

# Two-Year Progress Report

## Aging, Health and Well Being (PhD Collaborative)

### September 2014

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#### **1. Background and Overview**

The Aging, Health and Well-being (AHWB) program, which began in 2006, is one of two collaborative PhD programs (the other being Work & Health) housed within the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (AHS). Both doctoral programs were designed to capitalize on the interdisciplinary nature and strengths of all three departments. In addition to meeting the requirements of their home department, students in AHWB are required to take a course entitled the “Fundamentals of Aging, Health and Well-being” (HSG/KIN/RLS 750) and a dedicated research seminar (HSG/KIN/RLS 751) throughout their degree. Further program details, including learning objectives, can be found in the 45-page self-study report prepared by the previous executive committee (Drs. Giangregorio, Mannell and Hirdes) in October 2011.

In the fall of 2011, both collaborative programs completed their first extensive self-study, followed by an independent joint external review. In their January 3, 2012 report, the reviewers recommended that the AHWB program should be continued, noting that this program “is positioned to be one of the best in the country”. They also recommended that the university provide “strategic support to ensure program growth and sustainability”, offering a number of specific suggestions in this regard. In response, the AHWB executive committee at that time proposed a number of changes to the program’s structure and resources. The proposed action/implementation plan, endorsed by the AHS Dean, is contained in the Final Assessment Report, Academic Review of the Collaborative PhD in AHWB prepared for the SGRC in March 2012.

The AHWB program is co-ordinated by an Executive Committee of three faculty members (one from each department). Historically, members have served for about two years with the leadership role rotating between departments. The present executive committee was constituted a year ago (summer 2013). In addition to delivering the required courses and monitoring student progress, our mandate is to continue the efforts of our predecessors in growing and sustaining the program,

working in collaboration with the Faculty Administrative Council, whose membership includes the Dean, Associate Deans, and Departmental Chairs.

This report details the progress made to date concerning each of the action items specified in the March 2012 AHWB Assessment Report. Additionally, we provide an update on the number of doctoral students who have enrolled in and completed the AHWB degree specialization, as well as other relevant information.

## **2. Action Plan (March, 2012) and Progress to Date**

Prior to addressing the specifics of the action plan proposed in March 2012, it is important to describe what has transpired over the past two years. The Dean committed \$15,000 to the AHWB program for the 2012-2013 fiscal year in order to sustain the program and develop a business plan. A draft business plan was started in 2012/2013 with extensive revisions undertaken by the current AHWB committee in 2013/2014, in collaboration with the departmental chairs, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and AHS financial support personnel. When it became clear that a traditional business plan based on tuition revenues and projected growth in enrollment was not the best approach, an alternative “synergy” model was pursued.

The resulting **Memorandum of Agreement concerning the Collaborative PhD program in Aging, Health & Well-being** was approved by the Dean on March 3, 2014 and signed by all relevant parties (attached).

The **objectives** of this agreement are as follows:

1. to secure continuation and sustainability of the program for the next five years;
2. to foster stability and consistency in program administration, delivery and funding;
3. to maximize efficiencies;
4. to enhance accountability and recognition (of faculty and staff efforts); and
5. to enable growth (in student enrollment, faculty participation, program recognition) and ultimately, ensure the long-term sustainability of the AHWB program.

To achieve the above objectives, we developed a shared understanding to build on the collaborative history of the program and take advantage of new opportunities (e.g., the expansion of the RIA), while ensuring program stability and growth.

As the School of Public Health and Health Systems (SPHHS; formerly the Department of Health Studies & Gerontology) has consistently had the largest number of students enrolled in the AHWB program, it assumed administrative responsibility for the next five years. This is consistent with the recent external review of the School’s academic programs as a whole. In the report by the external reviewers (March 12, 2014), one of the recommendations was that: “the School and the Faculty of Applied Science continue to work together to profile and strengthen the area of Aging and Health as an area of excellence across the Faculty, with core critical mass in the SPHHS”.

As detailed further below, the 2014 synergy agreement addresses several of the suggestions by the external reviewers, while others are still a work in progress. **The action items below pertaining to structure and resources, respectively, are excerpted directly from the 2012 final assessment report to SGRC.** Progress to date for each item is shown in italics.

### **Proposed Structure for the AHWB program**

- The acting AHWB Director will receive one course teaching relief to facilitate program development and student engagement, and to recognize the time spent in a teaching role as part of university teaching.

*Done. As stipulated in the 2014 agreement, the faculty member who leads the program will now be given a one-course teaching credit per year for delivering 750 and 751, as well as service credit for program promotion and administration. The contributions of the executive committee will also be formally acknowledged through their annual service assignments and performance reviews.*

- The AHWB Executive Committee will have line authority regarding new and existing program resources and staff.

*Done. As shown in the 2014 agreement, the program now has dedicated resources and an annual budget of \$12,000. Costs of the program are to be shared by the three departments proportionate to the number of students from each department registered in the program. Expenditures and growth (student enrollment, withdrawals and completions) will be monitored and reviewed on a regular (annual) basis.*

- To reduce the burden of securing funding to support AHWB students, and to encourage program growth, the Faculty will provide funding, in the form of research assistant or teaching assistant stipends, to each of the three departments that can be allocated to support AHWB students. We have set enrollment targets, and specific funds allocated to the AHWB program will enable the program to reach those targets. Consistent enrollment from each department/school is integral to making it a faculty-wide interdisciplinary program. [page 2 of the final assessment report states that “The program aims to have 12 students per year in progress in steady state...equivalent to admitting about 1 student per year per department”]

*In the response to the external reviewers (March 19, 2012), the executive committee included a budget with expenses for additional TA/RA support. Additional TA/RA support was not included in the 2014 agreement as our AHWB Executive Committee and the present Faculty Administrative Council agreed that TA/RA support is already being provided through normal channels (refer to point # 4).*

*As shown in the next section, we have surpassed the 2012 target of 12 students as a steady-state complement. However, enrollment has not been equal across the three departments. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the students enrol in the SPHHS. Additional promotion efforts (both internal and external) are aimed at attracting more students in all three departments.*

### **Proposed Resources for the AHWB program**

- The Faculty has already begun to revise the AHWB program website (<http://uwaterloo.ca/applied-health-sciences/current-graduates/aging-health-and-well-being-phd>) and promotional materials to enhance program visibility. Further revisions of the website are pending and will include pictures and bios of featured students and faculty.

*Over the past year we have compiled up-to-date information on faculty members not only in AHS but across campus (e.g., Department of Psychology) who are engaging in research on aging. As stipulated in the 2014 agreement (point # 6), the Faculty has agreed to provide support for marketing (particularly web content). Additionally we are waiting for the GSO to finalize the standard branding they are developing for promotional materials across campus to ensure consistency with AHWB materials. Action pending.*

- The AHWB program will need a budget for travel to conferences and promotional materials to increase program visibility. This budget will allow the AHWB Director to attend the Canadian Association on Gerontology Annual Meeting and a booth and promotional materials dedicated to increasing AHWB program visibility.

*Done. We agree with our predecessors that this is important to increase our visibility and attract new students. Therefore, we submitted a request (approved) to sponsor a booth at the upcoming Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG) 2014 conference, as well as provide travel support for the AHWB faculty lead from our annual budget contained in the 2014 agreement. To minimize cost for both parties and foster collaboration, the booth at the CAG is being shared with the Partnerships in Dementia Care Alliance (PiDC).*

*Consistent with recommendations by the external reviewers, we believe it is important to continue providing travel support for our students presenting at major conferences, particularly the annual CAG conference. With the 2014 agreement in place, we have allocated \$1,200 to supplement AHWB student travel to the CAG2014 conference in Niagara Falls. A request will be submitted to the RIA for matching funds as the RIA is highly supportive of the program and has generously contributed student travel funds in prior years. It is important to note that students are expected to apply for other sources of travel support (e.g., from the GSO and CAG). However, many do not receive full coverage.*

*For instance, last year we received six requests for supplemental support. Each student received \$200 from the RIA's \$1,200 contribution.*

- The Faculty will identify an individual with responsibility to provide administrative support to the AHWB program director. The administrative support staff person will serve as the primary point of contact for prospective and current graduate students during their tenure at the University of Waterloo. This position will provide the necessary teaching and program management support for the AHWB Executive Committee to enable the successful day to day operation of the Graduate program. It is expected that this individual will assume these responsibilities as a part of other related duties in AHS, given that a full 1.0 FTE is not justified by the workload associated with a program of this size.

*Done. As specified in the 2014 agreement, the SPHHS has agreed to take administrative responsibility for the program for the next five years and the Program Lead will be an SPHHS faculty member. Staff support will be provided by the School's Graduate Coordinator, as well as the other departmental graduate coordinators, as part of their usual graduate student and administrative support functions.*

*A new SPHHS graduate support position was approved and the full-time Graduate Coordinator was hired in October 2012 for the MSc and PhD programs. Over the past year her assistance has been instrumental in tracking enrollment and completion in the AHWB program for planning purposes, helping us monitor student progress and completion of degree requirements, putting readings for the 750 course on reserve and organizing an orientation/social event for AHWB students and faculty. It is important to note that the graduate coordinators in each of the departments field inquiries from prospective students and assist current students in all of the graduate degree programs.*

### **3. Update on Student Enrollment and Other Relevant Information**

**Student enrollment and completion.** At the time the self-study report was written (October 2011), five students had completed the AHWB program or were close to completion. Five new students entered the program in 2006-2007 and in 2007-2008. Four were admitted in 2008-2009, but none in 2009-2010 and only one in 2010-2011. A total of five students withdrew from the program between 2006 and October 2011. Nonetheless, the student complement increased from 5 in the initial cohort to between 10 to 15 per year.

The table below shows the number of doctoral students who have enrolled in the AHWB program for the last three academic years: 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14. The program has allowed rolling admissions in each term to increase our complement. The program reached an all-time high of 17 students in Winter 2013, surpassing the target of 12 students as a steady state. With six new admissions in Fall 2014 (five from SPHHS and one from RLS), we will have a total complement of 22 students.

Since the program began (Fall 2006), a total of 11 students have completed their degree (9 from SPHHS, one from RLS and one from KIN). It is important to note that there are several other strong doctoral students (past and present) in all three departments who undertake aging research but have chosen not to formally enrol in the AHWB specialization. This is due, in large part, to having to fulfill both their home department and the AHWB requirements. The Executive Committee is working with the department graduate officers to streamline requirements and enhance consistency (e.g., with respect to timing and structure of comprehensive exams).

Table. Number of Doctoral Students in the AHWB Program over the last three academic years

Year	New	Total Student Complement	Citizenship		Enrollment					Withdrawals	Completions	Continuing
			Visa	CAN/PR	Full time	Part time	SPHHS	RLS	KIN			
<b>2011-12</b>												
Fall	1	11	1	10	10	1	7	3	1	0	1	11
Winter	0	11	1	10	10	1	7	3	1	1	0	10
Spring	1	11	1	10	8	3	8	2	1	0	0	11
<b>2012-13</b>												
Fall	4	15	1	14	10	5	11	3	1	0	0	15
Winter	2	17	2	15	12	5	13	3	1	1	4	12
Spring	1	13	2	11	11	2	9	3	1	0	1	12
<b>2013-14</b>												
Fall	5	17	2	15	13	4	11	5	1	0	0	17
Winter	0	17	2	15	13	4	11	5	1	0	1	16
Spring	0	16	2	14	11	5	10	5	1	0	0	16

\*Note: This chart was created on Jul 22, 2014. As we are currently 2/3 through the Spring 2014 term, Withdrawals, Completions and Continuing numbers can change

\*\*Note: we have admitted 5 full time students to SPHHS and 1 full time student to RLS for Fall 2014

**Faculty resources.** As listed in the October, 2011 report (page 28), there were 27 faculty members in AHS with interests in aging research (11 in SPHHS, 10 in KIN and 5 in RLS). Two of these individuals were Schlegel Research Chairs (SRCs): George Heckman, SRC in Geriatric Medicine (SPHHS) and Richard Hughson, SRC in Vascular Aging & Brain Health (KIN). Subsequently, three SRCs have joined the university: Carlos Rojas-Fernandez, SRC in Geriatric Pharmacology (School of Pharmacy); Heather Keller, SRC in Nutrition & Aging (KIN); and Veronique Boscart, CIHR/Schlegel Industrial Chair (Conestoga College with an adjunct appointment in AHS). Last year, all the SRCs took part in the 750 course and/or the 751 seminar series. They also serve on comprehensive exam and dissertation committees. Although a few key faculty members have retired (e.g., Roger Mannell), several promising young scholars with active research programs in aging have since joined the faculty. As these individuals secure tenure and Approved Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor (ADDS) status, they will be able to supervise doctoral students in the AHWB program.

**Research centres.** As noted in the October 2011 self-study, University of Waterloo is home to several research centres providing opportunities for both faculty and students to undertake aging research. These include, but are not limited to, the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA), the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program (MAREP), the RBC Retirement Research Center, the Partnerships in Dementia Care Alliance (PiDC), the Canadian Index of Well-being (CIW) network, and the InterRAI research group. The RIA in particular provides unique research opportunities through the Schlegel Villages (retirement, assisted living and long-term care) for both faculty and students, which will increase with the new facility (Centre of Excellence for Innovation in Aging) and integrated long-term care village being built on our north campus. Phase 1, which includes a 192-bed long-term care home and an adjacent 30,000 square foot research and education building, is scheduled for completion by August 2015. Moreover, the RIA has contributed to travel stipends for our AHWB students presenting at the annual CAG conference. The RIA and the Research Chairs should factor prominently in future promotion of the AHWB program and aid in attracting students from across Canada and beyond.

In its strategic plan, the university has identified aging as a key research area with potential for world leadership. AHS has been commissioned to develop a strategy to raise the profile of aging research campus-wide, and significant resources have been committed to this initiative, which will further enhance the research opportunities and environment for AHWB students.

### **Summary and Next Steps**

In summary, most of the recommendations made by the external reviewers and endorsed by the AHWB executive committee and Dean as an implementation plan approximately two years ago (March 2012) have been acted upon. The memorandum of agreement reinforces the commitment of all three departments and the Faculty Administrative Council to the AHWB program.

One of our priorities is to promote the program more aggressively through both external (e.g., the booth at the CAG conference, student ambassadors, updating the website) and internal efforts (e.g., hosting a guest speaker, holding a mini, campus wide conference). As noted above, we are striving to increase admissions to the AHWB program with a more equitable distribution across the three departments. We continue to work with the graduate officers to better integrate departmental and AHWB program requirements and expectations. Further efforts to involve faculty and students from other departments across campus who are also engaged in aging research are another priority. This will enhance the experience of students in AHWB and in other Faculties and is in keeping with the university's strategic priority on aging campus-wide.

As noted by the external reviewers in 2012, "the program in AHWB is positioned to be one of the best in the country". We are one of only three gerontology doctoral programs in Canada; the others are at Simon Fraser University and the University of Sherbrooke (offered in French). Moreover, we are the only doctoral program that focuses specifically on health and well-being. The 2014 agreement constitutes a major step forward with respect to the stability, sustainability and growth of the AHWB program. With the continued support from the Faculty and the University of Waterloo as a whole, ultimately we hope to achieve the vision of becoming the best gerontology doctoral program in the country.