

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH MEDIA RELEASE

Media Contact: Katie Schrier
katie.schrier@nurs.utah.edu
503.459.3656

U OF U GERONTOLOGY INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM TURNS 40

(September 25, 2012) In 1972, the Rocky Mountain Gerontology Program, a five-school consortium, which included the University of Utah, was established to offer credentials to students interested in the field of aging, and to encourage faculty to develop expertise in aging to complement their courses. Today, the U's Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program, as it is now known, is celebrating 40 years of excellence in preparing professionals in the field.

The program's academic structure is designed to offer an interdisciplinary environment in which an individual with an interest in aging can sculpt their educational experience. Students have the opportunity to pursue one of several areas of emphasis that include Healthy Aging, Geriatric Care Management, Educational Gerontology and Lifelong Learning, Long-term Care and Aging Services Administration, and Research and Evaluation. Students also have the option to design a customized program of study tailored toward their specific educational goals. The program offers an MS in Gerontology degree as well as fully online Undergraduate and Graduate Certificates, attractive to students across the country. Since its inception, the program has awarded almost one hundred Master's degrees and over 500 certificates.

"The Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program brings together the unique and rich perspectives of a variety of fields, making it possible for students to sculpt their educational experience to suit their interests," said Katarina Felsted, instructor (clinical), the program's director. "This wealth and breadth of knowledge and resource available to students helps to build diverse leaders in the field of gerontology—and opens graduates up to myriad professional opportunities."

With a mission to have students understand the aging experience at many levels—individual, family, community, and society—gerontology faculty pursue active research in areas including bereavement and loss, family caregiving, health promotion and self-care, special populations with disabilities, environmental issues, end-of-life and palliative care, and quality of long-term care.

According to Felsted, the relevancy of gerontology for an aging society is both timely and critical. Between 2000 and 2030, the older population—people 65 and older—in the United States is expected to more than double from 35 million to 71.5 million, with people over age 85 representing the fastest growing segment. "As we celebrate 40 years, the program honors the efforts of those who have worked and served to make it what it is today," she said. "It is the result of many, many people having dedicated their time and effort to sustain the field of gerontology at the University of Utah. As we look to the next 40 years of the Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program and the rapidly changing needs of an aging society in our community, the program is poised to build on its foundation of excellence. Priorities include continuing to increase its reach to prospective students, cultivate new inter-campus and inter-community relationships and expand the knowledge base and innovative approaches of gerontology professionals to support the needs of our aging population."

To learn more, visit www.nursing.utah.edu/gerontology

###