CHAPTER V

The GeroRich Planned Change Model: Implementation and Sustainability

This chapter builds upon the process of curricular and organizational analyses described in Chapter IV. Assessments of both structural arrangements and key stakeholders' support provided the foundation for implementing strategies to engage key stakeholders' buy-in to the action phase of the Planned Change Model. Effective and sustainable action strategies were found to be those that were compatible and aligned with a program's mission and goals, feasible and relatively simple to implement, able to be tested incrementally or in stages, and relatively more advantageous than what already existed in curricular and program structures. Implementation also required that the consistency of the change with a program's overall goals and priorities could be communicated to stakeholders.

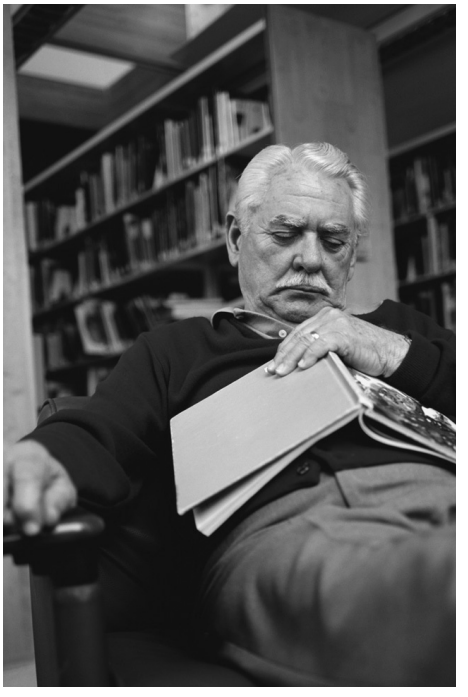
The following issues central to implementing sustainable changes among GeroRich projects are addressed in this chapter:

- Strategies to garner the support of key stakeholder groups: academic administrators, faculty colleagues, practitioners, and students.
- Strategies to influence structural arrangements in a program, such as curriculum decision-making policies and procedures.
- Methods to institutionalize changes within a program's organizational structure.

IMPLEMENTATION

Obtaining Faculty Buy-In for Action

As noted in Chapter IV, GeroRich projects found that the infusion of gerontology into their curriculum and program's organizational structure must be framed as a faculty process, since faculty support is ***essential*** to successful and sustainable change. Faculty members were more likely to own the process when they were presented ***early on*** with opportunities to be involved, such as helping to review data from a curricular analysis, to set outcome-based goals, or to select gerontological competencies for the foundation area in which they teach. However, without exception, GeroRich project directors encountered faculty resistance to the concept of gerontological infusion, as noted above in our discussion of curricular analyses strategies. In some instances, colleagues did not see a need for the foundation



curriculum to change because they were not convinced about the geriatric social work shortage or they cited lack of student interest. Others were generally supportive of the importance of preparing gerontologically competent graduates, but did not want to change what they teach. What happened most frequently was that faculty members stated their willingness to consider revisions to their courses, but then made only superficial changes, such as slightly modifying the course description in their syllabus; or in some instances, they talked about changes but never actually made any. Moving their colleagues beyond the abstraction "I will do this" to the concrete "how I will do this" was a major challenge for most GeroRich projects. Project directors felt it necessary to make multiple attempts to involve colleagues in their infusion work through multiple venues—when reviewing syllabi for gerontological content, when analyzing findings from the syllabus review, or when setting goals and measures—and an array strategies of group, one-on-one, and electronic communication.

Overall, project directors learned that they needed to be realistic and targeted about what they could accomplish within the nine-month academic calendar, based on programmatic norms about workload. Most recognized by Year 2 that their initial goals had been overly ambitious and did not adequately take account of faculty resistance. They also found that the timing and mechanisms to engage faculty needed to be congruent with a program's organizational norms. For instance, e-mail updates or tips about gerontological infusion typically worked in large programs, where faculty saw each other relatively infrequently. In contrast, face-to-face communication was more effective in small programs, where it is the norm for faculty to interact informally in hallways, offices, and lunch areas, and to talk more frequently about what and how they teach. As described in Chapter IV, a major purpose of the organizational analysis during the planning year was to understand the source and nature of faculty resistance to "gerontolizing" the curriculum. Project directors realized early on that they had to take the time to listen to colleagues' concerns in order to develop strategies that engaged their colleagues in the process. Effective strategies generally varied with program size and faculty ranks. Not surprisingly, directors in small programs were able over time to engage nearly all faculty members in the change process, whereas in large programs the

most effective strategy entailed targeted and multi-staged outreach to faculty with the greatest likelihood of being willing to infuse gerontology into their courses.

One large program implemented a planned three-tiered curriculum infusion strategy: targeted all foundation MSW courses and provided at least two related gerontological readings; targeted three foundation courses and provided at least three related readings and other teaching materials, and consulted with the faculty teaching the courses; and targeted a required first-year MSW course for concentrated infusion that cut across substantive areas, such as child welfare, mental health, and family-centered practice.

Among the faculty ranks, newly hired faculty were often the most receptive to infusing issues of aging and older adults in their courses. Because they were typically teaching a course for the first time, new faculty were not already committed to well-developed course content and tended to be open to their project director's curricular suggestions. Faced with a steep learning curve and multiple demands, they often appreciated assistance with new course development and benefited from accessible teaching resources: case studies, in-class exercises, and assignments.

As noted in the section describing curricular analyses, senior faculty varied widely in their receptivity. In many instances, they did not see a need to change the competencies and content that they had been teaching for years. In other situations, senior faculty with years of teaching, research, or practice experience tended to have a broad view of the environmental context and the importance of preparing graduates for current workforce needs. Some projects found senior faculty especially helpful because they "knew the system," their positions were secure, and they felt less threatened by change at this point in their career. In larger programs, lead faculty members for each foundation area were well positioned to influence colleagues teaching other sections of foundation courses.

Many social work programs increasingly rely on adjunct or part-time faculty to teach practice courses, especially in programs where faculty buy-out their time for their research. And students may readily turn to adjunct instructors who have current practice experience. In such programs, GeroRich projects found it essential to engage part-time and adjunct faculty. Doing so was challenging, however, since part-time faculty are on campus infrequently and not regular participants in curricular meetings. But their involvement is essential to ensure consistency of competencies and content across course sections.

Although the adjuncts were given all the age-related materials that full-time faculty received, they were not present at the faculty retreat and meetings where the GeroRich project was discussed. Therefore, their involvement was spotty.

On the other hand, part-time faculty, as with new faculty, often appreciated gero teaching resources and assistance with course development. Overall, GeroRich projects identified that gaining the support of adjunct faculty was a challenge each semester or quarter, because of their high turnover.

Some GeroRich projects discovered that providing opportunities for faculty to interact directly with older adults helped them to see the need to include course content on elders and their families. For garnering support, this tactic was generally more effective than citing demographics or appealing to what "one should do." For example, some project directors asked their colleagues, often individually or in a retreat setting, to exchange stories and sometimes pictures about the older adults in their lives.

One program posted pictures of faculty's older relatives on their GeroRich Web site. Others engaged faculty by talking about their care responsibilities for older relatives, sometimes by providing faculty with useful elder care resources.

Others suggested that their colleagues invite older adults into the classroom as guest speakers, co-instructors, or non-matriculated students, or they provided honoraria for faculty interested in visiting and learning about practice in aging-focused agencies. When faculty teaching HBSE courses required that students interview an elder, they often learned about aging by reading the interview paper. Or in some instances, the students' enthusiasm as a result of that personal experience influenced faculty to be more open to infusing gerontological content.

Nearly all faculty members, regardless of rank, appreciate receiving salient teaching resources. Some project directors invited faculty to view films featuring older adults. Others developed resource files containing current articles on topics that might be useful to colleagues (e.g., Medicare Part D, dementia, and family caregiving). When asked for suggestions for teaching materials, they could readily provide their colleagues with something tangible. Faculty were often most receptive to videos/DVDs of older adults and their families, since students typically like videos and faculty often have difficulty locating good ones on their own.

One project's Web site allowed faculty to read full text articles at their desks, whether at home or on campus.

"Through our initial focus groups, we found that faculty were amenable to infusing gerontology, but did not have the time and expertise to locate aging-related resources. We began by extending an invitation to faculty to contact us to discuss how to find resources, then offering to find resources for them, then sending them listings of resources, and finally to the creation of this Web site. Now other specialized areas are looking for ways they can create such a site."

Although time-consuming, one of the most effective strategies for engaging faculty was to connect with them personally through one-on-one or small-group interviews designed to learn about colleagues' teaching and research interests, expertise, and passions. Even when approaching faculty members who saw no need for preparing gerontologically competent graduates, listening openly to their concerns and acknowledging their expertise often served to engage them in the change process. Project directors frequently developed an approach built on reciprocity, highlighting ways that gero-focused curricular change might benefit a resistant faculty member. For example, project directors who approached their child welfare colleagues to include more content on grandparents as caregivers of grandchildren in a practice course found their colleagues more receptive when they took the time to listen and learn about the challenges faced by child protective service workers. Some project directors garnered support by inviting their colleagues to help interpret the data they had gathered on curricular needs. Since this individualized approach was resource-intensive, it was not realistic to use with all faculty in large programs. Instead, project directors in large programs carefully chose which faculty to approach individually, such as lead instructors, and then used existing structures—curriculum committee or foundation faculty meetings, e-mail updates, and Web-based teaching resources—to foster interest among other faculty.

Nearly every project director encountered faculty who felt that they could not "add one more thing" to their courses. As noted under our description of the infusion model in Chapter II, the most effective strategy to address this barrier was to link aging with what was important to colleagues:

- With other fields of practice: health, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence.
- With other populations: historically disadvantaged groups, children and families, the homeless.
- With foundation course content: age as cultural diversity and the intersections with race, gender, social class, disability, and sexual orientation.
- With crosscutting themes: intergenerational or multigenerational issues, life course, health and economic disparities, social justice, or lifespan.

Another way that GeroRich project directors assisted their colleagues with multiple course-content demands was to tailor teaching resources (modules, class exercises, readings) to their courses and teaching styles. Some project directors developed individualized teaching resource kits of case studies, modules, lecture notes, and assignments, which related to what was already being taught in a foundation course. Admittedly, this approach was resource intensive for project directors and difficult to sustain without funding for student assistance or release time. Others found that working with their colleagues to develop relevant course materials effectively promoted a strong sense of ownership of the teaching resources.

One project director described the ripple effects from individualized contact. *"The one-one-consultation has helped to stimulate ideas and walk faculty through the resources in order to pin-point items pertinent to their coursework. This approach has been successful with various faculty members. Subsequently, other faculty have contacted the team to discuss options for their classes as well as share new information that has, in turn, been included in the learning resources."*

Faculty development in terms of opportunities to attend gerontological conferences or training was also a central factor in supporting faculty in making changes in their foundation content.

One project director in a relatively small program noted that… *"All faculty members have participated in at least 16 hours of faculty development in terms of aging content and resources, 80 hours of internship with a program serving older adults, and a research project with service providers in aging-focused sites, which resulted in two articles. Faculty are now better equipped to teach social work content and are more comfortable infusing such content into their classes. This has led to students' recognition that regardless of the setting or population, they will be working with older adults in some capacity."*

On the other hand, many faculty members successfully infused issues of aging and older adults into their teaching without such formalized faculty development opportunities. In other words, while faculty training opportunities were a bonus for interested faculty, not all programs could sponsor such participation. In addition, it was assumed that faculty did not need to become gerontological experts in order to infuse gerontology into their foundation content. What they did need was time and commitment to infuse existing resources on content and pedagogy. Less than a handful of programs invited gerontological experts to provide consultation to their faculty, but those that did, found this to be an effective strategy. Overall, faculty development through one-on-one or small group consultation on their foundation courses combined with curricular and teaching resources tailored to meet needs identified by faculty were the most effective ways to engage and support faculty colleagues.

To summarize, action strategies to obtain faculty's support for the planning and implementation of gerontological infusion emphasized first attending to colleagues' feedback and concerns related to gero curricular change. By understanding the varied sources of resistance, project directors were able to develop realistic specific strategies likely to be effective for their programs. They generally started with colleagues who were already receptive; then leveraged their support to influence

others. A closely aligned action strategy involved finding ways to discover, free up, and mobilize colleagues' passion for teaching, research, and service, and then to connect aging with what they really care about. Tapping into what was already on faculty's plates and helping them manage this by "rearranging the curriculum bucket" was the most frequently used strategy. This approach helped colleagues see how they could benefit from building intersections between gerontology and the content areas important to them. As noted above, GeroRich project directors relied upon multiple contacts with their colleagues, to follow up, encourage, and model how to infuse gero competencies and curricular resources. Financial incentives such as release time, summer salary, or honoraria for participation in workgroups of course made a difference, but typically are not available in programs with tight fiscal resources.

The mini-grant program involving summer support for eight faculty created a great deal of energy and new curricular ideas.

Most project directors found other types of incentives and reinforcement were also effective. Finding ways to thank and publicly recognize colleagues who made curricular changes paid off over time, with faculty feeling acknowledged for their efforts and becoming more committed to the GeroRich project's goals. Faculty colleagues also experienced benefits when GeroRich project directors found ways to co-present or co-author papers with them, for example, on how to build intersections for curricular infusion. Translating the curricular infusion experience into advancing scholarly goals was especially valued by junior faculty.

Strategies to Garner Community Support and Action

As a whole, community practitioners were more receptive than any other key stakeholder group to gero infusion in foundation curriculum and the overall social work program. Across all projects, gerontological social workers, whether alumni, community practitioners, or field supervisors, tended to be enthusiastic and responsive about infusing gerontological content. The challenge was not so much finding ways to engage community groups but rather creating the most effective mechanisms for their involvement. GeroRich project directors developed two primary types of community partnerships for infusing gero competencies into both classroom and field curricula:

1. Creation of advisory structures, such as councils or committees, which involved practitioners, faculty, and students.
2. Outreach to the field—to create field placements targeted to older adults or to provide opportunities for students in "non-aging" placements to interact with older adults and their families.

A formalized advisory structure had numerous benefits for GeroRich projects. Such structures brought practitioners' multiple and diverse perspectives to the change process, which typically resulted in an enriched practice-relevant curriculum and, as noted by one project director, "provided a gentle pressure to faculty to maintain the change effort."

Practitioner engagement in needs assessment, goal setting, and selection of competencies, content, and teaching resources helped to ensure that graduates were prepared to meet elders' needs that were distinctive to a geographic area. And theoretical concepts taught in the classroom—through modules, in-class exercises, AV materials, and assignments—became "alive" for students through practitioner input. Several programs actively engaged their advisory board community members in developing up-to-date teaching modules, including case studies, for each foundation course.

One BSW project director invited community practitioners *"to apply for 'mini projects' to awaken or reinforce student interest in working with older adults and to develop teaching modules for each foundation course and practicum. And we found ways to strike a balance between community input and faculty curricular decision-making. We presented mini-project products to faculty and students for feedback at a two-day conference. These mini-projects were then translated into teaching modules for infusion in 14 sections of foundation courses."*

Advisory structures that valued practitioners' current knowledge of practice trends also helped to ensure communication, accountability, and continuity in the curriculum change process. In turn, these types of structures benefited the participating social work programs through more field placements, service learning opportunities, and employment options for students to work with older adults. Gerontological social workers, alumni, and older adults were often willing to become involved as informal mentors to students (separate from their field supervisors). And last, obtaining community support for curricular change served as an effective marketing strategy by increasing the visibility and sustainability of project directors' change efforts to strengthen the gerontological preparation of students.

Participation in advisory structures also benefited the community-based participants. Most alumni appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with faculty and students toward shared goals and to give back to educational institutions and the profession. GeroRich projects also created professional development opportunities for local practitioners, such as co-teaching, gaining continuing education units, access to Web-based resources, joint presentations at conferences, and collaboration on research projects. Similar to the importance of recognition for faculty, community involvement was more likely to be sustained when GeroRich project

directors publicly acknowledged the contributions of alumni, field instructors, and other community practitioners.

Although many GeroRich projects developed advisory board structures specifically for community engagement in gerontological infusion, others used existing program advisory boards, typically by adding some gerontological social workers to the advisory structure. Regardless of format, carefully planning the composition and selection criteria of an advisory structure was important. In general, a mix of faculty, practitioners, students, and elders (for example, a retired social work educator or practitioner who could bring multiple perspectives), along with faculty-practitioner co-chairs, comprised an effective board structure. GeroRich projects found that it was most productive to select members for their commitment to social work education overall, rather than because they had any particular interest in or view about a specific area. This helped to build connections with the social work interests of others on the advisory structure.

Programs that did not have the time, resources, or administrative support to develop advisory structures identified other less resource-intensive ways to obtain community buy-in. These included inviting practitioners to participate in focus groups, often asking them questions about current practice trends and their assessment of how well prepared graduates were to work with elders and their families. Practitioners typically appreciated being asked for their suggestions for how to prepare students with gerontological competencies in both the field and the classroom. When invited to participate, practitioners were generally willing to help programs with the development of practice-based teaching materials. For example, asking practitioners to provide case studies based on their practice experiences effectively engaged them in the curricular infusion process and helped to ensure that such teaching materials reflected current practice. Project directors learned the importance of developing and disseminating selection criteria for such case summaries. Knowing the expectations for case-study examples for specific courses helped practitioners develop relevant studies and alleviated misunderstandings or ill will that might have arisen when a submitted study was deemed inappropriate for a particular course.

Practitioner engagement also increased faculty and student understanding of the range, potential, and diversity of practice settings involving older adults and their families. Some GeroRich projects heightened awareness and reduced misconceptions

by including current pictures and best practice stories about gerontologically-competent practitioners, ideally alumni, on their program's Web site or in a newsletter. Web sites were also used to link students and faculty with information on local elder care services, aging-related classes, seminars and conferences, legislation, research opportunities, and employment.

An organizational goal for some GeroRich projects was to develop opportunities for students to interact with elders in all field sites. They assumed that all agencies—even those that were not aging-specialized organizations—shared with faculty a responsibility to prepare gerontologically competent social workers. Some GeroRich projects fostered the expectation that field instructors in non-aging-focused sites would incorporate contact with elders into the students' learning contract and experiences. For instance, in a few programs, students in child welfare placements were required to learn about the age-associated needs of grandparents as primary caregivers to grandchildren. Or students in a mental health setting were expected to interview at least one older client and to learn about symptoms of depression among elders. A barrier to this approach, however, was field supervisors who were uninformed about aging issues, some of whom even held ageist attitudes. In such instances, field supervisors lacked the knowledge, skills, and values needed to supervise students' attainment of gerontological competencies.

GeroRich projects addressed this barrier by creating professional development opportunities for field supervisors. Some projects provided training on gero competencies to practicum instructors in non-aging-specialized sites, such as schools, mental health centers, child welfare agencies, and substance abuse treatment facilities. Information on issues of aging and older adults, often focused on addressing ageist attitudes, was built into ongoing field supervisor orientations or annual training sessions as a way to minimize the time demands on practitioners. Some programs provided continuing education on gerontological issues at a reduced rate for field supervisors. Practitioners who participated in such training tended, over time, to buy-in and support the gero infusion approach.

In most instances, field supervisors in aging-focused agencies were very supportive of the GeroRich goals, because they recognized the workforce needs and were eager to have students placed with them. If aging-focused placements lacked an MSW to provide supervision, retired faculty or practitioners with MSWs and two years' practice experience were sometimes recruited to meet this need. Such arrangements had benefits for the student, the field program, and the retiree.

Older retired social workers, as "Practicum Partners," supplement students' supervision. This model allows students to be placed in settings without an MSW. While the agency field instructor provides the day-to-day agency-based supervision, the Practicum Partner gives the MSW supervision and draws upon his/her extensive experience to enhance students' learning.

Strategies to Engage Students

As noted earlier, social work programs across the country encounter students who state that they don't want to *"work with those old people."* However, obtaining student buy-in per se was not essential to infusing gerontological content in foundation courses and program structure. Instead, preparing all social work graduates with foundation gerontological competencies and providing opportunities for students to interact with older adults in their classes and field placements were in themselves strategies to recruit students to gerontological social work. GeroRich projects discovered that students who had gerontological exposure in the foundation year were more likely to take advantage of advanced gerontological learning opportunities and to influence positively the attitudes of subsequent cohorts. Just as with faculty, GeroRich project directors learned that it was important to help students see how such gero content interconnects with their career interests in other substantive areas—e.g., interpersonal violence, foster care, family therapy, treatment of depression, or health promotion.

The most effective strategy for engaging students, however, was to create experiential opportunities to interact with older adults, whether through practica, service or volunteer learning, interviews with older adults, or inviting elders into the classroom as guest lecturers, panelists, or students. Such activities were found to address anxieties, negative attitudes, and lack of experience with older adults. When students had positive experiences with older persons, they were often the most effective recruiters of other students through the student grapevine.

As noted by one project director, *"We learned that increased exposure to older adults had an effect on student interest. Students seem to influence each other in terms of choice of placement experiences, e.g., if one student has a good experience in a placement with elders, they share this with other students who then look forward to that placement experience. Once interest is sparked within students, they are able to relate well with older adults."*

Another effective experiential strategy was to create simulations of age-related sensory and physical changes. Simulations provided a chance for students to experience, to some extent, how it feels to have limited vision, hearing, manual dexterity, and mobility. Several GeroRich projects implemented a simulation in which students put cotton in their ears, Vaseline on eyeglasses, and thick gloves on their hands, and then tried to open or read the directions on a pill bottle; others put dried beans and seeds in their shoes to simulate the feeling of walking with arthritic feet. Project directors found, however, that it was important to take time to talk with students about their experiences during this simulation in order to foster empathy rather than negative stereotypes regarding illness or disability in old age.

Another barrier to engaging students was their negative views of gerontological social workers, viewing them as less skilled than those who work with other populations. In fact, the "graying of the geriatric social work workforce" can itself be a deterrent for students with ageist attitudes, since they perceive gerontological social workers to be old. Just as personal interaction with older adults can modify negative views of elders, opportunities to get to know gerontological social workers in community-based settings, not just in traditional hospital or nursing-home sites, can be an effective recruitment strategy. Other ways developed by GeroRich projects to try to change students' negative image of gerontological social work were to invite alumni who work with older adults to speak at student brown bags, in classes, and at career fairs, and to serve as mentors; to include students on advisory structures with geriatric practitioners; and, as noted above, to post photos and brief descriptions of gerontological social work alumni on their program's Web site.

Although experiential learning typically hooked students emotionally, GeroRich projects developed other learning options to advance students' professional goals. Some project directors invited students to work on aging-relevant research projects with them and to co-author and present papers at national gerontological conferences. Others offered modest prizes, ranging from $100 to $250, for research papers on older adults that students submitted as part of their foundation course requirements. Some projects recognized students by a special title, such as Gerontological Fellow. And many project directors required students, as part of classroom or practicum credit, to attend local or regional gerontological meetings or conferences, including events sponsored by the GeroRich project. Film festivals were often attractive to students. One project partnered with the medical school and the local Alzheimer's Association in their annual "edutainment" (a combination of education and entertainment!) event featuring the film "Iris" followed by a panel discussion. The visibility of aging issues in one's social work program was increased through GeroRich project bulletin boards, Web sites, listservs, newsletter articles, resource centers, and colloquia on aging. In addition, these visual representations served to embed aging in the organization as well as to engage more students. Similarly, publicly recognizing students who graduate with gerontological competencies, such as at a graduation reception, helped to change organizational norms and culture related to the importance of gerontology.

GeroRich project directors agreed that stipends typically helped attract students to aging-focused practica serving older adults. But stipends by themselves may not be an adequate incentive if students hold ageist attitudes and misconceptions about gerontological social work practice. Stipends were most effective in engaging students when paired with other experiential activities, targeted marketing, and the assurance of quality supervision in practicum sites.

SUSTAINABILITY

Beginning with the first year of GeroRich funding—and throughout the planning and implementation phases—emphasis was placed on the importance of sustaining curricular and organizational changes. This was also congruent with the strategic focus of the GeroRich model on relationship-building as a foundation for sustainability. Presumably, lasting change would result from a project director's ability to build strong relationships with and engage key stakeholders from the inception of the change process. And such relationships with faculty colleagues, community partners, and administrative leaders were assumed to increase the likelihood of additional resources over time. In addition, strong relationships with students were found to facilitate a "bottom-up" approach to change, such as when students started requesting more gerontological content in foundation classes and field placements. But building such relationships in themselves was not enough. The relationships with these new partners needed to be continuously reinforced—through public recognition, new opportunities, and expressions of appreciation.

Measures of effectiveness were also seen as a foundation for sustainability. Outcome measures, i.e., to what extent programs achieved their goals, were viewed as essential for convincing stakeholders and organizations to adopt and sustain changes. It was recognized that institutionalizing policy and procedural changes, such as modifying a program's new course development procedures to include aging content, would not occur unless project directors could demonstrate that gerontological infusion was effective in preparing graduates competent to work with elders and meet workforce needs. Likewise, GeroRich projects would be unlikely to acquire more resources for curricular and organizational changes—whether dollars, time, or curricular space—unless they could document such positive outcomes from gerontological infusion.

Planned sustainability as a goal for programs with GeroRich funding meant that gerontological competencies and content would be institutionalized and remain in the curriculum and organizational structure, even when faculty, student, field supervisor, and academic administrator turnover has occurred, and long after the GeroRich project per se becomes a thing of the past. Nearly all educators have encountered curricular initiatives where changes were made and then later eliminated, because of faculty and academic administrator turnover, declining faculty buy-in, or greater attention to competing priorities. Since sustainable changes must endure beyond any one individual, responsibility for gero infusion necessarily transfers from the individual GeroRich project director to the social work program as a whole. Sustainable change solidifies the project director's hard work and means that future cohorts of students—and, ultimately, older adults—benefit from the legacy of GeroRich.

The GeroRich model posits that sustainability is shown by much more than dollars. Fiscal resources are ideal but not essential, and sustainability can occur without new funds. Although new dollars can enhance sustainability, other resources also have helped to institutionalize curricular and programmatic changes in programs with GeroRich projects. These include time, administrative support and leadership, community partnerships (e.g., the aging provider network that can work with students and speak to classes), information (e.g., teaching materials), and in-kind contributions (e.g., food, staff support, supplies, and equipment).

In analyzing data from the GeroRich projects, ten ways to promote sustainability were identified:

1. Institutionalization of changes through formal policies, procedures, and governance structures.
2. Creation of new organizational structures.
3. Building a critical mass of gerontology faculty.
4. Institutionalization of changes through formalization of student groups.
5. Collaboration with other substantive curricular areas.
6. Development of academic-community partnerships related to aging.
7. Production of curricular materials within the overall change process.
8. Dissemination of findings.
9. Marketing of successes.
10. Resource development/obtaining funding.

These are captured in a case study of one MSW level program:

- They hired a new faculty member with expertise in gerontological practice.
- They modified admissions criteria to take account of applicants with an interest in aging.
- They established a mechanism for the development and use of gero curricular modules for advanced as well as foundation content.
- They marketed the school's aging-related activities to the advisory board and general public.
- They secured stipends for field placements in aging.
- They continued to build the Interdisciplinary Certificate in Aging on their campus.
- They were working to secure funds for an endowed chair in aging.

1. Institutionalization of Changes through Formal Policies, Procedures, and Governance Structures

Institutionalizing changes through governing bodies that set policy and develop procedures is a sustainability strategy that does not necessarily require new resources. However, as noted above, evidence of the benefits from gerontological infusion (e.g., outcome measures) is needed to convince decision-makers to changes policies or procedures. Policy changes require working within existing governance structures, such as a program's committees or task forces related to educational policy, curriculum, field work, admissions, and foundation sequence.

GeroRich-affiliated programs modified existing policies and procedures in ways that helped sustain gerontological content within foundation courses. For example, some programs convinced their Curriculum Committees to modify program guidelines for new course approval to include the expectation that issues of aging and older adults be infused in all new course proposals.

The most visible structural institutionalized change in leaving a legacy of a "gero enriched curriculum" is the adoption of a process of review and revision by each Curriculum Sequence and then by the Curriculum Committee of all foundation master course syllabi at the BA and MSW levels to ensure that faculty will continue to include aging-relevant objectives, content, learning experiences, and outcomes in all courses.

Others worked with members of their Curriculum Committee to develop and disseminate a master syllabi outline or template for gerontological infusion in course objectives, learning experiences, and assignments. Such a template included both criteria for quality syllabi, in general, as well as those specific to infusing gerontology competencies and content into courses.

"As a result of our project, our Curriculum Committee now routinely includes a discussion of infusion of aging content when looking at a syllabus for revisions. This did not exist before the project began."

As another example, some projects directors worked with their Curriculum Committee to add criteria related to gerontological content to already existing procedures for reviewing course syllabi. A document, *Guidelines for Foundation Syllabi Infusion,* is included in the Appendices and can be modified to fit particular programs. Another procedural change successfully promoted by a few GeroRich projects was to obtain faculty support for adding questions about working with older adults to their admissions applications or interviews. This was more likely to happen in programs that already asked applicants about their interests in

areas such as child welfare, mental health, or multicultural practice than in those without such criteria.

Sustainability was also enhanced by strategies that linked a program's curricular and organizational changes to existing programmatic processes, such as a program's self-study for reaffirmation, strategic planning, or other program reviews. For example, some GeroRich projects found that linking curricular measures to their reaffirmation self-study helped facilitate sustainability, since accreditation standards require the documentation of outcomes. In addition, the kind of attention (and the number of meetings!) given to curricular review in site-visit preparation may support the consistent and coordinated infusion of gero content. There were exceptions to this pattern, however, with some GeroRich projects finding a self study or program review to be an obstacle to curricular change because of its time-consuming nature.

Most projects implemented sustainable organizational changes through working with directors of admissions to include information on gero social work careers in recruitment packets or letters to prospective applicants, inviting more gerontological social workers to participate in Career Fairs, and working with the staff responsible for their program's written and electronic publications to include pictures of social workers with older adults, or intergenerational images. One project even produced a recruitment video.

2. Creation of New Organizational Structures

Some GeroRich projects created new structures to try to sustain their gero curricular and organizational changes—and that brought together faculty, students, and practitioners from across a wide range of substantive areas. Several examples display the variety of activities. New gero events involved students, faculty, and community members, such as an Annual Gerontology Lecture, ongoing film series, day-long integrative seminars, conferences, or workshops. These events also had the advantage of creating new partnerships through co-sponsorship by other campus units or community agencies.

"The original plan for a Research Colloquium focused on aging expanded to become an overarching special emphasis within the annual university-wide Scholars Day. Students and faculty from across the university were exposed to the incredible opportunities for working with older adults. Community practitioners had a renewed understanding of their contributions to research as practice. The plan is to sustain this effort by providing a Gerontology Track in the campus-wide Scholars Day each year, which is co-sponsored by the Graduate School and the Institute for Gerontological Studies."

Many GeroRich funded programs infused gerontological content into Continuing Education courses that were self-sustaining. Some developed a new Web site

focused on gerontological social work or a gero social work section on their program's Web site.

"Most important toward leaving a legacy of 'gero-enriched' curriculum was the creation of our GeroRich Web site. We institutionalized it in a number of ways. First, we asked faculty to provide pictures of their older family members to put on our Web site so that every time it was used, they would see their loved one's picture. Second, we linked our Web site to the already existing (and funded) Area Agency on Aging Web site. By providing this link, the GeroRich Web site can be easily maintained. Third, we added new amenities ("Aging Tip of the Month," link to videos in our School's media center) to the site as faculty and field instructors made us aware of their needs."

Art, bulletin boards, and other visual representations of aging within the building that housed a social work program provided effective low-cost ways to promote the project.

"We were able to secure approval for the first bulletin board in our new building. It includes a large permanent sign, Gerontology News. A bench directly underneath is one of the few sitting areas for students waiting to see various faculty, increasing its visibility."

Some new structures, such as a Geriatric Enrichment Group or a Curriculum Committee Gero Task Force, continued to meet and monitor changes after funding ended, although they convened less frequently than during the planning and implementation phases. Although some of these structures required new fiscal resources, several less resource-intensive ones were maintained in collaboration with other campus units or community partners. Other organizational changes made by GeroRich project directors, such as developing intergenerational service learning opportunities, benefited the whole social work program.

"Because of the success of the project, the leadership of the School is interested in supporting service-learning so that it becomes a permanent part of the curriculum. Additionally, the Immersion Subcommittee of the School's Diversity Committee has adopted service-learning as a goal."

Permanent awards for student papers and research or faculty awards for gerontological teaching and/or scholarship were a useful means of recognizing their contributions. For programs with extensive development resources, funding an endowed professorship or chair in gerontology heightened national and campus-wide visibility for aging issues.

3. Building a Critical Mass of Gerontology Faculty

Hiring additional faculty members with gerontological expertise or, at a minimum, the interest and willingness to learn to infuse gero competencies into their own teaching can help build sustainability. Sustainability is enhanced, since gero-focused faculty will support each other's efforts to implement curricular and organizational changes.

One project director noted that the GeroRich project enhanced the program's ability to hire two new faculty with expertise in gerontology. *"We believe that the GeroRich project contributed to their perception that important activities are taking place in our School in the area of gerontology. We expect that our new faculty will help build gerontology within the School and the University and will contribute to social work being a major player in gerontological education and research across campus."*

Building a critical mass is especially important in programs where only one faculty member has been providing gerontological social work leadership and feeling that s/he is the "lone voice." However, because this strategy requires new resources or the reallocation of existing ones for faculty hires, it was not a realistic one for most GeroRich projects to propose. And faculty may feel that one or two faculty with gerontological expertise is enough and be unwilling to commit additional faculty lines.

4. Formalization of Student Initiatives

Although students are transient members of social work programs, they can play a pivotal role in creating and sustaining changes, especially by continuing to support gero infusion when key faculty members retire or resign. GeroRich projects that were successful in engaging students then found that students could enhance sustainability in a number of ways. They could advocate from the "bottom up" for gerontological content in the curriculum, recruit peers to take classes or attend special events related to gerontological social work, or increase the visibility of issues of aging and older adults within a program, often through a gerontological social work club, caucus, or informal peer network.

Although most project directors found student recruitment to be challenging, several did not. *"We found it a lot easier to inspire our students than our faculty. I feel that faculty began to respond more when it was student-driven..."*

"The aging curriculum had to be consumer-driven for it to take off..."

"Student-initiated efforts represent a particularly influential vehicle for institutionalizing changes at the School, which pays close attention to the voiced concerns of this constituency."

When students started requesting gerontological competencies and content in their foundation courses or placements, faculty and administrators tended to listen. And when growing numbers of students asked for gero practice applications in their courses, they influenced the course content and structure. Students who interacted with older adults in their field placements or service learning settings often used examples involving elders as topics for class discussion, group projects, or written assignments. They thus influenced both course content *and* pedagogy. In some programs, students helped to "socialize" new faculty to the importance of gerontological learning experiences, a process that can help prevent the disappearance of gerontological changes when faculty turnover occurs.

When enthusiastic student groups organized special events associated with GeroRich projects, they increased the visibility of aging issues in the program and activated the "student grapevine" about the benefits of gerontological social work.

Students were creative in the names selected for their interest group: Silver Lining, Generations, Intergenerational Partners, and the Student Association for Service to Older Adults.

Most importantly, students could generate a "buzz" about working with elders and their families. Their enthusiasm was contagious and made some GeroRich projects highly visible within their institutions: as examples, students developed buttons to wear ("Aging…Aren't we all?"), bulletin boards, listservs, and gerontological social work Web sites. Such activities could be sustained when programs identified first-year MSW students or BSW juniors who could assume leadership after advanced-year or senior student leaders graduated.

5. Collaboration with Other Curricular Areas

The approach of building intersections of aging with other practice areas, discussed more fully in Chapter II, also increased the potential for sustainable curricular change by facilitating ongoing faculty buy-in beyond project funding.

Kinship care is a prime area in which to foster collaboration across a wide range of areas—child welfare, aging, substance abuse, mental health, family violence to name a few. For instance, many participating MSW programs received Title IV-E child welfare training funds that could support students committed to learning about kinship care best practices and to take courses in aging. Or gero-focused students who were interested in working with grandparents as primary caregivers to grandchildren were encouraged to take child welfare classes where they would learn more about kinship care policies and programs. In one program, a gerontologist faculty member partnered with a child welfare instructor to develop a research study on grandparents caring for grandchildren, jointly authored

peer-review publications, and developed a team-taught course on Kinship Care for both gerontology and Title IV-E students. In another, a faculty member secured private funding for students to be "Kinship Care Navigators" to assist grandparents raising grandchildren.

"At our first meeting of our advisory board, which included 18 social workers, we showed the video 'Surrounded by Love: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.' Incredibly, despite the variety of agencies represented in the audience (health care, hospice, gero pscyh, home health), each board member was able to comment on how the issue of grandparents raising children impacted their work and nature of services offered."

Collaboration with other curricular areas was also fostered when other faculty viewed the principles and strategies of the GeroRich Planned Change Model as transferable to other curricular areas.

"Our faculty now refer to the GeroRich project as a model for enhancing particular content within the curriculum. For example, a newly constituted Diversity Committee is looking for resources to undertake a similar examination of our courses to increase content on cultural issues."

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6. Institutionalization of New Gero Partnerships

Three types of formal partnerships were found to help sustain curricular and organizational changes:

1. With agencies (Academic-Field or Academic-Community partnerships).
2. With older adults.
3. With other campus departments or centers on aging or consortia, and with other regional or state colleges and universities.

Partnerships with Agencies

Academic-agency partnerships tended to provide faculty and students with research opportunities, a pool of agency-based guest lecturers, and internship and career placement options. Involvement of community partners also promoted sustainability through their ability to provide ongoing opportunities for students and faculty to interact with older persons. Some GeroRich projects developed formal written affiliation agreements with gero-focused agencies to help sustain the availability of student placements. One program implemented a field education site model, developed by Title IV-E child welfare funded programs, which involved a cluster of students at one aging-focused site. This model could promote sustainability by

building a "critical mass" and peer support. Written or Web-based materials, such as practicum manuals about gerontological field opportunities, also helped institutionalize experiential gero learning in GeroRich-funded programs.

One program holds an annual mini-conference for new field instructors who take the Seminar in Field Instruction. They were able to institutionalize a presentation on "Everybody Needs to Know About Aging" as part of this mini-conference.

Changes were also institutionalized with non-gero-focused placements sites. In some programs, placement agreements were developed that required all students in the foundation field course to have contact with at least one older client. As noted earlier, several GeroRich projects implemented annual gerontology orientation and training sessions for field instructors in non-aging specialized settings.

"With the cooperation of our field education coordinator and Field Education Advisory Committee, we have instituted a practice expectation that each BSW and MSW foundation student will have contact with at least one older adult in their field course. Field experiences with older adults are discussed and analyzed in the students' field seminar. I have presented annually a three-hour field education training for field instructors about how to incorporate experiences with older adults into field placements."

As noted throughout this monograph, advisory boards composed of faculty, practitioners, and in some cases students were one of the most important structures that fostered sustainable changes. Nearly all projects that developed some advisory structures tried to maintain them after funding ended. Because members were committed to sustaining gerontological changes in the classroom and field sites, most were willing to continue to meet with project directors, although typically on a less frequent basis than during the funded phases.

One project director attested that… *"the Geriatric Enrichment Task Force has been a mainstay of our change efforts. It has successfully brought together a stable membership of 15 students, alumni, field personnel, and faculty who are committed to providing geriatric-enriched learning and teaching opportunities for students and faculty. The members are currently exploring forms for institutionalizing the task force and providing a forum in which the various constituencies represented could continue to meet to influence class and field curricular development as well as plan and implement school-wide activities and the strategies for continuing aging-related learning beyond the project."*

GeroRich project directors networking efforts within the practice community also strengthened sustainability, especially when they served on agency boards or committees, or spoke at community sites serving older adults and their families. Several projects formalized collaboration with their county or state departments of aging services. For example, in one program, GeroRich faculty provided in-service training on culturally competent assessment for social work case managers, who in turn shared their practice expertise with other faculty and students. The agency became an ongoing site for data collection for students' research projects, agency staff served as guest speakers and members of admissions or curriculum committees, and faculty and students assisted with ongoing programmatic evaluation in the agency. When one GeroRich project no longer had funds to maintain their Web site, their state department on aging agreed to host it and thus ensure its continuation.

"The GeroRich project has resulted in a permanent working arrangement between our department and the county Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS). Year 1 grant funds were used to help the DAAS leverage a new staff position devoted to supervision of students, including those from our new BSW program, within DAAS. The ongoing agreement between the university and agency is one of multiple roles and flexible interactions in which each is able to call on the other for assistance as needs arise."

Regardless of the nature of community partnerships, GeroRich project directors learned the importance of making such collaboration visible to their dean/director and faculty colleagues and of publicly recognizing field/practicum instructors for their engagement with the change process and their significant educational role with students.

Partnerships with Older Adults

Some of the GeroRich projects developed ongoing collaboration with older adults in their local community. This included surveying older social workers to determine ways they would like to interact with the project, involving retired social workers as field supervisors, including older adults on advisory committees, and sponsoring groups of elders to be engaged in educating students.

"The Best Club is a club of elders sponsored through our grant. Best Club members have the opportunity to speak to students, give presentations at Intergenerational Events, be interviewed for Oral History and Social History interviews, get involved in the social work student club, and tutor students. In addition, they hold special discussion groups to address issues of concern to them."

However, several project directors cautioned about the need to be sensitive to other demands on older adults, such as other responsibilities, time, mobility, and transportation barriers, and not to assume their 24-hour availability. Ideally, project directors thanked elders who assisted with students' education with a modest honorarium, an invitation to lunch, or some other form of tangible recognition.

Academic Partnerships with Other Campus Units

In some cases, collaborating with other departments or with a campus-wide center on aging garnered additional resources, provided new educational and research opportunities for students and faculty, and helped sustain changes made.

"As a result of GeroRich, our program and the Department of Applied Gerontology now share notices of meetings, workshops, and other resources, which provide more learning opportunities for our students."

In other instances, projects developed gero-focused Institutes or Centers within their own programs that linked to the broader campus. Or gerontology minors, certificates, or dual majors of social work/gerontology were created within the social work program, but were open to students from other departments.

The development of Gerontology Centers within social work programs was most common, but one program developed an Institute for Multigenerational Health, Development, and Equality that cross-cut the substantive areas of child welfare, development disabilities, HIV/AIDS, and mental health and health.

In general, however, the GeroRich Coordinating Team did not encourage projects to invest time and resources in such partnerships early on, because such efforts might divert programs from the primary goal of preparing gerontologically competent social work graduates. Nevertheless, the success of GeroRich within an academic institution often led to new and sometimes unanticipated academic collaboration. On the other hand, social work programs housed in another academic department, such as sociology, typically had the norm and expectation to collaborate cross-disciplinarily. In such cases, collaboration was the best way to implement and sustain gero infusion in social work courses. As with most of the methods to build sustainability, developing academic partnerships needed to be congruent with a program's organizational culture. A handful of smaller programs developed consortia with other social work programs in their region or state, most often in sparsely populated areas.

7. Production of Curricular Materials Distinctive to a Program

Although curricular and teaching resources existed initially through the SAGE-SW Tool Kit and by Year 2 on the GeroRich Web site, faculty sometimes benefited by developing their own teaching materials specific to their courses and their program's geographic location. For instance, GeroRich projects in rural areas supplemented GeroRich Web site resources with case studies, assignments, resource manuals, and PowerPoint lectures tailored to practice and policy issues distinctive to rural locations. In addition, faculty members who have a sense of ownership from being involved in the development of teaching resources may be more likely to use such materials in their classes over the long haul. Although the Coordinating Team recommended the use of GeroRich resources to avoid "reinventing the wheel," programs at the same time needed to involve faculty and, in some instances, students in developing supplementary teaching materials congruent with their distinctive mission, size, geographic location, and organizational norms. Thus most GeroRich projects used a combination of resources distributed through the national Coordinating Team and those developed independently.

One project director noted that, *"the use of three case studies addressing issues related to aging has been institutionalized in the foundation practice courses through the use of casebooks developed as part of the GeroRich project. Faculty found it easy to introduce aging material when it is approached 'indirectly' as a means for teaching basic practice skills. Faculty say they will continue to use the cases because they are good learning tools, not simply because they are aging cases. The original plan was to have faculty members use the cases in one class. However, many are using the cases for two or three classes because they find them to be such good teaching tools."*

GeroRich projects had the advantage of being able to utilize funds to purchase media and library holdings on issues of aging and older adults that then became part of their program's permanent holdings. One program established video libraries at each of their five campuses, which made it easy for faculty members at each campus to check out newly purchased videos on older adults. Many project directors had developed positive relationships with their social work or social science librarians and found these librarians receptive to the purchase of gerontological social work books and media.

8. Disseminating Findings

Disseminating lessons learned was emphasized from the inception of funding in order to advance the knowledge base on gerontological social work education—and thereby ensure the long-term impact of the GeroRich Project. Many faculty directly involved in GeroRich projects had heavy teaching loads, making it difficult

for them to find time for scholarly dissemination through peer-review publications, conference presentations, or book chapters. Approximately 30% of GeroRich project directors were junior faculty who faced pressures to publish, but often felt they had little support to do so. Nevertheless, project directors were innovative in finding ways to foster the dissemination of their work. Some asked other GeroRich project directors or senior faculty in their program to mentor them and co-author presentations with them, often at state or regional conferences. Others recruited students interested in research to assist them with data analysis of literature reviews, or engaged students in a research course in the curriculum or organizational analyses. And some faculty were effective in convincing their dean or director to provide them with release time to write and publish as a means to highlight what their program had accomplished.

9. Marketing GeroRich Accomplishments

Most GeroRich project directors had little experience with marketing their work. And some were initially resistant to the concept, equating marketing with a costly business-like approach of glossy brochures or ads. To overcome this resistance, the Coordinating Team emphasized ways to market success that did not require extensive fiscal resources and would be viewed as compatible with social work values and organizational culture.

Internal marketing was one such approach. Through internal mechanisms, GeroRich projects endeavored to link their curricular accomplishments to their program or university's mission, goals, priorities, and needs. For example, they illustrated how gero infusion advanced priorities such as recruiting excellent students and faculty, graduating well-prepared and satisfied alumni, improving "town-gown" relationships, expanding their institution's scholarly reputation, or enhancing development efforts with foundations or private donors.

GeroRich projects discovered that it was helpful to develop a message that was consistent with such goals and priorities. For instance, projects in institutions trying to garner more community support could provide examples of how their GeroRich project was helping to attain this goal through stories or pictures of service learning and field placements with elders, or of faculty volunteer involvement in agencies serving older adults. As another example, GeroRich projects in institutions that

value interdisciplinary work showcased their collaboration with other campus units, especially when joint gero courses recruited students. Marketing what they had accomplished usually made project directors aware that they had achieved more than they realized, and often brought them both recognition and a sense of satisfaction.

GeroRich projects were encouraged to think broadly about external marketing in two ways:

1. Disseminating what they learned to key stakeholders and the larger social work education community, as described above.
2. Translating what they had learned to the broader community beyond social work.

This translation occurred through articles in campus or local newspapers, in program- or university-wide newsletters, or through stories on local radio or television stations. Students in gero placements were particularly well poised to tell emotionally compelling stories that could attract media attention. Project directors were encouraged to work with their institution's communications or public relations staff in preparing press releases and making media contacts. In addition, the Coordinating Team prepared and distributed a press release kit that could assist all GeroRich Projects with conveying their stories to the broader community (see Appendices for examples).

10. Resource Development

As noted above, the Coordinating Team emphasized that additional funding was not essential, since the intent was for GeroRich projects to think creatively about other ways of institutionalizing changes. But the Coordinating Team did provide training and resources on both internal funding (e.g., the program's or University's budget or pilot funding for new initiatives) and external funding (e.g., outside grants, field agency support, and individual donor or corporate support). Projects were encouraged to identify existing strengths that could form the groundwork for funding requests. For example, they were to articulate how their gero infusion work was meeting workforce needs and advancing institutional priorities, benefiting constituencies such as students and alumni, supporting their institution's mission and goals, and conveying their passion for gerontological social work in a way to create excitement among potential donors. As another example, students who have become "hooked" on working with elders are often the most persuasive messengers with potential donors. So these students were recruited to meet and tell their stories in various venues. GeroRich Project directors were also encouraged to contact staff within their institution who could assist them with locating external sources of funding and with proposal writing.

Conclusion

Strategies to garner stakeholder support and to identify ways to influence organizational arrangements were central to effective implementation of sustainable changes. This chapter has reviewed some of the most frequently used strategies and identified ten methods utilized by projects to build sustainability. Regardless of the size or nature of the social work program, GeroRich project directors displayed remarkable creativity, resourcefulness, and perseverance in their implementation strategies. While sustainability had seemed a daunting task in the early planning phase, all project directors found ways to institutionalize changes, most frequently without extensive new resources. In fact, the extent of institutionalization of gero changes exceeded the expectations of both the Coordinating Team and the project directors themselves. Over time such sustainable changes helped to garner more resources from academic administrators, the community, and private donors.