

# Graduate Gerontology Education in the US



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# Agenda

- I will overview general status of graduate certificate and MA programs in the US—LZ will discuss PhD programs
- Statistics were unavailable from AGHE, so I will use best estimates and opinions about trends
- Brief overview about our programs at USF
- Important to view MA programs in context of all levels of gerontology education programs



# Big picture

- Around 1000 US programs in gerontology
- Most common structure, cross-departmental training committee, e.g. Sociology, Psychology, Biology, Nursing
- Some combined departments, e.g. Sociology and Gerontology
- Two Schools of Gerontology/Aging Studies (USC, USF), two Departments (VCU, UNT)
- Most offer undergraduate minors and/or graduate certificates
- Most are small; largest programs (USC, USF) have 1000+ degrees granted.



# M.A. programs in Gerontology

- About 90 in the US
- Vary greatly in degree of flexibility, focus
- Most programs serve a primarily local audience, 3 types of students
  - Service providers or administrators upgrading credentials
  - People wanting to provide direct service but other programs such as MSW are poor fit
  - Interested in research but not ready for PhD



# Trends and issues for MA programs in gerontology

- Many programs seem to be facing declining applications and questionable viability
- Greatest concern—gerontology degree does not usually lead to licensure—social workers and nurses have powerful advantages, e.g. legislative preference
- Balance, need to recruit and be optimistic to remain viable, versus realism about professional status of gerontology
- Importance of “truth in advertising”, realistic advising, about prospects with an M.A. in gerontology
- Internships as source of jobs
- Resourceful, entrepreneurial graduates, or those who work their way up from the bottom, do the best



# Gerontology education at University of South Florida (Tampa)

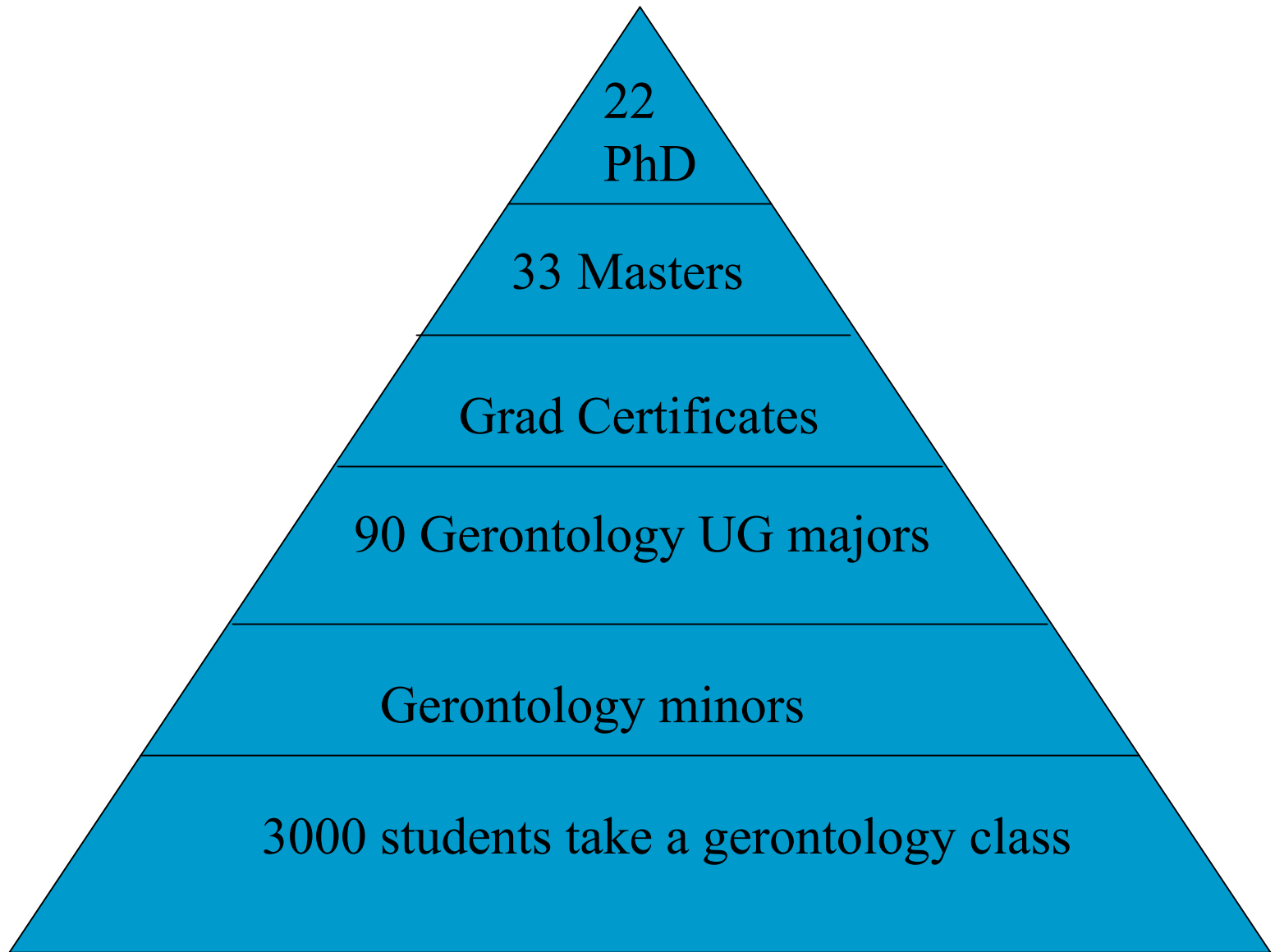
- School of Aging Studies, 12 full-time faculty, plus teaching by adjuncts (community), doctoral students, joint appointment faculty
- PhD in Aging Studies doctoral program has 40 plus faculty, campus-wide, who provide teaching and mentoring for doctoral students



# USF programs

- Liberal arts electives
- UG Minor
- B.A. in Gerontology
- B.S. in Gerontology
- 4 graduate certificate programs
- M.A. in Gerontology, concentrations in administration, case management, research—started 1967
- Ph.D. in Aging Studies—started 1995

# Gerontology enrollment pyramid at U. of South Florida







# Maintaining a successful gerontology education program over time

- Cross-departmental committees can be unstable and vulnerable to faculty change
- Diverse portfolio of education programs allows flexibility (e.g. 10 student MA course, 5 student PhD course)
- Multiple offerings serve to recruit students to target programs (MA or PhD)



# USF and international gerontology education

- About 1/3 of applicants and 1/3 of admitted to PhD program are international students
- China, Korea, Canada, England, Rumania
- Several faculty interested in international gerontology issues



# Final comments

- International exchange may be difficult for US M.A. programs, better for US PhD programs—nature of students, program resources
- US M.A. programs do not necessarily provide paradigm for other countries
- Consider long-term viability of programs and diverse portfolio of gerontology education