The Dean’s Office has read and commends the high quality of analysis and clear articulation of goals in the Gerontology Institute’s self-study report. We appreciate the evident hard work of the self-study committee (Candace Kemp, Chivon Mingo, Jennifer Morgan, Jenny Zhan) and its co-chairs (Jaye Atkinson and Elisabeth Burgess). We believe the report clearly demonstrates how the Gerontology Institute has made important contributions to the university’s strategic planning goals, and it helps shape a pathway for future sustainability and accomplishment.

We applaud the Institute’s progress over the course of the review period and since its most recent self-study. In transitioning from a unit that relied disproportionately on non-tenure track faculty to one that now has a small but productive core of tenured and tenure-track faculty, Gerontology has demonstrated some organizational maturation. There have been some notable successes in the hiring of junior faculty, in the promotion of existing faculty, and in the expansion of faculty from across the university holding affiliate positions within the Institute. The Institute has worked to strengthen its curriculum and the attractiveness of that curriculum to potential students. We pay special attention here to the internship opportunities available to Gerontology students, which may be favorably viewed as contributing to the University’s efforts to expand the number of available “signature experiences.”

The Dean’s Office agrees with the goals outlined in the Gerontology Institute’s self-study. We do, however, have further questions about how to proceed in the most effective way to achieve these laudable objectives. In the context of Georgia State University’s revenue-neutral budgetary climate, we essentially have three options for developing the strengths of our programs: (1) redirection of resources within existing departmental budgets to maximize programmatic impact, (2) lateral redirection of resources from other units within the college where we are convinced that the value added in a particular unit is an effective way of achieving the goals of the university’s strategic plan, and (3) entrepreneurial pursuit of opportunities for external funding. In
accordance with those contextual parameters, we would like the external review team members to consider the following items:

- As a small academic unit, Gerontology needs a dense network of collaborative interdisciplinary relationships in order to thrive at an appropriately high level. This is true in terms of building research teams, in terms of generating increased student interest, and in terms of distributing service responsibilities. What strategies would the reviewers recommend to best achieve the first self-study goal of better engaging partnerships across campus? How should the unit seek to leverage those partnerships to produce gains in extramural grant seeking?

- As a small academic unit without a single Full Professor, Gerontology needs to explore opportunities for enhancing leadership through the addition of senior faculty. Given the clear constraints of Georgia State’s present budgetary environment, what does the review team recommend as the most viable entrepreneurial strategies for attracting senior scholars with established track records of sponsored research? Can the review team identify sources of external funds that would align well with the Institute and its ambitions? If so, what would they recommend?

- What recommendations would the review team offer for growing and sustaining student enrollment in Gerontology’s undergraduate and graduate programs? Is the self-study’s plan sufficient to achieve these aims? Are there other (or better) mechanisms for strengthening the appeal of Gerontology for incoming students?

- How can the Gerontology Institute best engage and complement the University’s focus on the complex challenges of cities? What recommendations does the review team have for accelerating this engagement?