AGING STUDIES, PHD

Overview

Mission Statement

Our program focuses on the processes of aging at the individual and societal level. It examines how people change over the adult life course, the interrelationships between older people and social institutions, and the societal impact of the changing age-composition of the population. We emphasize the dynamic interplay between the aging of individuals and their changing biomedical, social, and physical environments and multi-level interactions among psychological, physiological, genetic, social, and cultural domains. Our goal is integration and synthesis within and across these domains. Our faculty's teaching and research emphasizes molecular, cellular, animal and human studies and takes place in a wide range of disciplinary and departmental settings across all of the schools at the university. Our students and faculty provide the foundation for this enterprise, working to create a new generation of leaders in this interdisciplinary field who will assume key positions in academia and in the public and private sectors. The program facilitates both basic and translational research allowing program participants to design and develop working models or implement a process that will initiate viable products or services for older adults in the expanding global community.

History

The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Aging Studies was established in 2009, in response to a call by the Provost's Office for interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs issued in 2008. The Program conforms to applicable University policies and regulations. The first class of students matriculated in the fall of 2010. Our Program is university-wide, encompassing all the Schools at Tulane University, and it is located in the School of Medicine. On successful completion of all program requirements, the student is awarded the "Doctor of Philosophy in Aging Studies." The University funds student stipends and provides tuition waivers.

Our Research Culture

A PhD degree can only be earned by performing original and significant research that is suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, in addition to any other program requirements. It cannot be earned by fulfillment of course requirements or residence for any specific period of time. We take courses to prepare us to begin to assimilate the latest findings, often prior to publication, in a variety of disciplines. Research seminars provide this new information, and they are not designed to be general in nature. An aspiring scholar must show sufficient curiosity to participate. Research seminars do not distract from research; they enhance it, which becomes only evident to a more advanced scholar. Research is a full-time activity (24/7). It involves sustained, hard work, great dedication, creativity, intellect, knowledge, and luck. One learns how to perform research by doing it under the guidance of a master, to whom the student serves as an apprentice. The PhD degree is bestowed only when the faculty determine that a student deserves the high honor of joining the fellowship of scholars, a life-long appointment that carries with it great responsibility to oneself, to the fellowship, to the university, and to society.

Requirements

The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Aging Studies is comprised of graduate students and faculty from eight schools at Tulane University and includes the Schools of Science and Engineering, Medicine, Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Liberal Arts, Social Work, Business, Law, and Architecture. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for successful careers in existing and emerging fields related to aging. Core courses include a two-semester Introductory Seminar on Aging, Topics in Aging Research, a biomedical course, a psychosocial course, and two semesters of research methods. Students also take specialized elective courses, while performing research, beginning in the first year of the Program. All course work is completed in two years, allowing the students to concentrate full time on research from their third year on.

Each student is guided closely by an academic advisor and co-advisor to facilitate integration across disciplinary domains, and by a dissertation committee. To obtain the Ph.D., each student passes a written preliminary examination following completion of course work at which time the student advances to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. Students prepare a dissertation research proposal, under guidance of the dissertation committee, then submit and defend orally a dissertation based on their own original research contribution to the field.

Distribution Requirements

- Students will complete the general sequence of studies under the guidance of the program advisor and program committee recommendations.
  - 24 graduate credits in aging-associated core and elective courses
  - 6 graduate credits in research methods/statistics
  - 6 credits in the Introductory Seminar (Proseminar) during the first year of study
  - 6 credits in the program seminar course during the first through third years or until advancement to Candidacy
  - 3 to 6 credits of internship
  - At least two semesters of dissertation research

- Credits in Aging Seminar are required through Year Three and thereafter until advancement to Candidacy and registration for Dissertation Research

Typical Schedule during Years One to Three

Course	Title	Credit Hours
Year 1		
Fall		
Proseminar in Aging		3
Psychosocial Core Course		3
Biomedical Core Course		3
Research Methods/Statistics		3
Research Topics in Aging		1
Aging Seminar		1
	Credit Hours	14
Spring		
Proseminar in Aging		3
Biomedical Domain Elective		3
Psychosocial Domain Elective		3
Research Methods/Statistics		3
Research Topics in Aging		1
Aging Seminar		1
	Credit Hours	14
Year 2		
Fall		
Biomedical Domain Elective		3
Psychosocial Domain Elective		3
Independent Study/Research		1-6
Aging Seminar		1
Advanced Statistics (optional)		
	Credit Hours	8-13
Spring		
Biomedical or Psychosocial Domain Electives		6
Independent Study/Research		1-6
Aging Seminar		1
Advanced Statistics (optional)		
	Credit Hours	8-13
Year 3		
Fall		
Independent Study/Research		1-6
Internship		3-6
Aging Seminar		1
	Credit Hours	5-13
Spring		
Dissertation Research		
Aging Seminar		1
	Credit Hours	1
	Total Credit Hours	50-68

- In addition, students are required to take an approved course in Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). Several such courses are offered at Tulane. (See Vice President for Research website.) The course offered through the Office of Research consists of about six lectures and offers a certificate of completion. A similar course is offered for credit by the Master's in Clinical Research Program at the School of Medicine. There is also

an online CITI course (See Vice President for Research website.) Students must complete one of these courses before the end of the second year. Documentation of completion must be provided to the program office. Ideally, this course is taken in the fall semester of the second year.

- All students are expected to regularly attend the activities included in the Seminar (AGST 7100), even though credit is not awarded after the third year or after advancement to Candidacy, whichever is later. This includes presentations of their work-in-progress. The Program Office schedules students for their work-in-progress seminars throughout the year, and each student must present at least once each year to remain in good standing in the program. These presentations and presence of all students at the work-in-progress seminars is mandatory.
- Graduate work is a full-time effort. The number of credit hours does not indicate the amount of time that the student devotes to this effort. Students are required to spend all of their time outside the classroom to study/research.