

## **Guide for Engaging with Universities to Advance Senior Living Leadership Programs**

VISION 2025 was formed from a common concern for attracting and developing the leadership talent required to serve our field for the next several decades. To that end, there is a great deal of upside for making the effort to engage with a university or college in your organization's footprint.

One of VISION 2025's goals is to make that connection simple, actionable, and impactful.

*First:* Identify the education providers in your geography.

*Second:* Gather some basic program information from VISION 2025 such as health administration, gerontology, or nursing programs, etc.; segmented by undergraduate and graduate; identify numbers of students, graduates per class, Dean or program leader, etc.

*Third:* Identify alums in your organization with connections to any of these programs and/or people. If you do not identify any alums or connections within your own organizations, reach out to members of VISION 2025 for potential points of contact. Some basic homework, using your own sources and the VISION 2025 information already assembled, can jump start and simplify your efforts and help those efforts bear fruit more quickly.

Next, begin developing and managing the relationship with appropriate program leaders (if you don't have one already). The first recommended goal, if you do not have an existing relationship, is a listening and introduction meeting, a meet and greet if you will. The goal is not to ask for a program relationship, but an opportunity to meet program directors and educators, discuss their educational and organizational needs (which usually includes career placement of graduates along with practical training) and listen carefully to what the person perceives are his/her personal and organizational interests or needs. It is great to share our general observations, concerns, and opportunities as it relates to staffing challenges in a growing and dynamic field. With that said, we do not recommend coming in to that first meeting with an agenda or list, but rather discuss how you can communicate and work together. Alumni have a distinct advantage due to their history and understanding with the University or college.

If you have a relationship already or have had an introductory meeting, a second step is to identify overlapping interests and explore avenues of involve the



in very applied actionable items. You will find a list and suggestions below that represent tangible practices that potential partners can engage in together (check all that apply and provide space for accompanying notes):

- Field Experiences – these could vary in length from 3 -12 months
- Guest Lecturer – mutually explore topics that you are knowledgeable about and the faculty or staff may have some expertise limitations
- Volunteer – students can connect with residents, tenants, and clients
- Advisory Board – whether formal or informal, a good way to serve as an ambassador for the program, give faculty feedback and help guide students

Separate from these participatory opportunities, there are financial partnerships that can also be explored with various levels of cost, return, etc. These include:

- Scholarship – a simple way to help and gain some visibility
- Project – fund an identified project that students and faculty are involved with
- Funded student experience – underwrite the costs of a conference for a student
- Paid student field experiences

The goal is to find one or two things that work for both of you, because people like to see things happening. A good partnership at some point produces results that can be shared with others.

Ultimately, you want to get to a place that you both feel comfortable enough with each other that often a simple phone call or cup of coffee is an example of the ease and trust in your relationship. The true success of these type of partnerships is when you are both equally driving or initiating the conversations or possibilities for students or future employees and any other related activities. Tracking these contacts is one way to ensure that the relationship develops and is maintained in a manner that is productive for everyone.

Sources:

*Olson, D., Johs-Artisensi, D. Kenny, E. “The Value of Partnerships for Senior Care Administration Academic Programs and Provider Organizations in the Field,” Journal For Health Administration Education accepted on March 2, 2021 for an expected summer 2021 publication.*

*The contributions of the partnership workgroup for VISION 2025 including John Cochrane, Steve Nash, Mike Schanke and Ed Kenny with support from Doug Olson and Taylor Darby.*