As a new Hartford Center for Geriatric Nursing Excellence at the University of Minnesota, School of Nursing (MnHGCNE), our mission is to "advance the care of older adults by preparing outstanding nurse faculty from diverse backgrounds who can provide leadership in strengthening geriatric nursing at all levels of academic programs". Our primary goal is to increase the number of new and existing faculty who will provide academic leadership in geriatric nursing at associate and higher degree programs in the Upper Midwest region, including Tribal Colleges. One of our key initiatives was the development of the Faculty Learning About Geriatrics (FLAG) program. The purpose of this presentation is to describe the design, implementation and evaluation of the first FLAG Summer Institute (SI) held in August, 2008, and to share the challenges and opportunities we encountered.

The FLAG program is designed to develop geriatric nursing teaching and academic leadership expertise of faculty (FLAG Fellows) from various academic settings, to help them “connect the dots” between their current expertise, their articulated goals for advancing geriatric education in their programs, their connections with each other as educators in geriatric nursing, and the resources of our MnHGCNE. The FLAG program is a year long fellowship that includes three components: the five day SI, ongoing mentorship of FLAG Fellows by our faculty to support fellow’s individual projects, and continuing online learning opportunities offered by the MnHCGNE. The SI, attended by 20 faculty, included four areas of focus: 1) geriatrics and nursing care of elders; 2) teaching-learning theory and strategies; 3) health care informatics; and 4) leadership for curriculum change. Fellows also experienced two “enhancements” offered by experts in the university: 1) strategies for online teaching; and 2) teaching geriatrics using case-based simulations. Evaluations indicated satisfaction and increased knowledge in the four areas taught. We continue to build FLAG, grounded in our relationships with fellows as they carry out their projects designed to facilitate their curricular leadership in the quality and quantity of curricular offerings in geriatrics in their home schools.