Dear colleagues and friends, thank you very much for all your hard work and great accomplishments during the Spring semester. It has been very strong in every type of scholarship and engagement activities. This Newsletter is dedicated to Dr. Dena Shenk as she retires. Her constant dedication to students has been recognized by the university community and we wish her the best! One of the most important events we had this semester was the Career on Aging week event on April 7th, where the program inducted new SPO members, recognized our graduating students and the outstanding senior in Gerontology, Ana Herrera (Congratulations Ana!), and most importantly the program farewell to Dr. Shenk. Many faculty, students, and community members attended the event.

As you can see from the pictures, all enjoyed this great event.

Announcing the Dr. Dena Shenk Graduate Research Award!

As we bid farewell to Dr. Dena Shenk after 24 years of service to the Gerontology Program, we have created the Dr. Dena Shenk Graduate Research Award in her honor. This award will provide annual research funding for one second year Master’s level Gerontology student with a 3.5 GPA or better.

Your tax-deductible contribution can be made by cash, check, credit card or stock transfer, and made payable to UNC Charlotte Foundation with “ShenkGraduate Research Award” on the memo line. You can mail these to:

UNC Charlotte,
Attn: Andrea Greene,
Development and Communications Coordinator,
9201 University City Blvd., Fretwell 324D,
Charlotte, NC 28223.

We will soon have a link to online giving at our Gerontology website. As friends, colleagues and former students of Dr. Shenk’s over the years, we hope that you will consider donating in her honor.
From the Graduate Director…

As spring semester 2015 draws to a close, I find myself writing my final column for the Gerontology Newsletter. I am stepping down as Graduate Director and retiring from UNC Charlotte at the end of June. It’s been an incredible ride and I trust that my relationships with many of my former students and colleagues will continue far into the future.

This has been another productive and exciting year for the Gerontology Graduate Program. Five students graduated with their MA degrees in December and another seven are on track to graduate in May with a few final defenses still to occur. The students have completed fascinating theses and applied projects on a wide variety of important topics. Ten students earned their Graduate Certificates this year as well. The aging community is in good hands and our incoming class of MA and Graduate Certificate students will continue and extend what we have already accomplished.

I would like to thank my colleagues who developed the Dr. Dena Shenk Graduate Gerontology Scholarship to be offered beginning in 2015-2016. I was deeply touched when the new award was announced at our annual Careers in Aging event and SPO gerontology honor society induction. Special thanks to my colleague, Dr. Cynthia Hancock, who came up with the idea and implemented it! I truly cannot imagine a greater honor than to be remembered in this way for many years into the future. The $500 scholarship will be awarded to a second year MA student to support them in their thesis or applied project research. My sincere thanks to each of you who have already contributed! Please see the information on page one about how you can make a contribution.

Farewell and please do keep in touch!

Contact Info: dshenk@uncc.edu

From the Undergraduate Coordinator…

Greetings from the Gerontology Minor! Once again, I’m pleased to report that the Gerontology Minor is not only alive and well, but breaking new records! We graduated 31 minors this past academic year. We inducted 11 undergraduates into our Gamma Psi chapter of Sigma Phi Omega, the national academic honor and professional society in gerontology. We have formally added a second section of our capstone Senior Seminar course to accommodate the growing demand. All of these numbers point to the continued relevance of and demand for what we offer in the Gerontology Minor at UNC Charlotte. In addition, we have achievements worthy of note. Ms. Ana Herrera graduated in December 2014 and was selected as our 2015 Outstanding Senior in Gerontology because of her exceptional leadership of our Gamma Psi chapter, her academic achievements, and her continued efforts to engage current students with her work at the Shamrock Senior Center in Charlotte. Congratulations Ana! Our Gamma Psi chapter also won national recognition for their service efforts and a video message addressing “Why Gerontology?” Congratulations everyone! Finally, I want to bid farewell to Dr. Dena Shenk with whom I have been colleagues for 12 years. It is always hard to see a valued colleague move on, but everyone should know that the Gerontology Minor and Program are in good hands. I look forward to the continued journey. I will be out of the office for the summer. Should you need me, feel free to email me at:

chancock@uncc.edu

Contact us… and keep in touch with us on social media!

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2015 Recipient of the Harshini V. de Silva Graduate Mentor Award:
Dr. Dena Shenk

by Amanda Swanger

On March 26, colleagues, students, alumni, university officials, and family members gathered at the Harris Alumni Center to witness Dr. Dena Shenk receive the Harshini V. de Silva Graduate Mentor Award. This award is given to a faculty member who shows an outstanding commitment in helping graduate students succeed in both academic and professional realms. Dr. Shenk has spent over 20 years building a program that is widely known and respected in the Charlotte region, and is the epitome of dedication to students. During that time Dr. Shenk has pushed students academically, challenging them in their understanding of Gerontology. She actively networks for the program wherever she goes in order to create more opportunities for her students. She prepares students for the field through service learning hours and practicums that allow students to create their own networks in the aging community, leading to wonderful career opportunities; often placed with alumni of the UNCC Gerontology program. Former students of Dr. Shenk and of the UNCC Gerontology program continue to promote the program and encourage potential students to apply.

Dr. Shenk is not only committed to helping students academically and professionally, but she is a tremendous source of social support. She always lends an ear for students to discuss classes, applied project ideas or simply to unload some stress. She makes sure that every student is on the right path, even if it takes extra time away from her day. In a nutshell, she is everything a graduate student needs during his or her time in graduate school.

Dr. Shenk’s absence from UNC Charlotte will be an adjustment for all, however her presence will be forever known. We will miss you Dr. Shenk, and will never forget how you have impacted the people around you. You have educated so many, and we, your students will always be grateful for the knowledge you have bestowed upon us. Thank you for everything.
Congratulations to our 2014-2015 graduates

This past school year, the program graduated 31 undergraduate Gerontology minors, 10 students with a Gerontology certificate and 12 Gerontology Master of Arts! Best of luck to all graduates. We urge you to keep in touch via social media.

New alumni & current students can show their pride with the new UNCC Gerontology t-shirt. Available from Dr. Montoro-Rodriguez for only $8.00.

Students in Action around campus

Thanks to Jessica Eudy, Corey Gwynn, Holly Morris, Nour Qomaq and Sarah Stevenson for extolling the benefits of the Gerontology program at the recent Open House Explore event. This event gives incoming students the opportunity to meet with current students as they try to decide on a course of study.

Catch that 49er spirit!

The 2014 Service Learning Showcase was held Friday, May 2, at the Barnhardt Student Activity Center. The showcase features poster presentations that share case studies, best practices, lessons learned, and innovations in the use of service learning as a teaching and learning pedagogy. Thanks to Jessica Eudy and Trena Ijamess-Scott, along with Dr. Hancock and Dr. Murray, for representing our Aging and the Lifecourse Service-Learning. Great job ladies!!
2014-2015 SPO/Club Officers
Undergraduate Co-President
Jessica Eudy
(jeudy26@uncc.edu)
Graduate Co-President:
WE NEED A VOLUNTEER!!!!!
Secretary:
Bare’a Hood
(bhood5@uncc.edu)
Treasurer:
Nour Qomaq
nqomaq@uncc.edu
Historian:
Sarah Stevenson
ssteve38@uncc.edu

GRNT Club/SPO Meetings
Fall 2015 Schedule
Coming Soon
Typically we meet one or two days a month to accommodate schedules, usually at month-end.

SPO is the national academic honor and professional society in Gerontology. See all their latest news INCLUDING a profile of our chapter’s award-winning video at SPO News

The Gamma Psi Chapter of Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte is led by undergraduate and graduate student members in conjunction with the Gerontology Club. Students who are simply interested in gerontology can join the Gerontology Club, while undergraduate minors and graduate students of gerontology may be invited to join SPO based on their educational achievements.

Gerontology Club members actively participate in on- and off-campus events, as well as activities at various assisted living facilities in and around the Charlotte area. Our most popular event, Fall Festival at Madison Saints Paradise South Nursing Home in the fall semester, attracts dozens of student participants and residents who have a great time together with activities and home-cooked food. In the spring semester, our chapter has participated in two on-campus activities to promote the club and highlight the academics of gerontology, and one very special off-campus activity: a Valentine’s Day event at Shamrock Senior Center in Charlotte.

One of our proudest accomplishments thus far was being awarded the Service Learning Project award and tying for the “Why Gerontology?” video award by the national Sigma Phi Omega society, which can be viewed here or on the Student Groups page of our website. During our Careers in Aging event (April 7th), we inducted an incredible 23 new members at our Gamma Psi induction ceremony. We are excited to have a large cohort of new members to continue the promotion of academics of gerontology through the Gamma Psi chapter of SPO. Additionally, as we bid farewell to Dr. Dena Shenk, the former Director of the Gerontology Program and long-time UNC Charlotte professor who is retiring at the end of this semester, we unveiled the Dr. Dena Shenk Graduate Research Award in her honor. This award will provide research funding for second year Master’s level Gerontology students with a 3.5 GPA or better, beginning in the Fall of 2015.

We are currently working on our upcoming events to be held in the Fall semester. Our Fall Festival event at Madison Saints will be one to look forward to, as we have made it a tradition for the past several years. This event attracts many individuals wanting to get involved in the community from all ages. The residents and staff of Madison Saints welcome our activities and looks forward to it every year. This event will occur sometime in late October.
**HONORS**

2015 Harshini deSilva Graduate Mentor Award, UNC Charlotte.

2015 Mildred Seltzer Recognition (AGHE).

**REFEREED PUBLICATIONS (Graduate student = **)**

**Articles**


**Book Chapters**


**Other Publications**

Hancock, Cynthia and Dena Shenk. 2015. What’s in a Word. All About Seniors.

**Conference Presentations**

Hancock, Cynthia, Dena Shenk and Deborah Tillman**. The case for early immersion of students with older adults living with cognitive impairment, Workshop presented at the AGHE conference, Nashville, February 28, 2015.


Davis, Boyd, Dena Shenk, Mohamed Shehab and Mary Nies. E-mobile support for community-based dementia caregivers: A proof of concept phase 1. 9th World Congress of Gerotechnology, Taipei, Taiwan, June 18-21, 2014.

**Keynote Speaker & Media**

Caring for and Communicating with People with Dementia: We’re All in This Together. Keynote address presented at the Montana Gerontological Society and Governor’s Conference on Aging, Helena, Montana, May 14, 2015.