

Trent University Joins Global Age-friendly University Network

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Move Recognizes Trent's International Leadership in Aging Studies



From left to right: Amber Colibaba, Kerri Davies, Marilyn Burns, Trevor Holmes, Mark Skinner, Glennice Burns and Elizabeth Russell

Building on a world-class reputation for leadership in aging studies, Trent University has become one of only four Canadian institutions to have officially joined the [Age-Friendly University \(AFU\) Global Network](#), an international network of universities committed to recognizing the distinctive contributions institutions of higher education can make to respond to the interests and needs of an aging population.

“Peterborough is one of the most rapidly aging communities in Canada, a fact that has encouraged Trent scholars to engage critically with aging issues,” said Dr. Leo Groarke, president and vice-chancellor of Trent University. “Over the past five years the Trent Centre for Aging & Society has facilitated leading-edge research that has earned the University a world-class reputation for its engagement with critical aging issues. Joining the Age-friendly University Network is Trent’s way of recognizing our on-going commitment to aging studies as a learning priority as well as acknowledging the vitality and importance of the older learners in our midst.”

The AFU global network was launched in 2012 by Dublin City University (DCU) in Ireland and is endorsed by the [Association for Gerontology in Higher Education](#) as a way to positively 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 consists of more than 500 cities and communities in 37 countries, working to improve their physical and social environments to become better places in which to grow old.

Talking of her first undertaking as the newly appointed director of the Trent Centre for Aging & Society (TCAS), Dr. Sally Chivers said: “I would like to thank our former director, Dr. Mark Skinner, for his leadership in bringing this initiative to fruition. Solidifying our desire to be an age-friendly university is an obvious extension of our dedication to being a world leader in interdisciplinary aging studies. This is us practicing what we teach. It also has the potential to produce a wonderful dynamic in the classroom – students young and old learn from each other’s sometimes very different perspectives, which makes for an exciting learning environment.”

Trent University offers a new multi-disciplinary Collaborative Specialization in Aging Studies program, open to students from all disciplines at the graduate level and it is home to the archive of the Canadian Association on Gerontology.

“Joining the AFU global network has the potential to create more dynamic learning opportunities for our students,” said Glennice Burns, associate vice-president, International at Trent University. “We can see the potential to partner with other universities in the network to offer an exchange program or course that would give our student’s international experience and build bridges of understanding across cultures in the critical aging studies field.”

Trent University’s commitment to age-friendly principles is wide-ranging. For example, TCAS regularly works with the Trent Community Research Centre to facilitate the work of students on aging themed community-based projects. Indeed, the work of several students contributed directly to the creation of the Age-friendly Peterborough Community Action Plan, which recently won recognition at the inaugural Age-Friendly Communities Symposium: Aging with Confidence event organized by the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility in Toronto.

“It is my pleasure to welcome Trent University to the global Age-Friendly University Network,” said Trevor Holmes, AFU’s chair and vice president for Strategic and External Affairs, Dublin City University. “It is truly impressive what Trent has accomplished since the formation of the Trent Centre for Aging & Society just five years ago. Indeed, it has become a world leader in critical aging studies. In particular, TCAS’ support of its home community’s age-friendly initiatives is truly outstanding and aligns seamlessly with the vision of AFU.”

Trent University is one of four Canadian universities to join the AFU network to date. Other members include McMaster University, University of Manitoba, University of Wisconsin, Trinity College Dublin, University of Pai Chai in South Korea, the University of Massachusetts in Boston, and the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands, among others.

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.

About Trent University

One of Canada's top universities, Trent University was founded on the ideal of interactive learning that's personal, purposeful and transformative. Consistently recognized nationally for leadership in teaching, research and student satisfaction, Trent attracts excellent students from across the country and around the world. Here, undergraduate and graduate students connect and collaborate with faculty, staff and their peers through diverse communities that span residential colleges, classrooms, disciplines, hands-on research, co-curricular and community-based activities. Across all disciplines, Trent brings critical, integrative thinking to life every day. Today, Trent's unique approach to personal development through supportive, collaborative community engagement is in more demand than ever. Students lead the way by co-creating experiences rooted in dialogue, diverse perspectives and collaboration. In a learning environment that builds life-long passion for inclusion, leadership and social change, Trent's students, alumni, faculty and staff are engaged global citizens who are catalysts in developing sustainable solutions to complex issues. Trent's Peterborough campus boasts award-winning architecture in a breathtaking natural setting on the banks of the Otonabee River, just 90 minutes from downtown Toronto, while Trent University Durham GTA delivers a distinct mix of programming in the east GTA.

About the Trent Centre for Aging & Society

Attracting leading university scholars from across Trent's humanities, social sciences and professional programs since 2013, the Trent Centre for Aging & Society (TCAS) draws together an interdisciplinary team of more than 40 faculty members, students and community stakeholders to do what no other Centre can do; build meaningful dialogue on aging that takes into account the diversity of experiences of older people to debunk the myths about aging, old age and older people. Home to two Canada Research Chairs and faculty and students from Canadian Studies, English Literature, Gender and Women's Studies, Geography, Kinesiology, Nursing, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology and Sustainability Studies, as well as partners from the municipal, health care and community sectors, TCAS is a catalyst for collaborative aging studies from a diversity of perspectives. As a team, TCAS promotes innovative research, education, and community engagement on aging and old age that is critically-informed, challenges ageist policies and practices, and is responsive to the issues facing older people and aging communities.