

Last Name	First Name	Bio
Adams-Price	Carolyn	Carolyn Adams-Price is a full professor of psychology at Mississippi State University, where she has taught for nearly 35 years. She has an MS in Social/Developmental Psychology from Brandeis University and a PhD in Life-Span Developmental Psychology from West Virginia University. She is a fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. Dr. Adams-Price was chair of the Gerontology Program at Mississippi State for more than 14 years. She is the author of more than 40 journal articles, books, and book chapters, including a 1998 edited book on Creativity and Successful Aging. She is well known for her research on the role of creative hobbies in promoting cognitive and social well-being in middle-aged and older adults, and for linking this research to theories of adult development. In addition, she is also studying the factors that promote health and well-being in older rural African Americans in the Deep South.
Adjah	Prosper	Prosper Adjah is a second-year master's student in Gerontology at Georgia State University. Prosper is a Registered Nurse with New York Board of Nursing and a Ghanaian national. He is passionate about person-centered care delivery.
Agbenyefia	Chris	Chris Mawunyo Agbenyefia is a dedicated Registered Nurse from Ghana with a strong commitment to patient-centered care. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Gerontology at Georgia State University, with an expected graduation in December 2026. Drawing on his experience in clinical and preventive nursing, Chris actively engages in volunteer work, patient advocacy, and infection prevention initiatives. He is passionate about promoting a holistic approach to caring for older adults, particularly those living with dementia and mobility disabilities.
Ahmad	Waqar	Waqar is a PhD candidate in sociology at Georgia State University. He holds a BA (Hons) and MPhil in sociology from the University of Min 2006 and 2009 respectively. He worked as a lecturer and then an assistant professor of sociology at Malakand University in Pakistan from 2007 to 2017. Waqar earned a master's degree in gerontology from GSU in 2020 and continued to pursue his PhD in sociology. Much of Waqar's research interests lie in the US' long-term healthcare (LTC) system. He draws on life-course, and intersectional approaches in sociology to explore problems and challenges facing the LTC workforce. In his dissertation, specifically, he uses the life course approach and employ mixed methods to demonstrate how the lives of direct care workers are influenced and shaped by inequities and constraints within the US. long-term care.
Aklasu	Rebecca	Rebecca Aklasu is a first-year master's student in Gerontology at Georgia State University. Her research interests are in the abandonment of older adults and elder abuse, reflecting her deep commitment to advocating for vulnerable aging populations. With a background in nursing, she is passionate about enhancing the care and well-being of older adults through both research and practice.

Appel	Joy Dillard	Joy Dillard Appel works to promote age-friendly communities and place-based health equity in the Aging and Independence Services Department at the Atlanta Regional Commission. She has studied housing, neighborhood institutions, and governance to explore mechanisms of social inequality, particularly in the Atlanta region. Her areas of interest include urban studies, race and ethnicity, comparative historical sociology, and gerontology. She has worked as a researcher and project manager on NIH-NIA-funded studies, led strategic development initiatives, and managed teams in the longterm care software and non-profit marketing industries. Her work has been featured in The Gerontologist and Qualitative Health Research as well as numerous journals, edited volumes, and public research reports. She holds a PhD in Sociology and a Certificate of Historic Preservation from Georgia State University.
Assan	Jeremiah	Jeremiah Assan is a second-year master's student at the Gerontology Institute, Georgia State University. Jeremiah is a Registered Nurse with Texas Board of Nursing and a Ghanaian. He is passionate about the delivery of care and its impacts on older adults.
Asters	Ethan	Ethan Asters grew up in Tupelo, Mississippi and has worked in various ministry contexts throughout the Southeast including Birmingham, New Orleans, and Nashville. An ordained Baptist minister, Ethan returned to school to pursue a Master of Social Work after a decade in vocational ministry. Following his father's diagnosis of early-onset-dementia in 2019, and the loss of his father-in-law to CJD, Ethan experienced firsthand the challenges of caregiving. Ethan is committed to exploring the intersections of spirituality, social work, and successful aging to resource individuals and their caregivers. Ethan was first introduced to the work of the James Houston Center as an intern through the University of Alabama in 2023, and now serves as Program Coordinator for the Center. Ethan and his wife Hannah live in Hoover, Alabama with their daughter Evie, and Rhodesian Ridgeback, Indy. Ethan is a graduate of Samford University, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, and has continued his education at the University of Alabama's School of Social Work. Ethan also serves as Minister for Congregational Ministries at Southside Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL.
Babenko	Natalia	Natalia Babenko is a PhD student in the School of Aging Studies at the University of South Florida. She earned a master's degree in Chemistry and Teaching from Donetsk National University in Donetsk, Ukraine, in 2013. Following her graduation, she worked for several years in pharmaceutical development as a Regulatory Affairs Manager for the Eurasian Economic Union. In 2023, she completed a Master's degree in Public Health with a concentration in Global Health Practice from the College of Public Health at the University of South Florida. Natalia's research interests focus on social connection and engagement, health behaviors, psychological well-being of cancer survivors, and cognitive aging in older adults.

Baxter	Grayson	<p>Grayson Baxter is the Program Manager for the Georgia Gear, Emory University’s Health Resources & Services Administration funded Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program at Emory University’s Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. She is currently obtaining her Master of Public Health at the Rollins School of Public Health with a concentration in Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences (BSHES). Her expertise includes qualitative research and program implementation. Past research includes serving as a program coordinator for a 2-year study funded by the Alzheimer’s Association that focused on creating a measure of the level of dementia friendliness of a community, where she conducted and thematically coded focus groups, coordinated and led data collection, and assisted in initial quantitative scoring.</p>
Bender	Alexis	<p>Dr. Alexis Bender, Associate Professor of Medicine, is a medical sociologist and social gerontologist based in the Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology. Dr. Bender completed her PhD in Sociology with a concentration in family, health, and the life course and an interdisciplinary certificate in gerontology from Georgia State University. Following her graduate work, Dr. Bender worked with the Army Public Health Center in Maryland conducting mixed methods research and evaluation of social and behavioral health among active duty soldiers and their families (e.g. behavioral health access, suicide, violence). Her research focuses on aging with disability and chronic disease with an emphasis on relationships over the life course, including patient-provider interactions and social and intimate relationships. Her research continues to explore the psychosocial aspects of disability and chronic disease management for patients, health professionals, and families over time. Dr. Bender is a Fellow of the Southern Gerontological Society, the past chair of the Disability and Society Section of the American Sociological Association, and an alumni of the UCSD Sustained Training in Aging & HIV Research (STHR) Program (R25MH108389).</p>
Bennett	Henrietta	<p>Henrietta Bennett is a doctoral student in the Applied Developmental Psychology Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is also a Research Assistant at the Pickering Caregiver Lab. Her research focuses on the physical and mental health of family caregivers of people living with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD).</p>

Bilal	Victoria	<p>Victoria Bilal is a PhD student in social work at Alabama A&M University and a graduate assistant dedicated to advancing gerontological research. Her academic journey stems from a deeply personal experience of loss, which ignited her passion for improving the lives of marginalized aging populations through education and training. Her dissertation research focuses on exploring the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ elders in hospice care, with particular attention to the impacts of discrimination and social isolation. Through her work, Victoria aims to promote more inclusive and compassionate end-of-life care practices. Victoria holds a Master of Social Work degree, which she earned with a 4.0 GPA, and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. Her academic success is a testament to her perseverance through personal challenges, including raising her family while pursuing higher education. As a graduate assistant at Alabama A&M, she supports academic programs that focus on social justice and equitable practices for marginalized communities. Her research interests include aging, end-of-life care, and the intersectionality of identity and social determinants of health. Victoria is committed to bridging gaps in knowledge and practice to improve the quality of life for aging populations. Her goal is to contribute to the gerontological field by creating educational initiatives that better equip practitioners to serve diverse elder communities.</p>
Blancato	Bob	<p>Robert “Bob” Blancato is the president of Matz, Blancato & Associates in Washington, DC. In that capacity, he serves as the Executive Director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, National Coordinator of the Elder Justice Coalition, and the National Coordinator for Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition. Bob’s prior work includes more than 20 years of public service including 17 years as a senior staffer in the House of Representatives. He was appointed by President Clinton to serve as the Executive Director of the 1995 White House Conference on Aging, one of four he has participated in. Bob is a member of Senior Executive Service. Bob is recognized as a national policy advocate for older adults, and has testified on numerous occasions before Senate and House Committees, most recently in 2022 before the House Appropriations Labor-HHS Education Subcommittee. As a volunteer, he currently serves as the second vice chair on the AARP Board of Directors, and is a member of the AARP Foundation Board. In 2024, Bob was appointed to the Next50 Foundation’s Board of Trustees. He serves on the National Hispanic Council on Aging Board and has previously served as the chair of the American Society on Aging and on the board of the National Council on Aging. Bob has been appointed to several federal advisory commissions, most recently the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services. Bob was inducted into the American Society of Aging’s hall of fame in 2022. In 2023, he was awarded Generations United’s highest advocacy award</p>

Boakye	Alfred	<p>Mr. Alfred Boakye is a doctoral student in Gerontology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB). His research explores the interplay between trauma and resilience among minority Direct Care Workers (DCWs) who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) and examines how their experiences shape the care and support provided to People Living with Dementia (PLWD). Mr. Boakye's work seeks to develop innovative strategies that empower DCWs to improve their health outcomes and enhance care delivery, enabling them to provide person-centered care to nursing home residents with dementia. Through his leadership roles and achievements, Mr. Boakye continues to bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice to advance equitable health and dementia care. He holds an MA in Gerontology from Georgia State University and an MPhil in Human Resource Management from the University of Ghana-Accra.</p>
Bonwell	Patricia	<p>Dr. Patricia B. Bonwell, RDH, BSDH, MS, PhD is a Registered Dental Hygienist and a Gerontologist. She is an Assistant Professor for and a Plenary member of the Virginia Center on Aging's Geriatric Education Center at the VCU College of Health Professions. She served eleven years as the Dental Clinic Coordinator for the Lucy Corr Dental Clinic. At the VCU School of Dentistry, she served over ten years as a Clinical Instructor and seven years as director of the Public Health Courses for the Dental Hygiene Program. She received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Dental Hygiene, Cum Laude, a Master of Science Degree in Gerontology, and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Health Related Sciences with a focus in Gerontology, all from the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University. She was awarded, by the Department of Gerontology, the A.D. Williams Award, which recognizes outstanding academic and professional performance. She was recognized as one of the "Forty Outstanding" and "Nifty 50" MCV/VCU Dental Hygiene Alumni in 2009 and 2019 respectively. She is a member of Sigma Phi Omega; Sigma Phi Alpha Dental Hygiene Honor Society; the Gerontological Society of America; and the American Dental Hygienists' Association. She has received grant funding from various resources and conducted research and authored and co-authored successful peer reviewed publications. She has an educational module published in the American Association of Medical Colleges' MedEdPortal. Dr. Bonwell was also an appointed Member of the Virginia Board of Dentistry.</p>
Bower	Kyle	<p>Kyle L. Bower studies the life course and intergenerational family systems using qualitative methodology enhanced through digital technologies. She uses qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) to engage reflexively throughout her research process, emphasizing the experiences of socially minoritized older adults and their social networks. Through her qualitative research consulting firm, Cardinal Direction, LLC, she hosts individual trainings and organizational workshops, offering her knowledge of methodological reflexivity, data management and organization, conceptual strategies, and analytical tools. Her understanding and commitment to the conceptual rigor of qualitative research are illustrated through her publications, research reports, and scholarly presentations.</p>

Bowman	Amy	Amy Bowman is an Extension Associate with the N.C. State Extension component of the Plants for Human Health Institute. With a passion for the healing power of plants, she integrates therapeutic horticulture into her educational initiatives, emphasizing the benefits of gardening for mental health, nutrition, and community well-being. She earned a horticultural therapy certificate in 2024 and has since developed and implemented horticultural therapy programs that foster community building, improved nutrition, and mental health support through hands-on gardening experiences. Beyond direct programming, Bowman supports educators statewide in developing school gardens as dynamic teaching tools, equipping them to integrate curriculum standards in the edible classroom. She also advances community nutrition initiatives by expanding access to fresh produce and gardening education.
Brady	Hannah	Hannah Brady comes from Harlingen, Texas, a town that makes up part of the lower Rio Grande Valley. She attended the University of Texas at San Antonio where she received a B.L.A. in Medical Humanities and graduated cum laude in 2022. Hannah is currently completing an M.B.S. degree in Biomedical Sciences at the University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine and is expected to graduate in the spring of 2025. Her interests include bioethics and biomedical research, but she much prefers human anatomical structure. After graduation, she plans on applying for medical school to earn a D.O. degree.
Brashear	Ava	Ms. Ava Brashear is a student in the Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology within the College of Education at the University of Alabama. She is also a Randall Research Scholar, as part of the University of Alabama Honors College and has also been selected as a Dr. Robert E Wi University Fellow.
Brooks	Marquita	I am currently a Doctoral candidate in Medical/Clinical Psychology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). My research explores how social determinants of health impact mental health outcomes, guided by my mentor, Dr. Olivia Clay. I have a strong foundation in psychology, with my Master's thesis examining the intersections of discrimination and neighborhood cohesion on mental health outcomes in older adults—a topic that informs my ongoing research. My academic journey is complemented by a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Science in Public Health, where I focused on epidemiology, including the dietary impacts on health outcomes. As a statistician, I have contributed to various health studies, including the REasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) Study, Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) Study, and Physical Activity Daily (PAD) Clinical Trials, where I developed statistical analysis plans and analyzed data to derive meaningful insights into health disparities. Throughout my research experience, I have disseminated findings through multiple peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations, such as my recent poster at the American Heart Association's EPI Lifestyle Conference. My scholarly work emphasizes the significance of socio-environmental factors in health outcomes, particularly in underserved populations. As an active member of several professional organizations, including the Association of Black Psychologists, the American Psychological Association, and the Alabama Psychological Association, I am committed to advancing the field through research, collaboration, and community engagement, with the overarching goal of improving mental health and well-being.

Brown	Candace	Candace S. Brown (Dace), PhD, serves as an Assistant Professor at University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She is in the Department of Epidemiology and Community Health and an affiliate of the Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology. Her teaching efforts at Charlotte are focused on health and aging among all populations. Her research interests are to use her knowledge of physical exercise to understand the sociological and psychological motivations of participation.
Brown	Jocelyn	Dr. Jocelyn Brown, Assistant Professor of African American Studies at Ohio University, focuses her research on health disparities and structural inequalities affecting Black and African American communities, with a particular emphasis on Appalachia. Her work critically examines the intersections of racial capitalism, structural racism, and health inequities across the life course, exploring how these systems shape outcomes for marginalized communities. A native of West Virginia, Dr. Brown’s research is deeply informed by her personal connection to the region, addressing the unique challenges faced by Black Appalachians. Her scholarship also investigates the socio-economic impacts of systemic racism, highlighting the relationship between economic exploitation and health disparities. Dr. Brown is committed to advancing knowledge that informs policy and promotes equity in underserved communities.
Brown	John	John Brown is currently a Master of Biomedical Sciences student at the University of Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine. He has a background in undergraduate studies of Physiology and medical sciences at the University of Arizona. Prior to studying at the University of Incarnate Word, he worked as medical scribe, medical assistant, laboratory technician, and athletic training technician that has bolstered his desire to pursue a career as a physician.
Brunson	Amie	Dr. Amie Brunson is a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and obtained her Doctor of Social Work from the University of Alabama in 2022. She also received her Master of Social Work from the University of South Carolina in 2012 and a Bachelor of Science in Criminology from the University of South Carolina in 2005. Dr. Brunson possesses a wealth of knowledge related to her years working within County Government. Within those roles, she has extensive experience in program planning, development, resource allocation, management, policies, and procedures. She possesses a vast array of clinical social work practice experience that includes hospice, geriatrics, primary care practice, pediatric case management, community health social work, managed care case management, discharge planning, facilitation of caregiver support groups along with caregiver education programs related to Alzheimer’s and Dementia-related diseases. Dr. Brunson possesses a passion and a heart for people. This passion is the driving force behind her research centered around health disparities within underserved populations. Her work is titled “Exploring the Provisions in Medical Social Work Settings for Those Living with Diabetes: A Systematic Review.” This work is incredibly timely as it puts forth a way for key stakeholders involved in the care of those living with diabetes to come together for more efficient and informed care. Dr. Brunson serves as a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama School of Social Work. Dr. Brunson plans to continue research on health disparities with an emphasis on Alzheimer’s and Dementia-related diseases, hospice and palliative care.

Callahan	Jacob	<p>Jacob Callahan is from Iraan, Texas and attended University of Texas at San Antonio. He received a B.S degree in Biochemistry. Currently, Jacob is a Master of Biomedical Sciences student at the University of Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine. He will receive his M.B.S this spring and continue to develop research in the field of combat military medicine. During his studies at the University of Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic medicine, Jacob has pursued research aiming to apply translational medicine to the field of combat that aids in giving wounded soldiers a fighting chance by incorporation of ECLS. Ultimately, he hopes to pursue a degree in medicine to become an emergency medicine physician in the United States Air Force.</p>
Casey	Katherine	<p>Katherine Casey, holds a Bachelor's of Arts in German, International Studies and Business from the University of Miami, Florida and a Master's of Arts in Nursing Home Administration from St. Mary's University and is currently in the final step of her PhD in Gerontology and Leadership from Concordia University of Chicago. Katherine works as a Nursing Home Administrator in the state of Wisconsin as well as a Regional Director of Operations for Continuum Healthcare Inc. Based on her experience in long-term care and with the elderly, she first hand sees the importance of how sexual ability can enhance the quality of life of nursing home residents, but that staff and regulators have little to guide them to ensure this piece of quality of life. With her research her hope is to publish and advocate for the elderly in NIH journals as well as become an adjunct professor in a university to promote sexuality and quality of life in skilled nursing facilities.</p>
Castro	Anthony	<p>Anthony Ryan Castro is San Antonio, Texas native and attended The University of the Incarnate Word. He received an B.S. in Biology at his time there from 2020-2023. Anthony Castro is a graduate student at The University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic medicine. He'll receive his Master of Biomedical Sciences this spring. During his years at UIW, Anthony Castro has pursued studies related to organic chemistry and medicine. In 2022 he got the opportunity to do research and eventually presented his work in 2023 at the American Chemical Society (ACS). This led to his first publication with UIW titled, Controlled Synthesis of Mono-Dimethoxy trityl Protected Derivatives of Glycols and Diols Utilizing Chromatography-Free Purification. In his downtime he enjoys fishing, staying fit, and hanging out with friends. Ultimately, his goal is to be a physician in Sports Medicine and open clinics in underserved communities.</p>
Catlett	Lauren	<p>Lauren Catlett, MSN, RN, CNL (they/them) is a registered nurse and PhD candidate at the University of Virginia School of Nursing. Their professional background is multidisciplinary, spanning the fields of fine arts and design, aging services, long-term care, and home hospice care. Lauren's current research centers on aging and end-of-life care, with a specific focus on the health and wellbeing of transgender and gender-diverse adults. In their current study, Lauren has collaborated with members of this population to envision healthcare resources that would support their agency within the U.S. healthcare system in later life and during serious illness. Lauren has experience with qualitative methods and community-engaged research approaches, and they have authored or co-authored peer-reviewed journal articles on aging, advance care planning, and end-of-life care within historically marginalized communities.</p>

Chan	Kiera	<p>Kiera Chan is a second-year doctoral student in the Medical Sociology program at University of Alabama at Birmingham. She completed her Masters in Public Health at Emory Rollins School of Public Health and has worked in the Emory School of Medicine as a public health researcher. Her works centers around stigma and health among underrepresented populations. Her past work has included women’s empowerment in Southeast Asia while more recent work studies the intersection between chronic illness and stigma among patients. She is committed to patient centered care via research, advocacy, and community engagement. She has contributed in the community through raising awareness via public speaking such as a Ted X talk on period poverty as well as volunteering as a sexual health educator. She has also volunteered as a patient advocate for several foundations and Nonprofits. She seeks to understand the experiences of patients and address gaps in diagnosis and treatment within the U.S. healthcare system.</p>
Choe	Su	<p>Originally from South Korea, I am a fourth-year PhD student in sociology at Georgia State University. In October 2024, I successfully defended my dissertation proposal, Minor Aging: Social and Cultural Determinants of Health and Aging of Older Asian Americans, with honors. My research explores the health challenges faced by older Asian Americans, shaped by the cumulative impacts of racial marginalization, immigration experiences, and cultural barriers. My ultimate goal is to address these critical health equity challenges and propose actionable interventions to reduce disparities in aging experiences for this underserved population. Beyond my academic pursuits, I am deeply committed to community-centered work. As a community researcher at Community Resource Corporation, I coordinate a dementia respite care program for Korean and Chinese adults in Gwinnett County. Funded by the Alzheimer’s Association Center for Dementia Respite Innovation, this program provides personalized care for individuals with dementia and vital support for their family caregivers. To address the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in aging research, I initiated a community-based project to collect survey data on older Asian Americans. This project aims to fill critical gaps in the literature and inform evidence-based policy recommendations, showcasing my ability to conduct rigorous, actionable research that bridges scholarly inquiry and community needs. My aspiration is to advance research on aging, health disparities, and culturally responsive support systems. With my sociological and gerontological training and commitment to translating research into practical interventions, I strive to ensure equitable support for marginalized populations, including older Asian Americans.</p>
Christensen	Keri	<p>Dr. Christensen earned her PhD in Learning Technologies at the University of North Texas and works for UNTHSC as the Assistant Director of Education Programs in the Internal Medicine and Geriatrics department. She is also the Program Director for the Seniors Assisting in Geriatric Education program and a team member managing a HRSA grant for the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program.</p>
Chrzanowski	Lauren	<p>Lauren is a clinical psychology Ph.D. student at the University of Louisville, mentored by Dr. Benjamin Mast. Her research focuses on whole-person dementia care and improving quality of life for families impacted by dementia.</p>

Clay	Olivio	<p>Olivio J. Clay, PhD is a tenured, Full Professor of Psychology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). The overall focus of his research is to aid in developing theory-based, culturally relevant interventions targeted to promote health equity across the life course. His research interests include caregiving and examining how social determinants of health affect an individual's longitudinal outcomes and risk for Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias (ADRD). He serves as the Director of C.L.A.Y.S. (a Comprehensive Life course approach to Aging Yields Success) Lab where he mentors undergrads, graduate students, and junior faculty. Dr. Clay directs the Outreach, Recruitment & Engagement (ORE) Core of the UAB Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC). He is also Director of the Applied Developmental Psychology doctoral program at UAB and the Analysis Core of the Deep South Resource Center for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR).</p>
Clevenger	Carolyn	<p>Carolyn Clevenger, DNP GNP-BC earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from West Virginia University, a Master of Science in Nursing from Emory University, and a Doctor of Nursing Practice from the Medical College of Georgia. She then went on to complete a Fellowship in Veterans' Health Administration. Carolyn is a nationally recognized leader in gerontological nursing and education. She is Past President of the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association, as well as a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and the Gerontology Society of America. Her clinic, the Integrated Memory Care Clinic, provides both primary care exclusively for people living with dementia.</p>
Cohen	Adrienne Lynn	<p>Dr. Adrienne Cohen received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Gerontology in 1986 and held several professional positions in the field for over 25 years. To expand her legacy in gerontology, Dr. Cohen returned to school and earned a PhD in Social Gerontology from Miami University. She was hired by Georgia Southern University in 2011 as a professor of Sociology just before her 50th birthday. In 2013 she opened the Center for Social Gerontology at Georgia Southern University. The Center hosts an annual conference for professionals and students each fall. Since arriving at Georgia Southern she developed and taught several gerontology courses including Introduction to Gerontology, Death and Dying, and Sociology of the Life Course. In her research career she published 13 peer reviewed articles, multiple needs assessment and program evaluation reports for non-profit organizations, and presented over 40 conference presentations. Her research primarily focusses on rural aging and social support for older adults. Since arriving at Georgia Southern University, she generated over \$2.3 million in grant funds to support the needs of older adults in the Southeastern region of Georgia. She worked with a team of professors at the University to develop an Interdisciplinary Minor in Gerontology which has been in place since 2016. After working in the field of gerontology for over 25 years she devoted the rest of her career to preparing a new generation of gerontologist.</p>
Constant	Bethanie	<p>Bethanie has an extensive background in development, communications, and management in the not-for-profit sector. Bethanie is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) and has earned certificates in fundraising and development and managerial effectiveness. She holds a BS in history from Lander University and is currently working on an MS in gerontology from Virginia Commonwealth University (graduation May 2025).</p>

Dakin	Emily	<p>Dr. Emily Dakin is a Professor in the Department of Social Work at Appalachian State University. She has had an over 20 year career in the field of gerontological social work in a variety of geographic regions and settings. Her initial gerontological social work practice career was in Cleveland, Ohio, where she coordinated a Violence Against Women Act-funded elder abuse and domestic violence in late life prevention project. In San Francisco, CA, she coordinated several Older Americans Act-funded community resource centers for seniors and adults with disabilities, and she also completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Psychiatry at University of California, San Francisco. Since 2007, she has been a social work faculty, initially at Colorado State University, and currently as a Professor in the Department of Social Work at Appalachian State University. Her teaching and scholarly work center in gerontological social work, typically emphasizing community-based research projects and strategies. Past and current research topics including older women’s perceptions of elder abuse and ethical dilemmas in, adult protective services, older women’s moral reasoning, mental health concerns and training needs in long-term care, older adult views of helpful aspects of psychotherapy for depression, conceptualization of gerontological social work education, experiences and needs of LGBT older adults in rural Southern Appalachia, and the role of pets in psychosocial well-being in rural southern Appalachian communities. She is excited by the unique challenges and opportunities posed by aging in rural southern Appalachian communities.</p>
Daniels	Geraldine	<p>Geraldine Adams Daniels is an ordained Elder in Full Connection in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She is a graduate of Miles College in Birmingham, AL with a B.A. in English, and minor in Sociology. Her other degrees and studies include a Master of Arts in Journalism from Texas Southern University in Houston, TX, Certificate of Theology from the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia, studies in Christian Counseling, at the College of Biblical Studies and Psychology at the University of Houston. In May of 2008, she earned her Master of Divinity with a Certification in Pastoral Care from Perkins School of Theology - Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. In May 2015 she earned her Doctor of Ministry completing a ministry project: “A Grief Support Model to Assist African American Women Dealing with Loss - Reconnecting to Congregational and Spiritual Practices,” from Perkins School of Theology. In 2007 she completed a one-year residency in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE); worked as a hospital chaplain at St. Luke’s Hospital in Houston, Texas. She served as a chaplain and bereavement coordinator with Solari Hospice in Houston. Dr. Daniels is presently the President of the CME Chaplains Commission of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. In August 2010, she was appointed as the Pastor of Southside CME Church, Birmingham, AL where she has served for the last fourteen years. Presently she is also Chair of the Ministerial Examination Committee and advisor/patron pastor to the Birmingham District Board of Christian Education and Formation. In the community Dr. Daniels is involved with Faith in Action Alabama, Greater Birmingham Ministries, a member (UAB) Community Advisory Committee of Study, “African American Communities Speak to Healthcare Providers.” A clergy partner with Samford University Center for Congregational Change, Washington School, K-8 and Sisters in Ministry Birmingham. Dr. Daniels is a mother and grandmother of one son (deceased) and one grandson.</p>

Davis	Julian McKoy	<p>Julian McKoy Davis, is a passionate international speaker, advocate and experienced Social Gerontologist with over 16 years experience in ageing and development. She has a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Policy. She is the Team Lead for Community Outreach at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Ageing and Wellness Centre Mona. Her areas of expertise include financial preparation for retirement, social policy, social security, long-term care management, social care, as well as disaster risk reduction and emergencies for older adults. She is a Board Member of the National Council for Senior Citizens in Jamaica. She has astute capacity to engage with stakeholders across different sectors at national, regional and international levels. She is skilled in project development and implementation as well as an avid and conscientious team player. She will lead how to develop training and coaching curriculum to change system behaviors in aging care.</p>
de la Cruz	Jennifer	<p>Jennie de la Cruz is a dedicated healthcare professional and educator with over two decades of experience in clinical practice. She earned her Master of Medical Science from Emory University and graduated with honors and Phi Beta Kappa distinction from Agnes Scott College, where she majored in Biology. Jennifer’s clinical expertise spans primary care, urgent care, and geriatric medicine, with a focus on post-acute and long-term care in skilled nursing facilities. In her current role as Interim Program Director of the Mercer University Physician Assistant Studies Program, she plays an important role in shaping the clinical training and education of future PAs. In addition to her academic and clinical achievements, Jennifer is actively involved in professional organizations, including the Southern Gerontological Society, where she serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors. Her work reflects a steadfast dedication to advancing health equity, health policy, and the professional development of physician assistants, while improving the lives of the aging population.</p>
Delgado	Kimberly	<p>Dr. Delgado is a Clinical Assistant Professor at East Carolina University’s (ECU) College of Nursing (CON). She is a nurse educator and nurse researcher with 20+ years of long-term care experience in New York and North Carolina. Dr. Delgado will be presenting on behalf of ECU CON’s Carolina Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP). The Carolina GWEP team provides education throughout eastern NC related to healthy aging, dementia care, and IHI’s 4Ms Framework. In addition to her role on the GWEP team, Dr. Delgado teaches pre-licensure first-semester nursing student didactic and clinical courses. Dr. Delgado earned her PhD in nursing from ECU CON in December 2022, with her doctoral studies research focusing on nursing staff identification of urinary tract infections in nursing homes. She is a certified dementia practitioner (CDP) and a certified trainer for the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioner’s Alzheimer’s disease and dementia care (ADDC) seminar, the prerequisite for CDP certification. She is certified to teach Teepa Snow’s Positive Approach to Care® methods.</p>

Dias	Mírian	<p>Mírian Dias is a Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Psychology at the Universidade Católica de Pernambuco (UNICAP), Brazil. She holds a Master's degree in Health Psychology and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the Faculdade Pernambucana de Saúde (FPS), Brazil. Her doctoral research examines depressive symptoms in the Brazilian elderly population, focusing on family and social factors through the lens of the Bioecological Theory of Human Development. As a visiting researcher in the Human Development and Family Studies department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Mírian is involved with the CERSA Lab, studying the mental health of older Asian immigrants, particularly depression and loneliness in a new cultural context. Her research is supported by a Fulbright scholarship through the Doctoral Dissertation Research Award from the Fulbright Commission Brazil (2024-2025).</p>
DiPaola	Suei	<p>Suei DiPaola is a prolific full-time author with a remarkable literary career, having published 25 books in the Chinese language in Taiwan. Her literary works have captivated readers across Asia. Suei DiPaola has a warm personality and loves multiculturalism. To learn about different cultures, she has been to more than 50 countries with a backpack. In addition to her literary pursuits, Suei DiPaola is a dedicated scholar currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree at the Gerontology Institute of Georgia State University. Her academic focus on gerontology reflects a deep-seated interest in the study of aging, a topic that resonates with her diverse readership. Suei DiPaola brings a unique perspective to the SGS conference, drawing from her rich experiences as an Asia-recognized author and her academic endeavors in gerontology. Her insights into the human experience, aging, and cultural nuances are informed by both her literary achievements and her scholarly pursuits. As a student at the SGS conference, Suei DiPaola is prepared to observe and learn deeply about the intersection of literature and gerontology, shedding light on how her dual roles as an author and a student have shaped her understanding of aging and its portrayal in literature. This biography highlights the author's literary accomplishments, global impact, and academic pursuits, setting the stage for her participation in the SGS conference.</p>
Dobbs	Debra	<p>Debra Dobbs, Professor and Director of the School of Aging Studies at the University of South Florida and is also the Editor in Chief of SGS's Journal of Applied Gerontology. Her research interests include palliative and hospice care interventions in assisted living communities with an emphasis on educational interventions for staff providing dementia care. She currently has an NIA funded five-year clinical trial, Preparing Staff in Assisted Living to Provide Palliative Care for Persons with Dementia.</p>

Dotson	Vonetta	<p>Dr. Vonetta Dotson is a gero-neuropsychologist, author, and speaker. She is Founder and President of CerebroFit Integrated Brain Health, Professor of Psychology and Gerontology at Georgia State University, Chief of Neuropsychology at Brigham & Women’s Hospital, and Senior Project Scientist at NASA. She is also a fellow of the American Psychological Association’s Society for Clinical Neuropsychology. She completed her doctoral training in clinical psychology at the University of Florida with a specialization in neuropsychology and a certificate in gerontology. She completed her postdoctoral training at the National Institute on Aging Intramural Research Program. Her career has focused on teaching, providing clinical care, and conducting research related to brain health and aging, including the impact of health disparities on brain health. Her research is funded by the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Alzheimer’s Association, and private foundations. Her start-up, CerebroFit, applies her expertise in brain health to the community, providing services to empower people to live a brain-healthy lifestyle. Her book, Keep Your Wits about You: The Science of Brain Maintenance as You Age, also offers science-based facts and practical tools to help readers develop healthy lifestyles to optimize their brain health.</p>
Douglas	Natalie	<p>Natalie Douglas, PhD, CCC-SLP, is an Associate Professor of Communicative Disorders at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where she holds the Doris Hawthorne/Louisiana Education Quality Regents Support Fund Professorship IV. She also coaches speech-language pathologists through the EBPirl course with The Informed SLP, working alongside clinicians to apply evidence-based practices in real-world settings. As a practicing clinician-scholar, Natalie is dedicated to improving communication access and enhancing quality of life for individuals with communication disabilities and differences in healthcare settings.</p>
Dozier	Mary	<p>Mary E. Dozier, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist and a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Mississippi State University. She completed her graduate work at the San Diego State University/University of California, San Diego Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology in 2019, following a one-year clinical internship with a geropsychology emphasis at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System. She has over 40 peer-reviewed publications on the characterization, assessment, and treatment of hoarding disorder across the lifespan and her work has been funded by the American Psychological Foundation and the National Institute of Mental Health.</p>

Eisalou	Maryam Rostamvand	<p>Maryam Rostamvand MSc, BSc, is a PhD student in Nursing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), where she is under the mentorship of Dr. David Vance. Her doctoral research focuses on cognition and olfactory function in individuals living with HIV. Maryam’s work is supported by a full-funded scholarship from UAB. Maryam holds a Master of Science in Psychiatric Nursing from Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences in Iran (MAZUMS), where she graduated as the top student in her program. Her master’s thesis investigated the effects of a mindfulness-based self-care training program on the depression and family functioning of breast cancer patients’ spouses. She also holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Ardabil University of Medical Sciences in Iran (ARUMS). Maryam has co-authored several publications, with topics focusing on nursing and psychiatric nursing. Her research has been presented at national and international conferences, including oral and poster presentations on self-care and mental health. As an experienced nurse, Maryam has taught courses on psychiatric nursing and conducted workshops on self-care and communication skills in her home country. Maryam is fluent in English, Persian, and Azerbaijani and she aims to contribute to nursing science and improve mental health in patients with HIV, cancer patients, and individuals with neurocognitive disorders through research and collaboration in cognitive health and neuroplasticity.</p>
Elk	Ronit	<p>Dr. Ronit Elk is a Professor in the Center for Palliative and Supportive Care, Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology and Palliative Care, Department of Medicine, University of Alabama, Birmingham. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Care. Throughout her almost 30-year research career, her focus has always been on researching strategies to achieve health equity. Dr. Elk is a national expert in Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR), an evidence based approach proven to reduce health disparities, yet rarely used in developing community-developed programs for minoritized patients. She conducts a yearly training in CBPR & mentors CBPR-researchers worldwide. Dr. Elk is currently funded by several NIH grants: Grant 1 goals: (1) Partner with African Americans in the Bronx and Birmingham using Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to develop a culturally-based and racist free training in caring for older African Americans, based on the community's cultural values and lived experience of racism. (2) Train healthcare providers and then evaluate their cultural competence and racist-free communication based on perspectives of older African patients they treat. Grant 2 goals: To develop a national program to train providers who provide care to older minoritized patients by training geriatricians, gerontologists and others in CBPR and then to provide mentoring to them in writing grants for CBPR-based studies and programs. For her work towards achieving health equity, Dr. Elk has been awarded the Richard Payne Outstanding Achievement in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award, from the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine.</p>

Fagan	Rose Marie	Rose Marie Fagan was a Co-Founder and Founding Executive Director of Pioneer Network, a National Network of individuals who are transforming the culture of aging for the 21st Century. She coordinated the seminal meeting of Pioneers in 1997 in Rochester, NY, and co-authored the widely disseminated final report of that historic occasion. She coordinated nine national Pioneer Network conferences from 1999-2009, with attendance growing to over 1000 from 48 states and five countries. Rose Marie speaks all over the nation on nursing home culture. Her latest project was as a driver of the Live Oak Project.
Ferguson	Lee Ann	Dr. Lee Ann Steffen Ferguson is the Director of Graduate Programs and a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland Baltimore, Erickson School of Aging Studies. She holds a Ph.D. in leadership and gerontology from Concordia University, Chicago. As an environmental and geographical gerontologist, Dr. Ferguson's research focuses on aging and aging policy in rural and remote environments, specifically island countries within the Caribbean and coastal municipalities of Central American countries. Dr. Ferguson actively volunteers in her community as a program manager and trainer of the Alexander County Community Emergency Response Team. Dr. Ferguson is the former executive director of the Southern Gerontological Society. Throughout her career, Dr. Ferguson has also maintained adjunct and visiting professor appointments at Lenoir Rhyne University, Caldwell Community College, and Appalachian State University. Prior to engaging her academic career, Dr. Ferguson worked as Director of Social Services, Director of Marketing, and as a clinical liaison in various continuing care retirement community settings.
Fernandez	Michael	Michael Fernandez is a senior at Mississippi State University, majoring in Psychology.
Finley	Jada	Jadalyn Finley, DNP, RN, AGCNS-BC, is an advanced-practice registered nurse specializing in geriatric care, delirium, and wound and skin care education. As Program Development Manager at UAB Hospital, she implements Age-Friendly evidence-based practices and leads staff education initiatives, including simulation training. With a Doctorate in Nursing Practice and experience in clinical instruction, Dr. Finley excels in quality improvement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and advancing best care practices.
Finney	J.R.	Reverend Johnny R. Finney II, (Pastor Finney or J. R. as he is known) is in his 24th year as the Senior Pastor of Covenant Community Church, A United Church of Christ congregation in the Lakeview area of Birmingham, AL. He credits his family's strong church and community focus as the foundation for his belief that the local church must not only meet people's spiritual need, but also, when possible, help in the everyday struggles of living. He has a long history of serving in various leadership roles in local churches as well as regional and denominational roles. He is a Vietnam era veteran of the United State Air Force (1972-1976). In September 2000, Pastor Finney became the Pastor of Covenant after a 17-year career with the US EPA, Region IV, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. His last position was Chief, Financial Compliance Section, Waste Division. He also served five years as President of local Chapter 1706, of the National Treasury Employees Union. Pastor Finney serves as a member of the Community Advisory Board of the "African American Communities Speak" study at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. Pastor Finney is a much sought after speaker, lecturer, and panelist on a wide range of issues.

Geisser	Sophia	Sophia is a PhD student in Clinical Psychology (Geropsychology emphasis), at the University of Alabama. Sophia's research interests include sleep and dementia, assessing care partner burden, mindfulness, identifying racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in end-of-life care, and creating practical and inclusive tools to promote health equity. Sophia graduated from Binghamton University with a BS in Integrative Neuroscience and a BA in Theatre Dance.
Gibson	Ethlyn	Dr. Gibson is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Geriatric Medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, VA focusing on Alzheimer's research and holds appointments as adjunct professor at Old Dominion University School of Nursing in Norfolk, VA, Norfolk State University School of Nursing, and Virginia Commonwealth University in the College of Health Professions (Center for Aging). From August 2019 until January 2023, she served as an associate professor at Hampton University's School of Nursing and Inaugural Director for the Center for Gerontology Excellence and Minority Aging. She holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Ursuline College Breen School of Nursing in Cleveland, OH, a Master of Science degree in Nursing from the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, GA, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Ursuline College Breen School of Nursing. She holds the distinction as a Fellow in Applied Gerontology conferred by the Southern Gerontological Society. She has practiced nursing for over 40 years to include clinical and administrative positions and is a veteran having served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps on active and reserve duty. Dr. Gibson has the following Virginia gubernatorial appointment to the Commonwealth Health Research Board. She is the current SGS President.
Glenn	Kaylie	Kaylie Glenn, B.S. in Neuroscience, is the President and Founder of the Day By Day Project. Since age 10, she has seen the power of music through her violin performances at memory care facilities. Working in collaboration with neurologists for 8 years, she developed a multi-sensory musical engagement program that has involved over 150 young volunteers across Ohio. Using these experience she pioneered the Memory Disco, becoming the first in America to repurpose silent discos for dementia care. She envisions a world where accessible music engagement tools are commonplace in dementia care.
Gonzalez	Kristelle	Kristelle Gonzalez Cuetara grew up in Havana, Cuba and graduated cum laude with a Psychology B.S. from the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley in 2020. Consequently Kristelle worked abroad in South Korea as an English teacher and later returned to her Texas community in 2022 to work for several behavioral health clinics as a registered behavior technician with children on the Autism spectrum. Outside of compensated work, Kristelle also engaged in volunteer research assistance at a behavioral lab affiliated with UTRGV. Kristelle is currently a graduate student at the University of the Incarnate Word School of Medicine, pursuing a master's level degree in Biomedical Science. Ultimately, Kristelle hopes to become a physician and continue to pursue her interests through a Psychiatry specialty.

Gore	Janelle	<p>Ms. Janelle Gore is the Director of Community Engagement for a national faith-based organization, Alter Dementia, who support Black faith communities in becoming dementia-friendly. Holding a Master of Public Health from Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health, Ms. Gore specialized in the Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences Department, augmenting her studies with a certificate in Religion and Health. Previously, Ms. Gore served as an ORISE fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, contributing her expertise to the Alzheimer's Team. Her tenure at the CDC honed her understanding of the intricate challenges facing underserved communities, particularly among historically underserved populations. Recently, Ms. Gore was recognized as a recipient of the National Institute on Aging Diversity Supplement to lead caregiver research at MapHabit, a start-up technology company supporting persons with cognitive disabilities. Furthermore, Ms. Gore recently began her PhD in Clinical Psychology on the Gerontology Track at the University of Alabama where she is focusing her research on the utilization of M-health to support Black youth caregivers' mental health outcomes along with intergenerational interventions to supporting older Black adults.</p>
Granillo	Cheri	<p>Cheri Granillo, DNP, FNP-BC, is passionate about the power of prevention in healthcare. With a background in primary care and a certification in Therapeutic Horticulture, she integrates science, nutrition, and nature-based interventions to promote wellness. With nearly two decades of experience as a Family Nurse Practitioner, she has worked extensively in underserved communities, focusing on disease prevention and wellness through sustainable lifestyle changes. As the Translational Nutrition Program Manager at North Carolina State University's Plants for Human Health Institute (PHHI), she helps bridge the gap between research and real-world application, developing programs that translate scientific findings into practical strategies for improving health.</p>
Gyamfi	Douglas	<p>Douglas Gyamfi is a second year PhD student in Nursing at the University of Maryland Baltimore. He graduated from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology where he pursued a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. His research focuses broadly on the wellness of the healthcare workforce and interventions to improve health outcomes for healthcare workers and patients. More specifically, his current research focuses on wellbeing of the Long-term Care (LTC) workforce and interventions to promote wellness for both the LTC staff and residents in their care. Douglas is actively involved in an interventional study that aims to improve physical activity among LTC staff as a preventive measure to improve their cardiovascular health, and ultimately enhance their self-efficacy to provide function-focused care to residents. Function Focused Care is a philosophy of care in which staff taking care of residents encourage residents to participate in all care activities. This has been shown to increase residents' physical activity levels and other outcomes associated with a reduction in sedentary behavior such as function, falls, and mental health. Douglas is meticulous and purpose-driven with an aim to cause a positive change in the lives of people around him. He aspires to be a dignified professor, health advocate and a renowned researcher. He seeks to advocate for the ordinary healthcare worker through research, policy reforms and interventions aimed at improving working conditions and total worker health.</p>

Gyimah	Clinton	Clinton Gyimah is a second-year Master of Social Work and Certificate in Gerontology student at the University of Georgia School of Social Work. In addition to his studies, he works as a research assistant within the School of Social Work. Clinton earned his Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from Ghana. Before relocating to the United States for graduate education, he was a teaching and research assistant in the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Clinton's research interests focus on aging policy, aging-in-place, gerontechnology, caregiving, gerontology, and dementia. Clinton is particularly drawn to exploring how innovative policies and technologies can improve the quality of life for older adults, promote independence, and enhance support for caregivers.
Hage	David	David Hage, Ph.D., MSW, serves as an Assistant Professor of Social Work at and as an Affiliate faculty member at Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging at Florida Gulf Coast University. Dr. Hage is an experienced gerontologist, geriatric care manager, licensed clinical social worker, health care administrator, and allied health sciences educator. His current teaching, research, and practice focus on interdisciplinary social work, gerontology, clinical practice, and leadership themes, including caregiver well-being, dementia, and palliative care.
Hall	Courtney	Courtney Hall, MSN, RN, GERO-BC, is a Program Development Manager in the UAB Department of Interprofessional Practice and Training. With over a decade of nursing experience, including roles as a Geriatric Care Coordinator and Clinical Instructor, she specializes in population health, geriatric care, and nurse education. Courtney holds certifications in Gerontologic Nursing, BLS, ACLS, and PALS. An accomplished educator and leader, she is the recipient of the NICHE 2023 National Conference First Place Poster Award and the Melanie Schultz Leadership Champion Award.
Hancock	Cynthia	Cynthia Hancock, PhD is a Teaching Professor in the Department of Sociology at UNC Charlotte where she also serves as the Director of the Gerontology Program. Her interests are in community-based learning, ageism education, and how language choice should be more critically incorporated into our work, instruction, and interactions. She is passionate about helping students understand how gerontology studies are relevant to their personal life and future careers. Hancock has won numerous teaching awards, has published in the Journal of Gerontology and Geriatrics Education, and is a fellow of the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education, the Southern Gerontological Society, and Sigma Phi Omega.

Harris	Jolie	<p>Dr. Harris is an Assistant Professor in the graduate program in the School of Nursing at Louisiana State University- New Orleans. She previously held varied operational and leadership positions in acute, post-acute, and managed care companies. Dr. Harris has an interest in long term care as evidenced by involvement as a VP of Clinical Services implementing culture change models of care across Louisiana and involvement in the start-up of the first I-SNP in the state. Dr. Harris was a gubernatorial appointed member of the Louisiana State Board of Nursing serving for two terms. She has been an active leader and member in organizations including; Louisiana Enhancing Aging with Dignity through Empowerment and Respect (LEADER) which advocates for elders to improve quality of care and quality of life; Louisiana Geriatric Society; Louisiana Dementia Coalition; National Nurse Executive Council for Long Term Care; and The Gerontological Society of America. She has worked with multiple long term care sites in applying for AHCA Quality Awards and volunteered as a master and senior examiner for the AHCA Quality Award Program most recently in 2025. Dr. Harris received her DNS in Nursing from Louisiana State University Health in 2015 completing her dissertation on The Constructs of Culture Change: A Secondary Data Analysis and Comparison in a Sample of Louisiana Nursing Homes. She is a recipient of the St. Charles General Hospital Auxiliary Professorship in Nursing to conduct a study to Examine Beneficiary Outcomes, Strengths, and Challenges in Implementing Louisiana’s First Institutional Special Needs Plan (ISNP).</p>
Heard	Vantrice	<p>Dr. Vantrice Heard, a qualitative researcher from Alexander City, AL, has a diverse academic background. She holds a B.S. in Health Services Administration, an MBA, an M.Phil. in Human and Social Sciences, and a Ph.D. in Human Services, along with a Certificate in Advanced Research Studies from Walden University. Her research journey began at Tuskegee University’s College of Veterinary Medicine before transitioning to the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care. There, she served as a Health Services Liaison, Research Core Coordinator, and Grant Administrator, contributing to public health ethics initiatives for nine years. She currently serves as a Clinical Research Coordinator III for the Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care in the Department of Medicine at the Heersink School of Medicine, University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Heard’s research focuses on public health ethics, social justice, and African American Studies. Committed to her community, she serves on the Alexander City Education Foundation’s board and enjoys singing, family time, and her role as a devoted mother and grandmother.</p>
Helmly	Victoria	<p>Victoria Helmly is a postdoctoral fellow in the School of Public Health at Georgia State University. She holds a B.A. in Sociology, an MSW, and a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice & Criminology from Georgia State University. Her research interests lie at the intersection of aging and the criminal legal system, with her current focus on the experiences of people living with frontotemporal dementia who have had contact with this system.</p>

Hemrajani	Girish	<p>Ear, Nose, Throat and Neck surgeon (Master's degree- Mumbai University-1990), Gerontologist (Master's degree from Georgia State University-2024)</p> <p>Research interests :</p> <p>Palliative care, end-of-life and hospice care.</p> <p>Role of advance care planning in end-of-life care.</p> <p>Prevention of MCD (mild cognitive decline) and Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD).</p> <p>Physical changes in Aging</p>
Hoefer	Karen	<p>Karen Hoefer is a PhD candidate at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is doing her dissertation on women with and without ADHD, social networks, and stress. She has worked with other scholars on research on grief, loss, and death and has previously done qualitative work on adult suicide attempters. She finds joy in painting, drinking coffee, and her cats.</p>
Hogan	Mary	<p>Mary Hogan, MBA, PhD was born in Ft. Sill, Oklahoma and moved to San Antonio at the age of five. After graduating from high school in San Antonio, Texas, she went on to graduate from Southwest Texas State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Interior Design. Dr. Hogan completed her Master of Business Administration with a concentration in International Business and Management from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She then completed her PhD in Demography and Public Health from the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Texas, School of Public Health. Dr. Hogan has over 18 years of experience in senior leadership with University Health System and Baptist Health System. She has served as a Clinical Assistant Professor in the School of Health Administration at Texas State University. In 2016 she joined the University of the Incarnate Word, School of Osteopathic Medicine, serving in administration as the Director of Special Projects and Facilities Liaison and as Associate Professor in both the DO and MBS programs. Her research interests are related to community health needs, obesity and the related co-morbidities, demographics, risk factors and behaviors, and long-term resolution of obesity.</p>
Hoskins	Lydia	<p>Lydia Hoskins is a Community Health Specialist in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Tennessee and a doctoral student in East Tennessee State University's Public Health program. Her work focuses on the prevention and management of chronic conditions, fall prevention, and nutrition. She specializes in chronic disease prevention and management, fall prevention, and nutrition, with a focus on diabetes education and successful aging.</p>
Hossain	Mohammad	<p>Adam Mohammed is a PhD Nursing student at the University of Virginia School of Nursing. His research is focused on improving the well-being of people with ADRD and their informal caregivers through the utilization of community-based resources. His clinical experience as a registered nurse in a geriatric unit exposed him to the challenges faced by older adults and their informal caregivers, particularly those caring for persons with dementia. This experience deeply informed his research interests in caregiving and dementia care.</p>

Hughes	Glynis Boyd	<p>Glynis brings her deep commitment and passion for the well-being of seniors to her current role as Director of Public Policy and Compliance for Virginia Assisted Living Association (VALA), the latest chapter in a career grounded in serving the public. Her past career experiences include serving as Public Guardianship Program Manager at The Span Center (formerly Senior Connections) and as a Social Worker with Richmond Department of Social Services (RDSS). Glynis holds a M.Ed. in Leadership, Policy, and Organizational Management from Merrimack College, North Andover, Massachusetts and a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Disability Leadership from Virginia Commonwealth University’s (VCU) VA-LEND program. She is currently set to graduate in 2025 with a M.S. in Gerontology from VCU, focusing on intersectional gerontology, as she continues pursuing credentials to become an assisted living facility administrator (ALFA). Along with her commitment to seniors and persons with disabilities, Glynis has conducted research in higher education related areas, such as examining the impact of student affairs planning on the success of adult learners. After returning to VCU at age 49 to resume completion of academic students she paused over 20 years earlier, she founded Retro Rams, an undergraduate student organization for adult learners and post-traditional student. An active member of her community, Glynis serves as co-chair on the Aging and Disability Advisory Board (ADAB) for the City of Richmond as well as a member of the Richmond Health Equity Fund Community Advisory Committee, Richmond and Henrico Public Foundation.</p>
Hultquist	Lauren	<p>Lauren Hultquist is a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte earning her Masters of Arts in Psychology and Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. She has her bachelor’s degrees in Psychology and Criminal Justice from Wingate University. Her research interests include ageism, online and fan communities, entitativity, personality, and aggression. She recently won her university’s 3 Minute Thesis competition with her presentation “Keyboard Warriors” and will represent them regionally at the 2025 Conference of Southern Graduate Schools.</p>
Jacobs	Grace	<p>Grace Jacobs is a Psychology Major and a Longevity, Aging and Generational Studies Minor at The Pennsylvania State University. She has accrued professional and practicum experiences in long-term care settings, including developing and implementing intergenerational physical fitness activities in a nursing care recreational therapy setting, as well as providing support for virtual reality travel experiences for cognitively healthy older adults in long-term care. In 2024, she received an Erickson Discovery Grant for her research on Adult Foster Care, with an exploration of person-centered care practices.</p>
James	David	<p>David H. James DNP, MSHQS, RN, CCNS, NPD-BC is a board-certified Clinical Nurse Specialist with over 25 years of service at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Medical Center. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, a Master of Science in Nursing, and a Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the UAB School of Nursing, as well as a Master’s in Healthcare Quality and Safety from UAB’s School of Health Professionals. Dr. James holds certifications in professional development and quality improvement. Currently, he works in UAB’s Department of Interprofessional Practice & Training (DIPT), where he collaborates with stakeholders to enhance care for vulnerable patients. In addition, he has served for over a decade as an on-site evaluator for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Dr. James is also a Clinical Assistant Professor at the UAB School of Nursing, where he primarily teaches in the DNP program.</p>

Jarvandi	Soghra	Soghra Jarvandi is an Associate Professor of Community Health in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Tennessee. Dr. Jarvandi holds advanced degrees in medicine (MD), public health (MPH), and nutrition (PhD), as well as post-doctoral research training in Clinical Epidemiology and Health Behavior Research. Her research involves dietary and lifestyle factors for prevention and management of chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and obesity. Dr. Jarvandi published more than 40 peer-reviewed papers in diverse journals, such as Annals of Behavioral Medicine, and Public Health Nutrition. Currently, Dr. Jarvandi serves as Principal Investigator (PI) for the project that has been presented in this abstract about implementation of Health Extension for Diabetes (HED) program in Tennessee.
Jennings	Andrea	I have a doctorate degree in Public Health with a focus in gerontology health services administration. For my entire career, I have focused on the gerontology population from a research and education perspective. For the last 16 years, I have worked as a nurse researcher and educator in developing, implementing, and evaluating gerontology projects.
Jensen	Christine	Dr. Jensen is Director of Health Services Research with the Martha W. Goodson Center (formerly the Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health), in Williamsburg and faculty affiliate in the Department of Gerontology at VCU. She obtained her Ph.D. in Human Development & Family Studies, with a specialty in gerontology, from the University of Delaware. She is active with the Gerontological Society of America and the Southern Gerontological Society (Past President)). She is Past Chair of the Virginia Caregiver Coalition. The Goodson Center has been honored with a 2013 Commonwealth Council on Aging Best Practices Award for her work with family caregiver programming and with a 2012 Best Practices Award by the Southern Gerontological Society. Jensen is a Master Trainer with the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers and was named the 2015 Applied Gerontologist of the Year by the Southern Gerontological Society. The Center was named the 2018 Rosalynn Carter Leadership in Caregiving Awardee, the highest award given in caregiving. Her current work focuses on programming and person-centered training to support family and professional caregivers.
Johnson	Gwenyth	Gwenyth Johnson is an aging specialist, focusing on bringing compassion and joy to the lives of anyone who is lucky enough to age. She is a registered dietitian, massage therapist, health coach, compassion coach and flow trainer (hula hooping, rope flow, dance etc.) She has spent the last 25 years exploring healthy aging, play and aging and much more. She is dedicated to sharing her joy and expertise in aging and playing across all the settings where we live and age.
Jones	Mary	Mary Jones (M.A.) is a research assistant and graduate student in the Gerontology program at Georgia State University. With a strong interest in neurodegenerative diseases, her research focuses on modifiable lifestyle factors, such as sleep quality and physical exercise, and how these may alleviate or potentially prevent the onset of dementia symptoms. In addition to her academic work, Mary is passionate about dementia advocacy, particularly in promoting low-cost, accessible interventions and providing comprehensive education. Looking ahead, she is committed to exploring innovative approaches that can improve the lives of adults living with dementia and reduce the impact of these diseases on caregivers and their families.

Jones	Matthew	Programs Director with a demonstrated history of working in the non-profit organization management industry. Skilled in Nonprofit Organizations, Grant Writing and Management, Data Analysis, Program and Volunteer Management. Strong administrative professional with a Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) from Virginia Commonwealth University.
Ju	Joshua	Joshua Ju is a promising young researcher and high school student at Brentwood High School in Tennessee. His academic interests span across mathematics, science, and music, as evidenced by his involvement in various honor societies and extracurricular activities. Joshua's research experience includes a summer internship in 2023 at Vanderbilt University, where he worked under the guidance of Dr. Hayhun Choi. During this time, he gained hands-on experience with advanced laboratory techniques such as PCR, gel electrophoresis, and chromosome analysis. His research focused on exploring innovative treatments for hemophilia using mouse models, specifically comparing Wild Type and Knockout mice. As a young scholar with a budding interest in scientific research and a track record of academic achievement, Joshua Ju represents the next generation of interdisciplinary thinkers poised to make significant contributions to the scientific community.
Kalaw	Karel	Dr. Karel Joyce D. Kalaw earned her Ph.D. in Social Gerontology from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, in 2015. She holds an M.A. in Gerontology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (2009) and a B.A. in Sociology from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (1998). Her dissertation examined the intersection of transnational migration and aging among overseas Filipino workers, utilizing Filipino indigenous methodologies to guide the qualitative study. Dr. Kalaw's research and advocacy are deeply informed by her lived experiences as a brown scholar, caregiver, and immigrant navigating the complexities of later life. These perspectives fuel her passion for exploring minority aging experiences, caregiving, and the impacts of loss and resilience. Her work seeks to illuminate the intersection of cultural identity, aging, and systemic inequities, particularly for marginalized and underserved populations. Currently, Dr. Kalaw dedicates her efforts to connecting with Oklahoma's aging communities as an ambassador for older adults at the state level. She partners with community organizations to advance the field of aging, creating opportunities for students and practitioners to bridge academic insights with real-world applications. Her academic interests include grandparents raising grandchildren, rural aging, transnational migration, and cross-cultural studies, with a focus on qualitative and indigenous methodologies. Dr. Kalaw's work reflects a commitment to honoring the voices and stories of older adults while fostering cultural competence and equity in the field of aging.
Kelly	Christopher	Dr. Christopher M. Kelly, PhD, is currently Professor and Chair of the Department of Gerontology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). He was awarded Fellow status from the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) through the Social Research, Policy, and Practice Section (FGSA). He has been an active member of GSA since 1998. Dr. Kelly's research interests include the extent and effectiveness of state nursing home survey activity, the development of alternatives to long-term care, including home and community-based services (HCBS), and the recruitment, training, and retention of the direct care workforce. His research has documented the shift in this workforce towards industries such as assisted living and home health care services and towards occupations such as personal and home care aides, which reflect the growing tendency of older adults to age in place.

Kibler	Sal	<p>After a business career in marketing and advertising, Sal Kibler entered the Georgia State 62+ program and completed a Masters in Gerontology in December 2021. Ms. Kibler originally joined Tools for Life as an intern in the direct services department in 2019 and was then hired to continue working with TFL's expanding outreach to older adults. Her interests are aging in place, planning for aging, and technology, products, and services for older adults. She hopes to provide solutions to companies, individuals and organizations who are interested in creating purpose-filled lives for older adults and their families.</p>
Kim	Younghyun	<p>Younghyun Kim is a PhD student in the Learning, Leadership, and Organizational Development program at the University of Georgia. Based on her experience developing learning spaces for older adults, her research interests now extend to fostering lifelong learning spaces for all entangled generations in response to an aging society.</p>
Kopitzke	Ann Marie	<p>Dr. Ann Marie Kopitzke is an Associate Professor at Hampton University, in the School of Nursing - Health Sciences, collaborative research focuses on aging health issues. Dr. Kopitzke has a broad background in health services research, with specific emphasis on the access to care and treatment options, given financial constraints. She has worked on diverse grants that include: childhood immunizations, cultural competency, nurse practitioners and the elderly, medication management; domestic abuse (heterosexual/same sex partners), teen obesity, and neighborhood satisfaction. In addition, collaboration with other researchers produced several peer-reviewed publications and presentations. Dr. Kopitzke has familiarity with all phases of research: 1) designing research studies; 2) conducting; 3) supervising and 4) research support (survey administration, data collection & entry; database management; as well as statistical analysis using SPSS/SAS). Dr. Kopitzke has taught Health Services Research to emerging undergraduate scholars with classes (in-person & online) of 60+ students per semester). Dr. Kopitzke has over 25 years of aging research experience. Dr. Kopitzke's work with Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia (SSEVA), allowed her to assist older adults with managing their chronic illnesses and aging in place. Her focus is on healthy aging across the lifespan. Her diverse background in business, public administration, holistic health practices and health services research enable her to contribute to evidence-based healthy aging practices and interventions. In summary, Dr. Kopitzke has the research experience, administrative and leadership skills, as well the expertise working with aging populations (with chronic illnesses) necessary to successfully carry out proposed healthy aging research projects.</p>

Lane	Sandi	<p>Sandi Lane earned her PhD in Health Service Research from UNC at Charlotte, in 2009. She has been a MHA Program Director since 2016 at two universities. She is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Southern Gerontologic Society, and a licensed nursing home administrator. Her operational experience includes acute care, long-term care and ancillary services. She is the Chair of the Post Acute Care Faculty Forum in AUPHA, Treasurer for Southern Gerontologic Society, and an academic and program reviewer for the National Association of Long-Term Care Administrator Boards. Dr. Lane has published in Health Care Management and Review, the Gerontologist, Natural Hazards, International Journal of Disaster and Risk Reduction, Journal of Applied Gerontology, and Science of the Total Environment. Her interests' center around the impact of policy, health system structure, management processes, and financing on quality of care for older adults. Recent research includes collaboration with the North Carolina Health Care Facilities Association to assess the impact of a recruitment and training program for certified nursing assistants on nursing home quality metrics. A key partner in the WECARE: Workforce Engagement with Care workers to Assist, Recognize, and Educate collective impact project funded by Cares at the UNC-CH School of Social Work in partnership with North Carolina Money Follows the Person beginning Aug 1, 2022 – July 1, 2026.</p>
Lee	Jenny	<p>Jenny Lee, MPH (c), CHES, is completing her Master of Public Health in Health Care Organization & Policy at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and holds a B.S. in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), where she founded the Vietnamese Student Association and led Eta Sigma Gamma. She is dedicated to promoting health equity by addressing the interconnected health of people, animals, and the environment through a One Health approach. Her extensive experience includes serving and empowering our immigrant and refugee communities to design, implement, and evaluate culturally appropriate health programs. Jenny's leadership as President of Mikoto Pembroke Inc. reflects her capacity to implement strategic initiatives that deliver measurable results. As a Program Evaluation Intern for the Montagnard Association of North Carolina (MANC) and a UNCG's CERSA Lab member, she assessed the art program's impact on mental health challenges among older adults with refugee origins. Her community-based participatory research experience highlights her ability to navigate cultural and systemic barriers to care. Utilizing her background and language skills, she remains committed to creating innovative public health solutions that empower immigrant and refugee populations worldwide.</p>
Lee	Mi Hwa	<p>Dr. Mi Hwa Lee is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and a Faculty Fellow at the Office of Health Aging (OHA) at East Carolina University. She holds a BA in Gerontology and Social Work from Seoul Women's University, an MA in Education from Seoul National University, and both a master's and PhD in Social Work from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Her research mainly focuses on health disparities, particularly in cancer screening among Asian American immigrant populations. As the OHA Faculty Fellow, Dr. Lee has been developing gerontology education and service opportunities and continued scholarship about health disparities and accessibility for immigrants and older adults.</p>

Lee	Minyong	<p>Dr. Minyong Lee is an associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology at North Carolina A&T State University. Dr. Lee has more than 15 years of experience teaching at the university level and he specializes in sport management and physical activity. Regarding his research interests, he focuses on (1) implementing quantitative data analysis techniques in sport and fitness management researches; and (2) incorporating of social science methodologies in the interdisciplinary sport and physical activity/health related researches. These research interest has resulted in more than 20 peer-review articles, publishing 1 book-chapter, and over 100 presentations at various academic conferences. In addition, Dr. Lee have submitted more than 20 research grant proposals to renowned agencies including Department of Defense, USDA, US Fishing and Wildlife Services, and Honda Foundation. He have been awarded more than 1.5 million research funds from various agencies so far.</p>
Lee	Sung-Jin	<p>Dr. Sung-Jin Lee is a Professor of Housing Research in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) at North Carolina A&T State University. Her research interests include housing for an aging society, social and environmental issues, sustainable communities, and secondary data analyses. Since 2010, Dr. Lee has served as the principal investigator for several research projects funded by organizations such as the USDA, focusing on strategies utilized by North Carolina older adults aging in place (home and community), with a special emphasis on older, limited-resource households. In her teaching career at N.C. A&T, Dr. Lee has accumulated 15 years of experience teaching FCS/housing and research methods courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels. She has contributed to the design and implementation of curricula, marketing and recruitment/retention plans, and assessments, all of which have been supported through extramurally funded USDA NIFA projects. Additionally, Dr. Lee has actively pursued service and leadership roles within the department, college, and university (e.g., committee membership), as well as in professional organizations at state, national, and international levels (e.g., top-tier journal manuscript reviewer, board member/committee chair, and editorial board member for an international journal).</p>

Lentz	Jeffrey	<p>Dr. Lentz is a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Medicine, Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology at Emory University School of Medicine. Dr. Lentz earned his PhD in Sociology from Georgia State University (2021), a master's degree in Sociology from Southern Connecticut State University (2015), and a bachelor's degree in Human Services from Post University (2013). In addition, he holds two graduate certificates in Gerontology from Georgia State University and Counseling from Post University. Dr. Lentz had CPG and CDP credentials. He attended several GSA/AGHE conferences in the past (2016-18, 2021, 2023-24), presented posters in 2018 and 2021, and received several GSA awards (the BSS Travel Award and the inaugural James McKenney Student Travel Award). Dr. Lentz's research focuses primarily on LGBTQ+ older adults concerning aging, health, and disability. He is working on a paper about chronic conditions and disability among LGBTQ+ adults with his co-author, Dr. Raeda Anderson. In addition, he has researched special populations in assisted living and their ability to maintain a sense of self. In his current role, he assists his mentor, Dr. Molly M. Perkins, with investigating informal caregivers of residents in assisted living with dementia. In a prospective longitudinal study, we are investigating informal caregivers' burden, health, stress, good and bad aspects of caregiving, and involvement over time as the residents' dementia progresses to identify modifiable factors at the individual and assisted living levels that will help future informal caregivers and help provide better care for those who have dementia in assisted living.</p>
Li	Yang	<p>Yang is a lecturer at the National Centre of Expertise in Life Course Research in Switzerland. His research emphasizes the economic aspects of aging, social-spatial inequalities, capability and development in later life. Yang has held teaching and research positions at the University of Southampton in England as well as the University of Massachusetts. Yang holds a PhD and an MS in Gerontology (University of Massachusetts), an MA in Economics (Boston University), and a BA in Economics (New York University).</p>
Lutz	Elizabeth	<p>Elizabeth Lutz is a public service assistant at the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development. Her focus areas include: community leadership, collaboration, team building, innovative solutions, and leading in multigenerational spaces. She exercises her skills in program evaluation, strategic planning, and group facilitation. Elizabeth works with a variety of nonprofit and community-based organizations building their leadership capacity, group dynamics, and communication practices. She joined Fanning in 2022 after seven years with UGA academic departments, during which time she worked with corporate partners, alumni, diverse student populations, and student organizations. Prior to her arrival at UGA, she taught high school Spanish and ESOL courses. Elizabeth is pursuing her Ph.D. in Learning, Leadership, and Organization Development with an emphasis on Community Enhancement Through Intergenerational Living and Learning.</p>
Mackiewicz	Marissa	<p>Marissa "Mari" Mackiewicz is currently a TL-1 post-doc fellow at the University of Chicago, Center for Health and Social Sciences, an affiliate member of the Virginia Center on Aging, with previous post-doc experience at Virginia Commonwealth University. She holds Masters and PhD degrees in nursing from the University of San Diego. Her professional experience includes special populations of disadvantaged older with a community health focus, primary specializations in substance misuse and substance use disorders in older adults.</p>

MacNeil	Amanda	Dr. MacNeil is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Longwood University. She is a dedicated educator and researcher who earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Gannon University, followed by a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Philosophy in Adult Development and Aging from Cleveland State University. In her teaching, Dr. MacNeil strives to make psychological concepts engaging and accessible, with expertise in courses such as Introduction to Psychology, Health Psychology, and Psychology of Aging. Her research focuses on the subjective perceptions of individuals with dementia, exploring how these perceptions influence their overall well-being.
Maness	Sophie	Sophie Maness is a graduate student at the Erickson School of Aging Studies pursuing a Master's in Management of Aging Services.
Marshall	Gillian	Dr. Gillian Marshall received her doctorate in Social Work from the University of Washington, Seattle, the same institution that granted her an MSW (Master of Social Work) and more recently an MPH (Master of Public Health). A committed collaborator, Dr. Marshall's research is centered within several disciplines and coalesce around, aging, stress, mental health, and social support. She investigates racial differences in the stressors that impact physical and mental well-being in later-life and the buffers that protect them from poor health outcomes. Her work in health disparities also includes the exploration of how cultural, social and structural contexts factor into differing health outcomes particularly among racial and ethnic groups. Dr. Marshall has been awarded over 1.5 million dollars through a K01 award and administrative supplements from the National Institutes of Health in recognition of the importance of her research, and its implications for public health. Her work has culminated into numerous peer-reviewed scientific publications, book chapters, presentations at national and international conferences.
Martey	Ebenezer	Ebenezer Martey is a doctoral student in Psychology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He earned his master's in Gerontology at Georgia State University. He is passionately interested about understanding the risk factors of dementia and developing approaches to provide unique care for persons living with dementia and their caregivers. He is also interested in improving the wellbeing of nursing home residents by understanding the social determinants of social integration.
Martin	Diane	Diane J. Martin is an associate professor in the Graduate School at University of Maryland, Baltimore. She also serves as director of the university's Geriatrics & Gerontology Education and Research (GGEAR) program, a state-funded program developed in 1987 to support interprofessional educational and research activities in the field of geriatrics and gerontology. Programs are designed to bolster the well-being of older adults and improve quality of later life. In partnership with the Maryland Area Health Education Centers and other agencies and organizations throughout Maryland, Dr. Martin develops interprofessional training opportunities related to aging and older adults for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in health science and social science programs, as well as conferences and programs for professionals and the public.

Martin	Maya	<p>Dr. Maya D. Martin, LMSW, is an accomplished social work professional with a diverse background in academia, clinical practice, and research. She earned her Doctorate of Social Work from Tulane University in 2020, building upon her Master of Social Work from Alabama A&M University and Bachelor of Arts in Political Science/History from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Martin's academic career includes a tenure as Assistant Professor at Tuskegee University (2017-2023), where she taught a wide range of courses in social work practice, policy, and human behavior. Most recently, she has continued her work in academia by serving as an Outreach Coordinator for Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) at Alabama A&M University. Her research interests span mental health, gerontology, and family services, as evidenced by her course portfolio and professional experiences. Dr. Martin's professional journey encompasses roles in correctional facilities, healthcare systems, and community mental health centers, demonstrating her versatility and commitment to addressing diverse social work challenges. Her expertise in geriatric care, crisis intervention, and program coordination has greatly enriched her academic and clinical contributions to the field of social work.</p>
McLaren	Christian	<p>Christian McLaren is a third-year doctoral student in Clinical and Health Psychology at the University of Florida's College of Public Health and Health Professions. With a specialization in gerontology health psychology, Christian is deeply committed to advancing research that supports healthy aging. Under the mentorship of Dr. Stephen Anton at the Institute on Aging, he is completing a prestigious predoctoral fellowship funded by the National Institute on Aging, focusing on innovative, non-pharmacological strategies to preserve and enhance cognitive function in older adults. With a solid foundation in basic and behavioral sciences from the University of Florida, Christian's research explores the transformative potential of lifestyle interventions, ranging from aged garlic extract to exercise, diet, and time-restricted eating, on both cognitive and physical functioning. Driven by curiosity and a passion for improving quality of life, Christian is dedicated to uncovering practical solutions that empower individuals to thrive as they age.</p>
McLean	Racquel	<p>Racquel McLean is a dedicated social work professional with a focus on geriatric care and mental health services. She holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from Alabama A&M University and a Bachelor of Arts in English from Oakwood University. Currently, Ms. McLean serves as the GWEP Project Coordinator at Alabama A&M University, where she manages the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program. This role allows her to contribute significantly to improving geriatric care education and training in underserved areas. With a strong background in social work and a commitment to transforming lives socially, professionally, and socioeconomically, Ms. McLean continues to make valuable contributions to the field of geriatric care and mental health services.</p>

McLeroy	Ashley	Ashley directs Alabama’s AT Act program, Accessing Potential Through Assistive Technology (APT AT), which aims to expand the state's AT service capacity. She brings over a decade of experience as a Rehabilitation Engineer to this role, having evaluated individuals with disabilities for assistive technology needs in home, school, and work environments. A highlight of her work as a Rehabilitation Engineer was designing accessible spaces for clients to live more independently in their homes. Driven by her personal experience living with a neuromuscular disorder, she even co-designed and built a wheelchair-accessible home so that she and her husband can age in place with greater peace of mind. Ashley hopes to combine her engineering expertise and lived experience to advance accessibility for all.
McNair	Lisa	Lisa McNair’s older sister, Denise, was one of the four little girls killed in the infamous 1963 bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Through her memoir, Dear Denise: Letters to the Sister I Never Knew, Lisa provides readers a front row seat inside a family that endured a horrific and high profile loss in the Civil Rights movement. Driven to find redemption in her sister’s death, Lisa’s parents worked tirelessly to build relationships and promote change across racial lines. Lisa’s poignant stories, often unique and even entertaining, reflect the pain and perseverance of many first-generation post segregation African Americans. In 2022 Dear Denise: Letters to the Sister I Never Knew was recognized as one of NPR’s “Books we Love”. She was also recently a featured author at the annual Monroeville Literary Festival. Monroeville is the home of Harper Lee and Truman Capote. Lisa is a frequently sought-after national public speaker. Her gift for telling stories that create empathetic connection enables her to address racial unity across a diverse range of audience demographics. Through her family’s historic tragic loss, Lisa shares how they chose to love instead of hate. It is a road map to show us all how we can bring about reconciliation to our state, our country and our world. Lisa believes it is important for all generations to know the rich stories of the Civil Rights Movement so that history does not repeat itself. She is a current graduate of the 2024 Class of Leadership Birmingham, and serves on the Community Advisory Board of "African American Communities Speak" of the University of Alabama, Birmingham.
McNeil	Jerena	Jerena McNeil is a graduate student at UNC Charlotte pursuing a Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Nonprofit Management and Gerontology. Currently she is a Research Assistant to the Custodial Black Grandmothers Project. Her research focus explores the intersection of nonprofit organizations and the aging population, more specifically the utilization and effectiveness of low-cost programs and services developed for Black Custodial Grandmothers. Jerena Undergraduate degree in Psychology and Gerontology and have since worked with the aging population in a volunteer capacity. Jerena is an avid advocate for the well-being of aging women and the empowerment of all women through educational achievement, financial literacy, and physical and mental health and wellness.
McRae	Kim	Kim McRae is a consultant, speaker, educator and a "FCTA" (Family Caregiver Turned Advocate). Kim is also an Educator and Mentor for The Eden Alternative. She comes to person-centered care and culture change through a twelve-year history as a family caregiver and a consumer of aging services and long-term care. Kim is known nationally as a vigilant advocate for people living with dementia and family caregivers. She is the recipient of The Eden Alternative Empowered Innovator Award and the Southern Gerontological Society Applied Gerontologist Award.

Medders	Laura	Laura is the program director for Emory's Integrated Memory Care team, a primary care clinic for people living with dementia. She previously served as the IMC's clinical social worker and provided family psychotherapy, care partner coaching, and psychoeducational groups. Additionally, she has previously served as the social services lead for Georgia Memory Net, a statewide program dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. She has an MSW from the University of Alabama.
Middlebrooks	Terri	Terri Middlebrooks, MSHQS, RN is a Program Development Manager in the Department of Interprofessional Practice and Training at UAB Hospital. In her previous role, Terri worked with the Geriatric population on the Acute Care for the Elders (ACE) Unit at UAB Highlands for the 12 years. While there, she served as a Geriatric Liaison and Care Coordinator. She is a graduate of the UAB Geriatric Scholars Program and has helped to pilot many quality improvement projects and Age-Friendly initiatives on the ACE Unit. In her current role, along with serving as the Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) Volunteer Coordinator, Terri has the opportunity to continue to disseminate Age-friendly initiatives system-wide.
Mohammed	Adam	Adam Mohammed is a PhD Nursing student at the University of Virginia School of Nursing. His research is focused on improving the well-being of people with ADRD and their informal caregivers through the utilization of community-based resources. His clinical experience as a registered nurse in a geriatric unit exposed him to the challenges faced by older adults and their informal caregivers, particularly those caring for persons with dementia. This experience deeply informed his research interests in caregiving and dementia care.
Molesky	Monroe	Monroe Molesky, MPH, MBA is a doctoral student in the University of Mississippi Medical Center's Department of Health Administration where he studies healthcare technology, physician workforce, and aging policy issues, amongst other health services research/administration topics. He has extensively published his academic research and spoken at conferences on these topics. Outside of academia, he serves as a Cyber Policy Advisor at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and previously served at multiple other federal agencies/consultancies. Monroe received his BS from Alma College, MPH in Health Policy from The George Washington University, and MBA in Information Systems from the University of North Alabama. Monroe was also a National Science Foundation CyberCorps Scholarship-for-Service Scholar.
Molo	Klaudia	Klaudia Molo is an immensely driven, enthusiastic nursing student who demonstrates stamina in rigorous coursework, has strong communication skills, and expresses an ultimate disposition to help individuals in need. She is a Certified Nursing Assistant with over 700 hours of clinical experience and is keen to provide principal care for her patients. Also, an honors student who is a part of Emory's Honors program, she works alongside researchers in hopes to conduct research of her own. she is currently finishing up her final semester of nursing school at Emory University.

Moore	Miranda	Dr. Miranda A. Moore is a health economist and health services research with interests in geriatric workforce education and dementia friendly communities. Dr. Moore serves as the population health evaluation lead for the Georgia Memory Net, a state-wide program expanding screening, diagnosis, and treatment for cognitive disorders, and as Co-Program Director for the Georgia Gear, Emory University's Health Resources & Services Administration funded Georgia Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program. In addition to her primary appointment as Associate Professor in the Emory School of Medicine, Dr. Moore is the Research Director for the Emory Academic Internal Medicine Center. She develops grant applications that will fund geriatric research, collaborates on peer-reviewed journal articles and policy briefs, and leads analytic efforts to provide timely evidence for health policy development. Recent research grant funding as Principal Investigator includes a 2-year study funded by the Alzheimer's Association focused on creating a measure of the level of dementia friendliness of a community.
Morgan	Jennifer Craft	Jennifer Craft Morgan, the Director of and Professor in the Gerontology Institute, Georgia State University. Dr. Morgan specializes in how policy, demographics, and workplace dynamics affect job experiences and workforce issues, particularly through a life course lens focusing on aging and gender. She is a national expert on direct care worker recruitment and retention issues. Dr Morgan is a Past President of SGS, a Victor Marshall Fellow in Applied Gerontology, a GSA Fellow and past winner of the Gordon Streib Academic Gerontologist Award.
Musah	Abdul-Dayan	Abdul Dayan Musah a first -year student master's student at the Gerontology Institute, Georgia State University. He has a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and a passion for delivering high-quality of care for older adults.
Nazario-Acevedo	Jaminette M.	Jaminette M. Nazario-Acevedo is a gerontologist and public health specialist interested in exploring the association between social relationships among older adults and their mental health outcomes. Additionally, she has researched the sociocultural correlates that impact older Hispanic adults living in the United States. Her current research is centered around examining the role of social ties, such as marriage, and the various determinants contributing to marital quality, all within the established framework of the socioemotional selectivity theory.
Nichols	Emily	Emily holds a BS in biological sciences from the University of California, Santa Barbara and is a recent graduate of Arizona State University with an MSc. in Aging Studies. She currently works in the field of biotechnology and cancer research at Agilent Technologies, Inc, as a senior research associate but has professional experience working with older adults in the service and medical industries. Her primary interest in the field of aging research is HCP cultural competency and patient satisfaction stemming from positive patient-provider relationships and interactions. Emily's studies focused on diversity in aging and the stigma that can be attached to aging across and within age cohorts. In line with SGS 2025's theme, her publication aims to bridge the gap between minority older adult populations and the medical field, intending to improve patient satisfaction and health outcomes.

Nwato	Uche	<p>Uche L. Nwatu is a dedicated scholar and practitioner in social work with a global academic background. She holds an MSc in Social Work, specializing in Families and Children, from the University of Stavanger, Norway, and an MSc in Gerontology from the University of Southampton, UK. She also earned a BSc in Social Work from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Uche's academic journey is informed by a deep commitment to understanding and addressing social issues across different cultural contexts. Currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Alabama, Uche's research interests lie at the intersection of child welfare, aging, and indigenous social work. A major focus of her work explores how climate change and environmental disasters impact older adults in the United States and Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in relation to their health, mental health, and ability to age in place. She is also interested in long-term care solutions for older adults, especially within marginalized and underserved communities. Her methodological approach emphasizes qualitative research, employing rigorous and innovative methods. She is particularly drawn to art-based research methodologies such as storytelling and photovoice, which provide powerful means of capturing lived experiences. Uche's research is also reflected in her peer-reviewed publications, where she showcases her expertise in qualitative research methods and her dedication to advancing knowledge in the fields of social work and gerontology.</p>
O'Donnell	Elle	<p>Elle O'Donnell is from Port Lavaca, TX, and earned a bachelor's degree in biology with a minor in biochemistry from Texas State University. During her undergraduate years, she was actively involved in leadership and volunteer work, including serving as an Instructional Assistant for General Chemistry and Physics. Elle previously worked as a Medical Scribe in the Emergency Room, where she developed skills in documentation and teamwork. She also trained new hires, furthering her leadership and adaptability skills. Elle dedicated time to volunteering at an elementary school in her hometown, leading science experiments and educating students about careers in the medical field. She was also actively involved in the Women in Health and Peers Against Pathogens organizations. Elle is currently pursuing a master's in biomedical science at the University of Incarnate Word School of Medicine. Through these experiences, she has demonstrated a commitment to service and education. She ultimately hopes to serve her rural hometown as an Emergency Medicine Physician.</p>
Okine	Joana	<p>Joana Okine is a third-year PhD candidate at the University of Alabama's School of Social Work. She earned a Master of Philosophy in Social Work and a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work with Sociology from the University of Ghana. Her research focuses on informal caregiving for older adults, aging and long-term care, misconceptions about aging, the social and cultural dimensions of aging, and immigrant caregivers. Joana is also a former pre-dissertation fellow of the AGESW Gerontological Social Work Predissertation Program.</p>
Osei	Foster	<p>Foster Osei is a second-year master's student in Gerontology at Georgia State University. Foster is planning a career in nursing leadership and has served as the project manager in the first year of the SWAGR program.</p>

Parker	Lauren	<p>Lauren J. Parker, PhD, MPH is an Associate Scientist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Her research examines how home-and-community based supports can be used to address the cultural needs of African American and Hispanic caregivers for people with dementia. With funding from the National Institute on Aging (NIA), she examines the influence of adult day services on physiological and psychosocial stressors for African American caregivers. This line of research integrates both biological and psychosocial indicators of stress. Another area of scholarly interest is to disseminate and implement culturally tailored stress-reduction interventions into real world settings. A such, previously served as the Co-Investigator on two NIA-funded research studies to culturally adapt the Adult Day Service (ADS) Plus program for Spanish-speaking and African American caregivers. Dr. Parker also serves on the Leadership Core/Health Equity Task Force of the Center for Disease Control Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure, Public Health Center of Excellence (PHCOE) in Dementia Caregiving at the University of Minnesota. She also serves on the Research Committee of the National Adult Day Service Association.</p>
Parker	Michael	<p>Michael Parker is Professor Emeritus at The University of Alabama School of Social Work, where he served on the faculty for more than 20 years. He was also an adjunct faculty member in the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Care at the University of Alabama-Birmingham and the UAB Center for Aging. A retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S, Army, Dr. Parker holds a doctorate in social work from the University of Alabama. He was an National Institute on Aging post-doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan and a John A. Hartford Foundation Faculty Scholar and Mentor. Author of more than 75 peer-reviewed journal articles and two books in the field of aging, his longstanding scholarly interest has been in family caregiving for older adults. This interest grew from his experience in the U.S. Army, when service members deployed overseas struggled to care for their aging parents. His belief that family collaboration to prepare in advance of a crisis for the challenges of aging led to his development of the AgeReady program and its subsequent implementation with communities of faith and others serving older adults and their families.</p>
Peebles	Blake	<p>Blake Peebles is a first-year Clinical Psychology doctoral student working under the supervision of Dr. Benjamin Mast at the University of Louisville. His interests lie primarily within intergenerational learning, non-pharmacological interventions, caregiver-patient relationship dynamics, and person-centered care for families and caregivers facing a dementia diagnosis.</p>
Peterson	Lindsay	<p>Lindsay Peterson is a research assistant professor in the School of Aging Studies at the University of South Florida. She has conducted research on disaster preparedness in nursing homes and assisted living communities and among caregivers living in the community. This work has been conducted through grants with the National Institute on Aging and with the Retirement Research Foundation, in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association. Peterson began her career as a daily newspaper journalist in Florida. She covered beats ranging from education to aging and wrote about the effects of multiple hurricanes. After leaving newspapers in 2012, she obtained her PhD in Aging Studies from USF and joined the Aging Studies faculty in 2016. She is also Interim Director of the Florida Policy Exchange Center on Aging at USF, whose mission is to help disseminate research on aging at USF and highlight its value for policy development.</p>

Phaowiriya	Hathaichanok	Hathaichanok Phaowiriya, MSN, is a PhD student at the School of Nursing, University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), and pursuing research in the field of neurocognition, with a particular focus on understanding cognitive and functional outcomes in diverse clinical populations, especially in people living with HIV (PLWH). She is actively publishing in this field of neurocognition, cognitive intra-individual variability, resilience, and HIV.
Phillips	Tommy	Dr. Tommy Phillips is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Science in the School of Human Sciences at Mississippi State University. He has been a member of the Mississippi State faculty since 2009. He received his Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies in 2003 from Auburn University. Dr. Phillips is a well-known and respected scholar who is recognized for conducting significant research on a variety of topics related to human development and well-being. His current research explores the role played by non-cognitive factors in success.
Piechota	Amanda	Amanda is a clinical psychology doctoral student at The University of Alabama, studying health psychology and geropsychology. Her research interests are in dyadic coping experiences while living with dementia, and sleep health in older adulthood. She is interested in person centered approaches to research.
Piloniea	Giovanna	Giovanna Pilonieta, Ph.D., DDS, MPH, is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cognitive and Behavioral Neurology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). She obtained her Ph.D. in Health Services Administration from UAB and her MPH in Epidemiology. Her research focus and goals are to improve the quality of life of individuals at high risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRD) through adequate processes of care, including diagnosis and severity assessments, as well as pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions to prevent and reduce cognitive and functional decline. This aligns with her research interest in ascertaining the influence of modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors at the individual level in ADRD trajectories and cognitive and functional outcomes differences among communities.
Pope	Taylor	Taylor Pope holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology from Purdue University and a Master's in Gerontology from Georgia State University. She returned to Purdue University in Fall 2024 to pursue a Ph.D. in Sociology and Gerontology. Taylor's research explores the intersections of social relationships, digital landscapes, health, and aging.
Price	Lauren	Lauren Price, LCSW-C, As a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW-C), Lauren has dedicated her career to improving the lives of older adults, particularly those living in assisted living and nursing homes. With a strong background in aging, Lauren has a commitment to providing compassionate and effective care to individuals with complex needs. Lauren's experience includes advocating for and promoting the rights of older adults, management of a dementia care spaces, and providing behavioral health services to older adults coping with unique challenges, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Price is currently serving as a lecturer at the Erickson School of Aging Studies at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). Lauren works to impart her knowledge, experience, and passion for elder care to aspiring professionals, equipping them with the skills and insights necessary to make a meaningful impact on our growing older adult population. Through her experience as a clinician, manager, and educator, Ms. Price continues to advocate for the well-being and dignity of older adults.

Puga	Frank	<p>Dr. Frank Puga is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Acute, Chronic, and Continuing Care at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Nursing. He earned his Ph.D. in Psychology with a concentration in Behavioral Neuroscience from the University of Texas at Austin. His research focuses on the mental health and stress profiles of older adults living with chronic illness and their care partners, particularly in populations disproportionately affected by age-related diseases, such as Hispanic and LGBTQ+ communities. Dr. Puga's current R01-funded project from the National Institute on Aging examines how stress, resilience, and cultural factors influence daily and long-term mental health outcomes among Hispanic dementia caregivers. A key objective of his work is to identify which individuals, and under what circumstances, are more likely to develop clinically significant psychopathology. A secondary aim is to determine the dynamic relationship between caregiver well-being and engagement in harmful behaviors, such as elder and vulnerable adult mistreatment. Ultimately, Dr. Puga's research seeks to inform the development of culturally responsive, resilience-based interventions tailored to the unique needs of individuals living with chronic illness and their caregivers. As a Mexican American, he is deeply committed to ensuring that underrepresented and underserved populations at greater risk for age-related diseases are engaged in research, helping to promote more equitable healthcare outcomes.</p>
Quinn	MaryLea Boatwright	<p>MaryLea Boatwright Quinn has been serving older adults and has worked in the Atlanta area for almost 30 years. She graduated from Auburn University with a BSW, completed her MSW at the University of Denver and became an LCSW in 1999. She worked in direct practice with older adults as a medical social worker in a variety of home & community-based settings for the including hospice, long-term care, adult day care, and home health. After years in direct practice, MaryLea was introduced to the power of advocacy and decided to shift to policy & advocacy when she started working for the Georgia Council on Aging. She spent almost 10 years advocating for policies and regulations that improve the lives of older adults and their caregivers both on the federal and state level. She lobbied and led advocacy efforts for the Alzheimer's Association Georgia Chapter and GCOA's CO-AGE. Since March of 2022, MaryLea has served as the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Georgia's Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services. In this role, she leads the State Unit on Aging administering the Older American's Act Services and Supports for adults age 60+ as well as adults with disabilities. In addition, the Division leads the states Adult Protective Services and Public Guardianship programs that ensure the health, safety, and welfare of vulnerable adults. MaryLea has served on numerous boards including GGS, NAIPC and the GARD Advisory Council. She enjoys traveling with her husband and two teenaged sons, reading, and crafting.</p>

Rashed	Regina	<p>Dr. Regina Rashed comes from a long line of military-affiliated family members and through their stories and struggles with mental health disorders, she decided to pursue further education to help other individuals suffering from similar conditions. From this passion, she decided to obtain her Doctor of Nursing Practice from Augusta University and obtain a board certification in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing in addition to her other degrees. Her professional nursing experiences include adult critical care, hemodialysis, CMS investigator, and community disability provider for patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She is currently an advanced fellow with the Veterans Administration Quality Scholars in Atlanta, GA where she is learning how to implement quality improvement methodologies in healthcare settings. Dr. Rashed is also a certified Community Resiliency Model (CRM) teacher where she has taught wellness skills to community members with HIV/AIDS, incarcerated juveniles, and first responders. She also provides monthly informational sessions to combat Veterans in the community about resources and services available to military members and their families. Her interests include improving access to mental health services, specifically substance use disorders, to marginalized communities, decreasing suicides among the Veteran population, and facilitating wellness classes for adolescents. In her free time, Dr. Rashed is a leader of a multi-level troop for the Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta.</p>
Reid	Chanel	<p>Chanel Reid, a graduate of The Gerontology Institute at Georgia State University, joined the University of Florida H.O.P.E. Lab to investigate the impact of social isolation, loneliness, and suicidality (SILES) on older adults. Her interest in this field was sparked during her "Death, Dying, and Loss" course. Since graduating, Chanel has devoted herself to creating collaborative solutions for older adults by participating in warm calling initiatives, discussing SILES-related issues in community forums, and championing the establishment of a national crisis hotline tailored to their unique needs. Having grown up surrounded by great-grandparents, grandparents, and other older relatives, Chanel developed a profound respect for the older adult community. She considers her research into their challenges and successes a lifelong endeavor and a deeply personal mission.</p>
Rhodes	Annie	<p>Annie Rhodes is an assistant professor in the Department of Gerontology and the Virginia Center on Aging. She completed her Bachelor's in Public Health in 2012, her Master's in Gerontology in 2017, and her Ph.D. in Health Related Science in 2022. She is also a certified geriatric case manager. Dr. Rhodes is committed to improving the lives of older adults through research, advocacy, and teaching. As the founder of the Virginia Memory Project, one of only four Alzheimer's and related dementia disease registries nationwide, Dr. Rhodes has pioneered efforts to collect and analyze critical data that informs policy, resource allocation, and care strategies for individuals with neurodegenerative disorders. The Virginia Memory Project is the 1st dementia registry in the world to align with the healthy brain roadmap, looking to address health equity concerns, particularly among communities of color, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the attention and support they need. Dr. Rhodes's approach combines evidence-based gerontology with practical applications in community and institutional settings. Her leadership in geriatric care management, particularly for very low-income populations, and her role as Evaluation Director for the Virginia Geriatric Education Center further amplify her contributions to the field.</p>

Rhodes	Morgan	Morgan Rhodes graduated with her master's in social work from Samford University. After graduating she began working with Senior Citizens with United Way's Area Agency on Aging as an Ombudsman to advocate for the rights and care of residents in long term care facilities in Jefferson County. After working for three 3 years as an ombudsman, Ms. Rhodes, became the Aging and Disability Resource Center Coordinator for United Way 's Area Agency on Aging. As the coordinator for the ADRC, Ms. Rhodes builds rapport with clients to complete intakes and assessments for clients that need services with United Way's Area Agency on Aging. In this position Ms. Rhodes helps client by referring to appropriate programs and resources in their area that might best serve their needs.
Richardson	Shanicqua	Shanicqua Richardson is a first year doctoral student at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work. She is a dedicated social worker with expertise in adult and geriatric medical social work. Professional experiences include hospice, community-based wellness, transitional care/rehabilitation, and mental health services. Documented success overcoming challenges of limited resources to design high-quality, cost-effective, and comprehensive care plans that improve lives. Demonstrated ability to collaborate with all members of the care team and to build trust to help patients and their families.
Richings	Stephanie	Stephanie Richings, MS, CCC-SLP is a speech-language pathologist in skilled nursing facility settings, an adjunct instructor at Lamar University, and a PhD student at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She works closely with interdisciplinary teams to support care for people living with dementia and is passionate about evidence-based training to build capacity for those living with dementia.
Robison	Julie	Dr. Julie Robison, a gerontologist and health services researcher, is a Professor of Medicine and Public Health Science in the Center on Aging at the University of Connecticut (UConn) School of Medicine. She is the director of two research cores at the UConn Center on Aging: the Evaluation and Population Assessment Core and the Recruitment and Community Engagement Core. Dr. Robison conducts evidence-based health services research and intervention studies focused on aging families and long-term services, supports and policy, using quantitative and qualitative research methods. Her research aims to improve quality of life and quality of care for people who need long-term services and supports (LTSS), in either community or institutional settings, and their families. Dr. Robison's research focuses on how LTSS funded by Medicaid, Medicare, and other public-sector sources affect health and well-being. Specific areas of expertise include effectiveness of LTSS for older adults and their families, designing evaluations of innovative programs promoting person-centered care and independent living, LTSS for people living with dementia, and health disparities in the population needing LTSS. The results of her work have direct impact on the implementation of policies and programs that serve extremely vulnerable populations in Connecticut and nationally. Dr. Robison is the past Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Applied Gerontology, an international forum for research with clear and immediate applicability to the well-being and quality of life of older adults, providing comprehensive coverage of all areas of gerontological practice and policy.

Roosevelt	Kathryn	Kathryn Roosevelt received her PhD in Social Work from the joint program at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and the University of North Carolina Greensboro, she also holds an MSW and BSW. Kathryn is current clinical faculty at the University of Kentucky. Additionally, she has been in the private practice sector for about eight years providing both in person and online based counseling. Kathryn's focus has been in aging since the start of her career, this passion drives her to further understand aging outcomes.
Rowe	Aimee	Aimee Rowe is a second-year doctoral student in the Department of Community and Behavioral Health at the College of Public Health at East Tennessee State University. She has also taught undergraduate Public Health courses in the department since 2002. She has a diverse background in community health, working primarily in academia in behavior change and disaster preparedness. She also works closely with a local non-profit organization, AdaptoPlay, which serves children with mobility issues. Outside academia, she has experience working with older adults in community settings and an assisted living facility. Her doctoral work focuses on social isolation in older adults.
Royster	Leigh-Anne	Dr. Leigh-Anne Royster is an educator, facilitator, and administrator focused on inclusion and equity development through policy, education and intervention. Dr. Royster is currently the Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Duke University. Dr. Royster holds a B.A. from UNC Chapel Hill, an MPA from the University of Colorado and a PhD from UNC Greensboro.
Ruggiano	Nicole	Dr. Nicole Ruggiano is a Professor and Associate Dean of Research within the School of Social Work. She was previously selected as an American Political Science Association Congressional Health and Aging Policy Fellow (HAPF; 2018-2019) and John A. Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholar (2011-2013). In addition, she is an Affiliated Associate Professor within the Department of Neurology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and Affiliated Scientist for the UAB Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. Overall, her research and advocacy work aims to improve health and social care for older adults. Currently, her work involves developing and testing technologies that support people with dementia (PWD) and their caregivers, where she leads/co-leads multidisciplinary teams to achieve their research goals. She has served as a PI/co-PI on multiple grant projects awarded to her teams, including funding from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ; R21HS026571), the National Institute on Aging (NIA; R01AG068572), National Science Foundation (NSF; Award Number 1951974), and the John A. Hartford Foundation.

Saeed	Mubarick	I am an international student from Ghana, where I completed my B.Sc. in Psychology at the University of Cape Coast. I then pursued an M.Sc. in Neuroscience at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Norway. During my master's program, my research involved using EEG to study neuronal signals associated with motion perception in infants' development. Following my master's degree, I worked as a research assistant for three years at the Developmental Neuroscience Lab at NTNU, participating in several research projects. In August 2022, I began pursuing a PhD in Applied Developmental Psychology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Simultaneously, I enrolled in the Social and Behavioral Statistics certificate program at UAB. During my first year in the PhD program, I worked at the Translational Research and Injury Prevention (TRIP) Laboratory. At the TRIP Lab, my primary focus was on developing cognitive efficiency models that could mitigate crash risk under distracted driving conditions among teenagers. I joined the UAB Alzheimer's Disease Center (ADC) as a graduate research assistant in the second year of my PhD program. My research at the UAB ADC includes studying the association between various biomarkers and cognitive functioning, potential moderators and mediators in the association between early-life adversities and cognitive decline in later life, and the association between vascular health and late-life cognitive decline.
Sainz	Mayra	Mayra is a current doctoral student and is expected to graduate in May of 2025. Her interests are building partnerships to conduct research that explores, addresses, and evaluates programs that reduce health disparities in BIPOC communities. Specifically, she is interested in partnering with local organizations to improve the quality of life for Latinx families impacted by dementia.
Sampson	Jasmine	Jasmine Sampson is an undergraduate student in the Department of Health Sciences at Clemson University with minors in Biological Sciences and Public Policy. She is completing her Departmental Honors in Public Health Sciences under the mentorship of Dr. Alyssa A. Gamaldo and is a member of the Mind & Body Initiative for Diverse Communities (MBIDC) Lab at the Clemson Institute for Engaged Aging. Jasmine plans to become a primary care physician and researcher, focusing on whole health principles and the social determinants of health.
Schwartz	Abby	Abby J. Schwartz, MGS, MSW, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and serves as the Coordinator of the Gerontology Program and Director of the Office of Healthy Aging at East Carolina University. Her research addresses: (1) Identifying and meeting the needs of informal caregivers of older adults in community-based settings, (2) addressing health inequities among vulnerable rural residents, and 3) developing community-based interventions that increase access to healthcare for rural adults and older adults.
Severance	Jennifer	Dr. Severance is an Associate Professor and Director of Education and Research at the Department of Internal Medicine and Geriatrics and Center for Older Adults at the University of North Texas Health Science Center. Her research is focused on workforce education, training, and community programs for increasing access, addressing social determinants, and improving health service quality and Age-Friendly systems of care for older adults and family caregivers. She is the Principal Investigator/Program Director for a Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program funded by HRSA to develop and support the primary care and geriatric workforce.

Simonds	Wendy	Dr. Wendy Simonds is a Professor of Gerontology and Sociology at Georgia State University. Most of her past work centers on reproductive health and medicalization. She is currently researching cultural representations of sexuality of older adults. Wendy serves as the Graduate Director for the Gerontology Institute at Georgia State and has played a key role in supporting the SWAGR program.
Skipper	Antonius	Dr. Antonius D. Skipper is an Assistant Professor in the Gerontology Institute at Georgia State University. Adopting a life course perspective, his research broadly involves understanding marital relationships, religion, and health decisions within African American families. As a member of the American Families of Faith Project, led by scholars in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, Dr. Skipper conducts in-depth interviews with enduring, exemplary African American couples to examine and understand the processes associated with familial and relational stability. In addition, his work adopts strength-focused approaches to highlighting social factors, such as dyadic support and fictive kin, as determinants of health for African Americans. Dr. Skipper's work is present in several high-impact journals on gerontology and family studies. He served as a guest co-editor for a special issue, entitled "Exemplary Strong Black Marriages & Families," in the journal Marriage & Family Review. Dr. Skipper shares his expertise with the broader African American community by presenting on podcasts, through radio and research briefs, and in religious institutions. Dr. Skipper's honors include fellow of the Butler-Williams Scholars Program, fellow of the Michigan Integrative Well-Being and Inequality Program, fellow of the Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research, and selection into Georgia State University's 40 Under 40.
Slattum	Patricia	Patricia Slattum, Ph.D., Pharm.D., is a pharmacist and geriatric clinical pharmacologist. After twenty years on the faculty at VCU School of Pharmacy and Director of the Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program, she retired at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year and now works part-time with the Virginia Center on Aging at VCU as the co-director of the Virginia Geriatric Education Center Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program. She remains engaged in scholarship, practice, interprofessional education and mentoring in the field of geriatrics. The focus of her research is reducing medication-related problems among older adults with a particular interest in drug-induced cognitive and functional impairment. She develops geriatrics-focused curriculum for interprofessional training and has more than thirty years of experience establishing pharmacy and interprofessional practice models serving older adults. She serves as faculty in the VCU Mobile Health and Wellness Program, an interprofessional teaching and care coordination program in low-income senior housing that she co-founded in 2012. Her role in these efforts is facilitating integration of age-friendly practice into primary care. Her strength is in applying team science principles to interdisciplinary community-engaged collaborative projects to facilitate project success. She also serves as a Visiting Scholar at the Gerontological Society of America.

Smith	Megan	<p>Dr. Megan Smith is an Assistant Teaching Professor who works in both the Sociology Department and Gerontology Program. She served as Theme Guide for the new General Education program, is an Honors College Faculty appointee, and serves on a committee for Charlotte Phi Beta Kappa chapter in CHESS. She was recently inducted as a Distinguished Faculty Member through Phi Kappa Phi. Before her time teaching at UNC Charlotte, she earned her Ph.D. at Emory University, achieved a Master of Arts degree in Sociology at Charlotte in 2011, and a Bachelors of Arts degree at North Carolina State University in Sociology with an Anthropology concentration in 2001. Her research and teaching interests are in the areas of mental health, loneliness, health and illness deviant behavior, particularly the experiences of older adults. Her research interests extend beyond the classroom in the forms of invitations to speak at conferences and in more informal settings and writing for public consumption specifically on the topic of loneliness.</p>
Smith	Nathan	<p>Dr. Smith earned a BS in Chemistry with honors from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) in 2001 and his DMD from the UAB School of Dentistry in 2005. He spent his early career serving as a clinical dentist and Director of Dental Health for the Jefferson County Department of Health for over a decade; during this time, he earned his MPH in health care policy and organization from the UAB School of Public Health in 2010. In 2021, he joined UAB School Dentistry as full-time Assistant Professor and Director of Geriatric Dentistry, where—in addition to teaching and mentoring dental students and residents—he manages and coordinates external clinical rotations, community outreach, and oral health screenings. His expertise in community dentistry encompasses oral care delivery for all age groups, implementation of health safety practices in clinical settings, and leadership of health services teams. Leading numerous community projects involving partnership and outreach to expand oral health services to underserved, vulnerable populations, Dr. Smith is passionate about promoting health. Dr. Smith is a Fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry and provides direct patient care at the UAB 1917 Dental Clinic.</p>
Smith-Ruiz	Dorothy	<p>Dorothy Smith-Ruiz is a Full Professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She received her PhD in the Department of Sociology from Michigan State University. She has authored numerous articles, book chapters, and four books. Her books include <i>The Handbook of Mental Health and Mental Disorder among African Americans</i> (Greenwood, 1990), <i>Amazing Grace: Custodial African American Grandmothers as Caregivers and Conveyers of Traditional Values</i> (Praeger, 2004); <i>Contemporary African American Families: Achievements, Challenges, and Empowerment Strategies in the Twenty-First Century</i>, co-authored with Sherri Lawson Clark and Marcia Watson (Routledge, 2017); and, <i>Black Families and Recession in the United States: The Impact of the Recession of 2007-2009</i> (Rutledge, 2021). Her present book: <i>Older African American Women: Systemic Racism, Health Disparities, Spirituality, and Caring Responsibilities</i> is in production and will be published by Routledge Press, December 2024). More recently, Dr. Smith-Ruiz received an invitation from Baylor University to participate in a non-residential Fellowship Program at The Institute for the Studies of Religions (2024) under the leadership of Dr. Byron R. Johnson.</p>

Sokan	Amanda	<p>Amanda Sokan, PhD is CO-Program Director, MEZCOPH Phoenix Programs, Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health Practice & Translational Science, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health(MEZCOPH), University of Arizona, and Research Assistant Professor, Internal Medicine (Geriatrics), COM-Phoenix. She holds a Ph.D. in Gerontology and Masters in Healthcare Administration from the University of Kentucky and a law degree (LL.B) from the University of Buckingham, England. Her professional experience includes faculty positions and administrative appointments in Gerontology and Health Administration, clinical and translational research administration, program evaluation, consultancy work on aging issues, personnel management/development, and workplace culture. Her interests straddle the nexus of gerontology, healthcare, and law, including elder rights and justice, elder abuse and mistreatment, cultural competence, LGBTQ+ aging, long-term care, aging and healthcare navigation, health promotion and well-being, provider relationships, and workforce planning and development. Sokan is passionate about teaching/mentoring and considers herself a teacher-learner and an applied gerontologist.</p>
Sorkpor	Setor	<p>Setor Kofi Sorkpor, PhD, is an assistant professor in the College of Nursing at Florida State University, where he pursues innovative research on aging and equity.</p>
Southerland	Jodi	<p>Dr. Jodi Southerland is an assistant professor in the Department of Community and Behavioral Health at East Tennessee State University. Her research interests include caregiving, intergenerational activities, and aging in place. Dr. Southerland has published and presented extensively on rural social determinants of healthy aging. She serves on the American Society on Aging Health and Well-being Advisory Council and is the Chair of the Tennessee Public Health Association Aging Section. She uses her platform as a family caregiver to advocate for improved services for rural older adults and those who provide them with care.</p>
Spencer	T'erah	<p>Hello, I'm T'Erah Spencer, and I'm thrilled to introduce myself! I'm a proud graduate student at the esteemed Alabama A&M University, where I'm earning my master's degree in Social Work. Born and raised in sunny Southern California, I come from humble beginnings and have always been driven by a purpose: to uplift others and foster unity, strength, and safety wherever it's needed. I began my academic journey with a bachelor's degree in Business Management, earned during the challenging height of the 2020 COVID shutdown. That experience taught me resilience, adaptability, and the value of pursuing meaningful goals despite adversity. Now, as I continue my education, I'm passionate about equipping myself with the tools to make a real difference in the lives of others. It's an honor to walk this path of service and growth, and I'm excited to see how my journey unfolds as I strive to positively impact the world around me. Thank you for letting me share a bit of my story!</p>

Standridge	Sarah	<p>Dr. Sarah Standridge is an assistant professor of Sport and Recreation Management at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee. She earned her doctorate in Health and Human Performance and her certificate of Gerontology from Middle Tennessee State University in 2019. Her research focuses on benefits of leisure and recreation for older adults, particularly the role leisure plays in adjusting to the changes we experience as we age. She enjoys spending her leisure time with her pets and reading. When the weather is nice, she hikes at her local parks. She and her partner also regularly participate in local car shows.</p>
Stansbury	Kim	<p>Dr. K.L. Stansbury is a highly accomplished scholar and practitioner in social work, gerontology, and mental health, with nearly two decades of experience. As a Full Professor at North Carolina State University's School of Social Work, she has held key roles, including Associate Head and MSW Program Director, significantly shaping the program's direction. Dr. Stansbury earned her Ph.D. in Gerontology from the University of Kentucky, where her dissertation explored African American clergy's pastoral care for mentally distressed elders. Her research focuses on aging, mental health, and gambling behaviors, with notable recognition as Principal Investigator for a John A. Hartford Foundation-funded study on older adults' attitudes toward casinos and gambling disorders. Her work has informed social work curricula and practitioner training, addressing aging populations' unique challenges. She has presented at conferences such as the Southern Gerontological Society and the International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking and published extensively in peer-reviewed journals, including studies on gambling awareness among child welfare workers and social service providers' preparedness. Previously, as Director of the Center for Aging Studies at Eastern Washington University, Dr. Stansbury advanced community engagement and interdisciplinary approaches to aging-related challenges. Her leadership has addressed gambling addiction in older adults, fostering collaboration among providers and raising awareness of vulnerable populations' needs. Dr. Stansbury remains dedicated to advancing social justice, promoting mental health literacy, and equipping future social workers with the skills to support diverse populations effectively.</p>
Suggs	Andy	<p>Born and raised in Atlanta, Andy started solving brand and marketing problems as a high school sophomore by helping the Roswell Hornet cheerleaders concept and design football banners. Andy graduated from UGA in 1997 and became a Partner at Reckon Branding in 2004. His goal is to foster an environment in which strategy-backed creative can flourish in solving marketing and branding problems. For 15 years, Andy has specialized in Gerontology & Aging Marketing and Branding Strategy working with clients like Emory University, Georgia Memory Net, Integrated Memory Care (IMC), ALTER Dementia, Georgia Gear, and the Gerontology Society of America (GSA). Andy lives in Roswell with his wife, son, two dogs, a cockatiel, and a few dozen koi. He can often be found fishing down the street from his house (don't tell the koi) or getting crushed on Xbox by his son.</p>

Tann	Debra	<p>Dr. Debra Tann has been an educator for over thirty years. For the past 8, she has made it her life's work to advocate for individuals with one of the dementia diseases and their caregivers/partners; while simultaneously encouraging optimum brain health. Her clarion call is to help people of color and women who are disproportionately affected by dementia. Dr. Tann is the founder and CEO of Reminiscent, an organization dedicated to promoting brain health in her community of Valdosta, GA. In this capacity, Dr. Tann has worked at the local, state, national, and international level to speak on behalf of the people who cannot. Dr. Tann also teaches at Georgia State University within the Gerontology department. Dr. Tann has received invitations to speak/present from organizations including Mayo Clinic, the NIH, Department of Aging, AlzEurope, and the International African-American museum in Charleston, SC. She has been recognized by BrightFocus Foundation and Ideagen for her work and has been interviewed by PBS and PCH Films. Dr. Tann authored the 2020 book "The Race of Dementia" and has co-authored White Papers and Expert Opinion Papers. She has also served on Advisory Boards and spoken before Congressional leaders in DC and state representatives in Georgia to help shape the dementia space. Dr. Tann serves on the Global Alzheimer's Platform (GAP) as a council advisor. She is a certified dementia educator, credentialed memory screener, and licensed Virtual Dementia Tour consultant. She facilitates a local Memory Cafe and an online support group for caregivers/partners.</p>
Taylor	Leslie	<p>Leslie Taylor, PT, PhD, MS is the Director of Mercer University's Center for Gerontology and is a Professor of Physical Therapy in the College of Health Professions. Dr. Taylor was the inaugural chair of the PT department, which includes the DPT program, a clinic, 4 residencies, and a fellowship. Dr. Taylor served as Associate Dean of the College for 5 years before returning to the department to focus on interprofessional and collaborative research. As a physical therapist clinician, educator, and researcher, Dr. Taylor's biopsychosocial approach is built upon her comprehensive educational background as a physical therapist, with advanced degrees and training in counseling, sociology, and gerontology. Currently, she serves as the program lead for Mercer University's collaboration with Emory University's Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) to develop age-friendly practitioners through team-based training models and humanities-focused educational interventions. Dr. Taylor's primary teaching focus is on developing providers who practice using a holistic biopsychosocial model of care and her research interests revolve around interventions for successful aging. She has documented experience in the integration of humanities in health professions education programs and interprofessional education and serves as a faculty mentor for collaborative endeavors across professional disciplines. Dr. Taylor is licensed to practice physical therapy in Georgia. She has practiced in a variety of settings, including acute care, inpatient rehab, home health, outpatient orthopedics, and as the owner of a private practice that focused on outpatient and home-based care of individuals with chronic health problems.</p>

Teitelman	Jodi	Dr. Teitelman received a Ph.D. In Experimental Psychology and Certificate in Aging Studies from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She then continued in a 30-year career at VCU as an Associate Professor in the Departments of Gerontology and Occupational Therapy, and retired in 2018. Her research, advocacy and service commitments continue to be focused on family caregivers, particularly in the Alzheimer’s community, and she has frequently co-presented on dementia and caregiver issues at the annual Southern Gerontological Society conference. She is currently Associate Professor Emerita and Plenary Member of the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Project at VCU’s Virginia Geriatric Education Center/Virginia Center on Aging.
Tesar	Sarah	Sarah Tesar is a passionate social work and gerontology scholar pursuing her Master of Social Work and Gerontology Graduate Certificate at UNC Charlotte, where she also earned her Bachelor of Social Work with a minor in Gerontology, summa cum laude. Her research focuses on peer-led sexual health education for older adults. Sarah is a Graduate Assistant for the Gerontology Program, assisting in research and supporting the program. She serves as President of the UNC Charlotte Gerontology Club, fostering educational initiatives that enhance understanding of aging and promote positive health outcomes for older adults as well as serving on the Charlotte Mecklenburg Council on Aging board of directors.
Thomas	Danyae	Danyae Thomas serves as Director of Programming and Strategic Partnerships for The Park Community Development Corporation. She is a passionate advocate for education and community development making a significant impact in the non-profit sector through her work developing sustainable systems of support and strategic partnerships within the community. Driven by a desire to create meaningful change, she remains committed to promoting educational equity, economic mobility, community development, and change.
Tutt	Kathy	Kathy Tutt is an Assistant Professor and Educator of Family and Consumer Sciences at Ohio State University Extension, Clark County. Kathy Tutt came to Ohio State University Extension as a Family and Consumer Sciences Educator in May 2010. Kathy does community educational programs to help families build resiliency through all stages in life. Kathy has written an “Aging Smart” curriculum that focuses on falls prevention, aging and eating, personal safety and scams. Kathy has also created a family empowerment curriculum called “On My Terms”. The family communication tool ensures that loved ones know and understand the later life wishes of older adults. Kathy is a graduate of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio where she received a Bachelor of Science in Family Studies and Social Work and a Master of Science in Family and Child Studies. During her graduate work at Miami University, her interest in the unique issues with aging and family communication began. Her graduate research on transnational caregiving looked at the stress experienced by first generation immigrant men who were caregiving for their aging parents who still resided in their country of origin. However, it wasn’t until her mother’s Parkinson’s Disease diagnosis in 2011 that her personal life intersected with her scholarly work. The intersection gave her a full understanding of caregiving stress and navigating long term dementia care.

Ugbem	Christiana	<p>Christiana O. Ugbem is a graduate student of the Food and Nutritional Sciences Program in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University. With an academic background in Agricultural Biochemistry and Nutrition, she is passionate about improving health, nutrition, and wellness. Her research interests include nutritional epidemiology and promoting nutrition sustainability among vulnerable and underrepresented populations. Currently, her research focuses on food insecurity in older adults. Christiana has experience in community outreach and aspires to pursue further studies in community nutrition and public health. Her goal is to work with health-focused organizations to advance health and nutritional sustainability on a global scale. She is dedicated to fostering positive change through education, research, and policy development.</p>
Valenti	Korijna	<p>Dr. Valenti's research focuses on geriatric palliative care for underserved populations by developing interventions that can be used to improve the goals, emotional trajectory, and relationship quality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) older adult patients, and to improve patient-dyad outcomes. To achieve this goal, Dr. Valenti's current research examines communication approaches and their impact on a) palliative care practitioners' (PCPs) utilization of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data; b) PCPs experiences with LGBT older adult patients (individually and as a dyad); and c) LGBT older adult patient and dyad knowledge of palliative care and their experiences around palliative care communication.</p>
Vance	David	<p>Dr. David Vance, HIV+, MGS, FAAN, is a University Professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Nursing and psychologist actively pursuing research in positive and negative neuroplasticity, neurocognitive aging, neurocognitive remediation, aging with HIV, and more recently neurocognition in cancer survivors. With a passion for successful cognitive aging and for mentoring scientific leaders, Dr. Vance's work has resulted in +400 publications (+330 peer-reviewed articles with 63% as first/senior author) including numerous book chapters and editorials, and he has disseminated his research prolifically in national and international presentations (+440) across +25 countries/territories.</p>
Vickery	Joshua	<p>Joshua Vickery began his role as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the organization in October of 2021. Joshua was drawn to the mission and vision of Encore Creativity and is thrilled to be a part of this team. He plans to bring his experience and passions to the table to have great influence across the nation in creative aging. Prior to joining Encore, Vickery served as Executive Director of Central Florida Community Arts (CFCArts), an organization which he founded in 2010 consisting of thousands of artists in multiple choirs; an adult and youth symphony orchestra; children/youth arts program; theatre; School of Performing Arts and programs for seniors, vulnerable communities and arts and wellness. He holds an Associate of Arts Degree in Vocal Performance, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in General Education/Music. Vickery has been a featured soloist in countless venues, produced musical recordings, and has been a director of numerous productions. He has been an entertainment leader, casting director, and vocal coach for Walt Disney Entertainment. He also serves as a consultant for other arts organizations in their beginning stages and a voice for local, state, and national arts advocacy. Vickery has received numerous leadership and community accolades and serves on multiple local, state and national boards. Joshua is excited to be with Encore, to honor the incredible legacy and to build on its foundation for impact into the future.</p>

Voight	Rick	Rick Voight, CEO and Co-Founder, Vivid-Pix and Publisher, Reunions magazine, is a lifelong photography and imaging visionary with leading photography companies, such as Hewlett-Packard and Kodak. Whether by inventing software to restore decades-old photos, bringing back precious memories that were thought to be long gone due to the passage of time or cognitive decline, sharing stories, or helping to bring families and friends together, for over a decade, Vivid-Pix has focused on making it simple and affordable for consumers and organizations to relive memories.
Wang	Kun	Dr. Kun Wang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Her research focuses on understanding and addressing disparities in cognitive aging and psychological well-being among older adults from Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) communities, with a particular emphasis on the role of digital inclusion.
Wang	Yetao	Yetao Wang (Ph.D.) is a dedicated professional with a unique interdisciplinary background in kinesiology and gerontology who is committed to improving the health and well-being of aging populations. Yetao's over a decade of experience spans culturally responsive health initiatives, facility management, and applied research, including published and ongoing studies on aging and health-focused sports complexes in urban settings such as Shanghai and other metropolitan areas. She is currently interning with the Dementia Respite Care Program at Community Resource Corporation in Duluth, serving the Asian community's elders living with dementia. With a global perspective and a passion for lifelong learning, Yetao combines academic rigor with practical insights to address the evolving needs of diverse aging populations.
Williams	Belinda	Dr Belinda Williams earned her Bachelor of Science (HBSc) from the University of Toronto and Doctor of Medicine (MD) from St. George's University. She trained in Internal Medicine in New York and completed a fellowship in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). She is currently a junior faculty at UAB and holds multiple roles, including Medical Director of a skilled nursing facility affiliated with the hospital. She also provides inpatient geriatric consultations and leads a Continence Clinic, offering office-based procedures for older women with urinary incontinence. Her clinical research involves studying pathophysiology underlying traumatic brain injury and urinary incontinence, which she finds deeply rewarding.

Williams	Cara	<p>Cara Williams is a senior at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree with triple majors in International Studies, Anthropology, and Geography. Cara has developed a strong interdisciplinary approach to understanding global issues throughout her academic career, focusing on the intersections of culture, sustainability, and the natural environment. Cara's research interests include development and sustainability, human conservation, and acculturation/culture retention. Outside of coursework, Cara is an active member of the American Anthropological Association and the American Association of Geographers, where she engages in scholarly discussions and stays informed about the latest developments in her fields. In addition, Cara is involved in campus life as a member of Delta Zeta Sorority and participates in several other on-campus organizations, including Pals For Peds and Global Connections, which allows her to apply her academic learning in practical, community-focused contexts. Through these affiliations, Cara has developed a well-rounded perspective on both academic and real-world issues and has strengthened her leadership, teamwork, and communication skills. While Cara is still exploring the full range of career possibilities, she is passionate about gaining real-world experience, particularly through travel and work opportunities that allow her to apply her interdisciplinary studies to diverse global contexts.</p>
Williams	Cynthia	<p>Dr. Cynthia Williams is an Assistant Professor and at the University of Central Florida. She has a Bachelor's in Science in Exercise Physiology (University of Florida) and in Physical Therapy (FL A&M University). She also earned a Master's in Health Administration and Ph.D. in Health Services Research (University of Central Florida). Dr. Williams has an interdisciplinary background that enhances her ability to serve the community. She has used technology to facilitate patient care, health education, self-care management, and inter professional engagement. As an entrepreneur she owned a homecare agency for Older Adults for 8 years. In current her roles, she provides program evaluations and examines business/clinical outcomes in telehealth/telemedicine, chronic disease management and health equity among Older Adults. Dr. Williams partners with community-based agencies to help them implement and evaluate telehealth and population health programs. Dr. Williams' service extends beyond her immediate community. She served as the Policy Chair for five years and currently serves as a Governing Councilor of Community Health Planning and Policy Development Section of the American Public Health Association. In addition, she is chair of the Editorial Advisory Board for the American Journal of Public Health</p>
Williams	Janice	<p>Janice L. Williams is a native of Columbia, S.C. she has lived in Alabama for 39 years. She is the Coordinator of Senior Citizens Services for Jefferson County Community Services Department, Senior Services Division. She has worked in this department for 13 years but has worked with Senior adults for over 20 years, with the Office of Senior Citizens Services. She served as Asst. Coordinator and Coordinator for the Alabama Cares program for Jefferson County, through the Area Agency on Aging for 6 years. She is a graduate of Miles College with a degree in Social Science with a minor in Sociology. She has worked with caregivers and coordinated caregiver and grandparent support groups for 16 years. In her current position as Coordinator, along with her staff, she coordinates educational and social activities and various services to enhance the lives of senior adults.</p>

Williams	Sonya	Sonya Williams is a Recreation Therapist working at A.G. Rhodes and is a graduate student in the Leadership and Aging Certificate with Georgia State University. Sonya plays a key role connecting A.G. Rhodes' life enrichment teams with students participating in the SWAGR program.
Williams	TimMarie Chloe'	Janice L. Williams is a native of Columbia, S.C. she has lived in Alabama for 39 years. She is the Coordinator of Senior Citizens Services for Jefferson County Community Services Department, Senior Services Division. She has worked in this department for 13 years but has worked with Senior adults for over 20 years, with the Office of Senior Citizens Services. She served as Asst. Coordinator and Coordinator for the Alabama Cares program for Jefferson County, through the Area Agency on Aging for 6 years. She is a graduate of Miles College with a degree in Social Science with a minor in Sociology. She has worked with caregivers and coordinated caregiver and grandparent support groups for 16 years. In her current position as Coordinator, along with her staff, she coordinates educational and social activities and various services to enhance the lives of senior adults.
Willis	Whitnie	Whitnie Willis has over 15 years of nursing experience and is currently an Assistant Clinical Professor at Auburn University College of Nursing. Over the past seven years, she has served as a nurse leader, including three years as the Assistant Director of Nursing at a long-term care facility and Staff Development for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic at that same organization. In this pivotal long-term care role, she managed orientation, onboarding, staffing, and competency assessments for both licensed and unlicensed personnel. Notably, Mrs. Willis established new and managed multiple successful CNA training programs, showcasing a commitment to geriatric workforce development. Proficient in managing online learning platforms, she ensured the delivery of accessible and effective training resources for over 250 frontline staff. Her research interests include Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) and ADRD caregiver wellbeing and resilience.
Yang	Yijiong	Yijiong Yang, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at FSU College of Nursing with research interests focused on chronic diseases, including Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD), diabetes, and aging-related conditions.
Yanks	Robert	Since graduating from the University of Florida with a degree in Advertising, Robert has built brands, strategized marketing plans, and managed integrated multi-channel campaigns for clients in a wide range of industries. With a specialization in Gerontology & Aging, Robert manages the Emory University, Gerontology Society of America (GSA), ALTER Dementia, and Georgia Gear clients for Reckon Branding. After working in Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, and even Israel, he settled down in Atlanta after falling in love with Shrimp and Grits, Chicken and Waffles, and oh yea... his beautiful wife, Katy. When he's not tethered to a laptop, Robert can be found taking a hike, kicking a soccer ball, playing board games, and watching Ms. Rachel with his three-year-old son, Rhys, and one-year-old daughter, Maeve.

Yin	Cheng	Dr. Cheng Yin is a dedicated researcher and educator specializing in gerontology and health services research. He earned his Ph.D. from the Department of Rehabilitation and Health Services at the University of North Texas, with a concentration in Applied Gerontology. His dissertation, titled "Long-Term Care Facility Residents with Dementia: Their COVID-19 Infections and Hospitalization Outcomes," reflects his deep commitment to addressing the health challenges faced by vulnerable aging populations. Dr. Yin's research spans a wide array of critical topics within the field of gerontology, including the prevention and management of COVID-19 outbreaks in nursing homes, the development of sacral ulcers in rehabilitation settings, and the exploration of neurocognitive disorders among older adults. His work is characterized by a strong focus on health disparities, particularly among underserved and historically marginalized groups.
Yost	Arin	Arin Yost is a program analyst at the Atlanta Regional Commission, where he employs public health, geographic, and urban planning techniques to support place-based health equity. He holds a Master's degree in Human Geography from Georgia State University, is a graduate of ARC's Community Planner's Academy, and has conducted independent research on informal care networks, urban governance, and community place-making. Arin is passionate about direct democracy and transparency in planning processes and is always looking for opportunities to translate data into accessible materials for public information to drive innovative strategies.
Young	Lufei	Lufei Young, a nurse practitioner and faculty member from University North Carolina at Charlotte. Her practice and research focus is to promote team-based supportive service to community-dwelling older adults living with multiple, life-limiting and/or debilitating chronic conditions. Her passion is to change healthcare system behavior to promote dignity-centered aging service and deinitialize older adults to their preferred community setting. She will lead conversations about how to revolutionize the current healthcare system to empower elderly individuals to remain socially engaged in meaningful, community-centered roles with personalized support. She is interested in knowing the mechanisms to structure healthcare system to promote aging in place.
Young	Meghan	Meghan Young, MGS is the Associate Director for Opening Minds through Art at Scripps Gerontology Center. Her career in aging and the arts began in a service-learning class during her first year at Miami University when she facilitated storytelling experiences for residents living with dementia in nursing homes. Since 2016, Meghan has worked on research projects dedicated to making communities age- and dementia-friendly, instructed intergenerational service-learning courses for 5 years, and assisted long-term care providers with implementing arts-based activities for their residents. She believes everyone, regardless of age or ability, can share their life stories through the arts.

Zellous	Erreannau	Erreannau Zellous holds a Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Aging Services from Georgia Gwinnett College and a Master of Arts in Gerontology from Georgia State University. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Social Gerontology at Miami University. Her research focuses on improving the quality of life for older adults by addressing social isolation, promoting culturally inclusive community-based care, and fostering meaningful engagement through innovative approaches such as animal-assisted interventions. With hands-on experience in program development for older adults, Erreannau brings both practical expertise and academic insight to her work, aiming to bridge research and practice to create impactful, person-centered care solutions.
Zeng	Xiaoyi	Xiaoyi Zeng is a second-year doctoral student interested in promoting the physical, mental, and cognitive well-being of community-dwelling older people with cognitive impairment or dementia and their care partners, especially focusing on the contexts of neighborhood and community to create a greater impact that meets the growing needs of our aging population. Ms. Zeng's research topics of interest include: older adults living with cognitive decline or dementia; informal caregivers; dementia-friendly neighborhoods; community-based participatory research; loneliness and social isolation; transitions to family caregiving; racial disparities; cultural adaptations of cognitive assessment tools and intervention; digital technology use for older adults; and program evaluation.
Zeng	Xueling	Xueling Zeng, MSc, is a first year PhD student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Psychology. Her research focuses on neurocognitive aging, social cognition with HIV, and neurocognitive interventions in clinical populations. With an interest in pursuing successful aging as a promising researcher, she plans to publish in the field of HIV with aging, neurocognition and social cognition.