Introduction

The major in Gerontology Studies is intentionally inter-disciplinary. It is a program administered by the Sociology Department, and utilizes the bodies of knowledge in the social and behavioral sciences to develop theoretical frameworks for the study of adulthood and aging. Students who select this plan of study will be well grounded in a liberal arts education as well as aided in the development of skills and knowledge that are focused toward understanding and improving the lives of adults as they age. To achieve this goal, the major provides a core set of courses that include a sociological perspective on aging and the elderly, as well as courses in theory and research. Each student is required to do either an internship, or a senior seminar. The former provides the students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned to a work experience; the latter provides students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned through a research paper. Finally, the student selects from a group of related courses to further develop the major according to a particular interest. The student may also elect to combine this major with one of a variety of minors, such as: Political Science, Anthropology, Women and Gender Studies or Business/Economics to compliment his/her interests. For students who want to study the life course, a minor in Child Development is also available. And, for students who plan to get into the health professions, a Health and Wellness minor, as well as pre-professional programs such as Pre-Physical Therapy and Pre-Occupational Therapy are options.

Functional Skill Set for Gerontology Majors

Oral and written communication
Listening
Tolerating individual and group differences

Relate well with others
Problem-solving
Related Career Titles for Gerontology Majors

- Program development in recreation
- Education
- Social services for older people
- Administration of nursing homes, housing projects and government programs
- Direct service roles in multipurpose senior citizen centers, mental health agencies and personnel department of corporations
- Development, operation and coordination of services from a billion-dollar network of aging services
- College and university faculty
- Community, human service and religious organizations
- Health care and long-term care institutions
- Federal, state and local government agencies, including the aging network (the system of service delivery to older persons established by a federal law entitled the Older Americans Act)
- Retirement communities
- Academic and other educational and research settings
- Professional organizations
- Business and industry

Some Fields & Professions that Typically Employ Gerontology Majors:
Some areas require graduate education before working as a professional in the field

- Business Administration
- Communications
- Counseling
- Epidemiology
- Health services management
- Home Economics
- Individual and family development
- Law
- Marketing
- Nursing
- Physical and Occupational Therapy
- Psychology
- Public Administration
- Social Work
- Sociology
Start a Strategic Plan:

- Participate in Internships, Field Experience Placements and related part-time work
- Join clubs and organizations related to Sociology
- Take on leadership roles
- Serve as a board member in community affairs related to aging and elderly adults
- Volunteer in a nursing home, senior center, or retirement community
- Read up on careers in aging (101 Careers in Gerontology is available in Milne Library)

Professional Organizations and Associations

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
601 E. St., NW
Washington DC  20049
(202) 434-2277

American Society on Aging (ASA)
833 Market St., Suite 511
San Francisco CA  94103
(415) 974-9600

Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE)
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 410
Washington DC  20036
(202) 429-9277

Gerontological Society of America (GSA)
1275 K St., NW Suite 350
Washington DC  20005
(202) 842-1275

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (NAAAA)
1112 16th St., NW, Suite 100
Washington DC  20036
(202) 296-8130

National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA)
1225 I St., NW, Suite 725
Washington DC  20005
(202) 898-2578
National Council on the Aging (NCOA)
409 Third St., SW, Second Floor
Washington DC  20024
(202) 479-1200

National Institute on Aging (NIA)
Public Information Office
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda MD  20892
(301) 496-1752

US Administration on Aging (AOA)
330 Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC  20201
(202) 619-0441

US Bureau of the Census
Age and Sex Statistics Branch
Population Division
Washington DC  20233
(301) 457-2378

Revised 12/1/10
# HUMAN SERVICES
What can I do with this major?

## AREAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL SERVICES</th>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIONS/STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration and Planning</td>
<td>Public welfare agencies</td>
<td>Social services are designed to provide support for poor, disabled, ill, elderly, or juvenile clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>Federal, state, and local government including:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Administrative agencies</td>
<td>Volunteer at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, battered women homes, literacy programs, or other social service agencies to gain relevant experience and demonstrate interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Department of Human Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Development</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Learn to work well with different types of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Coordination</td>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
<td>Cultivate multicultural competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
<td>Become familiar with government and community resources available for those in need.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Job Corps</td>
<td>Learn about government application procedures and apply early as the process can take at least four to six months.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>Complete an internship with the federal government.</td>
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<td>Indian Health Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>State legislatures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Private social service agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group homes and halfway houses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religiously affiliated organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE/CORRECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counseling/Therapy</th>
<th>Prisons and correctional facilities</th>
<th>Human services workers in corrections focus on rehabilitating clients and assisting victims.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>Obtain experience by volunteering at a corrections facility or a victim services organization such as a rape crisis center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>Police departments</td>
<td>Gain experience as a juvenile probation officer; many states allow reputable citizens to serve as volunteer officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parole</td>
<td>Probation and parole offices</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Services</td>
<td>Victim services organizations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Assistance</td>
<td>Private treatment facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>Group homes and halfway houses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHILD WELFARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Management</th>
<th>Public or private child welfare agencies</th>
<th>Child welfare workers strive to ensure the safety and well-being of children through interventions and programming.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Local, state, and federal government including:</td>
<td>Volunteer at day care centers, children's shelters, camps, YMCA/YWCA, Scouts, CASA, or other agencies that aid youth and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Coordination</td>
<td>Department of Children's Services</td>
<td>Take additional courses in child development or early childhood education.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Human Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Child Protective Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adoption agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foster care organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Day care centers and Head Start programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recreational facilities (i.e., YMCA or YWCA)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREAS</th>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIONS/STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>Community residential homes</td>
<td>Human services workers specializing in this area help people with disabilities to adjust to and lead productive lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>State and local agencies including:</td>
<td>Volunteer at special needs camps, child care centers, schools, or hospitals to gain experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Planning and Evaluation</td>
<td>Vocational Rehabilitation &amp; Employment programs</td>
<td>Learn about a variety of disabilities and accommodations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Development</td>
<td>One-stop career centers</td>
<td>Obtain specialized training in areas such as sign language or assistive technology for additional opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Medical facilities</td>
<td>Earn a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling for opportunities in vocational rehabilitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Mental health organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleges and universities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment agencies</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GERONTOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREAS</th>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>Gerontology involves working with older adults, healthy or ill, and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Nursing and retirement homes</td>
<td>Become involved with programs or organizations designed for senior citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>Senior centers</td>
<td>Join the American Society on Aging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>Assisted living facilities</td>
<td>Supplement curriculum with course work in life span development and aging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming</td>
<td>Hospice</td>
<td>Obtain specialized training and credentials oriented toward gerontology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy</td>
<td>Home healthcare agencies</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community agencies serving the elderly</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## HEALTH CARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREAS</th>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIONS/STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>Human services workers in healthcare facilitate the medical and emotional treatment of patients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>Health maintenance organizations (HMOs)</td>
<td>Volunteer in health related settings such as hospitals or the American Red Cross to gain experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Development</td>
<td>Nursing homes</td>
<td>Supplement curriculum with course work in public health or community health education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Hospice programs</td>
<td>Gain membership in relevant professional associations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Home healthcare agencies</td>
<td>Become familiar with community resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Community health centers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Public health programs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Social service organizations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospice Care</td>
<td>Outpatient clinics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group homes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specialized camps/schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Federal, state, and local government including:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### AREAS

**ADMINISTRATION**
- Management
- Policy Development
- Planning
- Supervision
- Fundraising
- Budgeting
- Grant Writing

**BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**
- Human Resources
- Management
- Market Research
- Customer Service
- Sales
- Public Relations
- Corporate Giving
- Development
- Employee Assistance Programs
- Financial Counseling

### EMPLOYERS

**ADMINISTRATION**
- Social service agencies
- Employee assistance programs
- Probation departments
- Public interest groups
- Local, state, and federal government including:
  - Department of Human Services
  - Department of Children’s Services
  - Department of Education
  - Department of Justice
  - Department of Veterans Affairs
  - State mental health departments
  - Job Corps
  - Head Start
- Public welfare agencies
- Residential or outpatient hospitals/treatment centers

**BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**
- Business firms in various industries
- Developers of educational products
- National foundations and associations
- Consumer protection agencies
- Social service organizations with business components, i.e. tax assistance, financial planning

### DESCRIPTIONS/STRATEGIES

Administrators are involved with planning, budgeting, public relations, management, fund raising, and other crucial operating responsibilities that keep an organization functioning.

Supplement curriculum with course work in areas such as public relations, advertising, accounting, or management.

Consider earning a business minor.

Gain management experience through internships, part-time employment, or leadership in relevant student organizations.

Research government application procedures.

Graduates of human services programs may apply their skills and knowledge in the private sector of business and industry.

Earn a minor in business or related field.

Develop computer skills particularly with spreadsheets, databases, word processing, and desktop publishing.

Learn to communicate effectively with a wide range of people.

Take courses to enhance writing skills.

Gain experience through part-time jobs, summer jobs, and internships in business environments.

Get involved in student organizations and seek leadership roles.
GENERAL INFORMATION

- A bachelor's degree in human services prepares individuals for entry-level positions in the helping professions.
- A master's degree in counseling, social work, occupational therapy, or related field, in addition to appropriate professional licensure, is usually necessary to provide therapy and for advancement to supervisory or administrative positions.
- Complete practicum experiences and internships to determine suitability for the helping professions and to gain exposure to various practice settings and clients.
- Candidates should possess empathy for others, an appreciation for diversity, and an interest in social change.
- Gain experience with a wide range of clients and client systems including individuals, families, groups, communities, and minorities.
- Join a human service organization while in school and seek leadership positions.
- Look for ways to impact your community and get involved with local organizations and issues.
- Become familiar with local social service agencies and resources available for those in need.
- Learn a second language to better communicate with diverse client populations.
- Develop ability to work well under pressure and manage stress.
- Update your resume as you acquire new accomplishments, skills, knowledge, and interests.