on campus. The increasing size of the student and campus population has led to more buildings on campus over the last decade, putting increased pressure on available on-campus options. The University has provided MIRA with a physical space within a new residence under development for first-year students that will be used for programming that facilitates intergenerational connectivity. A separate report on this project and the uses and design of this space is available through MIRA. This space has great potential to serve as an activity hub for the community. With an intergenerational hub being constructed on campus, it is more important than ever to ensure

Recommendations

older adults have access to safe and accessible on-campus parking options. Facility Services is actively working with MIRA on ways to make campus more accessible, including addressing the lack of accessible, nearby parking. Some suggestions being examined include using student volunteers to transport older adults (and other individuals who may have difficulty walking long distances) across campus using golf carts, having student volunteers help physically navigate campus with older adults or offering reduced parking rates for older adults in lots closer to main campus. Parking Services will be engaged to examine feasible options and possible solutions to accommodate this increased need, while balancing the demands of other user groups and the limited number of on-campus parking spots. Groups on campus will also be engaged to consider holding events at more accessible locations, such as recreation centres and libraries with free parking, or the Downtown Health Centre, which has more parking options.

Implementation Considerations:

- Difficulty in implementing designated parking spaces or passes within the existing transponder system that meets the needs of casual visitors;
- Existing limited supply of parking on campus;
- Growing campus population and increasing demand for limited parking;
- Ensuring any modifications to the system would encourage new visitors;
- Ensuring modifications to the system would not cause hardship for existing users;
- Balancing potential price reductions with ability to pay.

Programming and engagement

Examine the feasibility of developing supplementary educational programming open to the public on topics of interest

In each of the three focus groups, participants expressed interest in participating in educational programming outside of traditional courses. These participants felt that the traditional course structure and scheduling (usually three hours of lecture time a week, often offered during the day on two or three separate days) did not align with their schedules or needs as retirees. They also felt unwelcome in traditional courses where they are sometimes told by professors not to speak if they are enrolled as listeners, and where they often do not have peers of their age and life experience. Many felt lectures on different topics but similar themes or on broad public interest subjects would be attractive to older adults with varied educational backgrounds who were interested in more casual opportunities to learn.

McMaster should examine the feasibility of developing educational programming targeting this audience using available resources or the feasibility of creating an annual schedule out of existing programs. There are two approaches to developing this kind of program that are currently in use at universities in Ontario. The University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies offers general interest courses as part of its offerings. These courses charge tuition and offer no discounts for older adults. Tuition fees range between \$160 and \$325 a course, depending on the number of sessions in the course. Wilfrid Laurier's Laurier Association for Lifelong Learning operates using a similar model and

Recommendations

offers several broad interest courses each term. These courses cost \$85 for a six-session course. Trent University offers continuing education courses that are pay-as-you-go. It charges \$20 a lecture and students can either take a whole thematic course or single one-off lectures. These models often use non-tenure-track faculty members as instructors. For example, the University of Toronto's program is mostly taught by professionals in other fields; Laurier's is largely taught by professors emeritus; and Trent's is largely taught by graduate students. Charging a small fee for life-long learning courses would support the viability of this programming, but limit its availability to older adults who have disposable income in retirement. This model is the most commonly used model for universities in Ontario, and across major research universities in Canada.



Alternatively, McMaster could consider launching a public lecture series and publicizing it widely as open to all public audiences. This series could be organized around a single theme or allow professors to speak about topics of public interest. Other universities currently use this model, often in partnership with other public bodies. For example, Wilfrid Laurier University offers a monthly lecture series in partnership with the Milton Public Library. This opportunity could be pursued in partnership with a local company or organization, such as the former "Science in the City" and "Research in the City" lecture series that ran in partnership with the Hamilton Spectator. These types of win-win partnerships open new markets and marketing opportunities. A partnership of groups on campus at McMaster University currently offers public programming targeted at children and families through the McMaster Children and Youth University, and this model may be a useful one to explore when considering the feasibility of offering accessible programming targeted at older adults. This approach would require speakers who are willing to volunteer their time, funding for speakers, and marketing support, a location, and event coordination.

If resources are not available to develop new programming, currently, a number of organizations offer occasional programming tailored to this audience that could be adapted or coordinated to fill this need. The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) offers some programming for older adults, such as its Trump Talks and Conversations That Matter series. The Socrates Project is an initiative launched by Chancellor Emeritus L.R. 'Red' Wilson and President Patrick Deane in 2017 to foster the University's strengths and expertise in liberal arts education and research, and showcase, foster and promote the critical thinking, communication, creativity, civic engagement and collaboration skills needed to develop deeply engaged citizens and leaders. As part of its mandate, it offers public educational programming, activities and events. The McMaster Alumni Association occasionally offers more general interest talks advertised to alumni. Other organizations on campus such as the Origins Institute also offer public talks from time to time on topics of interest. If organizations on campus cross-promote and coordinate, these talks could be shared with the public more easily, and perhaps shaped around a cohesive theme.

Recommendations

Implementation Considerations:

- Costs and administrative burden of developing targeted programming;
- Determining ownership and responsibility for delivering and creating programming;
- Costs of developing and distributing marketing materials;
- Assessing potential demand for programming.

Explore running educational campus programming on ageism and the value of older adults

Participants in the focus groups and survey respondents repeatedly expressed their feelings that older adult input, knowledge and contributions may not be valued on campus, and noted their feelings of being excluded from campus activities. Retired faculty members interviewed in the focus groups and who identified themselves in the survey described feeling their opinions, knowledge and contributions to their field were no longer valued or welcome after retirement. This feedback was generally reflected by survey respondents who felt they were not supported or pushed into retirement because their contributions were not valued within their areas.

McMaster University could integrate material on ageism into its current training and marketing materials on equity and inclusion. The University's student body is largely composed of young adults, who themselves experience ageism, and it is natural that, given the wide range of programming available and limited resources available for advocacy work, ageism may not seem like an immediately pressing topic. However, given that the university is an intergenerational community, it is important to highlight the value that people can contribute to that community at all stages of life. Students' views about older adults and older adults' feelings of exclusion impact their ability to build those community networks and collaborate together. Developing a communications and training strategy that includes and highlights the importance of recognizing and combating ageism could positively impact all members of the McMaster community and create a more supportive community on campus. This strategy could include the development of marketing tools, seminars, or other campus programming that highlights the importance of recognizing ageist attitudes and behaviours and works to change society's thinking around this issue.

Implementation Considerations:

- Determining ownership and responsibility for creating and delivering training;
- Costs of developing and distributing marketing materials;
- Assessing potential demand for focused ageism training.

Recommendations

Partner with community organizations to organize events that bring older adults on campus

MIRA has relationships with community groups who already host events for older adults, such as the Hamilton Council on Aging, the City of Hamilton, the Hamilton Public Library and the Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTO). Focus group participants from each of the three sessions noted that community groups that they were a part of often had trouble finding space to hold events at McMaster, and, as a result, felt that they, and their partner organizations, were not welcome on campus.



While McMaster works to expand its existing programming to older adults and improve its communication regarding existing programs on campus, partnering with community groups with existing relationships with older adults would help McMaster to build relationships with these community groups. Allowing these groups to use space on campus would encourage older adults to come to campus and expose them to other opportunities available there. Space is at a premium on campus and it will be necessary to coordinate with Facility Services, the Office of Community Engagement, and Housing and Conference Services to assess the feasibility of this option. Given that many community groups meet on a monthly basis, it may be possible to accommodate a limited number of requests from groups with high membership to maximize the reach of this initiative.

Implementation Considerations:

- Availability of space on campus, especially large spaces;
- Determining ownership and responsibility for managing public space bookings;
- Appearance of favouritism for or endorsement of groups using spaces;
- Potential high-demand for spaces made available.

Develop a central registration hub for studies seeking participants

Currently, researchers at McMaster recruit their own participants for research studies. They do this by soliciting their own networks and using their own advertising strategies. Some of these strategies include posters posted on campus and in the community, online postings on lab websites, emails to target audiences and advertising in print media. The breadth of advertising varies by study and according to the budget of the lab, researcher or organization involved.

Recommendations

During our focus groups we heard from participants that they enjoyed participating in studies and appreciated that their input was valuable to researchers. They expressed that they would like to participate more often, but sometimes did not hear about opportunities. Finding out about studies seemed to depend on personal networks and frequency of campus visits.

Older adults expressed interest in a more centralized way to access study information. Participants pointed out that recruiting the same older adults over and over again for studies was not representative of the broader population and that using a limited sample pool for these studies may skew the results of these studies. MIRA's interested-citizens mailing list currently includes studies received by MIRA from its researchers, but this list is not comprehensive and likely omits some studies older adults may be interested in. MIRA will liaise with researchers, the McMaster Research Ethics Board, the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board, the Community Engagement office, and the Research Office to assess the feasibility of launching a centralized platform, including questions such as: How would studies be verified for posting? Who would post information? and Who would manage the site?

Implementation Considerations:

- Cost of designing and maintaining centralized hub;
- Ethics considerations regarding recruitment of study participants;
- Determining ownership and responsibility for maintenance of a centralized hub;
- Privacy of personal data for users of a centralized hub.



Considerations for this study



Limited engagement with broader community

This study, which was made up of both focus groups and surveys, largely included members of the immediate McMaster community including faculty members, staff, graduate students, researchers, alumni, retirees and program participants. All focus group participants had attended university, and survey respondents were all part of the McMaster community, and thus were already predisposed to see universities as spaces that were open to them. This study did not interview members from the broader Hamilton community who had not attended university and may never have been on campus. It was felt that it was important to judge the current state of campus at this stage of the study. Given that many participants and respondents who were regularly engaged in campus activities answered “I don’t know” to questions at relatively high rates, it was felt that participants who were not familiar with campus would not have better knowledge of programming and, therefore, focus groups wouldn’t be an efficient use of time. As a result, this study does not reflect their opinions and feelings on how welcoming and age-friendly the university may seem.

Based on conversations with older adults in the focus groups, participants in the MIRA-supported walkability study, and feedback received from members of the public at MIRA events, it is clear that there are barriers that would discourage members of the public from attending events on campus.

Some barriers include:

- The perception that universities are elite spaces that are not open to everyone;
- Difficulties finding affordable and accessible parking;
- The location of McMaster’s main campus is not central and can be difficult to access and take lengthy public transit time; and
- Lack of interest in current programming.

The broader community must be consulted at a more appropriate time, after the committee established to implement age-friendly initiatives has begun to expand its programming. A number of recommendations made in this report should contribute to creating more welcoming spaces and programming and studying the results of these changes to the broader community’s perceptions of the university as an age-friendly space will produce more meaningful results.

Considerations for this Study

Limited engagement with students, especially mature students

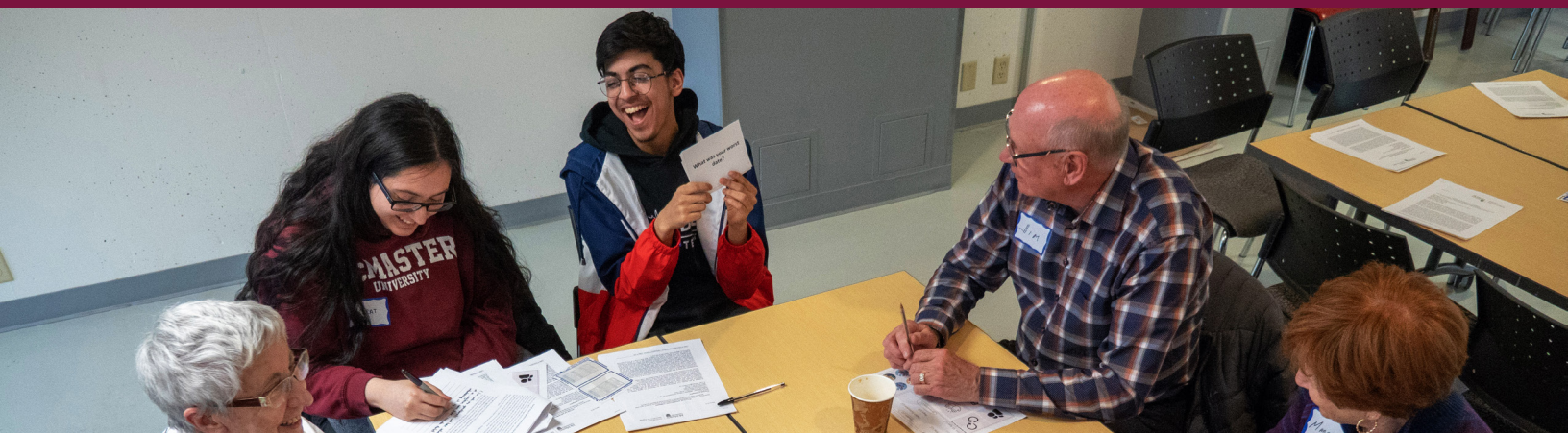
This survey was primarily targeted at university employees, retirees and alumni. In part, this decision was made because most programs for older adults are not targeted to students. However, it would have been beneficial to hear from mature students, who may not be over the age of 65 but are still older than most McMaster undergraduates, who begin school between ages 17 and 19. Their insights would also provide more information on how McMaster supports second career students, students from atypical educational backgrounds and students who are not directly entering university after high school. As part of the follow-up to this study, or as a part of future studies, MIRA should consider reaching out to these students using a more targeted survey with questions designed to solicit information specifically on these subjects.

Self-selection

Both the survey and focus group participants self-selected to participate in these studies. As a result of this self-selection process, it is likely that the results of the survey and focus groups do not account for all opinions, and over-represent the number of people who are aware of age-friendly programs and initiatives at McMaster. This limitation does not alter the recommendations of the survey, but does reinforce the importance of internal communications and engagement with the McMaster community on this initiative as it continues.



Next Steps



The findings of this survey and the focus groups, as outlined in this report, highlight the need for action in three key areas:

- **Communications and outreach**
- **Accessibility and inclusion**
- **Programming and engagement**

As outlined in the recommendations of this report, there are a number of actions that the University can consider that would align with the principles of an age-friendly university. In order to effectively prioritize these recommendations and ensure that McMaster effectively continues to work towards the principles of the AFU network, MIRA, together with the support of its partners, will put in place a series of next steps to further McMaster's efforts towards ensuring it meets or exceeds the 10 AFU principles.

Actions

1. **Form an age-friendly university stakeholder committee**

There are a number of stakeholders on campus whose work supports and aligns with the principles of the AFU network and who would be excellent partners in moving AFU initiatives forward. This committee would harness the collective energy of these diverse partners for a single purpose. Creating a committee of interested partners will also make it easier to communicate regarding the progress of initiatives and areas where cross-campus support may be necessary. Creating a committee with partners from across the university will help to ensure information is being appropriately and effectively shared across the campus.

2. **Conduct targeted follow-up across the university**

This survey and the focus groups largely targeted groups who were already interested in research on aging, retired older adults and individuals who were already part of the McMaster community. As MIRA begins to develop action plans it must consult with groups affected by new or changed programs to better understand their impact.



Next Steps

3. **Develop an action plan in partnership with committee members**

This report includes some recommendations that will require significant collaboration, time and investment to develop, such as developing new educational and social programs. MIRA will develop a strategic action plan in collaboration with its partners on the stakeholder committee to prioritize and implement these longer-term initiatives.

4. **Implement recommendations already underway, within MIRA's purview**

Some of the findings of this survey highlighted areas and programs that MIRA is already working on with some on-campus partners. MIRA will continue to work on these projects while discussions and the development of collaborative initiatives are underway. Programs and activities that MIRA and collaborating partners will continue to work on may include:

- Developing intergenerational programming in partnership with Residence Life staff to continue to improve the perception that McMaster University is a welcoming place for older adults;
- Developing a certificate of completion to continue to improve awareness of research on aging and increase student engagement with research on aging and working with older adults;
- Examine the feasibility, in partnership with the Equity and Inclusion Office, of developing training materials about working with older adults and avoiding ageism;
- Creating communication materials for older adults that outlines how to enrol in courses as an older adult, and liaising with the Registrar's office regarding identified obstacles encountered by older adults;
- Examining current communications strategies for promoting research on aging internally to staff and faculty members; and
- Working in partnership with Facility Services to improve the walkability and accessibility of campus.

MIRA's continued work on these projects will help further other longer-term recommendations and demonstrate that McMaster is interested in providing programming that considers the needs and interests of people over 65.

Appendices

Appendix A: McMaster Community E-Mail Survey

Question	Text
Preamble	<p>Preamble Statement</p> <p>This survey is administered by the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA). McMaster has recently joined the global Age Friendly University Network (AFU). The resulting commitment to work towards the AFU principles is built upon the foundation laid by McMaster’s researchers and educators over many years. MIRA is committed to enabling and raising the profile of aging research and education at the University, including platforms that exemplify the AFU principles. In order to better understand existing strengths and opportunities, MIRA is collecting information related to the current status of these principles at McMaster.</p> <p>This information will be collated in an environmental scan/current state analysis to inform future conversations and communications about the Age-Friendly University across campus.</p> <p>This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.</p> <p>Through this survey, you will learn about the 10 AFU principles. More information can be found here: http://www.dcu.ie/agefriendly/principles.shtml</p> <p>You will be shown the 10 principles and will be asked for your perception of how/if your area or department is currently meeting the principles. For each principle, you will be asked to provide examples that demonstrate the principles, or opportunities to improve. If you are uncertain, or are unaware of any examples or opportunities in your Faculty or department, you may answer “I don’t know.”</p> <p>Lastly, you will be asked if you have any further comments and for your contact information so that we may contact you for more detailed information.</p> <p>If you have any questions or comments, please contact Alison Outtrim (mirainfo@mcmaster.ca), administrative assistant at MIRA.</p> <p>To learn more about the survey and the researcher’s study, particularly in terms of any associated risks or harms associated with the survey, how confidentiality and anonymity will be handled, withdrawal procedures, how to obtain information about the survey’s results, etc. please click the following link to read the letter of information: https://mira.mcmaster.ca/docs/default-source/Documents-and-Files/afu-survey-letter-of-information-and-consent.pdf?sfvrsn=2.</p> <p>This survey is part of a study that has been reviewed and cleared by the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB). The MREB protocol number associated with this</p>

Appendices

Consent	Having read the above, I understand that by clicking the “Yes” button below, I agree to take part in this study under the terms and conditions outlined in the accompanying letter of information.
Preface	<p>In your opinion, how well is your department or Faculty currently meeting the principles?</p> <p>In this section, you will be asked about your department or Faculty’s current state with respect to each of the 10 principles using a Likert scale. If you are a member of the broader community, or if you are not connected to a specific department or area, you may consider your experiences with the University as a whole. If you are uncertain, or are unaware of any examples or opportunities in your Faculty or department, you may answer “I don’t know.”</p> <p>You will then be asked to provide examples specific to your department or area about why you chose the answer you did (i.e. any ongoing work or opportunities related to the principles). If you are a member of the broader community, or if you are not connected to a specific department or area, you may consider your experiences with the University as a whole.</p> <p>We will use this information to communicate about existing strengths (acknowledging the owner/home), to connect individuals doing similar work, and to understand where there may be opportunities or gaps.</p>
1	<p>Principle 1: To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programmes.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) encourages older adults to participate in core activities at the university, such as research and educational programs.</p>
2	<p>Principle 2: To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue “second careers”.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) promotes career development for older adults, including those looking for career change later in life.</p>
3	<p>Principle 3: To recognise the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master’s or PhD qualifications).</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) provides educational opportunities for older adults with varying interests and needs at the University, from those who left school at a young age to those seeking degree qualifications.</p>

Appendices

4	<p>Principle 4: To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) promotes learning across generations to support reciprocal sharing of expertise between and among people of all ages.</p>
5	<p>Principle 5: To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) offers older adults educational opportunities through online platforms.</p>
6	<p>Principle 6: To ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an ageing society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) thinks about research topics and supports research that will address the needs of an aging society. My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) participates in public conversations about how universities can support the interests and needs of older people.</p>
7	<p>Principle 7: To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that ageing brings to our society.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) promotes an understanding among students that living longer in good health brings social, economic and health benefits to society.</p>
8	<p>Principle 8: To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programmes and its arts and cultural activities.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) provides access to its health and wellness programs, arts and cultural activities to older adults.</p>
9	<p>Principle 9: To engage actively with the university's own retired community.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) actively engages with its retirees.</p>
10	<p>Principle 10: To ensure regular dialogue with organisations representing the interests of the aging population.</p> <p>My department or Faculty (or the University as a whole) engages with organizations that represent the interests of older adults.</p>
Questions 1-10	<p>All Questions are followed by a Likert scale with 5 options from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and an "I don't know" option, and an open-ended text box asking "Please provide examples specific to your department or area about why you chose the answer you did (i.e. any ongoing work or opportunities related to the principles)."</p>

Appendices

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

McMaster as an Age-Friendly University Part A: Pre-Focus Group Information Sheet

Background:

McMaster has recently joined the international network of Age Friendly Universities (AFU). The McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) is committed to supporting and raising the profile of aging research and education at the University, including activities that demonstrate the ten AFU principles. We are collecting information related to the current status of these principles at McMaster. As a member of the McMaster community, we would greatly appreciate your feedback and perspective about what areas McMaster is Age-Friendly and what areas there are opportunities to be more Age-Friendly.

Below are the ten principles that have been identified by the Age Friendly University Network. Please take a moment to read over the principles so that you are familiar with them.

Age-Friendly University Principles

Age Friendly Universities strive...

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the **core activities** of the university, including educational and research programs.
2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue “**second careers**”.
3. To recognize the **range of educational needs** of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master’s or PhD qualifications).
4. To promote **intergenerational learning** to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
5. To widen access to **online educational opportunities** for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6. To ensure that the university’s **research agenda** is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education

Appendices

can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.

7. To increase the understanding of students of the **longevity dividend** and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of **health and wellness** programs and its **arts** and **cultural activities**.
9. To engage actively with the university's own **retired community**.
10. To ensure regular **dialogue** with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

During the focus group, you will be asked for your level of agreement (if you agree or disagree) that McMaster currently meets each principle. You will be asked to mark your answer on this survey tool.

The scale will look like this:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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After you have had a moment to think about your response and indicate your opinion with an "X", the discussion will begin. The group will be asked to describe why they chose the answer they did, and what opportunities there are to work towards improving our way of demonstrating the principle based on their knowledge and experiences. We encourage you to share your input. There may be some questions which you will not be able to answer, so please feel free to answer 'I don't know'. An example of when this may be the case is a question about retired McMaster employees if you have never worked at McMaster.

Appendices

Before we start the focus group, please take a moment to consider your thoughts.
Please feel free to write down any ideas you have.

What does Age-Friendly mean to you?

What makes McMaster Age-Friendly?

What opportunities exist for McMaster to be more Age-Friendly?

Appendices

Part B: McMaster as an Age-Friendly University - Survey Tool

McMaster has recently joined the international network of Age Friendly Universities (AFU). The McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) is committed to supporting and raising the profile of aging research and education at the University, including activities that demonstrate the ten AFU principles. We are collecting information related to the current status of these principles at McMaster. As a member of the McMaster community, we would greatly appreciate your feedback and perspective about what areas McMaster is Age Friendly and in what areas there are opportunities to be more Age Friendly.

This tool will be used as a part of a discussion. First, you will be asked to write down your level of agreement with the principles. After everyone has had a moment to indicate their answer, we will have a brief discussion about the answers. Please do not change your answer during or after the discussion.

Age-Friendly University Principle # 1

McMaster encourages the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programs.

Core Activities can include all aspects of educational activities from enrolling in classes for credit or as a listener, to attending public talks and lectures. Research programs could include participating in research as a participant, being informed about the university's research activities through public outreach activities, or providing input or feedback on research under development at the university.

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Appendices

Age-Friendly University Principle # 2

McMaster promotes personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue “second careers”.

This can be based on your personal experience as a student or staff member, or on things you have observed or heard from peers, friends, or colleagues, or information you have seen or heard in the media or through advertising. This question should reflect your overall impressions, and you can answer whether or not you yourself have pursued a second career.

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Age-Friendly University Principle # 3

McMaster recognizes the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Masters or PhD qualifications).

This question is more focused on learning activities, but doesn't have to be strictly focused on enrolling in classes. It can include activities outside of class like continuing education and public outreach programs.

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Appendices

Age-Friendly University Principle #4

McMaster promotes intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.

For example, do you think that students and older adults have the opportunity to share their knowledge with one another either in or outside of the classroom?

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Age-Friendly University Principle #5

McMaster widens access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.

You can use more general examples, if you can't think of any that are specifically targeted to older adults. This question is focused only on online opportunities.

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Appendices

Age-Friendly University Principle #6

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

Do you think that the university is thinking about research topics and supporting research that will address the needs of an aging society? Do you think the university is participating in public conversations about how universities can support the interests and needs of older people?

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Age-Friendly University Principle #7

McMaster works to increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.

The Longevity Dividend means the social, economic, and health benefits to society that come from people living longer in good health. So do you think students understand the importance of improving the aging process, and do you think they see the benefits that older adults and their rich experiences contribute to society?

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Appendices

Age-Friendly University Principle #8

McMaster enhances access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities.

This can include activities at the gym, musical performances, access to the art gallery, invitations to see performances on campus, and other activities happening on campus.

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Age-Friendly University Principle #9

McMaster actively engages with the university's own retired community.

Are you aware of how McMaster engages with its retired staff and faculty? It is okay to say I don't know if you are not.

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Appendices

Age-Friendly University Principle #10

McMaster ensures regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

Do you know if McMaster works with outside organizations to support the interests of older adults in the community? This could be targeted organizations or more general groups that also work with or provide services for older adults.

Do you agree that this statement is true at McMaster?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
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Appendices

Part C: Demographic Information

McMaster as an Age-Friendly University

Demographic Information

Birth year: _____

Gender: _____

What level of education did you complete?

Postsecondary – University

Postsecondary - College

High school

Elementary school

Have you ever attended McMaster University as a student?

Yes / No

If yes, for how many years? When? _____

Have you ever been employed as a staff member or faculty member at McMaster University?

Yes / No

If yes, for how many years? When? _____