It is our honor to announce that the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) awarded our Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program the AGHE Program of Merit designation. This is a five year status, that recognizes our high quality programming that is consistent with globally vetted gerontology criteria to ensure that students receive the knowledge and skills necessary for employment in the workforce. Our Master’s Degree program received specific commendations for the following strengths:

1. Program leadership with innovative ideas for programmatic and financial growth.
2. Strong support for Gerontology Programs from the College of Nursing leadership.
3. The development of a solid interdisciplinary gerontology curriculum applying AGHE competencies.
4. PhD trained faculty members who represent varying disciplines with diverse skills that add to the breadth and depth of program offerings.
5. A growing and committed relationship with local communities and a requirement for internship and practice hours that exceeds the AGHE Standards and Guidelines.
6. Implementation of assessment tools for students and alumni that have outcomes indicating program success in education and training; with outcomes utilized by faculty and leadership to continue with program improvements.

We thank Dr. Kara Dassel, Nancy McGee (alumni), and Rebecca Dick for the many hours spent completing this application and responding to the Program of Merit review committee questions. We also thank the many faculty who spent hours revising, and mapping courses to meet AGHE standards and Guidelines, and the many students, community members, and alumni who provided us with important feedback. We value these partnerships!

This Spring, we have been busy preparing for Careers in Aging (with Gary Glazner, Director of the Alzheimer’s Poetry Project), Sigma Phi Omega Honor Society Induction, and Graduation. In addition, we met with community partners to brainstorm next steps in building community/education partnerships, providing internship opportunities for students, and making sure the education to practice/employment pipeline improves.
Hi! I first came out to Utah in January of 2004 as the interim advocacy director for AARP Utah. I was working for AARP’s national office in Washington, DC at the time, supporting our state offices by analyzing legislation and providing draft testimony for them to use before their respective legislatures. Here in Utah I’d be the one lobbying state legislators on the issues important to our members and the public alike, such as stronger telemarketing fraud legislation and retirement income security. After my initial two month stint (during ski season) I decided to stay on, figuring I’d be here for a few years before heading back to DC. Well, the best laid plans . . . I got married, and while that didn’t last, I’m still working for AARP Utah, now as the communications director. I’ve been at AARP for 26 years, but before joining them worked for the FDA, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, and the Center for Auto Safety, a group founded by Ralph Nader. Needless to say, the political landscape in Utah is a bit different from DC, but the draw of its incredible natural beauty and easy access to biking, hiking, skiing, kayaking and the like has kept me here for the indefinite future. I love the energy of a university campus, but my loyalty is to the University of Wisconsin (my photo was taken at the Orange Bowl, where we emerged victorious), though I’ll root for the U of U over BYU any day of the week. I have a BA in political science from UW and a law degree from George Washington University, and in addition to the activities mentioned above have volunteered or raised funds for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the YWCA, the Huntsman Cancer Institute, the National Ability Center, and Fit to Recover. I love to travel and to have friends and family come to visit to explore our beautiful state.

Katarina Friberg Felsted successfully defended her PhD dissertation, “Comparing Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction with the Health Enhancement Program in the Treatment of Urge Urinary Incontinence in Older Adult Women: A Pilot Feasibility and Randomized Controlled Trial” in December. Katarina’s research will lead to future important investigations into complementary approaches to support healthy aging. She will receive her PhD at the College of Nursing May Convocation ceremony.
Melanie Stewart, MS
I completed my project and paper, “Focusing on the Aging Homeless Population: An Overview of Current Services and Recommendations for Salt Lake County” in December of 2017. My research examined the extent of senior homelessness in Salt Lake County (SLCo), determined how well current services address homeless older adult needs, and made recommendations for senior homelessness prevention. The most exciting part about my experience was collaborating with Kelly Roemer at SLCo Aging and Adult Services as she began her new position helping homeless seniors. After defending my paper and project I was able to put my research to work by assisting Kelly in helping Thomas, who was facing eviction, move to a senior subsidized apartment. I’m grateful for the experiences I had while in the gerontology program. I feel that the curriculum, professors, practicum, and interactions with professionals in the community effectively prepared me to be a leader in serving older adults in my community.

A former student, W. Mohlman, had a manuscript from her MS project accepted for publication in the Journal of Gerontological Nursing. The citation below can help you locate this manuscript.


End-of-Life Education and Discussions With Assisted Living Certified Nursing Assistants

University of Utah Center on Aging Research Retreat

Left: Jackie Eaton

Right: Linda Edelman
To the left we see Gary Glazner, visiting scholar, who was the speaker for the Careers in Aging Conference in 2018.

Mike Caserta and Scott Wright

Faculty with Students graduating with a graduate certificate in GERON (L to R: Jackie Eaton, Leilani Barrus, Harmony Brown, Nanci McLeskey, Gina Stevens, Mike Caserta, Katarina Felsted)

Melanie Stewart (MS graduate) graduating with her practicum preceptor and community mentor- Kelly Roemer Salt Lake County Aging & Adult Services

Katarina Felsted, Faculty in GIP, graduating with a PhD, with Kathie Supiano
On April 16th, the Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program held its annual Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) Induction and Awards Celebration, where several students and community partners were recognized. Seven new inductees were welcomed into SPO, the national gerontology honorary society (pictured below with Drs. Kathie Supiano, Nanci McLeskey, and Jackie Eaton). Sigma Phi Omega is open to qualified students, faculty, and community partners in the aging field. For information, contact Nanci McLeskey at Nanci.McLeskey@nurs.utah.edu.

From left: Karen Ameloot (Graduate Certificate Recipient), Melanie Stewart (MS in Gerontology), Suzette Shepherd (Graduate Certificate Recipient), with Dr. Jackie Eaton, GIP Director

SPO inductees with Drs. Supiano, McLeskey, and Eaton.