WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE GRANT REPORT
Xavier University Montessori Program for Dementia

Accomplishments
Xavier University Montessori Institute (XUMI) through its Montessori Dementia Program, introduced a collaborative program during the summer of 2016 with the goal to assist Xavier community members, their friends and family to build a better understanding and strategies dealing with the challenges of dementia.

Three model workshops were developed for the summer of 2016 and took place at the Cintas Center in June, July, and August with an average of ten attendees per workshop. The focus was on: 1) home caregivers; 2) professionals for continuing education; 3) both caregivers and their relatives/friends with dementia. The grant enabled the program to bring Cameron Camp, Ph.D., a research scientist with expertise in gerontology and dementia, to help conduct the training for caregivers. These pilot workshops provided useful information for future offerings for families and professionals and feedback indicated the need for the following: 1) more workshops and support for home caregivers, providing more strategies to keep loved ones at home longer; 2) development of a toolkit that can be used immediately within their home setting or care facility; 3) more training opportunities to encourage improved quality of care within residential settings; 4) increased support and instruction for home care providers.

The workshops generated interest in Xavier’s Montessori Dementia Program as well as create visibility in using Montessori methods when providing care for those with dementia. The program has received inquiries as to when there will be more workshops as well as interest in receiving a certificate or endorsement from Xavier, which is the direction needed to keep this important program sustainable. Data received in the post surveys provided the opportunity for immediate application to the content and training methods, enabling us to improve future workshops, develop more effective training, and identify needs to, thereby informing future strategies and program development.

Description and Challenges of Pilot Workshop
The workshops began by reviewing our views of dementia as a disease and challenging participants to take a positive approach in caregiving and keep the focus on retained abilities rather than deficits. The groups were split with more instruction for the caregivers, but time for those with dementia to experience Montessori community activities. Caregivers then had the opportunity to work together with their loved ones with dementia, enabling them to positively interact in a collaborative environment. It was difficult recruiting caregivers willing to bring their loved ones with dementia, many expressing fears of managing behavior or the difficulty of transporting them from home to the workshop.

Advertisements were made through Xavier’s Student Employee Hub, but there were no student worker applications submitted. By the end of the May it was obvious student workers would not be participating in the first workshop but eventually two Xavier Special Education students were recruited and started working the day immediately before the July workshop. Due to the shortage of student workers, qualitative data was difficult to gather.

Attendance was somewhat problematic due to the summer schedules. Most of the registrants in July cancelled days before the event. Added advertising on social media and in church publications helped to increase attendance in August. Overall, the goal for attendee demographics were met with a mix of Xavier employees or alumni, caregivers, those with dementia, and outside community members (including Montessori teachers, friends of Xavier employees, or professionals in senior/dementia care). Many people declared themselves in
multiple categories, indicating their mixed roles. (Attachment 1) Data is more limited due to the small number of attendees with dementia (population targeted for feedback) but each demonstrated or expressed satisfaction and enjoyment in the activities when interviewed and/or observed by our student researchers.

The program formally thanks the Women of Excellence for their generous support to make these workshops possible and their assistance in improving the quality of life for both caregivers and those in their care.

Attachment 1