

**GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM**  
**FIRST CHOICE RENEWAL REPORT**

**March 2014**

(original First Choice designation was awarded for Fall, 2009)

**Criterion 1:** The program documents sustained achievements in strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement and who complete degrees and succeed as alumni.

**1a. Enrollment Management**

**Enrollment Summary Fall 2010 – Fall 2013**

| <b>Gerontology MA Enrollment</b> | <b>Fall 2010</b> | <b>Fall 2011</b> | <b>Fall 2012</b> | <b>Fall 2013</b> | <b>Fall 2014 Goal</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
|                                  | 27               | 24               | 19               | 17               | 21                    |

**Diversity of Gerontology Student Enrollment**

| <b>Fall 2013</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b>          | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
|                  | Black or African American | 1             | 0           | 1            |
|                  | Hispanic                  | 1             | 0           | 1            |
|                  | International             | 1             | 0           | 1            |
|                  | White                     | 12            | 2           | 14           |
|                  | Total                     | 15            | 2           | 17           |
|                  |                           |               |             |              |
| <b>Fall 2012</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b>          | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|                  | Black or African American | 1             | 0           | 1            |
|                  | Hispanic                  | 1             | 0           | 1            |
|                  | White                     | 14            | 3           | 17           |
|                  | Total                     | 16            | 3           | 19           |
|                  |                           |               |             |              |
| <b>Fall 2011</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b>          | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|                  | Black or African American | 4             | 2           | 6            |
|                  | International             | 1             | 0           | 1            |
|                  | White                     | 12            | 5           | 17           |
|                  | Total                     | 17            | 7           | 24           |
|                  |                           |               |             |              |
| <b>Fall 2010</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b>          | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|                  | Black or African American | 3             | 2           | 5            |
|                  | International             | 2             | 0           | 2            |
|                  | White                     | 16            | 4           | 20           |
|                  | Total                     | 21            | 6           | 27           |

A critical component for the Gerontology program's diversity is student age. During the past four years students in the program have ranged in age from 22-60 years old. This broad age span is important to note because it represents the two divergent groups of students who apply and enroll in the Master's program: 1) those who have graduated from college within the past 1-3 years; and 2) professionals (some of whom are already employed in the field of aging) who wish to expand their career opportunities. The students in the Gerontology program are divided fairly equally between these two populations. The following table illustrates the average age of students enrolled in the program from fall 2010 to fall 2013.

| TERM      | AVERAGE STUDENT AGE |
|-----------|---------------------|
| Fall 2013 | 32                  |
| Fall 2012 | 35                  |
| Fall 2011 | 34                  |
| Fall 2010 | 36                  |

**1ai. Recruitment plan-** The program provides a clear recruitment plan and evidence that it meets its intended application, enrollment, and diversity goals.

Since achieving First Choice status, the Gerontology faculty have made a number of changes and updates to the program's recruitment plan in order to attract students internal and external to EIU:

**Website:** The program website has been completely redesigned to include media clips and testimonials about the program. The website also now reflects the four key reasons alumni cite as the reasons they selected the program: Professional Development, Flexibility, Research Opportunities and a Supportive Environment.

**Print Materials:** Since achieving First Choice status, the program's print materials have been updated twice to reflect the changes and updates in the curriculum, as well as to respond to the developments in the field of Gerontology. Print materials and a cover letter are mailed out every fall to coordinators of gerontology-related programs at 15 colleges and universities in the Midwest region.

**Exhibiting at Conferences:** The Gerontology program has exhibited at several state and national conferences to recruit potential applicants including the Illinois Governor's Conference on Aging and the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) National Conference.

**In-class presentations:** The Gerontology program coordinator has given guest lectures and/or presentations about the Gerontology MA program in undergraduate Family and Consumer Sciences, psychology and communication studies courses.

**Honor Society Presentations:** The Gerontology program coordinator gives informational presentations to various honor societies across campus including: Psi Chi (Psychology Honor Society), Kappa Omicron Nu (Family and Consumer Sciences Honor Society), Alpha Kappa Delta (Sociology Honor Society), KSS Honors Club (Kinesiology Honor Society), and Eta Sigma Gamma (Health Studies Honor Society).

**Campus Visits:** In an effort to increase applications from students outside of EIU, as of spring 2013 the Gerontology program coordinator has been making campus visits to colleges and universities in the Midwest. A partial list of targeted schools includes: Indiana State University, Illinois State University, Western Illinois University, Millikin University and University of Southern Indiana.

**1a.iii. Selection criteria** – The program documents a rationale for its admission selection decisions in order to show that it is fulfilling its expectations for candidate quality.

Since achieving First Choice designation, the Gerontology program has further increased the rigor of its selection process with the following changes:

**Number of Recommendations:** As of fall 2010 the Gerontology program began requiring three letters of reference from applicants (instead of two previously required). The faculty also formalized the expectation that at least two of the applicants' letters must address the student's academic performance if the applicant graduated from college within the past 5 years.

**Admissions Committee:** In the fall of 2011, the Gerontology faculty established a formal admissions committee, consisting of the Gerontology Graduate Coordinator and two additional Gerontology faculty. The Graduate Coordinator remains on the committee at all times but the two additional faculty members rotate off the committee each fall.

**Application Essays:** In an effort to attract applicants with strong writing and critical thinking skills, in the fall of 2010 the gerontology faculty began requiring two short essays as part of the student's application. The first required essay asks the applicant to discuss why Gerontology and EIU are a good fit for them and the second essay requests that the applicant address their own academic strengths and weakness and then describe how they have worked to overcome their academic weaknesses.

**GPA:** The minimum GPA for admission to the Gerontology MA program has remained at the Graduate School minimum of 2.75. The gerontology faculty members have discussed increasing it to 3.0 for the program, but have opted not to each time it has been revisited. Part of the explanation for the decision not to increase the minimum GPA relates to the average age of our students and length of time since earning their bachelor's degree for many of the program's applicants. With many of the Gerontology students in their mid-thirties (and out of college for 10 years or more), the applicant's GPA from a decade earlier was seen as less relevant to the faculty for considering the suitability of the applicant. The faculty did not want to end up excluding strong candidates who may have earned low GPAs years ago, but have since excelled in their fields and developed solid critical thinking skills. However, it should be noted that leaving the program's minimum GPA at 2.75 has not compromised the quality of students admitted to the program. The table below illustrates the average GPA for the program's incoming students each year—a figure well above the 2.75 minimum for the program.

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Fall 2013 | 3.39 |
| Fall 2012 | 3.38 |
| Fall 2011 | 3.15 |
| Fall 2010 | 3.40 |

**1a.iii. Acceptance rate-** The program documents that desired applicants accept admission offers.

With the exception of one semester between the spring of 2010 and spring 2014, at least 50% of students admitted to the Gerontology MA program have enrolled in the program.

| <b>TERM</b> | <b>Applications→Admissions</b> | <b>Admissions→Enrollments</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Spring 2014 | 100.00%                        | 100%                          |
| Fall 2013   | 77.78%                         | 57%                           |
| Summer 2013 | 57.14%                         | 50%                           |
| Spring 2013 | 60.00%                         | 67%                           |
| Fall 2012   | 55.56%                         | 100%                          |
| Summer 2012 | 100.00%                        | 75%                           |
| Spring 2012 | 0.00%                          | -                             |
| Fall 2011   | 77.78%                         | 57%                           |
| Summer 2011 | 100.00%                        | 75%                           |
| Spring 2011 | 42.86%                         | 33%                           |
| Fall 2010   | 91.67%                         | 64%                           |
| Summer 2010 | 88.89%                         | 75%                           |
| Spring 2010 | 66.67%                         | 100%                          |

### **1b. Assistantship/Scholarship Management**

**1bi. Annual Awards-** The program documents that its annually allocated assistantships enhance program quality by attracting desired applicants and by showing that the teaching, research, or service experiences add value to the degree.

Annually, the multidisciplinary gerontology program awards four graduate assistantships and one Presidential assistantship. Because the GAs serve multiple departments and faculty, the following table is included to illustrate the tasks and responsibilities the graduate students assume. The responsibilities listed from the fall 2013 Graduate Assistants show the diversity of teaching, research, and service opportunities afforded to the graduate assistants through their GA assignments.

| <b>NAME</b>                  | <b>Coles County Life Span Ctr</b> | <b>TA</b>        | <b>Academ Of Lifetime Learn</b> | <b>GERO PR/ Service Program Assistance</b> | <b>Research ( &amp; w/ whom)</b> | <b>Special Projects or Other</b>                      | <b>TOTAL HOURS/ WEEK</b> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Karly Kasten<br>Presidential | 8                                 | Simpson          |                                 | 2-3  | Simpson                          | -Study Abroad<br>-Grant proposals<br>-Meeting minutes | 18-19                    |
| Marquita Ward                |                                   | Frank<br>3       |                                 | 3-4  | Gill                             | -Organizing Program<br>--Gero document updating       | 18-19                    |
| Narissa Ramirez              |                                   | O'Rourke<br>4    |                                 | 2-3  | O'Rourke<br>-----<br>Frank       |   | 18-19                    |
| Sharbari Ganguly             |                                   |                  |                                 | 3-4  | Brito<br>-----<br>Frank          | Winkleblack Grant work                                | 18-19                    |
| Bridget Murphy               |                                   | Pritchett<br>3-4 | 10                              | 1-2  |                                  | Strategic Plan &<br>First Choice                      | 18-19                    |

**Summer Research Assistantships:** The following table summarizes the First Choice summer research assistantship projects for summer 2010-summer 2013.\*

| RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE  | FACULTY MENTOR(S) | SUMMER |
|---|-------------------|--------|
| Long-term Prisoners' Concerns about Preparing for Release and Reentry: Implications for Prison Programming                  | Dr. J. Frank      | 2010   |
| Educational Interests of 50+ residents in Coles County: A Community Survey and Study  | Dr. W. Hine       | 2010   |
| Young Adults' Perceptions of Older Adults' Perceptual and Cognitive Functioning   | Dr. C. Brito      | 2010   |
| Black Friday Study: Part II   | Dr. L Simpson     | 2011   |
| Older Adults' Interest in Community Exercise stations   | J. Overstreet     | 2011   |
| Eat Smart, Live Strong: Nutrition Education for Older Adults: Phase II  | Dr. J. Frank      | 2011   |
| A Comparison of Academy member Survey Results and Academy Member Attendance Behavior  | Dr. W. Hine       | 2012   |
| Statewide Study of the Eat Smart, Live Strong Senior Nutrition Program  | Dr. J. Frank      | 2012   |
| The Longitudinal Impact of the Purposeful Living Units serve (PLUS) Program on Prisoners' Self-Esteem and Civic Development | Dr. J. Frank      | 2012   |
| Black Friday Rituals  | Dr. L Simpson     | 2013   |
| Intergenerational Relationships between older adults with dementia and younger Children: A behavioral analysis              | Dr. O'Rourke      | 2013   |
| A View from Both Sides: Young Onset Dementia  | Dr. J. Frank      | 2013   |

\*For several of the research assistantships, the graduate student's time was split between two separate faculty members' research projects.

**1bii. Competitive Awards-** The program documents that it competitively acquires additional assistantships that further enhance quality by attracting additional desired applicants and by showing that the teaching, research, or service experiences add value to the degree.

#### Gerontology Student Grants and Awards

|                                | Fall 2009 | Spring 2010 | Fall 2010 | Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 | Spring 2012 | Fall 2012 | Spring 2013 | Fall 2013 |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             |           |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             | √         |             |           |             |           |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             | √         |             |           |             |           |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             | √         |             |           |             |           |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           | √           |           |             |           |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           | X           |           |             | x         |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             | x         |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             | x         |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             | √         |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             | x         |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             | √         |             |           |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             |           |             | √         |
| Williams Travel Grant          |           |             |           |             |           |             |           |             |           |
| Grad School Research Grant     |           |             |           | √           |           |             |           |             |           |
| Grad School Research Grant     |           |             |           |             |           | x           |           |             |           |
| Grad School Research Grant     |           |             |           |             |           |             | √         |             |           |
| Grad School Research Grant     |           |             |           |             |           |             | √         |             |           |
| Grad School Research Grant     |           |             |           |             |           |             |           | √           |           |
| Provost Research Assistantship |           |             |           | √           |           |             |           |             |           |
| Provost Research Assistantship |           |             |           |             |           | X           |           |             |           |
| Provost Research Assistantship |           |             |           |             |           |             |           | √           |           |
| Provost Research Assistantship |           |             |           |             |           |             |           |             | x         |

√ = awarded

X = applied for but not awarded

**1c. Matriculation Management** – The program has a targeted graduation rate and documents that degree candidates consistently meet the program's degree completion expectations.

Matriculation is complicated for the Gerontology program. The program is comprised of part time and full time students and thus there is no one set of completion expectations for those enrolled in the program. The program is designed so that *full time* students complete the program in 3-4 semesters. Part-time students will typically complete the program in 5-6 semesters.

**1d. Graduate Placement** - The program documents sustained placement achievements of graduates. Programs with Professional Emphasis document that candidates enter and advance in the professions and earn required credentials. Programs with Content Emphasis document placements or contributions to society that are important in-and-of themselves and provide evidence of the breadth of opportunity associated with mastery of the content in the program. Programs with Advanced Degree Preparation Emphasis document that candidates successfully enter and matriculate in advanced degree programs.

As of fall 2013, the Gerontology MA program coordinator does not formally track the placement of its graduates. Faculty maintain contact with many alumni and learn about placements in this manner. However, beginning with

the spring 2014 graduating class, the program coordinator will seek to formally track its alumni for the first five years after graduation.

**Highlights of professional placements for graduates of the Gerontology MA program include:**

- LGBTQ Senior Services Case Manager, Center on Halsted (Chicago)
- Activity director, Lincoln rehabilitation center (Decatur)
- Adult protective and community worker, Missouri Dept. of Health and Senior Services
- Bereavement coordinator- Carle Hospice. (Champaign)
- Health Education and Outreach Coordinator, SIU School of Medicine, (Springfield)
- Human Subjects Protection Specialist. University of Illinois Institutional Review Board (Urbana)
- Team leader of Peer and Senior Wellness Services, Wellspring Resources (Alton)
- Care Coordinator, Starting point Senior Services at the Macon County Health Department (Decatur)
- Director of Aging Services, Cumberland Associates Senior Programs (Mattoon- Champaign)
- Social Services Director, Palm Terrace of Mattoon (Mattoon)

Since 2010, four Gerontology alumni have also gone on to enroll in additional Master's degree programs including Family and Consumer Sciences, Counseling, and Business Administration. An additional alumnus has been accepted to a PhD program in Human Development.

**Criterion 2: The program documents sustained achievements in fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics.**

**2a. Assessment Results Documented by the Center for Academic Support and Achievement**

Review of the program's Assessment Plan by the Center for Academic Support and Achievement (CASA) documents that the program uses its assessment data to improve student learning, to guide improvements to the curriculum, and to achieve academic excellence.

| <b>CASA Assessment Report Results by Category</b> |             |             |              |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Category</b>                                   | <b>2010</b> | <b>2011</b> | <b>2012*</b> |
| Learning Objectives                               | 3           | 3           | 3            |
| How, When, Where Assessed                         | 2-3         | 2-3         | 3            |
| Expectations                                      | 3           | 3           | 3            |
| Results   | 2           | 2           | 2            |
| How results will be used                          | 2           | 2-3         | 3            |

*\*At the conclusion of the 2012 assessment report, Dr. Karla Sanders, Executive Director, CASA noted: "The Gerontology faculty and the coordinator have certainly been busy this year! I am glad that the faculty as a whole has contributed to the new assessment plan since that will solve the data collection issues that you had in the past. Your feedback loop now includes all faculty members, the students, and the internship site supervisors. Well done."*

After the 2012 assessment report, the Gerontology program was moved to a two-year assessment cycle and therefore, no report was submitted for the 2012-13 academic year.

**2b. Assessment Results Documented by the Graduate School:** Review of the Program's plan by the Graduate School documents that the program uses its assessment data to improve student learning in areas identified by the Council on Graduate Studies. These include advancing scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics.

The Graduate School documented that the program has sustained its First Choice achievement by using assessment data gathered to improve student learning in the areas identified by the Council on Graduate Studies. These include depth of knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, application of technology, professional ethics, and research.

Since achieving First Choice status, the Gerontology program continues to receive strong reviews from the Dean of the Graduate School. As with the assessment results by CASA in Appendix VI, Dean Augustine's assessment memos reflect improvement in the program every year. In 2012 he noted, "The comprehensive approach to assessment and full engagement of the faculty reflect the First Choice achievement of this program" (see assessment memos, Appendix VII).

**Criterion 3: The program documents sustained achievements in expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry.**

**3a. Sustained Mission and Planning Leadership-** The program articulates a clear mission that is aligned with current and future trends in the discipline and that states the program's strengths.

The Gerontology program mission has remained the same over the review period, however the Gerontology faculty did review the program mission in 2011 and make minor changes to the wording. The time spent reviewing the mission led the Gerontology faculty to add a sixth program learning goal (titled *Integration*) to the five already in place for the program: content area knowledge, critical thinking, communication, research, and ethical behavior. Appendix II defines each of the learning goals in depth.

In the fall of 2013, the Gerontology program launched a strategic planning committee to assist with designing a 5-year plan for the Master's program. The strategic planning committee is comprised of program alumni, community leaders in Gerontology, as well as two current Gerontology faculty.

**3b. Sustained Curricular Leadership by Program Administration and Faculty-** The program documents that its administrative structure and graduate faculty advance the curriculum.

**3bi. Administrative Leadership:** The program documents how its administrative structure and leadership advance the quality of its curriculum. For example, the program documents how the Graduate Coordinator (leadership) implements his/her duties in collaboration with the Chair and Graduate Committee (structure) to publish documents (handbooks, web resources), manage processes (orientations, capstones), ensure rigor (curriculum review), etc. in order to advance the quality of graduate study.

The current Graduate Coordinator assumed the role of Coordinator in the fall of 2009, at the beginning of the program's First Choice status. Since 2009, the Coordinator has initiated the following updates to the program.



**New Student Orientation:** In the fall of 2010 the Coordinator developed and implemented a 3 hour mandatory new student orientation for all incoming Gerontology MA students. This orientation is held every fall and is sometimes repeated in the spring if new students enroll for the spring semester.

**Mandatory Gerontology Meetings:** At least twice during the academic year the Coordinator holds mandatory meetings with the students enrolled in the program to keep them abreast of changes or updates that students need to be aware of and to foster a sense of community among the students in the program.

**Information Sessions:** During the academic year the graduate coordinator hold multiple information sessions during the academic year for graduate students in the program. Topics covered in these individual sessions include: 1) Thesis informational meeting 2) Preparing for a successful internship, 3) Progressive Portfolio process 4) Preparing for Comprehensive exam, and others as needed or requested by the graduate students enrolled.

**Integrative Learning Analysis:** During the 2010 calendar year, the coordinator and the Presidential GA conducted a research study to better understand graduate students' and recent alumni perceptions of opportunities for integrative learning experiences across the seven core courses. The data gathered from this study helped to inform a core curriculum evaluation and later the addition of a new learning goal for the graduate program.

**Core Curriculum Evaluation:** In 2011 the Graduate coordinator initiated a Gerontology CORE curriculum evaluation. The Gerontology faculty re-examined the core courses and decided on updated the program according to the evolving field of Gerontology.

**Study Abroad Development:** During the 2013-14 academic year the Graduate Coordinator has been developing a Gerontology study abroad course/program to launch in the summer of 2016.

**Internship Manual Redesign:** Based on feedback received from students completing their internship as well as internship sight supervisors, the coordinator overhauled the internship manual to better mesh with the program's updated assessment plan and to promote stronger integration and critical thinking application skills among the graduate students. The gerontology faculty approved the updated manual in spring, 2013.

**3bii. Graduate Faculty Leadership:** The program documents the significant role of the graduate faculty with advancing the curriculum through curriculum committees or appropriate curriculum processes. Examples of improvements include changes in the courses, capstones, practicum programs, internships, study abroad opportunities, options, concentrations, and related learning and curricular experiences that advance the quality, currency, and rigor of the curriculum.

Since achieving First Choice status the gerontology faculty continue to work as a whole to advance the graduate program. Evidence of sustained graduate faculty leadership since achievement of First Choice status includes the following:

**Course Development:** Two new courses were developed for the Gerontology program between 2011-2013. *Immersion in Long term Care* was developed as an elective course for the program, and *Aging Policy in Action* was developed as a new core course for the program. The faculty as a whole offered input into the development of these courses.

**Assessment Plan:** In 2011 the faculty decided to overhaul the gerontology assessment plan. This decision came about for two reasons: 1) core faculty concerns about the level of critical thinking and application students were able to demonstrate by the end of their graduate program; and 2) missing data and a lack of closure in the program's assessment feedback loop. Appendix III and IV provide the major documents associated with the updated assessment plan.

**Progressive Portfolio Development:** During the work on the assessment plan, the core faculty decided that there needed to be a process of checks and balances outside of classroom regarding student achievement of the program learning goals. The concept of a progressive portfolio was created whereby students submit the portfolio after each semester they are enrolled in the course. The portfolio specifically targets the 6 learning goals for the gerontology MA program. After the portfolio is turned in the graduate students meet individually with the gerontology portfolio committee.

**Programmatic Changes:** Since achieving First Choice status the gerontology faculty have reexamined the gerontology curriculum and made several updates to the program that are now all required elements: 1) the addition of a new core class, *Aging Policy in Action*, 2) increasing the program's credit hours from 30/32 to 36 (as of fall 2014), 3) progressive portfolio requirement, 4) the completion of 5 professional development

**Faculty Changes:** From 2010-2013 the gerontology program experienced several faculty changes. Four of the six core faculty retired from Eastern Illinois University, which caused challenges to the program. Dr. Janet Cosbey (Sociology) retired and as a result the Chair of the Sociology department decided to pull Sociology from the Gerontology core (formerly the core departments included: Family and Consumer Sciences, Sociology, Psychology, Kinesiology, and Education). Losing both Dr. Cosbey and a core discipline from the program caused the remaining faculty to regroup and consider an appropriate new discipline to join the core and decided on Communication Studies and Dr. Beth Gill. The three other retirements from the core faculty were Dr. Phylis Croisant (KSS), Dr. Lucy Campanis (FCS) and Dr. Will Hine (EDF). Dr. Hine continues to teach a core course for the program, and Dr. Croisant has been replaced by Dr. Brian Pritchett.

**Subcommittees:** Since achieving the First Choice designation, several subcommittees have been developed within the gerontology program in order to help the program run efficiently and to better engage all of the gerontology faculty. There are currently seven core faculty who serve as voting members on the gerontology faculty committee. The subcommittees developed during the past four years include the progressive portfolio committee, the admissions committee, and the comprehensive exam committee, as well as other ad hoc committees that are formed as needed.

**3c. Sustained Curricular Leadership by External Review** - The program documents how it has advanced the quality of the curriculum and sustained excellence based on external reviews as appropriate to the mission/discipline. Examples of external review include accreditation reviews, program invited external reviews, or program advisory group reviews.

**Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE):** In 2006, the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education reviewed EIU's gerontology program and the program was awarded Program of Merit status. EIU's Gerontology Master's program was the second in the country to receive this designation (designation is valid through 2017). Currently, there are a total of four gerontology Master's degree programs in the US (out of 33) that have successfully completed this review process and earned the designation. (See Appendix IX and X for description of Program of Merit evaluation process as well as proof of EIU's designation).

**Gerontology Advisory Council:** The graduate program has an advisory council that meets twice a year with program faculty and a group of graduate students. The advisory council is comprised of gerontology professionals from across central Illinois as well as alumni and retired gerontology program faculty.

**IBHE:** In May, 2013, the coordinator submitted a summary review report to the IBHE for our seven year review. The faculty are currently awaiting renewal notification from the IBHE (See Appendix I for the gerontology IBHE program summary).

**Strategic Planning Committee:** In the fall of 2013, the gerontology program coordinator decided to assemble a strategic planning committee to spend a year designing a five-year plan for the gerontology MA program. The strategic planning committee is composed of program alumni, professionals in the field of aging, and two gerontology faculty members.

**Alumni:** Alumni involvement and input is woven into different aspects of the gerontology program. Gerontology alumni serve on the program's advisory council, strategic planning committee, remain active with our chapter of the Sigma Phi Omega national gerontology honor society, serve as internship site supervisors, and even teach a few of our elective courses. In addition, during the fall of 2012, the gerontology program coordinator held a focus group with 9 program alumni to garner their perspective and input on proposed curricular changes and updates to the gerontology program.

**3d. Sustained Capstone Leadership -** The program requires a rigorous capstone appropriate to the mission of its degree and certificate options and documents the impact of each of its capstones on the quality of learning in the degree program. Capstones include research capstones (thesis, the research paper, action research projects, or business research projects), performance capstones (recitals and exhibits), examinations, internships, and study abroad.

The capstone experience within the Gerontology MA program includes either a thesis or a comprehensive exam option. Approximately 80% of the Gerontology graduate students opt for the comprehensive exam (which includes a 5.5 hour/4 question written exam and a 2 hour oral exam). All students in the program are also required to complete a 150 hour internship before graduating from the program. Students are required to complete at least 5 core classes prior to commencing their internship in order to make certain students possess both the adequate content knowledge and critical thinking skills that the internship will require. The Gerontology program coordinator serves as the faculty supervisor for all students' internships and she also serves on all comprehensive exam and thesis committees.

**3e. Sustained Student Leadership** - The Program documents how it fosters the participation of its graduate candidates on the Graduate Student Advisory Council and/or the Black Graduate Student Association to ensure that students advance the quality of graduate study and achievements of graduate students through leadership and advice on policies, programs, curriculum, seminars, forums and related programs.

The Gerontology program continues to promote and encourage involvement and participation from its graduate students in multiple service opportunities at Eastern Illinois University including GSAC, A.G.E.S (the gerontology RSO), and Sigma Phi Omega (the national Gerontology Honor Society). Gerontology graduate students are also strongly encouraged to join the American Society on Aging (ASA) with a student membership and take on leadership roles within the organization.

**3f. Sustained Alumni Leadership** - The program documents how it fosters participation in alumni programs sponsored by the Graduate School Alumni Advisory Board to ensure that alumni advance the quality of graduate study and achievements of alumni. Documentation includes nomination and/or selection of program alumni for alumni awards, alumni representation on the Board, participation in alumni events hosted by the Board, or other activities affiliated with the Board.

As noted in section 3c above, gerontology program alumni are involved in various aspects of the program including the gerontology advisory board, the strategic planning committee, and internship supervising to name a few. One area that the gerontology program needs to work on is the hosting of alumni events (especially in the Chicagoland area) as well as the nomination of alumni for EIU distinguished alumni awards.

**3g. Sustained External Partnerships** - that partners contribute to advance the quality of the curriculum. Assets may include financial resources, professional expertise, consultation, or related contributions. External partners include entities external to the University or University entities that are not fiscally managed by the academic program.

**Internship Sites:** The gerontology program has fostered many ongoing partnerships through many of the internship sites. Several examples include: East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (Bloomington, IL), The Lifespan Center, (Charleston, IL), Cumberland Associates (Toledo-Charleston-Champaign), Mid-Illinois Senior Services (Sullivan, IL), Heritage Woods Assisted Living (Charleston, IL), Wabash Valley Correctional Facility (Carlisle, IN).

**Research Collaborations:** Partnerships through research collaborations: BMA Associates (state-level provider of assisted living at 38 different locations); Wabash Valley Correctional Facility; Sullivan County Long Term Care and Rehabilitation Center, Academy of Lifetime Learning; Illinois Affordable Assisted Living Coalition (AALC).

**Partnerships through class-community collaboration projects:** Aspen Creek dementia care; Gowin Parc Alzheimer's care; East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging; Brookstone Estates (Charleston and Mattoon); Sullivan Long Term Care and Rehabilitation facility;

**Professional Development Opportunities/Requirements: volunteering for conferences:** All students in the Gerontology MA program are required to participate in 5 professional development activities per academic year. These activities often partner students with community organizations such as the Moultrie County Counseling Center, the Alzheimer's Association (Decatur), the University of Illinois via the Healthy Aging Conference, and the Illinois Department on Aging.

**Criterion 4: The program documents sustained achievements in research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty.**

**4a. Sustained Student Research Leadership: The program has a sustained record of scholarship by offering a research/creative activity option appropriate to the discipline.**

**4ai. Research Productivity** - The program has an annual research productivity goal and documents that its candidates meet or exceed the completion of those products.

Currently, the Gerontology program does not set an annual research productivity goal for its graduate students. As noted below, all graduate students are exposed to the research process as part of their graduate course work. In regard to research, the focus of the Gerontology program is to ensure that all students graduate with a solid understanding of the research process and can be competent consumers of research so that they can apply it in their professional lives.

**FCS 5900 Research Methods:** All students in the Gerontology program are required to take FCS 5900, *Research Methods* as part of their academic program. As part of this course all students engage in the research proposal process and give a formal presentation of their research proposal.

**FCS 5980 Independent Study:** Approximately 20% of the graduate students in the program elect to enroll in an independent study during their program. Students who choose to complete an independent study always engage in some type of research project. Many students in the program desire to engage in an independent research project but not on the scale of a full thesis.

**Written Comprehensive Exam:** In order to confirm students' understanding of the research process and its application to the field of gerontology, one of the questions on the gerontology comprehensive exam focuses specifically on the research process.

**Progressive Portfolio:** As part of the students' progressive portfolio, students are asked to address how they have either engaged in or interacted with the research process during the previous semester.

**Outstanding Thesis Award:** This year a gerontology graduate student was awarded the Outstanding Thesis Award for the Lumpkin College of Business and applied sciences for her 2013 thesis titled, *The Impact of an Immersion in Long Term Care Course on Gerontology Graduate Students*. (See Appendix XII for the announcement letter from Dean Augustine).

**Research Grants:** As the table in Section *Ibii* notes, Gerontology graduate students have received several research grants from 2010-2013. Four students received Graduate student research grants to fund independent study projects and thesis research. Additionally, two Gerontology students were awarded Provost Research Assistantship grants. Appendix XIX includes both Provost Research Assistantship award letters.

**National Award:** In 2013, a gerontology graduate student (and recipient of a Provost Research Assistantship) received a national award in collaboration with a statewide community partner, for their partnership on a senior health and wellness program introduced to 7 assisted living sites in Illinois. The graduate student was responsible for introducing the program, facilitating the education sessions, and gathering research data on the efficacy of the program for the residents. The award was presented by the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA) to the graduate student and the community partner at their national conference and their *Best of the Best* award was featured in their national publication. (See Appendix XX for award notification letter and excerpt from Senior Living Executive trade publication).

**4a.iii. Research Engagement** - The program's graduate candidates achieve a sustained record of scholarship through presentations, performances, or exhibits as appropriate to the discipline and mission or through attendance at conferences, workshops, in-services as appropriate to the discipline/profession.

Students in the Gerontology graduate program have exhibited a sustained record of scholarship through the following venues:

**Graduate Research Symposia:** At least two Gerontology graduate students each year have presented research posters for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013.

**Research Presentations at regional and statewide conferences:** Gerontology graduate students have given poster, paper, and panel presentations at the Illinois Governor's Conference on Aging, the Token Economy Systems Conference, and the Illinois Council on Family Research conference.

**Research Presentations at National Conferences:** Graduate students in the Gerontology program have presented posters, panels, and workshop presentations at national conferences including the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education, the American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences, the American Society on Aging, and the International Association for Reminiscence and Life Review. (See Appendix XVII and XXI for photos from these conferences).

**4b. Sustained Commitment to Research and Travel Grants: Graduate School Programs:** The program has a record of sustained participation in the annual Graduate School research and travel grants that includes both applications for awards and a record of earning awards. The program may include additional documentation that its students access awards provided by the department, college, discipline, or related sources to foster engagement in research, travel to conferences, and assistance with publishing or presenting scholarly work or with attending conferences to advance scholarship and networking.

**Williams Travel Grants:** Since 2010 there have been 13 Williams Travel grant applications submitted to the Graduate School, 7 of which have been funded.

**Departmental Support:** The Gerontology MA program is multidisciplinary and therefore, requires the buy-in and collaboration of several departments and colleges on campus. During the past five years FCS, EDF and the Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences have all offered support with either supplies, travel funds, or promotional materials for the program.

**Research and Creativity Grants:** As noted in sections above, numerous Gerontology graduate students have applied for and received research grants during their graduate education.

**Gerontology/Elder Hostel Scholarship:** Every year the Gerontology program and the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences awards the Elderhostel Scholarship to a Gerontology graduate student.

**4c. Sustained Commitment to Showcasing Graduate Scholarship/Creative Activity:** The program showcases graduate research and scholarship through a sustained commitment to the Graduate Exposition by requiring students and faculty members to participate. Participation includes but is not limited to annual student presentations, faculty monitored panels, poster displays, exhibits, recitals, performances, and related venues that showcase student research/creative activity. Programs may include additional documentation regarding other programs that showcase graduate research/creative activity through department, college, or other venues.

Gerontology faculty and graduate students participate in the Graduate Exposition every year. The Gerontology Coordinator has served as a research poster judge 2010-2013 as well as an award presenter for the Graduate award program ceremony. Gerontology students have also been in attendance every year to support their fellow graduate students. In addition, at our spring advisory council meeting, student scholarship is highlighted in two ways: 1) student posters are displayed and briefly presented for advisory council members; and, 2) students working on or completing Master's theses are asked to give 5 minute individual presentations on their research studies for the council. Student scholarship is also featured on the Gerontology program website.

**4d. Sustained Record of Award Program Participation:** The program demonstrates participation in the Graduate School's Distinguished Awards Program with evidence of nominations, applications, and achievements. Programs may include additional documentation regarding other award programs offered by the college, department, discipline, school district, business, or other agencies with evidence of nominations, applications, and achievements.

The Gerontology graduate program has continued to participate in the Graduate School's Distinguished Awards program each year through nominations, applications, and achievements. Annually, Gerontology students continue to be nominated for and presented with Distinguished Graduate student awards. Additionally, the coordinator has nominated one student for the Hamand Society Scholars (although he was not selected for this prestigious award). The coordinator also nominated a Gerontology graduate student for the inaugural commencement speaker competition in the fall of 2013. The graduate student did not win the competition but his essay was selected for the semifinal round where he delivered it for the faculty review panel.

**Criterion 5: The program documents a sustained record of developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service.**

**5a. Sustained Record of Coordinator Leadership:** The Graduate Coordinator has a sustained record of leadership. The Graduate Coordinator has established a sustained service record that may include service to the Council on Graduate Studies, Graduate Student Advisory Council, Graduate School Alumni Advisory Board, International Programs Advisory Committee, and Council on Faculty Research or through presentations, seminars or forums presented through the Graduate School's boards, councils, or committees. A sustained record of achievement may include awards such as the Graduate School

Leadership Award, a Faculty Mentor Award, an Assessment Award, Research Award, or college or department awards recognizing leadership for the graduate program.

Between 2009-2014, the Gerontology program coordinator has demonstrated a sustained record of leadership through the following service activities:

- Member, International Educational Council (IEC)
- Faculty Mentor Award (2011)
- CGS (2012-present)
- Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs Council
- ACA Award for Research (2010)
- Faculty advisor: AGES Gerontology RSO; Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity; Sigma Phi Omega Gerontology Honor society
- Member, NCA 2013-14 Self-study Team
- 2013-14 University-wide Search Committee, *Study Abroad Director*
- Member and Chair, DPC, Family and Consumer Sciences

**5b. Sustained Graduate Faculty Scholarship:** Graduate faculty are active scholars in the discipline and can document a sustained a record of scholarship and extra-mural funding. Examples of scholarship include but are not limited to publications, presentations, or exhibits as appropriate to the discipline. Examples of funding include but are include but are not limited to internal grants through the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, Graduate School and International Program Awards for Initiatives, College awards for grants and research, and external grants for research and sponsored projects.

The Gerontology faculty have an active record of scholarship through publications, presentations, and extra-mural funding. Details of Gerontology faculty achievements can be found in Appendix XXII (Faculty CVs). Highlights of the faculty achievements during the past 5 years are listed below:

**ACA Awards: 3**

**CFR Awards: 1**

**Faculty Award for Integrative Research (FAIR): 1**

**Provost Award for Integrative Learning: 1**

**College Research and Creativity Awards: 3**

**National Grant (TIAA-CREF and National Council on Graduate Studies): 1**

**Sample of National Conference Presentations:** The Gerontological Society of America (GSA), American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS), Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), American Society on Aging (ASA), International Association of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE).