at the forefront of many innovative programs since it was founded in 1974, contributing to the growth of the field and the recognition of education as one pillar of the field of gerontology and geriatrics, along with research, policy and practice. This symposium highlights three ongoing initiatives that promote connections and collaborations. The first paper discusses the Age-Friendly University (AFU) network which is made of institutions around the globe who have committed themselves to becoming more age-friendly in their programs and policies. AGHE endorses the AFU principles and invites its members and affiliates to call upon their institutions to become part of this pioneering initiative. The AFU initiative is one of several international activities that AGHE, global leaders in education on aging, has engaged in. The second paper describes international networking activities such as collaborations with international organizations including the World Health Organization and connecting international and US students. In the third paper, initiatives to connect disciplines and professions through competency-based education and curricula are discussed. For instance, the Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education and the Program of Merit promote competency-based gerontology education across disciplines and professions.

PERILS, PITFALLS, AND POTENTIALS OF NETWORKING IN INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: TAKING ON THE CHALLENGES
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Gerontology and geriatrics are conceptualized as quintessential interdisciplinary fields. To understand aging and provide quality care to older adults, you need an interdisciplinary perspective and an interprofessional team. However, academic and clinical settings—with their vertical structures—require bridging strategies to connect the disciplinary dots. Implicit in this approach is the need for creating networks to support interdisciplinary education in both classroom and experiential settings. Taking on these challenges requires emphasizing the importance of key competencies for both gerontology and interprofessional practice with older adults, including foundational, interactional, and contextual dimensions. These competencies recognize the unique perspectives, contributions, and roles of different disciplines, and create the connections critical for promoting and sustaining interprofessional education. Strategies for developing and maintaining interprofessional networks include: (1) identifying forces driving and restraining change, (2) matching strategies for promoting networks to readiness for system change, and (3) enlisting external forces to make and maintain changes.

AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITIES: POSSIBILITIES AND POWER IN CAMPUS CONNECTIONS
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Populations are aging locally, nationally, and globally – and challenging institutions of higher education to consider how they can respond to these changing demographics through new approaches to teaching, research, and community engagement. The Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative was recently launched by an international team convened by Dublin City University, and endorsed by the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE). The AFU concept and 10 guiding principles provide a guiding campus-wide framework that colleges and universities can use for distinguishing and evaluating age-friendly programs and policies, as well as identifying institutional gaps and opportunities for growth. To date, over 45 institutions have joined the AFU global network. This presentation will describe how collaborations across aging-focused programs and campus units devoted to diversity, community engagement, professional studies, and related educational efforts offer prime opportunities to build and sustain an AFU vision.

THE EVOLUTION OF AGHE AS A GLOBAL LEADER IN EDUCATION ON AGING: HOW, WHY, AND WHAT’S NEXT
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The scope of AGHE’s responsibility to gerontology and geriatrics extends worldwide, as reflected in its tag line, “Global Leaders in Education on Aging.” Optimal responses to worldwide demographic transitions can only come from persons well-versed in the dimensions of aging and trained and globally situated to translate that knowledge into effective and culturally-appropriate solutions. This presentation reviews the evolution of AGHE’s role in initiating and fostering global networks of educators in gerontology and geriatrics, including collaborative efforts with major international organizations (e.g., WHO, UN, IAGG) to increase the visibility and appreciation of aging-related issues among world leaders; sponsoring national and international meetings to promote exchange of ideas and refinement of teaching methodologies; initiating and adapting new models of gerontological training enhanced by advances in information and communication technology; and supporting world-wide cohorts of emerging scholars to assume leadership roles within the organization. Recommendations for next steps are considered.

SESSION 2225 (PAPER)

ELDER ABUSE AND OBSTACLES TO SUCCESSFUL AGING
BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO HEALTHY AGING IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA, USING CONCEPT MAPPING
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Alaska currently has the fastest growing proportion of older adults than any state in the country, and seniors are choosing to age-in-place in Anchorage in record numbers. Research shows that including older adults with community-based professionals (aging advocates, researchers, service providers) in focus group activities can provide a rich and holistic model of aging that demonstrates a robust foundation for supporting aging and addressing health disparities. This paper presents the results of a project conducted with older adults (50+ years), advocates, and other stakeholders in Anchorage using Concept Mapping (CM) methodology,