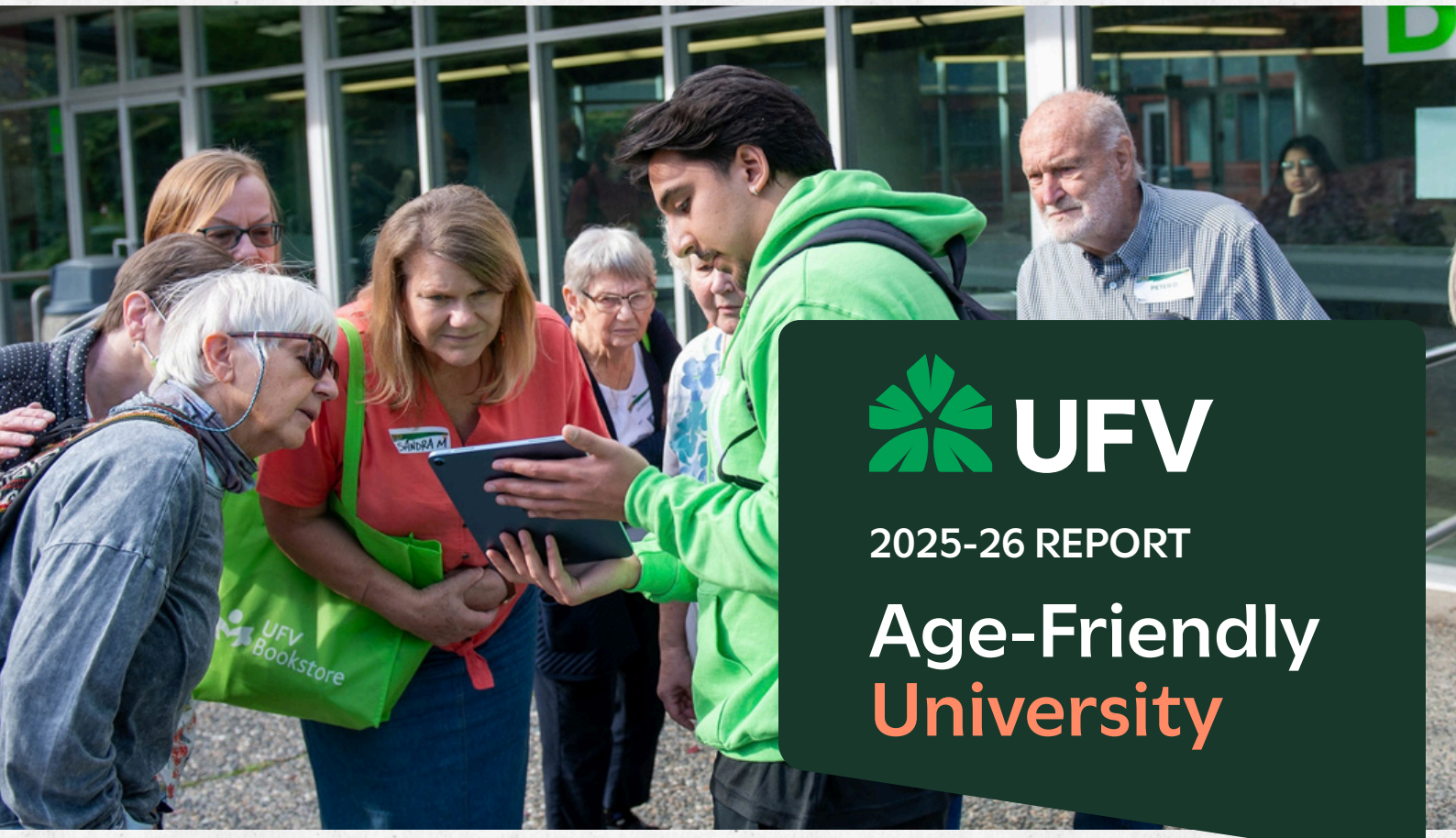


UFV

2025-26 REPORT

Age-Friendly University



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OVERVIEW

The University of the Fraser Valley is known as a gathering place, guided by a vision, mission, and values supporting lifelong learning in inclusive learning environments. UFV's Integrated Strategic Plan outlines strategic imperatives that underpin UFV's commitments as an Age-Friendly University (AFU) (www.afugn.org) supporting UFV to successfully meet the diverse needs of learners of all ages.

UFV's role as an AFU is increasingly important in today's ageing society where currently the number of Canadians over the age of 65 years is 19% of the total population, and predicted to increase to approximately 24% by 2030. This pattern is also reflected in the increasing number of older adults in British Columbia.

Today's university students will establish and complete their careers at a unique time in history. UFV students across disciplines will live and work in an ageing society that will require them to engage with older adults in meaningful ways.

UFV's Centre for Education and Research on Ageing (CERA) spearheaded UFV's membership in the global AFU movement in 2022, and CERA faculty associates have continued to build on educational and research initiatives that address the ten AFU guiding principles.

In this report, we highlight UFV's success and areas for potential growth in meeting our commitments as an age-friendly university.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT

The Age-Friendly University (AFU) movement grew out of the Global Age-Friendly Cities Initiative, developed by the World Health Organization in 2005 in response to demographic projections for an ageing population. Universities were identified as important institutions to support age-friendliness.

Today's global AFU network boasts membership across the United Kingdom, Europe, United States, and Canada, endorsing the 10 principles forming a global AFU network. Additionally, the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education has also formally endorsed the age-friendly principles.

The University of Manitoba led the way to become the first Canadian AFU; subsequently, nine Canadian universities have joined the global network with UFV recognized as the first AFU in British Columbia.

UFV AFU STEERING COMMITTEE

CERA has taken the lead in exploring and promoting UFV as an age-friendly university. Key to this has been the formation of an AFU Steering Committee with membership across UFV academic units and including our external community partners. This group meets once each semester and is co-led by Dr. Shelley Canning (CERA Director) and Gerry Eggert (UFV mature student).

Gerry Eggert also serves as UFV's representative at the AFU global meetings. External community members represent Chilliwack Elder College, Chilliwack Community Services, Abbotsford Seniors Access, and UFV Alumni Association.

Over the past three years, steering committee discussions have centred on increasing UFV's engagement with older adults in our neighbouring communities through exploring initiatives to increase access for older adults seeking to register for UFV courses and credits, and attend events and presentations on campus.

The steering committee has also identified the importance of creating and supporting opportunities for UFV students to engage in intergenerational partnerships with reciprocal benefits for both generations.



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OUR DEMOGRAPHIC

UFV's student population is largely made up of young adults with the overall average age of UFV graduates being 26 years (UFV Factbook 2025-2026). This reflects the majority of students who are completing baccalaureate degrees.

However, the demographic picture also points to a significant number of middle and older adult students. For example, in 2024-2025 there were 661 students over the age of 30, including 57 students over 50 years old.

The average age of students increases significantly in graduate and certificate programs.

40.8 yrs
Master's degree

53.6 yrs
Graduate diploma

37.8 yrs
Short certificate

47.3 yrs
Graduate certificate

37.0 yrs
Advanced certificate

Most Continuing Education students are mature students (i.e., over 30 years old), with an average age of 36.4 years. These students are also more likely to be enrolled part-time. We believe there is a need to support the unique needs of these older students.





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HOW UFV IS MEETING 10 AFU PRINCIPLES

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

- Gerry Eggert, 84yo BA student, is Co-Chair for AFU Steering Committee
- Christine Aiken, an advocate with lived experience of dementia, is a research team member of a CIHR funded UFV research study
- 40 seniors partner with first semester nursing students each semester

Potential Actions:

- Include a mature student as a member of each of the Teaching and Learning Advisory and the Research Advisory committees
- Engage a senior advisor to serve as a consultant within CERA providing guidance across UFV related to ageing scholarship initiatives

02 Promote personal and career development in the second half of life and support those who wish to pursue "second careers".

- Tuition waiver available for students over 65 years old

Potential Actions:

- Identify a dedicated academic advisor for mature students
- Create a “How to Register at UFV” video targeting mature students, including information regarding tuition waiver for 65 years
- Explore and market micro-credentials designed for mature students (e.g. those who are mid-career or those who are retired)

03 Recognise 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).

- Upgrading and University Preparation (UUP) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses are tuition-free for domestic students
- Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) recognizes professional certificates, work history, and life experience
- Continuing Education programming attracts mature students
- UFV has an MOU supporting Chilliwack Elder College programming
- Centre for Accessibility (CAS) and Workplace TASK programme offers resources and support to students at different life stages

Potential Actions:

- AFU Steering Committee representatives to attend faculty council meetings to share current initiatives and discuss potential actions
- Designate an academic advisor as a "Seniors' Advisor"
- Support mature student connecting with each other (e.g. forming a Seniors' Club)
- Build on relationship with Elder College (e.g. explore auditing options for Elder College students)

04 Promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.

- First year nursing students partner with older adults with goals of developing communication and relational skills while learning about the ageing experience
- Dr. Rita Dhungel received funding from Maplewood Foundation to create intergenerational learning opportunities for her social work students.
- Dr. Valentina Proietti incorporates intergenerational experiential learning opportunities in her psychology ageing course (PSYC 491)
- Dr. Shelley Canning is funded by Michael Smith Health Research grant to create intergenerational educational resources for K-grade 5 students
- UFV Trishaw Rides provides intergenerational experiences for Kinesiology students trained as trishaw pilots
- UFV Retirees Association provides mentorship role for students
- CERA provides research assistantships and volunteer opportunities for UFV students to engage with older adults in educational roles (e.g. CERA Series) and research studies

Potential Actions:

- Advertise CERA volunteer and research assistantship opportunities more widely
- CERA to connect with UFV Student Experience Office to explore collaborations
- Invite membership on the AFU Steering Committee from Student Experience Office



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05 Widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.

Wide range of online resources are available through the UFV library, counselling services, CAS, Brightspace orientation and support, online peer tutoring and orientation

Potential Actions:

- Survey mature students regarding appetite for online educational opportunities and potential barriers to accessing online educational opportunities
- Explore opportunities for online opportunities in current credentials and future micro-credentials that appeal to mature students

06 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.

- CERA faculty associates take the lead in ageing research – currently 8 research studies are being conducted including UFV Trishaw Rides research (CIHR funding); Dementia Friendly Cancer care (Alzheimer Society of Canada funding); identifying early dementia diagnosis through SMART Pen analysis – see the Research Office annual senate report for additional details
- CERA student research assistants presented their studies at the recent Student Research Day with Owen Swan (Kinesiology) and Makaela Gelowitz (Nursing) winning the two top award

Potential Actions:

- Host an ageing conference bringing research centres from UFV, UBC, SFU, and UVic together creating an opportunity for faculty and student researchers to share and network

07 Increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that ageing brings to our society.

- Several courses across disciplines have a focus on ageing: CRIM 217, HSER 160, KIN 365, NURS 104, PNUR 154, PSYC 491, SOC 331, SOWK 750

Potential Actions:

- Create an “Age and Dementia in the 21st Century” learning module providing a basic level of current gerontology knowledge available to all students, staff, and faculty; this learning module could be embedded in related micro-credentials
- Create post graduate certificate in ageing and Health, targeting local health care providers (e.g. nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists etc)
- Increase opportunities for students to engage in meaningful ways with older adults through experiential learning as part of course work



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08 Enhance access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programmes and its arts and cultural activities.

- Annual CERA Day event brings over 100 older adults to UFV campus for a day of presentations, workshops, and connections – UFV faculty provide the majority of presentations with focus on health, movement, and the arts
- CERA Series is offered each semester through Elder College, CERA faculty associates and students present on relevant areas of scholarship
- UFV Trishaw Rides offers free rides along the Vedder River Rotary Trail for individuals with mobility and/or cognitive impairments; over 400 older adults and 2 dozen UFV students have enjoyed this programme
- UFV Cascades hosted a seniors' day for the opening of volleyball season in the fall 2024

Potential Actions:

- Create marketing stream for seniors in UFV's neighbouring communities ensuring seniors are aware of opportunities to attend Cascades events, theatre events, academic lectures, conferences, workshops etc

09 Engage actively with the university's own retired community.

- UFV Retirees Association (UFVRA) was formed in 2025 and have representation on the AFU Steering Committee

Potential Actions:

- Share information regarding UFVRA during Faculty Council meetings
- Include UFVRA activities in CERA website and network communications

10 Ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the ageing population.

- CERA faculty associates sit as members of Abbotsford and Chilliwack senior's organizations (e.g. Abbotsford Access and Chilliwack)
- Gerry Eggert (AFU Steering Committee Co-Chair) sits on Safety Advisory Committee for Chilliwack City Council providing an important link between UFV and Chilliwack Healthier Community

Potential Actions:

- Supporting actions in guidelines #1-9

POTENTIAL ACTION PRIORITIES

1. Create registration video for older adults
2. Dedicated academic advisor for seniors
3. Increase awareness of AFU principles among UFV faculty and staff

CONCLUSION

Since achieving AFU status, we have seen meaningful advances in meeting the 10 guiding principles. For example, UFV Trishaw Rides has become increasingly well known among in the local community with significant benefits for both Kinesiology student pilots and the Trishaw passengers. Recently we received funding to purchase a second trishaw from the Sienna Foundation and Chilliwack Foundation. This expands our ability to better meet the needs of seniors in UFV's local communities.

Ageing research has increased with CERA faculty associates leading research studies funded by major funding agencies including CIHR, Alzheimer Society of Canada, and Michael Smith Health Research.

CERA Day has become well known in UFV's neighbouring communities. CERA Day 2026 was hosted on September 25th on the Abbotsford campus. The agenda featured Dr. Lauren Erland as the keynote speaker, and our health fair brought 15 community groups to campus.

While we are making progress in meeting our AFU commitments, the number of potential actions highlighted in this report point to areas for future focus.

Continued support from the Research Office, Alumni Association, UFV senior administration team, and our community partners will be central to achieving our aims for meaningful inclusion of mature students in all aspects of UFV, and ensuring UFV's students are best prepared to live and work in an ageing society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by AFU Steering Committee Co-Chairs Dr. Shelley Canning and Gerry Eggert with assistance from Lana Marinculic Sijan (CERA student volunteer).

Thank you to all the CERA faculty associates for their continued efforts in addressing the AFU guiding principles:

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