

Living the Questions
Listening to Leaders Session
Policy & Planning Faculty
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The Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging is a collaborative of thirteen leading nonprofit organizations with statewide service and advocacy presence. Formed in 2004 to advocate for home and community-based services the Council has met with community leaders to raise awareness of and discuss the demographic, social and economic issues related to the aging of the Baby Boom generation through an initiative called *Living the Questions*.

Through a series of *Listening to Leaders* dialogue sessions, the Council is gathering information about community aging issues as viewed by foundations, housing and community developers, civic groups, education officials, transportation representatives, faith communities, disability organizations, business and industry, and others.

More information about the Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging can be obtained from www.mnlcoa.org.

Background

Faculty from the University of Minnesota, Saint Catherine's, University of Saint Thomas, Gustavus Adolphus, and Hamline University participated in a *Listening to Leaders* session held at Twin Cities Public Television. Participants represented planning, policy and healthcare fields. Overwhelmingly participants expressed that the current landscape of post secondary education needed to change to meet the demands of demographic shifts.

Common themes of the session included that academic institutions are centers of production and knowledge and this should be a primary role in the future and the focus of planning efforts; student bodies are changing and institutions must be proactive before being reactive while maintaining the current student body; educational institutions are planning for a changing student body but resources are not readily available to hasten these efforts.

Key Questions

1. The traditional undergraduate school market is changing as demography shifts. What implications for enrollment arise in the changing market? How do you balance the

shrinking of one market (traditional undergraduate) and growth of another (lifelong learning) simultaneously?

2. How can educational institutions become community focal points (i.e., college towns as a place to retire)?
3. As older adults return to the workforce or dramatically change careers, what different expectations and relationships will they have with employers vs. middle-aged and younger-aged adults? What are the concurrent human resources issues and needs of employers and employees? What role does higher education play in this changing dynamic?
4. How can we juggle the generational difference in knowledge acquisition between traditional and non-traditional aged students?
5. What is the capacity and will to meet the changing needs of the community and higher education?

Other Questions

- How can retired professionals entering the workforce combat ageism?
- What replacement needs will current employers have when baby boomers retire?
- What financial support is available for educational institutions to pursue change related to the demographic shift?
- What is the responsibility of academia to prepare future professionals for the aging of the baby boom generation and the lack of workers in gerontology?
- What is the role of statewide or regionally based planning organizations in the demographic shift? How do or can planning organizations partner with the regional area agencies on aging?
- How can other cultures be included in the discussion and in planning?
- How can we act to honor the intergenerational compact?

The Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging exists to coalesce the resources and power of senior consumer, advocacy, social and health service organizations, and the individuals we serve and represent, to boldly advocate for and achieve positive system changes for elders in Minnesota.

www.mnlcoa.org