

UBW SENIOR
SOLUTIONS
CONSULTING

JULY 6, 2007

DIVERSITY & AGING FELLOWS & STUDENTS

CONFERENCE FOLLOW-UP

JUNE 19, 2007 BEGINNER'S DIVERSITY TRAINING WITH ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

During the Pre-conference sessions, 7 freshmen and sophomores along with their teacher from Lincoln High School participated in the Diversity Training "Beginner's" course. Intermingled with seasoned professionals, AARP Staff, and other attendees, the students were actively engaged in the discussion of awareness and abilities to recognize, understand, and appreciate cultural differences and similarities. They developed skills for addressing and changing attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate bias, discrimination, and other obstacles to equity and inclusion.

Through this opportunity for personal growth and insight, this team building exercise strengthened their cross-cultural communication skills and fostered a candid intergenerational exchange among the participants.

Their involvement and inclusion in this portion of the conference proved to be mutually beneficial to all and was expressed by every attendant.



D & A FELLOWS

- 22 graduate students representative of 5 AARP regions
- Diverse in discipline, ethnicity, age, and ability.
- Given numerous opportunities for networking and personal growth and development as participants in conference

2007 DIVERSITY & AGING STUDENT FELLOWS PROGRAM



The Fellows' experience culminated with a "Breakfast with a Champion: Dr. Percil Stanford" on June 21, 2007.

There the fellows met and thanked AARP's Office of Diversity & Inclusion's leadership for creating such an opportunity and presenting a vision them in mind. All resolved to continue the dialogue in their respective communities.

ELAINE CHEN, CSU LONG BEACH, M.S. GERONTOLOGY

Thanks to you, it was possible for me and several other graduate students to attend the Diversity & Aging Conference. The educational and inspirational programs, the high caliber of panelists, the quality of event organization and the array of experiences experienced by the attendees... all of these were a priceless gift.

I regretted not being able to attend all of the student activities due to being shorthanded at work. The Breakfast with a Champion was very nice; next time, if possible, perhaps more AARP staff could attend in order to tell us about the organization and discuss collaboration between students and the AARP. The conference was such a valuable experience, I wish there were a way for students to give back. Perhaps fellows in the future could assist with the creation of a white paper for each of the plenaries, and/or iPod interviews with panelists.

I brought home (and will apply at work) lessons learned from panelists and participants about mental health programs, health insurance program advocacy, marketing, and approaching faith organizations. I couldn't wait to tell my friends and family about what Dolores Huerta, Julian Bond, and Anna Deavere Smith said.

I thank you and the AARP for this wonderful opportunity!

TERI KENNEDY, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

I was impressed with the session on Women Leaders and Aging into the 21st Century. What an amazing panel of incredible women! I only wish there would have been more time for that session. I was particularly interested in the aging and workforce issues and issues regarding aging in place and aging-friendly communities. There was a wealth of information and informative speakers.

I wondered if the handouts for sessions that were not yet in the notebook binder would be available on-line? There are some very good resources, and I assume not all of the handouts were available before the conference for inclusion in the notebook.

My only suggestion regarding students would be to make sure that the registration desk folks are aware of the presence of the student diversity fellows, their meetings, and a contact person during the conference. When I registered, I explained that I was a student diversity fellow and wondered how I could connect with someone during the conference. They didn't seem to know what I was talking about.

If there's any other information I can provide as follow-up, please don't hesitate to let me know. If there's an opportunity for past fellows to meet at future conferences (perhaps with the new fellows), I'd be interested in participating if possible.

**JUNG KWAK, M.S.W, PHD POST-DOCTORAL FELLOW
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

Among all the interesting and important sessions, the most informative were: Ordinary Women - Extraordinary Lives; 50+ Market Boom: Re-shaping the Images and Perceptions of Aging; Who Will Provide the Care: Delivering Quality Long-Term Care with a Diverse Global Workforce; and Women and Long-Term Care. In particular, I really enjoyed the "Ordinary Women..." session because I felt that the session represented important leaders in the field of aging who shared their thoughts and comments on very important issues such as policy issues and politics regarding women, long-term care, and overall issues in aging. "50+ Market Boom" session was also quite helpful as presenters shared valuable and important suggestions as to how to reach out to minority groups in aging.

One overall suggestion is to help fellows have clear expectations as to what their roles are. For me, it was wonderful to attend many important sessions and learn from them, however, it was not clear whether that was the only AARP's expectation of the fellows. Some specific suggestions are: offering a special session for fellows to present their studies/research or perspectives on being in the field of studying aging, offering opportunity for student fellows to present with other presenters, and opportunities to meet or contact via e-mail with other fellows before the conference to assist each other during the conference.

Urrikka did a wonderful job as a liaison she was helpful and available to assist fellows' needs.

*Testimonials
and Feedback
from Student
Fellows on
Conference*

MARIA LUISA BRATLY, M.S., CSU NORTHRIDGE

I applaud the AARP staff for bringing about a powerful beginning to a dialogue on the challenges faced by our diverse communities as our population ages. Many of the sessions spoke to me on a very personal level: as a woman, as an Hispanic immigrant farmer worker's daughter who began school in Texas' segregated schools, as an aging Baby Boomer, as a recently graduated Gerontology student, and as an advocate for students and the disabled.

The plenary sessions: Wednesday's *Ordinary Women – Extraordinary Lives* and Thursday's *Inspiring Social Change* with Julian Bond and Bill Novelli were very powerful sessions. The review of the extraordinary accomplishments towards social justice in our lifetime was an inspiration to continue to our efforts to remove remaining obstacles and to change archaic thinking. The achievement of an environment that allows our diverse elders to age with dignity is of greatest importance.

The Thursday workshop *Transforming Mental Health Services for Older People* addressed an area of great concern to me, in particular the deficits in mental health services to diverse populations due to the lack of culturally competent practitioners. Past exposure to ethnic elders with the responsibility of caring for developmentally disabled grandchildren or other family member and witness to their struggles in accessing services to ease the stress place on their personal health greatly influenced my selection of the study of mental health and Gerontology. The presentation of the MHSA workforce education and training strategies provided some reassurance that efforts are being made to produce more culturally competent Geriatric mental health practitioners. Much remains to be addressed in the under funded mental health field.

Thank you for the fellowship, which allowed my participation at this memorable event. I will share the message with other professionals and students in hope of enlisting their involvement in furthering the dialogue.

CAMILLE HUGGINS, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

The AARP Diversity conference was an excellent opportunity for me to see the different faces of aging and how AARP, such a large organization will attempt to address these diverse faces in the future. The 1/2 day diversity training (intermediate) was excellent. The speakers were not threatened with the dialogue among the participants. They were honest, open and humble in listening to the participants and that gave me permission to be free to talk. Starting the conference with this training opened the dialogue and set the tone for the rest of the conference.

I really enjoyed Women and political voice and the marketing session. They both fueled my thought processes and provided me with insight and creative ideas for the future. I enjoyed the plenary session with the women from different ethnic groups and backgrounds. I thought it was insightful.

The only thing I regret is that I did not get an opportunity to bond with the other fellow awardees a little bit more. I did not know we would be having a meeting Monday evening until the week before the conference and I already made travel arrangements to come in later Monday night so I did not get a chance to know the cohort until Thursday morning. I am sorry I did not get to network with other PhD and master candidates from other fields.

All in all, I can not thank you enough for the opportunity to attend the conference, I think it is a wonderful opportunity for students (I think students interested in a political future should be involved) to become exposed to diversity of aging because they are the future that will make decisions in all areas of aging.

FAH VASUNILASHORN, USC PHD STUDENT

Thank you again for the opportunity to attend the AARP Diversity and Aging Conference as a fellow. The experience was invaluable, and I am incredibly grateful. With my research interest in public health and biological issues relating to older adults, I was especially pleased to attend the HIV/AIDS and older adults session. This is an emerging topic that AARP was very perceptive in including. The "Inspiring Social Change: A conversation with Bill Novelli and Julian Bond" was exceptionally insightful. The personal testimonials they shared were appropriately inspirational, and the session itself was incredibly motivating. I was unable to attend the introductory Fellows meet-and-greet session on Tuesday evening, but I recall that mentoring of high school students was on the agenda. I thought this was a wonderful opportunity to give back, but I didn't hear much about this program otherwise. In the opposing direction, it would have been nice to have a mentor-mentee arrangement for fellows with junior faculty or junior professionals just starting out in the aging field. The more networks and experiential advice we receive, the better our abilities to excel. The breakfast was a really great time to meet some of the other fellows, but I was unfortunately unable to meet all. From the other students I did converse with, it was especially interesting to learn of their specific interests in the field of aging and the research that they are currently engaging in. Perhaps a more formal directory listing all the fellows, their research interests, university, contact information, etc. would be helpful. That way, we can read before the conference and seek out specific individuals who may have similar research interests to one another. And with their contact information, we could easily continue lines of communication beyond the conference.

Ultimately, the experience was very enlightening and spoke to a wide group of individuals. My experience with Urrikka was a very positive, and she is a pleasure to be around. Her expertise working in AARP and her experience as a young professional/student made her an ideal liaison for fellows. Thank you!

TOM O'HANLON, CSU LONG BEACH

It gives me the greatest of pleasure to recount my feelings and feedback about the Conference on Aging and diversity in the 21st Century so much did I enjoy and benefit from it.

Ways to enhance the fellows' role in future conferences:

Continue to provide opportunities for fellows' to come together to share their journeys and future plans.

Continue to pair up fellows with H.S. students to sow seeds, nurture aspirations and share stories.

Welcome fellows during Opening Session asking them to stand and be recognized and encourage professionals to communication and networking with fellows.

Invite recent graduate-students (or fellows) to participate in various sessions panels creating a sign of intergenerational representation.

Design a conference survey instrument to get specific feedback from fellows.

Have Dr. Percil Stanford meet fellows early in the conference. His presence and counsel would set the tone for the fellows.

Capitalize on fellows growing bond with AARP by involving them in occasional activities such as are fulfilled by AARP Volunteers. This would give AARP and the fellows an opportunity to "experience" each other in action.

Delegate two (male/female) fellows to publicly thank AARP and attendees, during the Closing Session. This would afford fellows an opportunity to acknowledge AARP and draw attention to the AARP fellowship program.

Provide a means whereby AARP leadership (President, and upper management) can be publicly photographed with the fellows for use in marketing and promotion of AARP's image as being intergenerational.

Urrikka was at once personable and approachable. Being a student, Urrikka identified with fellow students and as a former employee could share her work experience of working with AARP. Urrikka uses her charm to get things done in a timely and efficient manner. Urrikka was very professional in her dealings and I enjoyed working with her.

My overall experience of the conference on Aging and Diversity in the 21st Century hosted by AARP was one of utter amazement, sincere admiration and profound gratitude. The attention given to every detail by AARP was enviable. Each stage of the conference blended like a seamless garment from one hour to the next. The experience of ethnic diversity, intellectual stimulation, emotional involvement, artistic sensitizing, and human enrichment could hardly be outdone. The setting at the Westin Bonaventure was ideal. Perched in the heart of downtown Los Angeles it provided a locus for not just attendees on the west coast but a multicultural magnet for participant's nation wide. The sense of goodwill, openness to dialog, readiness to develop new strategies, mould new dreams, and craft new policies was evident in every session attended. If one could image what heaven is like, these few days under the wings of AARP must surely mirror some of its eternal harmonious qualities.

YUMI SHIRAI, M.S. UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

It is a great honor to be selected as a fellow graduate student for the AARP diversity and aging conference. I highly appreciate AARP's financial support. Without it, graduate students like me would have little opportunity to attend such a wonderful event.

The conference was very well organized; starting with the pre-conference session on sensitivity and diversity which I found particularly helpful and interesting. This pre-session helped conference attendees build a culturally sensitive environment that supported individual and group differences with respect to others, and cohesiveness among the diverse participants in the conference. This size of the pre-session gave us opportunities us to be comfortable and patience with each other, allowing us to have constructive and creative conversations.

The session that spoke to me most was the panel session with the representatives from different minority groups. This session highlighted well the unique needs of each minority groups as well as the common needs across the conference community. The strong leadership and connections across the diverse groups not only gave us hopes for the future but also encouraged us to be next leaders.

I was also impressed by the breath of the participation, including AARP officers, academic professionals, volunteers, and students. All are interested in and took time to listen to other people.

I was particularly pleased by the spontaneity of the conference organizers in allowing unscheduled commentary, feedback, and formal presentations as each session warranted.

To improve future diversity and aging conferences, I recommend graduate students (even college and high school students) highlight the proudest and most relevant work in a poster session in the lobby and facilitate more dialogue between the various groups (i.e., AARP volunteers, officers, and academic professionals).

**EMPOWERING SENIORS, EDUCATING FAMILIES,
ENLIGHTENING ORGANIZATIONS**

**UBW SENIOR SOLUTIONS
CONSULTING**

P.O. Box 5221

Hyattsville, MD 20722

Phone: 301-768-1847

E-mail: ubwseniorsolutions@hotmail.com