Forward With Integrity Report
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This project was funded by the Office of the President, with matching funds from the Faculty of Science. The proposal was to form partnerships with local retirement homes, and allow undergraduate and graduate students to make meaningful community connections, to interact with seniors, but to also conduct cognitive research with individuals, on location at the retirement homes.

We successfully partnered with five retirement homes in Hamilton, Burlington and Waterloo.

Aberdeen Gardens
Durand Residence
Caroline Place
Waterloo Heights
Martha’s Landing

This project has clearly fostered collaboration and interdisciplinarity. As a result of one of the findings from the project, I have started on a new followup project, to test a new screening test for dementia. My collaborator for one part of the project is Dr. Jeff Crukley from Starkey Hearing Technologies (an international hearing aid company), and also Dr. Karen Saperson from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neuroscience, and Dr. Meghan McConnell from the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Saperson, McConnell and I just received funding for this project from the LaBarge Optimal Aging Opportunities Fund, and we plan to apply for funding from the Alzheimer Society next month.

I have recently become an associate of the Gilbrea Centre at McMaster.

Over a dozen students have had the opportunity to be directly involved in research through this project. To date, four honours students have conducted their thesis research in the retirement homes, and another. One of these students is preparing the work for submission, and she will be the first author on the paper. This work is forming the cornerstone of the doctoral dissertation of a graduate student as well.
This work has given students a chance to get off campus, and to interact with the community, and with seniors, including seniors suffering from mild to severe cognitive impairment. All students who have taken part have cited it as an incredibly valuable personal and professional learning experience.

Currently, I am extremely excited about the new possibility for the creation of a new dementia screening tool that has emerged from this work. This is an approach coming far more from basic psychological science, plus the rigorous quantitative approach of psychometrics, rather than from more traditional clinical perspectives.

I have recently received funding from the Labarge Opportunities Fund to continue this work, and expand to other sites where we can recruit older adults. A different ongoing collaboration with Starkey Hearing Technologies has serendipitously lead to them being willing to test large numbers of their clinical populations with this new dementia screening tool, to help evaluate it. The PhD work of one of my students is also continuing this work. Finally, we will be applying for Alzheimer’s Society funding shortly, with possible funding possibilities from Heart & Stroke in the future, as well.

The major barriers to this kind of work is always simply logistics – of scheduling both students and seniors for testing. Furthermore, turnover in the administration teams of the retirement residences has been challenging.

Finally, I can add that this work has resulted in some positive news coverage for McMaster. It was covered by the CBC, and the McMaster PR team was also able to put together a piece about this project.


http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/searching-for-the-words-on-the-tip-of-your-tongue/