USING VR FOR NAVIGATION ASSESSMENT IN OLDER ADULTS
Scott Moffat, 1. Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia, United States

There has been a long tradition of wayfinding and orienteering studies in humans but these have mostly neglected possible age-related differences in navigation. This field of inquiry is experiencing something of a resurgence of interest due to the development of VR technology which has brought the systematic study of large scale navigation into the laboratory and into the MRI scanning environment. Empirical studies to date identify navigation as an aspect of cognition that is vulnerable to the aging process. Functional and structural neuroimaging studies in humans suggest that age-related changes in the brain’s “navigation circuit” may underlie these behavioral age differences. Older adults also adopt unique spatial strategies and knowledge of these strategy preferences could enlighten both basic science research in spatial cognition and also inform the development of age-specific technological assistance that may extend functional independence of older adults into later life.

VIRTUAL REALITY AND OLDER ADULTS: A USABILITY STUDY
Julie A. Brown, 1. Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, United States

Within the past two years there has been a very small but growing number of scholarly articles that highlight the potential benefit of mobile Virtual Reality (VR) platforms among older adult populations. Yet, it is critical to assess older adult user needs and preferences, as well as ethical considerations, before utilizing VR in applied contexts. This pilot study investigated perceptions of VR use and its potential application by individually interviewing ten community-dwelling older adults (ages 63 to 89) both before and after trying the Samsung Gear VR and followed with two focus group discussions. Themes identified from the transcripts include 1) usability, 2) video subject matter preferences, and 3) implications with use. These themes highlighted both the challenges and opportunities of VR use among a wide range of older populations, and provided greater insight with its exploration and application in future studies, particularly with individuals with functional limitations.

SESSION 1285 (SYMPOSIUM)

INTEREST GROUP SESSION—COMMUNITY COLLEGE: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER WITHIN GERONTOLOGY
Chair: Jan Abushakrah, Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon, United States
Discussant: Michael A. Faber, Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon, United States

This symposium will highlight how innovative and often non-traditional Community College Gerontology students are motivated to seek career shifts and intentional training and comprehensive education. Understanding and applying this approach allows students to build on their prior skills, especially caregiving experience, to advance to more professional roles in the field of Gerontology. During this symposium we will focus on the Applied Gerontology aspect of Community College programs, including short-term certificates and other approaches related to and informed by the rapidly evolving workforce development in the field of aging. Selected Community College and University representatives, who understand and are leaders in the field of Applied Gerontology, will highlight models of existing Community College and University partnerships/collaboration that work, as well as provide models of other applied approaches. In addition, there will be an opportunity for robust dialog between Community Colleges and four-year Colleges and Universities – both on developing other effective Applied Gerontology approaches, and on creating even better partnerships and collaboration. This symposium will appeal to professionals working in both two and four-year systems of higher education. Colleges and Universities desiring to develop or enhance relationships with area Community Colleges will find this session especially helpful.

TOOLS FROM OUR APPLIED GERONTOLOGY TOOLBOX: FLIPPING MINDSET AND PROPELLING INNOVATION
Roger A. Anunsen, 1. Western Oregon University, Monmouth, Oregon, United States

As the rapid growth of the older population has grown, so has the potential benefit of mobile Virtual Reality (VR) platforms among older adult populations. Yet, it is critical to assess older adult user needs and preferences, as well as ethical considerations, before utilizing VR in applied contexts. This pilot study investigated perceptions of VR use and its potential application by individually interviewing ten community-dwelling older adults (ages 63 to 89) both before and after trying the Samsung Gear VR and followed with two focus group discussions. Themes identified from the transcripts include 1) usability, 2) video subject matter preferences, and 3) implications with use. These themes highlighted both the challenges and opportunities of VR use among a wide range of older populations, and provided greater insight with its exploration and application in future studies, particularly with individuals with functional limitations.

ADDRESSING THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE GERONTOLOGY STUDENTS TO UNIVERSITY SETTINGS
Margaret M. Manooogian, 1. Western Oregon University, Monmouth, Oregon, United States

Developed in 2012, our gerontology program has tracked enrollment, learning outcomes, student competency development, and career paths post-graduation. Enrolled students tend to be older, transferring from community colleges, reentering college due to work and family commitments, and retooling career paths. Our efforts have focused on career integration across all courses culminating in a two-term practicum program. Additionally, through discussions with community college faculty and students, alumni, and community partners, we have adapted our curriculum to address student needs for work, family care, and academic engagement through flexible course delivery, syllabus construction, and wrap-around supports that include empowering advising and career planning, intentional internships, mentoring, networking opportunities, and our newest tool, The Flipping Mindsets Project. We will demonstrate how these evidence-based approaches provide students the knowledge, skills and confidence propelled by a positive mindset, to go boldly into any field of aging as innovators within existing jobs and programs or as ground-breaking entrepreneurs.
APPLIED GERONTOLOGY: HOW STUDENTS ADDRESS LONELINESS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
Eric Schoenmakers, 1. Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, Netherlands

Fontys University of Applied Sciences offers an Undergraduate program in Applied Gerontology. Full-time and part-time students are trained in gerontology and in applying this knowledge in developing and implementing products and services in order to improve quality of life of older adults. In our vision, students learn in practice. Therefore, the educational program largely consists of authentic projects for real organizations in the local community. In one of these ongoing projects, students research loneliness in the local community. A network of organizations, which communicates intensively with the University, is involved. For these organizations, students study how clients and employee's think about (coping with) loneliness, write testimonials about interventions, and advise in improving the services of organizations. For students, these kind of projects offer opportunities to learn in practice. For the community, students’ involvement means extra manpower to further develop services and society as a whole.

WORKFORCE TRAINING FOR MIDDLE-AGED AND OLDER ADULTS: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Phyllis Cummins, 1. Scripps Gerontology Center, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, United States

In recent years, occupational changes have become increasingly common for mid- and later-life (MLL) workers. The aging population in the U.S. has resulted in increased opportunities in health-related related occupations and many MLLs seeking to re-career choose these professions. Because of their convenient locations and open access policies, community colleges are an ideal educational setting for MLLs to seek training. This presentation will discuss the results of a research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education that included focus groups and key informant interviews at community colleges in Ohio. More specifically, we will discuss reasons MLL students enroll at a community college, their process for choosing a program of study, services that are important to successful completion, and barriers they face. Finally, we will discuss policies and practices that can improve MLL student outcomes.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNIVERSITIES IN PRODUCING QUALIFIED GERONTOLOGY PROFESSIONALS
Karen Kopera-Frye, 1. New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico, United States

Today especially critical for community colleges and universities to work together to allow for pathways in educating professionals in the field of gerontology. At New Mexico State University, Public Health Sciences Department, we have partnered with Dona Ana Community College and Central New Mexico College through articulation agreements to allow transfer of credits and an accelerated pathway to a Gerontology Minor for workforce development. This paper will discuss the steps we took in bridging these educational opportunities as an example for other institutions to consider. By incorporating joint Advisory Boards, faculty and administrators entering into articulation agreements, and coordinated course offerings, we were able to systematize the curriculum and allow for transfer of up to 12 credits from the community colleges into our Public Health Bachelors degree program, with attainment of the Gerontology minor along the way. Lessons learned during this process will be shared.

UNDERSTANDING AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE
Chair: Barbara Hanratty, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom
Co-Chair: Karen Spilsbury, University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom

Long-term care facilities play a vital role in the care of older people. Across the world, service providers face common challenges to the delivery of high quality care to residents. Rising levels of morbidity and dependency, recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce, and separation from mainstream services are some of the issues that make this one of the most precarious care sectors. In this symposium, we will consider the evidence underlying some of these challenges, along with current and possible future service responses. The first presentation will look at factors that increase the risk of transition to dependency in the Newcastle 85+ cohort study. This is followed by an analysis of trends over time in health, morbidity and disability in the UK care home population, drawing on data from three later life cohorts. Having considered the characteristics and needs of residents, the next presentations move onto care services. Findings will be presented from a mixed methods study on the relationship between care home staffing and quality of care, followed by a study of the organisation of primary care for long term care facilities. This session will end by looking to the future, with findings from rapid syntheses of international evidence on technology, and evaluation methods, in animated format. Together, these presentations will enhance our understanding of the relationships between the needs of residents in long-term care facilities, demands on service providers and quality of care. We aim to stimulate debate and discussion on future directions for research and practice.

ORGANIZING PRIMARY CARE FOR RESIDENTS IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES: A MULTI-METHOD APPROACH
Barbara Hanratty, 1. Katie Brittain, 2. Rachel Stocker, 3 and Karen Spilsbury, 1. Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom, 2. Northumbria university, Newcastle upon Tyne, England, United Kingdom, 3. University of Newcastle, newcastle upon Tyne, England,