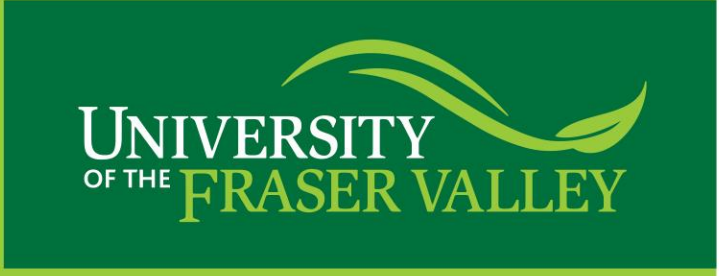




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[ufv.ca/aging](http://ufv.ca/aging)



# Seeking Age-Friendly University Status

## Inclusive Learning Environments

The University of the Fraser Valley's vision, values, mission, and goals support UFV becoming known as a gathering place, engaging learners in inclusive learning environments with opportunities for everyone. Our [Integrated Strategic Plan](#) draws on these central tenets, outlining strategic imperatives in the following areas: Indigenization and Reconciliation; Applied Research; Lifelong Learning; Student Experience and Success; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Personal and Professional Development; and Engagement with the Community.

These strategic imperatives open the doors to developing diverse key performance indicators aimed at supporting UFV to successfully meet the diverse needs of our learners. At UFV's Centre for Education and Research on Aging we believe that the imperatives related to lifelong learning, and equity, diversity, and inclusion open the door to supporting UFV achieving "Age-Friendly University" status.

## THE AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY 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 aging population. Following this, a multidisciplinary group led by Dr. Brian MacCraith met at Dublin City University in 2012

to discuss how universities and colleges might adopt an age-friendly model building off the age-friendly cities movement.

Ten AFU principles emerged from these discussions, providing direction for post secondary institutions to better address the needs of older learners (website: [www.dcu.ie/agefriendly](http://www.dcu.ie/agefriendly)).

To date, universities and colleges across the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, and Canada have endorsed the 10 principles forming a global AFU network. Additionally, the [Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education has also formally endorsed the age-friendly principles](#).

In 2016 the University of Manitoba led the way to become the first Canadian AFU. This was followed by McMaster University, Niagara College, Ontario Tech University, Toronto Metropolitan University, Trent University, University of Calgary, and the University of Sherbrooke.

## UNANIMOUS SUPPORT TO LEAD INITIATIVE

In 2021, faculty associates in UFV's Centre for Education and Research on Aging (CERA) met to discuss the 10 AFU principles and consider pursuing AFU status. There was unanimous support among CERA's multidisciplinary membership to lead this initiative at UFV.

# The 10 AFU principles

## As identified by Dublin City University

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the **core activities** of the university, including educational and research programmes.
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 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).
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 ageing 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 ageing brings to our society.
8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of **health and wellness** programmes and its **arts and cultural activities**.
9. To engage actively with the university's own **retired community**.
10. To ensure regular **dialogue** with organisations representing the interests of the ageing population.



# CERA's AFU initiatives

## FIRST STEPS

CERA's initial steps in seeking AFU status began with a zoom conversation with Christine O'Kelly, Age-Friendly Coordinator at Dublin City University, to clarify and establish the process. This was followed by discussions with UFV's Provost, Dr. James Mandigo, and Dr. Garry Fehr, Associate VP Research, Engagement, and Graduate Studies to establish initial support from UFV's senior administration for the initiative.

In the spring of 2021, we formed a task force including internal UFV members representing Adult Education, Continuing Education, Human Resources, Research, and Senior Administration. In addition, representatives from the three neighbouring community's senior's organizations (Chilliwack Elder College, Mission Lifetime Learning, and Abbotsford Learning Plus) were invited to join to the task force.

The concept of the AFU and 10 guiding principles were introduced, and discussions revealed wide-spread interest and support among task force members. In particular, the local senior's organizations were very interested in enhanced opportunities for education and intergenerational engagement.

## AGE-FRIENDLY AUDIT

In the spring of 2022, with the support of UFV's senior administration and the AFU task force members, CERA faculty associates conducted an AFU audit; the audit was intended to identify current UFV activities and initiatives that align

with the 10 AFU principles, as well as any gaps or potential age-friendly opportunities.

The audit was supported through funding from the Provost's Strategic Imperatives Fund competition. This funding award reflects the strong alignment between UFV's Integrated Strategic Plan and the AFU principles, providing CERA with approximately \$5500 to conduct our AFU audit.

The audit involved both an examination of UFV's current student demographic profiles, educational programming, events, policies, and practices, as well as an environmental audit assessing the accessibility of the three main UFV campuses (Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission).

The Strategic Imperatives Fund award supported hiring eight undergraduate students from the following program areas (Kinesiology, Psychology, Sociology, and Computer Information Sciences). In conducting the internal audit, the students used the 10 AFU principles as a guiding framework to explore UFV's current state of age-friendliness and consider ways UFV might meet the principles in the future.

In conducting the external environmental audit, members from our local senior's organizations were invited to accompany a fourth year Kinesiology student in a "walk-about" at each of UFV's campuses. An accessibility survey tool was used to gather data during the walk-about to help identify current accessibility barriers and supports.

# UFV's AFU audit findings

## 1. TO ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPATION OF OLDER ADULTS IN ALL THE CORE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY, INCLUDING EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS.

UFV's mission and vision encourage a diversity of learners and learning opportunities is reflected in our Integrated Strategic Plan's commitment to lifelong learning, and equity, diversity, and inclusion. These imperatives support the active involvement and inclusion of older adults in all aspects of UFV's educational and research programs.

Educational offerings at UFV include a range of disciplinary and professional programming options, focused primarily at the undergraduate level. The average age of UFV graduates is 25 years reflecting a significant number of older students. The number of students who delay entry to UFV for 7 years or longer is comparable to the number of students who enter directly following high school graduation.

Student graduation data highlights UFV programming and credentials that attract larger numbers of mature students. For example, our Continuing Education department offers a wide range of credentials including six-month certificates, diplomas, and some laddering opportunities.

More students in the 30-39 years age group graduate with certificates and diplomas versus baccalaureate degrees; for students over 40 years, certificate and diploma completion are more than three times that of baccalaureate completion. The diversity of programming and

range of credentials offered at UFV position the university well to meet the needs of older students who have delayed entry or returned to post-secondary education. [Factbook-2020-21](#)

UFV's research profile has expanded significantly over the past 10 years boasting an increased number of major grant holders, Canada Research Chairs, and research centres and institutes.

The Centre for Education and Research on Aging (CERA) is a natural champion for the AFU initiative with all faculty associates being actively engaged in research and teaching initiatives with an aging focus.



CERA members provide significant opportunities for community living older adults and UFV students of all ages to participate and partner in research opportunities at UFV. Over the past year, CERA activities related to seeking AFU

status have elevated issues related to aging within the academy. For example, CERA members were recently invited to present the workshop *How Age-Friendly is UFV?* at UFV's institution-wide professional development days.

UFV's close relationships with the senior's organizations in our neighbouring communities encourages the participation of older adults in educational and research programming. For example, Elder College has an administrative office located on UFV's Chilliwack campus. This provides Elder College students and staff with a

physical presence on UFV's campus where they are able to utilize classroom space for educational programming and mingle with younger students as they walk through the halls and line up for coffee.

As UFV moves forward with AFU initiatives, meaningful participation of older adults will be critical to ensuring their voices are heard. CERA's task force is committed to ensuring on-going, active engagement of older adults in setting UFV's AFU priorities and goals.

## 2. TO PROMOTE PERSONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO WISH TO PURSUE SECOND CAREERS.

UFV offers its students a wide range of programming and credentials. Students' complete baccalaureate degrees in the sciences, humanities, and professional studies such as nursing and education.

Additionally, there are many certificates and diploma options providing personal development and career opportunities, for example: in Healthcare (e.g., Activity Assistant, and Nursing Unit Clerk); in Business (e.g., Human Resources Management, and Records Management); in Creativity and Design (e.g., Floral Design); and in Trades (e.g., Power Line Technician).

UFV's certificate and diploma options are frequently accessed by our older students seeking second careers.

Individuals over 65 years of age seeking personal and career development are eligible for a tuition exemption at UFV.

While there are some course and program exceptions, the tuition waiver can be applied to most courses, including those for baccalaureate credentials.

During the winter and fall semesters, older adults can receive up to two courses tuition-free while there is no limit for courses taken during the summer semesters. Waiving tuition for those 65 years of age and older, reduces some of the financial barriers associated with post-secondary education.

UFV also offers online and in-person academic advising. The Academic Advising Centre helps students to reach their academic goals by assisting them in planning and exploring program options and offering workshops and information sessions to help new students navigate university.

These supports are invaluable for older students who are often juggling family and work obligations as they return to school.

### 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).

Students who have delayed their university entry or returned to study after time away benefit from UFV's supports related to financial and academic advising. Counselling services also provide important support through one-on-one sessions, workshops, and support groups. UFV's counsellors are equipped to help with career planning, study skills, and personal issues.

All of these supports are accessible both online and in-person on campus. While many older adults are adept at using technology, it remains a barrier for some; thus, in-person supports ensure that the needs of students with limited access or comfort with technology continue to be met.

UFV also offers courses to improve English language proficiency and workshops for students to upgrade academic skills. Upgrading and University Preparation (UUP) courses are available to support older students to complete their high school education. These courses build and upgrade skills that lead to academic success and future careers.

Adult Basic Education courses are tuition-free for domestic students and can be used to complete high school equivalency, positioning students to continue their educations and meet career goals at a post-secondary institute.

Students seeking admission to UFV can also take advantage of Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR). This flexible assessment process is often accessed by older students who are able to receive credit in courses or programs based on the knowledge and skills they have

acquired through professional certifications, and/or life and work experience.

UFV provides support for students living with a disability to help maximize employment potential through the Workplace Training in Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge (TASK).



The Centre for Accessibility Services (CAS) offers a network of supports for students with both temporary and permanent disabilities, with the goal of fostering equitable education opportunities for all students. CAS recognizes that students may need alternative types of support, particularly at different life stages and takes a comprehensive approach to support students along their academic journeys.

UFV's School of Graduate Studies offers three master's degrees and several post-graduate certificates. The master's programs are geared towards students currently working in the areas of Teacher Education, Social Work, and Criminology. These programs are designed recognizing the challenges older students often have related to juggling work and family responsibilities.

#### 4. TO PROMOTE INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING TO FACILITATE THE RECIPROCAL SHARING OF EXPERTISE BETWEEN LEARNERS OF ALL AGES.

Some programmes, particularly those with a healthcare focus, require students to receive theory and experiential knowledge and skills related to older adults.

UFV's Nursing department currently boasts several examples of intergenerational learning and connections. For example, all nursing students partner with older adults in a "companion program" where they complete a series of visits with their companions during their first semester.

A recent CERA led study explored the experiences of both generations of companions, with findings pointing to students having diminished ageist stereotypes as relationships were formed.

CERA faculty associates have explored the richness of meaningful intergenerational connections through several research projects. For example, a documentary film, "They Aren't Scary," was created during a study exploring the benefits of an intergenerational ballet program where elementary school children and residents living in LTC partnered in weekly dance classes.

A recent CERA study examined the impacts of partnering high school students with community living older adults, exploring experiences of social isolation, while another study partnered children and older adults in a pen-pal project.

CERA has recently established a partnership with a local chapter of "Cycling Without Age." This partnership provides important opportunities for



UFV undergraduate students to engage with older adults as they cycle along the local trails.

CERA faculty associates are conducting a study exploring

the reciprocal benefits of these intergenerational connections. This study explores the benefits of socialization in a natural environment for the older adults, and the impact of intergenerational connections on ageist views among the student pilots.

We believe achieving AFU status will encourage more exploration of intergenerational connections both within and across programs.

For example, mentorship programs that intentionally partner older returning students with younger students entering directly from high school may provide important support to both generations of students.

Additionally, UFV's close relationships with local senior's organizations provide access to rich opportunities for faculty members to connect their students with older adults as guest lecturers and partners in experiential learning activities.



## 5. TO WIDEN ACCESS TO ONLINE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS TO ENSURE A DIVERSITY OF ROUTES TO PARTICIPATE.

UFV currently provides flexible learning options including in-person, online, and hybrid instruction (a mix of online and in-person classes); these options are course and program specific.

Online and hybrid options offer important flexibility to older students with work and family commitments. However, both online and in-person class materials are readily accessible through the online Blackboard platform. UFV also offers digital library services, providing students with convenient access to digital collections of books and academic journals.

UFV also offers a range of online learning tutorials to address student challenges associated with navigating new online platforms.

For example, the “IT Services Toolbox” is a useful guide for accessing course materials, student emails, and computer labs.

Students also have the option for one-on-one peer support in addition to video tutorials outlining technical assistance for accessing Blackboard, myUFV, emails, and uploading assignments.

As we become more aware of, and attuned to the needs of our older students, modes of instruction and technology services must continue to support those with limited access or comfort with technology.

## 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.

CERA is the natural champion for the AFU initiative at UFV with its mission of conducting research and providing education associated with aging.



Over the past year, CERA faculty associates have shared their endorsement of the 10 AFU

principles with both internal UFV audiences and local community groups.

Additionally, UFV’s Research Office has provided important support for research projects addressing the needs of an aging society; over the past year this has included support for UFV achieving AFU status.

Research centres, including both CERA and the Community Health and Innovation Hub (CHASI) have researchers actively engaged in aging projects.

UFV researchers have conducted a range of studies in response to current areas of aging and dementia scholarship including ageism, elder

abuse, intergenerational connections, social connections, and use of technology.

Faculty associates also regularly engage with local communities as guest speakers and committee members of local organizations with a focus on aging. For example, CERA faculty associates served as members of Abbotsford's task force for Age-Friendly Cities status, and the

Senior's Task Team for Chilliwack's Healthy Community organization.

We recognize that maintaining and building new community connections will help to ensure that issues of importance to local older adults will continue to inform UFV's research and education agendas in meaningful ways.

### 7. TO INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENTS OF THE LONGEVITY DIVIDEND AND THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY AND RICHNESS THAT AGING BRINGS TO OUR SOCIETY.

Educational opportunities, both within the classroom and through experiential learning will support UFV students, and faculty and staff, to understand the value of the longevity dividend.

Educational opportunities that address ageist views are critical to support an understanding of the potential for positive outcomes related to aging.

Currently, aging courses are offered in the humanities as well as UFV's healthcare

programs. In addressing this AFU principle, we recognize the need for additional aging programming at UFV.

To that end, a new course titled "*Dementia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*" will be offered in 2023. Additionally, CERA faculty associates have initiated discussions with the Dean of Arts regarding the creation of an interdisciplinary post-graduate certificate in "aging and health".

### 8. TO ENHANCE ACCESS FOR OLDER ADULTS TO THE UNIVERSITY'S RANGE OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS AND ITS ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

There is a range of programming offered through Campus Recreation promoting leisure and healthy living choices, and opportunities for intergenerational interactions. While "pickleball" sessions are very popular among older adults, there is a need to better understand the needs and interests of UFV's older students.

UFV hosts a range of events and activities each year. Each year a variety of academic lectures that are open to the public are presented across UFV; these lectures are variously hosted by

individual departments, research centres and institutes, and the office of the President. We recognize that ensuring attendance by older adults requires intentional outreach to both our internal UFV community and external communities.

As an AFU, this is a principle we will need to work on to ensure that older adults are both aware of and feel welcome to participate in the activities and events being hosted by UFV.

## 9. TO ENGAGE ACTIVELY WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S OWN RETIRED COMMUNITY.

This principle also reflects an area for increased focus and attention. While UFV has an active Alumni Association, we do not have a formal association or membership for our retired faculty and staff.

While some faculty members do remain connected to UFV through their status as

professor emeritus, this is a relatively small group.

Thus, there are opportunities for increased outreach to our retired faculty and staff community providing opportunities to encourage their continued engagement with the university.

## 10. TO ENSURE REGULAR DIALOGUE WITH ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF THE AGING POPULATION.

Community engagement is a central tenet of UFV's identity, and our well-established relationships with local community seniors' organizations helps to ensure that the interests and issues of our aging society are understood.

Representatives from these groups are members of UFV's AFU task force where their voices provide important direction for future planning related to addressing the AFU principles in meaningful ways.

In addressing this principle will be important to continue to build on these relationships and build new relationships as our communities grow.

Maintaining meaningful dialogue with these organizations will provide important direction for

UFV researchers to ask impactful questions related to aging issues, and provide educational programming that better prepares our students to meet the needs of an ageing society.



# Environment assessment

## Campus walkabouts

An environmental assessment was conducted through hosting walkabouts at the three main campuses of UFV (UFV Abbotsford, UFV Chilliwack, and UFV Mission) to assess the age-friendliness of the built environment.

Lead by a senior Kinesiology student, older adults from the local communities were invited to UFV campuses to explore accessibility barriers and supports; an established accessibility tool developed by one of the CERA faculty associates was used.



Age-friendliness was understood to be determined by the level of accessibility and inclusive infrastructure that would enable older adults to be part of the UFV community. The

feedback and insights from the relevant target demographic, our walk-about volunteers, was invaluable.

Overall, the infrastructure of the three campuses were assessed as being accessible; however, some areas for improvement were highlighted that would make UFV more accessible to all students regardless of age and functional ability.

Walk-about volunteers applauded UFV



campuses for their current level of accessibility noting ramp entrances, elevator access, non-slip walking surfaces, and wide pathways/sidewalks that can support walkers and wheelchairs.

Two main areas for improvement were noted. The volunteers felt that both the Abbotsford and Chilliwack campuses would benefit from having additional handicap parking spots for students with mobility issues (common among older adults).

Additionally, they felt that campus signage could be improved to make directions clearer. For example, the volunteers felt that UFV's older signs had a higher colour contrast, making them easier to read than the newer style signs; however, the older signs did not include braille support for visually impaired students.

UFV's campus in Mission is currently under a major renovation. The findings from the Mission campus walkabouts were shared with the Provost to support an accessibility and age-friendly renovation.

The following link highlights the walkabouts in a short video clip: <https://youtu.be/PqQ5HDjmJ1M>

# Next steps in UFV's age-friendly journey

## Seeking AFU Status

Our age-friendly audit and discussions over the past year have highlighted important strengths and pointed to opportunities for UFV to do more to support and promote “age-friendliness.”

Factors that support UFV in achieving and maintaining AFU status include:

- Alignment of AFU goals with UFV's mission, vision, and strategic plan
- Strong, established relationships with local senior's organizations
- Research centre focused on aging (CERA)

We recognize that there are important next steps to be taken to ensure UFV is age-inclusive, supports lifelong learning, and addresses ageism. Potential areas to explore in developing age-friendly initiatives and activities that address the 10 AFU principles include:

- i. Create more aging educational programming**
  - Create “Introduction to Aging” course elective available across disciplines
  - Create certificate and diploma options focused on aging
  - Offer faculty and staff workshops related to caregiving roles, dementia, and end of life

- ii. Build communication and outreach**

- Ensure older adults in neighbouring communities and older students within UFV participate in events and activities of intergenerational interest
- Engage older adults in programs of research
- Build social networks through intergenerational events and reciprocal mentoring
- Encourage retired faculty and staff community to remain engaged

- iii. Ensure accessibility**

- Ensure amenities including campus recreation and foods are welcoming to older adults
- Address barriers to learning for those with sensory or mobility challenges
- Ensure flexible access to technology support
- Create a welcoming environment for older adults by ensuring UFV students, faculty, and staff have awareness of the longevity dividend

# UFV's AFU initiative champions

## UFV CERA's faculty associate members

*Darren Blakeborough MA, Media, and Communication Studies*

*Michael Corman PhD, Sociology*

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*\*\*Sidney Hoolsema for her efforts in compiling the audit findings and supporting the writing of this report*