Careers in Gerontology

There is a need for trained professionals to work in the numerous fields related to gerontology, elder care services, and geriatric medicine. Oregon and the nation’s population are undergoing a dramatic increase in the percentage of older adults. According to data compiled by the Administration on Aging, by the year 2030 there will be approximately 70 million Americans age 65 and over, up from 40 million in 2010. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that Oregon’s older adult population is increasing at a rate of 3.5% as compared to the national median of 2.6%.

In addition to the growing older adult population that will require specialized services, there are also unmet work force training needs. According the U.S. Department of Labor, employment in home health care services are expected to increase 69.5% between 2004 and 2014, during the same time period, community care services for the elderly are expected to see a 54.8% increase in the need for qualified employees. People from a broad range of career fields who have received training in gerontology will be very marketable and provide important services for our community. The aging population is driving much of the increased need in the medical field. An understanding of gerontology will help people who go into the following professions: medical assistants (52.1% increase expected between 2004 and 2014) physical therapists (36.7%), physical therapy assistants (44.2%), occupational therapists (33.6%), occupational therapy assistants (34.1%), as well as nurses and many other human service careers. An integral component of the major is a practicum option, which will allow students to get real-world experience in the area of gerontology. The practicum experience will also help students navigate the transition from college student to productive member of the workforce.

The following are examples of some of the numerous employment opportunities in the following fields that would be beneficial to someone trained in gerontology*:

- Long term care administration
- Skilled nursing care administration
- Senior center operations and management
- Occupational Therapy
- Home health care
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Teaching
- Nursing
- Nursing assistants
- Recreational therapists
- Social work
- Research that focus on older adults’ needs and interests
- Public and private institutions that provide health, education, and social services to older adults
- Senior care services
- Hospice
- Palliative care
- Public policy and advocacy for older adults

*-Note: some of the above careers may require additional education or certification.
Already have a Bachelor Degree? Students can earn a post baccalaureate degree in Gerontology if they already have a bachelor degree. The requirements include completing at least 45 credit hours and all of the major requirements. This is a great way for professionals who are already working with older adults to increase their skills and maximize their career opportunities. It might even be possible to earn a post baccalaureate degree in Gerontology in one year if students can go to school full time.