STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY FORM

Program Name: M.A. in Aging Studies
Dept: Human Services
College: Health and Human Services
Submitted by: Kathleen O'Rourke

Part 1:

CGS Learning Goal #1 **A depth of content knowledge**	Program Learning Goal(s): Students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing appropriate breadth and depth of physical, emotional, social, and economic aspects of aging and theories of aging.
How are learners assessed?	a) Certification of Comprehensive Knowledge (CCK) Written Paper Capstone Rubric [a direct measure]: Students completing the written capstone will be evaluated on their knowledge and understanding of specialized aging content. b) Independent Study and Internship Mid-term Self-Evaluation Forms [an indirect measure]: Students indicate perceived knowledge and understanding of aging studies content criteria and professional performance levels (e.g., aging issues/trends, communication, ethical practice). c) Independent Study and Internship Final Self-Evaluation Forms [an indirect measure]: Students indicate perceived knowledge and understanding of aging studies content criteria and professional performance levels (e.g., aging issues/trends, communication, ethical practice). d) Independent Study and Internship Mid-term Site Supervisor and Graduate Faculty Supervisor Evaluation Forms [an indirect measure]: Supervisors indicate students' knowledge and understanding of aging studies content criteria and professional performance levels (e.g., aging issues/trends, communication, ethical practice).

e) Independent Study and Internship Site Supervisor and Graduate Faculty Supervisor Final Student Evaluation Forms [an indirect measure]: Site supervisors indicate students' knowledge and understanding of aging studies content criteria and professional performance levels (e.g., aging issues/trends, communication, ethical practice).

f) Certification of Comprehensive Knowledge (CCK) Oral Presentation Capstone Rubric [direct measure; course embedded]: Students completing the oral presentation capstone are evaluated on their knowledge and understanding of specialized aging content and ability to apply knowledge/understanding to professional career development.

g) Area Agency on Aging Paper Rubric and Assignment Grade [direct measure; course embedded]: Students enrolled in the HSL 5100 Societal Theories of Aging (a required course) are evaluated on the following specifications and competencies of the assignment.

The Area Agency on Aging assignment aligns with the mission of the Older Americans Act: to oversee the development of services and opportunities for older people in every community across the nation. The Older Americans Act contains 10 objectives related to enhancing the dignity and independence of older adults in all realms of life, regardless of economic status. Title II of the Older Americans Act established an "aging network," to provide funding for local service programs, establish training and research projects, and stimulate the development of innovative and/or improved services for the elderly.

For this assignment, students are assigned a state. The paper is written as though the student is that state's Executive Director of the Area Agency on Aging and as though the student will present the content of this paper to the state's Governor, the Director of the State Unit on Aging, and aging policy-makers.

The paper is evaluated on students': explanation /summary of current AAA programs in the state; identification and discussion of three state shortcomings/gaps regarding the

	integration of older adults within communities; proposal of three new state programs in accordance with the Older Americans Act.
What are the expectations for the students?	a) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by faculty reviewers will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) or higher in their knowledge and understanding of aging topics and theories. The 5-point scale described here and throughout the report includes: 5=highly competent 4=competent 3=somewhat competent 2=minimally competent 1=not competent b) At least 85% of students completing midterm evaluations will indicate competency by achieving at least a rating of 4 on a 5-point scale. c) At least 85% of students completing final evaluations will indicate competency by achieving at least a rating of 4 on a 5-point scale. d) At least 85% of supervisors completing midterm evaluations will indicate competency by achieving at least a rating of 4 on a 5-point scale. e) At least 85% of supervisors completing final evaluations will indicate competency by achieving at least a rating of 4 on a 5-point scale. f) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by faculty reviewers will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) or higher in their knowledge, understanding, and application of aging topics and theories. g) At least 85% of the rubric evaluations submitted by faculty teaching the course will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) on the assignment. For the assignment grade, at least 85% of students will earn at least a minimum score of 85%.

What are the expectations for the program?	The program expects that at least 85% of students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding representing appropriate breadth and depth of physical, emotional, social, and economic aspects of aging and theories of aging, as evidenced through CCK papers and presentations, independent study, and internship evaluations, and specified course assignments (including a minimum assignment grade of 85%).
What were the results?	a) Using the CCK rubric, 100% of the evaluations rated students higher than the expectations. All students earned ratings of 5 (highly competent) on a 5-point scale.
	b) 100% of the students who completed the midterm evaluations indicated ratings of "highly competent" (5 on a 5-point scale) on both the midterm and final self-evaluations.
	c) 100% of the students who completed the final evaluations indicated ratings of "highly competent" (5 on a 5-point scale) on both the midterm and final self-evaluations.
	d) 100% of the supervisors who completed the midterm evaluations indicated ratings of "highly competent" (5 on a 5-point scale) on both the midterm and final self-evaluations.
	e) 100% of the supervisors who completed the final evaluations indicated ratings of "highly competent" (5 on a 5-point scale) on both the midterm and final self-evaluations.
	f) Using the data gathered from the CCK rubric, 100% of the evaluations submitted rated students higher than the expectations. All students earned ratings of 5 (highly competent) on a 5-point scale.
	g) Rubric evaluations and assignment grades were submitted for all Aging Studies students taking HSL 5100. At least 85% of the rubric evaluations submitted by faculty rated students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) on the assignment. For the assignment grade, at least 85% of students earned at least a minimum score of 85%.

How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	a) The CCK capstone is evaluated by the student's faculty supervisor. If needed (e.g., average rubric rating below a 3, unforeseen problematic circumstances), additional Aging Studies or HSL graduate faculty reviewers evaluate the CCK capstone. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where and how changes or improvements need to be made. b) Students completing independent studies and internships submit a self-evaluation at the mid-term of the semester. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. c) Students completing independent studies and internships submit a self-evaluation after the semester. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. d) Supervisors complete an evaluation of the student at the mid-term of the semester. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. e) Supervisors complete an evaluation of the student after the semester. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. f) The CCK capstone is evaluated by the student's faculty supervisor. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where and how changes or improvements need to be made.

	g) Faculty teaching HSL 5100 evaluate each student's paper. Assessment data, including course assignment samples/outcomes, are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. Follow-up discussion is initiated with the course instructor, as needed.

CGS Learning Goal #2: **Critical thinking and problem-solving skills**	Program Learning Goal(s): Students will demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills about aging/older adulthood topics and older adulthood.
How are learners assessed?	a) CCK Capstone Rubric [a direct measure]: Students completing CCK capstone written papers and oral presentations will be evaluated on their ability to think critically and problem-solve about aging topics. b) Research Proposal Presentation Rubric and Assignment Grade [direct measure; course embedded]: Students enrolled in the HSL 5900 Research Methods (a required course) are evaluated on their ability to think critically and problem-solve concerning aging research through the development and presentation of a research proposal, which includes an introduction, review of literature, methodology sections, and instrument creation.
What are the expectations for the students?	a) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by faculty will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to think critically and problem-solve about aging topics and older adulthood. b) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by faculty teaching the course will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to think critically and problem-solve regarding aging/older adulthood research. For the assignment grade, at least 85% of students will earn at least a minimum score of 85%.

What are the expectations for the program?	The program expects that a minimum of 85% of students will demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills about aging topics and older adulthood in CCK papers and presentations and specified course assignments (including a minimum assignment grade of 85%).
What were the results?	a) Faculty evaluations rated 100% of students as highly competent (5 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to think critically and problem-solve about aging and older adulthood topics. b) Rubric evaluations and assignment grades were submitted for all Aging Studies students taking HSL 5900. 86% of the evaluations rated students' Research Proposal Presentation as a 4 (14%) or a 5 (72%) (on a 5-point scale). For the assignment grades, 86% of students' scores met the minimum score of 85%.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	a) The CCK capstone is evaluated by the faculty advisor. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where and how changes or improvements need to be made. b) Faculty teaching HSL 5900 evaluate each student's research proposal presentation in the course. Assessment data are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. Follow-up discussion is initiated with the course instructor, as needed.

CGS Learning Goal #3: Effective oral and written communication skills	Program Learning Goal(s): Students will display the ability to effectively and professionally communicate information about aging and older adulthood in their written and oral work.
How are learners assessed?	a) CCK Capstone Rubric [a direct measure]: Students completing the CCK Capstone will be evaluated on their ability to effectively and professionally communicate.

b) Independent Study and Internship Site Supervisor and Graduate Faculty Supervisor Evaluation Forms (Mid-term): Supervisors evaluate students on their ability to effectively and professionally communicate in their written and oral work.

c) Independent Study and Internship Site Supervisor and Graduate Faculty Advisor Evaluation Forms (Final): Supervisors evaluate students on their ability to effectively and professionally communicate in their written and oral work.

d) Aging Policy Paper Rubric and Assignment Grade [direct measure; course embedded]: Students enrolled in HSL 5400 Aging Policy in Action (a required course) are evaluated on the following assignment and competencies.

This assignment represents a synthesis of the various current issues and trends covered in this course. The assignment is comprehensive and allows for fact-finding, creativity in the written presentation of information, and critical reflection and application. Each student is assigned a different topic with the end goal in mind of best preparing students for careers related to serving individuals, families, communities, and our diverse and global society. For the paper, students consider the unique and shared characteristics of older adults ages 62 and over. In addition, students consider the potential for very different needs at age 62 versus 92 or that two 75-year-old individuals may have very different needs, for example. Age is only one descriptor of an individual or group.

The assignment is evaluated on the following parts: introduction (general overview of topic, key facts/statistics, historical issues and trends); the body of the paper (expansion on facts/statistics, discussion of current policy and programming issues and trends, description of national/state/local support services); and application to professional practice and future vision (discussion of future implications for older adults, families/caregivers, and aging network professionals, description of future policy- and program- related needs and developments, conclusions).

What are the expectations for the students?	a) At least 85% of the CCK evaluations submitted by faculty will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (oral and written) information about aging and older adulthood. b) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by supervisors will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (oral and written) information about aging and older adulthood. c) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by supervisors will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (oral and written) information about aging and older adulthood. d) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by faculty will rate students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (written) information about aging and older adulthood. For the assignment grade, at least 85% of students will earn at least a minimum score of 85%.
What are the expectations for the program?	The program expects that at least 85% of students will display the ability to effectively and professionally communicate information about aging and older adulthood in their written and oral work, as evidenced through CCK mid-term and final evaluations by students and supervisors and specified course assignments (including a minimum assignment grade of 85%).
What were the results?	a) 100% of the evaluations rated students as highly competent (5 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (oral and written) information about aging and older adulthood. b) 100% of the mid-term evaluations rated students with at least a 4 on a 5-point scale in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (oral and written) information about aging and older adulthood.

	c) 100% of the final evaluations rated students with at least a 4 on a 5-point scale in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (oral and written) information about aging and older adulthood.
	d) Rubric evaluations and assignment grades were submitted for all Aging Studies students taking HSL 5400. At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by faculty rated students as competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their ability to effectively and professionally communicate (written) information about aging and older adulthood. For the assignment grade, at least 85% of students earned at least a minimum score of 85%.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	a) The CCK capstone is evaluated by the student's faculty advisor. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. b) Supervisors complete the evaluation and submit the evaluation to the student and the faculty advisor. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where and how changes or improvements need to be made. c) Supervisor completes the evaluation and submits the evaluation to the student and the faculty adviser. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where and how changes or improvements need to be made. d) Faculty teaching HSL 5400 evaluate each student's paper in the course. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. Follow-up discussion is initiated with the course instructor to provide feedback opportunities, as needed.

CGS Learning Goal #4: Evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity.	Program Learning Goal: Students will demonstrate an understanding of research proposal development, including appropriate research methodology, for a specialized topic related to aging and older adulthood.
How are learners assessed?	a) Research Proposal Presentation Rubric and Assignment Grade [direct measure; course embedded]: Students enrolled in the HSL 5900 Research Methods (a required course) complete a research proposal on a specialized topic related to aging and older adulthood. Proposals include introductory, literature review, and methodology (design, sampling, instrumentation, data collection procedure, data analysis) sections and the creation or adaptation of a research instrument.
What are the expectations for the students?	a) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by faculty will rate students as at least competent (4 on a 5-point scale) in their understanding of research proposal development and research methodology. For the assignment grade, at least 85% of students will earn at least a minimum score of 85%.
What are the expectations for the program?	The program expects that at least 85% of students will demonstrate an understanding of research proposal development, including appropriate methodology, for a specialized topic related to aging and older adulthood, as evidenced through the specified course assignments (including a minimum assignment grade of 85%).
What were the results?	a) Rubric evaluations and assignment grades were submitted for all Aging Studies students taking HSL 5900. 86% of the evaluations rated students' Research Proposal Presentation as a 4 (14%) or a 5 (72%) (on a 5-point scale). For the assignment grades, 86% of students' scores met the minimum score of 85%.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	a) Faculty teaching HSL 5900 evaluate each student's research proposal presentation. Assessment data are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. Follow-up discussion is initiated with the course instructor, as needed.

CGS Learning Goal #5: Ethics and Professional Responsibility	Program Learning Goals: Students will interact professionally and ethically in academic and other professional settings; demonstrate understanding of and sensitivity to the cognitive, physical, emotional, and sociocultural challenges of older adulthood; and exhibit awareness of and respect for diversity among older adults and their families and caregivers and academic/professional peers and colleagues.
How are learners assessed?	a) Site Supervisor and Graduate Faculty Mid-Term Evaluations (Forms) of Independent Study and Internship Students [a direct measure]: Supervisors evaluate students on their level of ethical behaviors and professional responsibilities, understanding of/sensitivity to challenges of older adults, and awareness of/respect for diversity. b) Site Supervisor and Graduate Faculty Final Evaluations (Forms) of Independent Study and Internship Students [a direct measure]: Supervisors evaluate students on their level of ethical behaviors and professional responsibilities, understanding of/sensitivity to challenges of older adults, and awareness of/respect for diversity. c) Independent Study and Internship Mid-Term Self-Evaluation Form [an indirect measure]: Students evaluate their perceived level of ethical behaviors and professional responsibilities, understanding of/sensitivity to challenges of older adults, and awareness of/respect for diversity. d) Independent Study and Internship Final Self-Evaluation Form [an indirect measure]: Students evaluate their perceived level of ethical behaviors and professional responsibilities, understanding of/sensitivity to challenges of older adults, and awareness of/respect for diversity. e) Students complete CITI training and earn a certificate of completion as part of HSL 5900 Research Methods.

What are the expectations for the students?	a) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by supervisors will rate students as "Competent" (4 on a 5-point scale). b) At least 85% of the evaluations submitted by supervisors will rate students as "Competent" (4 on a 5-point scale). c) At least 85% of students will indicate a "Competent" level of confidence (4 on a 5-point scale). d) At least 85% of students will indicate a "Competent" level of confidence (4 on a 5-point scale). e) 100% of students will complete the CITI training and earn a certificate of completion.
What are the expectations for the program?	The program expects that at least 85% of students will interact professionally and ethically in academic and other professional settings; demonstrate understanding of and sensitivity to the cognitive, physical, emotional, and sociocultural challenges of older adulthood; and exhibit awareness of and respect for diversity among older adults and their families and caregivers and academic/professional peers and colleagues. In addition, the program expects that 100% of students will complete the CITI training and earn a certificate of completion.
What were the results?	a) 100% of the students were rated as Highly Competent (5). b) 100% of the students were rated as Highly Competent (5). c) 100% of the students indicated a "Highly Competent" (5) level of confidence. d) 100% of the students indicated a "Highly Competent (5) level of confidence.

	e) 100% of students in HSL 5900 completed the CITI training and earned a certificate of completion.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	a) Supervisors evaluate each student and results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. b) Supervisors evaluate each student and results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. c) Students complete a self-evaluation and submit it to their faculty supervisor. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. d) Students complete a self-evaluation and submit it to their faculty supervisor. Results are disseminated to the Aging Studies Board faculty/administrators during semester meetings and discussed to ascertain where, how, and if changes or improvements need to be made. e) Faculty teaching HSL 5900 monitor completion of CITI training and verify certification of completion. Information is reported to the graduate coordinator and follow-up discussion is initiated with the course instructor if needed.

Part 2

Describe what your program's assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the Graduate Assessment Summary Response from last year's report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

Program's assessment accomplishments since the last report:

- Aging Studies faculty members, Departmental Chairs, Graduate Coordinators, and the Graduate School Dean comprise EIU's Aging Studies Board, which meets at least once each fall and spring semester. Assessment plans and the assessment response report are disseminated to the Board and the plans and response reports are discussed. There continues to be 100% "buy-in" of the Board on the direction of assessment (e.g., rubrics, assignment grading, selected courses, independent study and internship evaluations, capstone experience).

- The same goals were retained and continue to align with the goals established by CGS. Direct measures of rubrics were retained and used to collect/analyze data from students' written work and oral presentations. Indirect measures of student and faculty or site supervisor evaluations of internships and independent studies were retained. Direct measures embedded in courses, written papers, and/or presentations in HSL 5100, HSL 5400, and HSL 5900 were retained, as they demonstrate assessment breadth and diversity in types of major assignments. A continued assessment strength is that the selected courses/course assignments reflect a comprehensive and holistic picture of three fundamental tenets of a graduate program's courses: research (HSL 5900 Research Methods), theory (HSL 5100 Societal Theories of Aging), and policy/practice (HSL 5400 Aging Policy in Action). The CITI training data, which has been a requirement of students enrolled in HSL 5900 Research Methods, was retained.

- Rating expectations of a minimum of 4 on a 5-point scale for rubric items were retained and demonstrated appropriate rigor of graduate study expectations. For this report, all student outcomes met or exceeded expectations of earning at least a rating of 4 on a 5-point competency scale. Percentage benchmarks for all expectations were retained at a minimum of 85% and all student outcomes met or exceeded the 85% expectations.

- Results align with the outcomes of the last AY assessment report. All expectations set forth for this assessment cycle were achieved. Results indicate that the Aging Studies students continue to excel in academic performance related to all five University and Program learning goals.

- The Aging Studies Board continues as a cohesive and valuable advisory group comprised of faculty and administrators. The last Student Learning Assessment Program Response to Summary Form was well received by all and, during the fall and spring semesters, assessment discussion and critical reflection on assessment outcomes continued at meetings. The 33 required program hours, the online program delivery mode, and the 6- or 8-week scheduling of the majority of classes continue to benefit the program and the Aging Studies students/demographics. At present, all Aging Studies students are employed full- or part-time (many in the aging or human services fields), all reside outside of the Charleston area/East Central Illinois region, and most fall into middle-aged brackets with family/personal/financial/health care obligations different from a younger student demographic cohort. To successfully continue with recruitment/enrollment, retention, and academic performance levels, Aging Studies needs to offer a high-quality online graduate degree program with ease in accessibility, flexibility for diverse student demographics, maximum online campus engagement options for participation (e.g., GSAC meetings, Graduate School student events, University advisory council meetings with graduate student representatives), and cost efficiency/transparency in tuition and fees costs. These key considerations assist in guiding all program efforts, including assessment.

Ways in which we have responded to the Graduate Assessment Summary Response from last year's report:

- *"It might be helpful to invite someone in the field of aging to the board, perhaps a graduate of the program."* – Dr. Hillier, 2021
We have identified an individual, Jamie Patton, from the aging field and invited her to serve on the Aging Studies board. We expect that she will start in Spring 2023. Jamie is one of our alumni from the early 2000s and has worked in long-term care administration since graduation from EIU with her M.S. in Gerontology (former degree name for Aging Studies). Earlier this month, Jamie and I discussed the new M.S. in Aging Studies: Long Term Care Administration option and recruitment/enrollment successes and challenges for both Aging Studies' options. Examples of her informal, anecdotal feedback illustrate the thoughts and perceptions of a seasoned professional in the field and I asked her permission to share the following.

> *I would definitely send it [recruitment flyers] out to the local/semi-local nursing home corporations. It's challenging to be an administrator right now after COVID and more are promoting from within, but many are struggling to meet the degree requirements. It's rough out there right now! I'm even taking a break and went back to respiratory therapy until I feel like I can breathe (and sleep) again. I'm still doing paid consulting and helping out [name of long-term care corporation deleted] by training a lot of their new admins and helping during and after bad surveys/reviews, poor management, and things such as that. Lets me stay in it so I don't completely miss it altogether. I would love to be a guest speaker if you would like one sometime. I've done a lot of that and have a wide variety of information/experience by this point in my career. I support the specific classes for the LTC [Long Term Care Administration] option since the field is so specific with regulations, licensure, surveys, employment laws, COVID restrictions, payment systems, etc. It truly is a world of its own! I've always said we need this kind of LTC degree for new admins. I do a lot of teaching for new admins now so if there's any way I can be involved please let me know. I would love to!*

- *"It might be helpful to survey those who employ your graduates to assess if they have the required skills for positions in the aging field." – Dr. Hillier, 2021*
  We have begun the process of identifying employers of our alumni and, in Spring 2023, plan to develop and distribute a survey to assess employer perceptions of and experiences with our alumni and their professional skills.

- *"The rapid changes in long-term care facilities during the COVID pandemic necessitate close attention to these changes in your field, and how these market changes may impact your degree plan." – Dr. Hillier, 2021*
  We have addressed rapid changes in the aging field with the launch of the Long Term Care Administration degree option, as described in Part 3. We are committed to continuing our best efforts to market this new option and our other option to recruit more students. We are realistic and mindful of recruitment challenges for gerontology/aging studies higher education degree programs and for the aging career field and admittedly concerned and cautiously optimistic about program recruitment and enrollment. The impacts of the COVID crisis, aging professionals' attrition and burnout rates and subsequent hesitations/debates about whether to enter or continue in the field, and systemic issues of a top-heavy aging population (that will continue to grow) outweighing the number of available/qualified employees present significant challenges to the recruitment of students and professionals, alike. The U.S. Department of Labor projects continued double-digit growth in the aging job market and, as such, the need for professionals with graduate-level degrees and skills exists. However, like Jamie's quote above and simply put, "it's rough out there right now" and that is reflected in our program's enrollment (N=16), which is 15 enrolled students for Fall 2022 and 1 student who is taking a semester off. That is not shared as an excuse – rather, it's an explanation for enrollment numbers and it's a challenge that we will continue to embrace and endeavor to overcome.

We have continued (and will continue) to invest in marketing and recruitment strategies to boost enrollment. Our strategies at present include new marketing and promotional materials, email blasts to aging professionals/employer sites, social media posts and boosts, aging conference sponsorship/participation, EIU class presentations in Human Services, University Foundations, and Nursing courses and for RSOs, listserv emails, and recruitment for the accelerated graduate program and the second master's degree option. This semester, we have also begun the year-long process of applying for national Program of Merit status (the equivalent of program accreditation in the field of gerontology/aging studies) with the support of being awarded the Hamand Fund for Innovation in Graduate Studies for the 2022-2023 AY. If granted, the Program of Merit would provide a nationally-recognized designation of program excellence and should aid in our marketing and recruitment strategies.

Part 3

Summarize changes and improvements in curriculum, instruction, and learning that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

Curriculum content, learning goals, assessment measures, expectations, results, and dissemination practices are sound at this time. Formal and anecdotal student evaluation feedback has been positive. The interdisciplinary Aging Studies Board has been supportive of the program and curriculum. During AY 2021-2022, the assessment data contributed to our planned efforts for trying to increase enrollment and revising the program and curriculum with the renaming of the degree and designing/offering two program curriculum options within the degree. Effective Fall 2022, our degree is now an M.S. in Aging Studies rather than an M.A. and this change more accurately reflects the course curriculum of the program. Effective Fall 2022, our program has two curriculum options: M.S. in Aging Studies and M.S. in Aging Studies: Long Term Care Administration. The M.S. in Aging Studies largely mirrors our past Aging Studies degree and underwent minor revisions of shifting one elective course to a required course and one required course to an elective. Our new M.S. in Aging Studies: Long Term Care Administration was designed to include a curriculum that aligns with the national Nursing Home Administration (NHA) exam criteria and, upon graduation, students are qualified to sit for the NHA exam (if required by the place of employment) and/or seek executive-level director positions in residential assisted or supportive living sites, residential independent living sites, and related to administrative positions. Besides qualifying students for a wide array of career positions in the aging field (e.g., case management, social/human services providers, community and outreach educators), the existing M.S. in Aging Studies already qualifies our graduates to enter directly into executive director-level positions but nursing

home administration was the exception. Now, instead of being required additional post-baccalaureate education, students can opt for the M.S. in Aging Studies: Long Term Care Administration option if their goals are specifically aligned with immediate or future nursing home administrator positions or executive-level positions in aging in some states that vary in their requirements from those of Illinois. We acknowledge and credit Dr. Julie Dietz, Public Health Chair, with the original idea for the Long Term Care Administration option and Dr. Dietz's generous contributions of brainstorming and expertise in the early phases of creating the new option.

In closing, our plans for the future are listed here and previously described in Parts 2 and 3. Plans include:

- Increase strategic and broader marketing and recruitment of students to boost program enrollment;
- Continue with current assessment expectations and measures;
- Apply for national Program of Merit designation;
- Survey employers of Aging Studies alumni; and
- Add a professional in the field of gerontology/aging studies who is one of our alumni to the Aging Studies board.