

SPRING 2025 EDITION

FSU

INSTITUTE FOR
SUCCESSFUL LONGEVITY
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST



NEWSLETTER



THE FUTURE OF THE ISL

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

NEW DIRECTOR | DR. ZHE HE

Dear ISL Affiliates and Friends,

I'm honored to write to you for the first time as the newly elected Director of the Institute for Successful Longevity (ISL). I want to sincerely thank our Provost Office, Advisory Board, faculty affiliates, and university partners for your trust and continued support. It has been a privilege to serve as Interim Director over the past year, and I look forward to continuing to advance our shared mission of supporting innovative, interdisciplinary research that enhances longevity and quality of life for older adults.

We've had an incredible year of momentum and engagement. In October 2024, we hosted Dr. George Demiris from the University of Pennsylvania as our featured speaker in the ISL Lecture Series, and in March 2025, our Student Poster Day brought together 15 outstanding student researchers across campus and featured a keynote from Dr. Rui Zhang of the University of Minnesota. These events showcased the strength of our research community and the real-world relevance of the work being done across ISL. We have also created three new working groups: Advanced Technology, Basic Science, and Clinical Research, to further reinforce ISL's mission of advancing aging research and improving the quality of life of older adults.

Another exciting development has been our social media initiative. With our new Outreach Assistant Victoria's effort, we've revamped our presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, BlueSky, Instagram, X (Twitter), YouTube, and the ISL website. Our goal is to raise ISL's visibility - to attract more research volunteers, increase funding opportunities, and promote public awareness of the incredible work being done by our affiliates. This summer, we will also launch a podcast series highlighting ISL researchers and labs, and begin a new research volunteer recruitment campaign. Your support in following, sharing, and amplifying our content is tremendously appreciated!

In this issue of our newsletter, we're excited to share:

- An introduction to new ISL leadership team
- Updates on the ISL Volunteer Registry and community engagement
- New faculty affiliates
- Spotlights on research by faculty affiliates
- Updates from the Working Groups
- Announcement of our newest Planning Grant awardees

Thank you again for being part of the ISL community. I look forward to working together to grow our impact and ensure that aging research continues to thrive at FSU and beyond.

Warm regards,

Zhe He, PhD, FAMIA

Director, Institute for Successful Longevity Professor, School of Information | Florida State University

Read more [here](#).



ISL'S NEW OUTREACH ASSISTANT | VICTORIA VALKO

The ISL is pleased to welcome Victoria Valko as its new Outreach Assistant. A second-year student at Florida State University, Victoria is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health with a minor in Information Technology. With a strong interest in healthcare systems, data, and technology, she brings valuable experience in research, data analysis, and student leadership to the role.

In this role, Victoria supports ISL's outreach efforts, manages the institute's social media accounts, and helps drive new initiatives to increase student and community engagement. "I'm excited to contribute to ISL's mission and promote healthy aging," she shared. Read more [here](#).



SOCIAL MEDIA INITIATIVES



Expanding ISL's Digital Presence

With a growing interest in aging research and longevity, ISL is expanding its digital footprint to better connect with students, faculty, and the broader community. Our social media platforms serve as key tools to share research highlights, event announcements, and opportunities for involvement.

Where You Can Find Us

You can stay connected with ISL on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and now on BlueSky. Each platform helps us engage with different audiences, from long-time supporters on Facebook to emerging academic and professional networks on LinkedIn and BlueSky.

Sharing Research and Stories That Matter

Through these channels, we spotlight ISL faculty affiliates, student researchers, and innovative projects focused on healthy aging. From new publications and grant announcements to event recaps and interviews, our posts are designed to inform, inspire, and celebrate the work being done across the institute.

Join the Conversation

We invite you to follow, share, and engage with ISL across our platforms. Your support helps us grow our community, highlight the importance of aging research, and connect with others working to advance health and longevity. Find us by searching our [Link Tree](#) to stay up to date!

Want Your Good News to Be Featured?

Use the ISL's [Qualtrics form](#) to submit good news for us to feature on our social media and official website!



THE ISL's MISSION

The ISL advances research on how to live longer, healthier, and more engaged lives. Taking a multidisciplinary approach, the Institute explores the biological, cognitive, social, and economic aspects of aging.

Our mission is to understand the mechanisms of age-related decline, develop holistic interventions to promote well-being in older adults, and share this knowledge with communities, caregivers, and policymakers to support successful aging for all. We view aging not as a problem, but as a natural and vital stage of life. Through cutting-edge research and community partnerships, we aim to transform how society supports and values older adults. Visit our website [here](#).

JOIN THE VOLUNTEER REGISTRY

The ISL needs research volunteers to help us achieve our mission of improving health and well-being for Florida's aging population.

You can be paid to advance the science of successful longevity, helping your friends and family achieve longer, more productive, and enjoyable lives. You will be able to choose what studies you participate in.

To volunteer, visit <https://www.isl.fsu.edu/volunteer>, or call **850-644-8571** or send an email message to isl@fsu.edu.



ISL'S NEW FACULTY AFFILIATES



Dr. Sladjana Lukic

School of Communication
Science & Disorders



**Dr. Gashaye
Melaku Tefera**

College of Social Work



Dr. Andrea Lobene

Department of Health,
Nutrition, and Food Sciences



Dr. Patrick F. Merle

School of Communication



Dr. Yijiong Yang

College of Nursing



Dr. Min Sook Park

School of Information



Dr. Zhaotong Lin

Department of Statistics



Dr. Guang Wang

Department of Computer
Science



Dr. Daejin Kim

Interior Architecture &
Design



Dr. Qianwen Guo

Department of Civil and
Environmental Engineering

READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE AT [ISL.FSU.EDU](https://isl.fsu.edu)

ISL WORKING GROUP UPDATES

The working groups aim to foster integration and collaboration by maintaining strong communication and encouraging overlap across teams through joint meetings and shared research platforms. A key priority is regular engagement with stakeholders, including aging populations, caregivers, and policymakers, to ensure that research remains relevant and impactful. Additionally, the groups are committed to education and outreach by translating research findings into community workshops, continuing education for professionals, and public health initiatives. Finally, they provide research support through pilot studies and the generation of preliminary data to strengthen applications for external funding.



CLINICAL RESEARCH

Led by Dr. Julia Sheffler and Dr. Emily Pritchard | Read more [here](#)

The ISL Clinical Research Working Group is developing a Canvas-based Research Assistant (RA) training course to support aging-related research. The course will offer customizable modules covering topics like CITI certification, clinical interviewing, and data management, with assessments to verify completion. This initiative aims to streamline the RA onboarding process for faculty. The group is also working on new strategies to recruit for and manage the ISL participant registry. Faculty interested in contributing or sharing existing materials are encouraged to contact Dr. Sheffler.



ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

Led by Dr. Zhe He | Read more [here](#)

The ISL Advanced Technology Working Group is exploring how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence can enhance the quality of life for older adults. Their focus includes innovations that support daily living, health monitoring, and cognitive and social engagement. For the 2024–2025 period, the group has hosted seminars on aging-related technology, collaborated with startups, and fostered interdisciplinary research among computer scientists, engineers, and healthcare professionals.



BASIC SCIENCES

Led By Dr. Ravinder Nagpal | Read more [here](#)

The ISL Basic Science Working Group investigates the biological, psychological, and social mechanisms underlying aging. By uncovering new knowledge in these areas, the group seeks to inform groundbreaking treatments and prevention strategies. Current efforts focus on promoting collaborative, high-risk, high-reward research grants and encouraging cross-departmental sharing of research resources and methodologies.

2025 ESTHER & DEL GROSSER SCHOLARSHIP WINNER | STEVEN MEDAREV

Congratulations to Steven Medarev, Ph.D. candidate in the College of Medicine at Florida State University, on being awarded the 2025 Esther & Del Grosser Scholarship. Steven's research focuses on adiponectin signaling and its role in cardiac and microvascular adaptations to aging and exercise. His work aims to uncover how changes in this pathway contribute to age-related cardiovascular dysfunction, with the goal of informing future interventions. Read more [here](#).



ISL STUDENT POSTER DAY

On March 18, 2025, the ISL hosted its annual Student Poster Day at the Claude Pepper Center. The event opened with a keynote by Dr. Rui Zhang (pictured top left) of the University of Minnesota, who shared insights on using artificial intelligence to advance research in nutrition, aging, and cancer.

Students across academic levels presented their work on topics ranging from digital health tools to cognitive health and exercise interventions. Top awards were given to Cole Patoine (1st), Steven Medarev (2nd), and Victoria Valko (3rd). Medarev also received the 2025 Esther & Del Grosser Scholarship for his research on vascular aging and cardiovascular health.

ISL's Poster Day continues to foster interdisciplinary research and showcase student innovation. "It's inspiring to see students leading new discoveries in aging and health," said ISL Director Dr. Zhe He. The event reflects FSU's growing momentum in aging science and translational research. Read more [here](#).



ISL STUDENT POSTER DAY WINNERS

1ST PLACE COLE PATOINE

PH.D. CANDIDATE | COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, & HUMAN SCIENCES

Patoine's research explores how diet impacts the gut microbiome and overall health. It's important for understanding how nutrition may support brain health in older adults. Read more [here](#).



2ND PLACE STEVEN MEDAREV

PH.D. CANDIDATE | COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Medarev studies adiponectin's role in maintaining vascular health during aging and metabolic stress. His work may lead to new ways to prevent cardiovascular complications. Read more [here](#).



3RD PLACE VICTORIA VALKO

UNDERGRADUATE | COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & PUBLIC POLICY

Valko's research via the UROP focuses on improving how adults understand their lab test results. It's important for making health information more accessible through technology. Read more [here](#).



2025-2026 ISL PLANNING GRANT WINNERS

Each year, the ISL awards a \$25,000 Planning Grant to support innovative or ongoing interdisciplinary research that advances opportunities for successful aging. Open exclusively to ISL Faculty Affiliates, this grant encourages bold ideas and collaborative projects that align with our mission.

We're excited to announce this year's Planning Grant recipients, read more about their projects below. Learn more about the this year's ISL Planning Grant Winners [here](#).



DR. RAVINDER NAGPAL



DR. JULIA SHEFFLER

RAVINDER NAGPAL

with Dr. Julia Sheffler

Unraveling the gut-microbiome-brain axis elements through multi-omics assessments in older adults with mild cognitive impairment

Supported by the ISL Planning Grant, this project investigates the gut-microbiome-brain axis in older adults with mild cognitive impairment. Led by Drs. Nagpal and Sheffler, it builds on their I-CAN program to develop scalable nutrition interventions and address disparities in brain and gut health.



DR. YUNJUNG KIM



DR. ERIN BUSH



DR. VICTOR DeBRUNNER

YUNJUNG KIM

with Dr. Erin Bush & Dr. Victor DeBrunner

Bridging Bench Science to Clinical Practice: Exploring Ultrasound Imaging for Articulation Studies in Parkinson's Disease

Supported by the ISL Planning Grant, this project uses ultrasound imaging as biofeedback to enhance speech therapy for Parkinson's disease. It aims to develop a tech-assisted, cost-effective articulation program that bridges speech science and clinical care.



DR. HONGYUAN CAO



DR. ANTONIO TERRACCIANO



DR. QIAN ZHANG

HONGYUAN CAO

with Dr. Antonio Terracciano & Dr. Qian Zhang

Exploring the Paradoxical Link Between BMI and Alzheimer's Disease Risk

Supported by the ISL Planning Grant, this project explores how the relationship between BMI and Alzheimer's disease risk changes across the lifespan. By identifying key periods when BMI most impacts AD onset, the study aims to inform age-specific strategies for prevention and cognitive health in older adults.

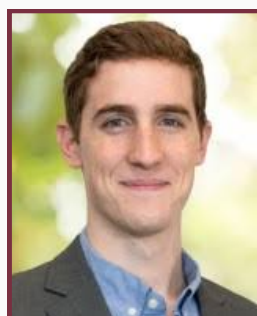
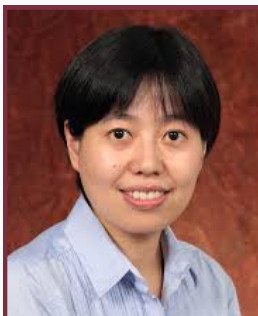
PREVIOUS ISL PLANNING GRANT WINNERS

Explore the past five years of ISL Planning Grant winners and their groundbreaking research in longevity.

2024-2025

Read more [here](#).

- **Dr. Fengfeng Ke**
 - Dr. Xin Yuan
- **Dr. Joseph Watso**
 - Dr. Kyle Smith
- **Dr. Qing-Xiang Sang**
 - Dr. Yi Zhou



2023-2024

Read more [here](#).

- **Dr. Michelle Parvatiyar**
- **Dr. Zilong Xie**



2022-2023

Read more [here](#).

- **Dr. Brad Schmidt**
- **Dr. Geraldine Martorella**
- **Dr. Zhe He**



2021-2022

Read more [here](#).

- **Dr. Bradley Gordon**
 - Dr. Michael Delp
- **Dr. Jennifer Steiner**
 - Dr. Ravinder Nagpal



2020-2021

Read more [here](#).

- **Dr. Maxim Dulebenets**
 - Dr. Hui Wang
 - Dr. Ren Moses
 - Dr. Eren Ozguven
- **Dr. Judy Delp**
 - Dr. Lynn Panton
 - Dr. Colm Connolly
 - Dr. Jacob Caldwell



SPRING 2025 GOOD NEWS



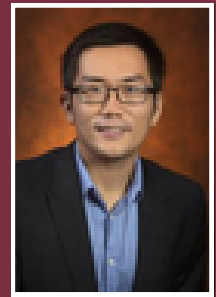
DR. LEO LIU RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS GLOBAL RESEARCH AWARD

ISL affiliate Dr. Leo Liu was named a 2024 Eberhard F. Mammen Young Investigator Award recipient by Seminars in Thrombosis & Hemostasis!

As one of only six awardees globally, and the sole recipient from the U.S., Dr. Liu is recognized for his innovative work in blood clotting and hemostasis. His research explores how red blood cells drive von Willebrand factor (VWF) activation and cleavage under high shear, with major implications for vascular health and aging. Read more [here](#).

DR. YUNJUNG KIM & DR. ZHE HE RECEIVE \$100,000 FSU CRC SEED GRANT

Congrats to ISL affiliates Dr. Yunjung Kim and Dr. Zhe He on receiving a \$100,000 FSU CRC Seed Grant! Their project will explore the clinical use of ultrasound imaging in individuals with Parkinson's disease, advancing research at the intersection of technology, aging, and speech health.



DR. RAVINDER NAGPAL SPEAKS AT THE FLORIDA ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

ISL affiliate Dr. Ravinder Nagpal was honored to speak at the Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Symposium. The event brought together leading nutritionists and dietitians from across the state, highlighting their vital role in translating science into practice and promoting community health and wellness.

DR. ZHE HE AND VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR DR. BALU BHASURAN PUBLISHES NEW STUDY ON AI FOR DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

Read more [here](#).



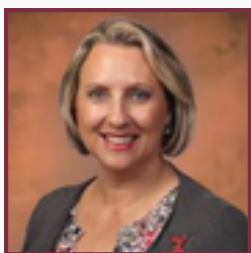
RECENT AFFILIATE PUBLICATIONS

The ISL celebrates the latest research and scholarly work from our faculty affiliates. Have something to share? Submit your publication or good news [here](#).



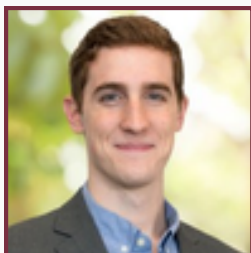
DR. ANTONIO TERRACCIANO

- Marital status and risk of dementia over 18 years: Surprising findings from the National Alzheimer's Coordinating Center ([Alzheimer's & Dementia](#))
- Psychological Resilience and Personality in Mild Cognitive Impairment and Healthy Older Adults ([The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry](#))



DR. LUCINDA GRAVEN

- Examining Heart Failure Informal Care Partners Using Person and System Levels and Domains: A Meta-Synthesis ([Western Journal of Nursing Research](#))
- Palliative Care and Advanced Cardiovascular Disease in Adults: Not Just End-of-Life Care: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association ([Circulation](#))



DR. JOSEPH WATSO

- Differential effects of female aging on sympathetic blood pressure regulation at rest and during stress in humans ([Physiological Reports](#))
- Advanced cardiovascular physiology in an individual with type 1 diabetes after 10-year ketogenic diet ([American Journal of Physiology, Cell Physiology](#))



DR. ANNE BARRETT

- How Do Social Relationships Affect Later Life Planning? ([The International Journal of Aging and Human Development](#))



DR. RAVINDER NAGPAL

- Almond snacking modulates gut microbiome and metabolome in association with improved cardiometabolic and inflammatory markers ([npj Science of Food](#))
- A Gut Microbial Metabolite Alleviates Stress-Induced Neurobehavioral Dysfunction in an Alzheimer's Disease Model ([Molecular Neurobiology](#))
- Temporal impact of sepsis on Alzheimer's disease pathology and neuroinflammation ([Progress in Neurobiology](#))
- *Klebsiella pneumoniae* employs a type VI secretion system to overcome microbiota-mediated colonization resistance ([Nature Communications](#))

FSU 2025 DEVELOPING SCHOLAR AWARD WINNERS



Dr. Aaron Wilber | Department of Psychology, College of Arts & Sciences

Dr. Wilber was awarded a 2025 Developing Scholar Award for his research on brain dynamics involved in spatial orientation, memory, and Alzheimer's disease. His work explores how neural networks support navigation and how they change in memory-related disorders. Read more [here](#).



Dr. Yanshuo Sun | Department of Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering, FAMU-FSU College of Engineering

Dr. Sun received a 2025 Developing Scholar Award for his contributions to transportation systems modeling and optimization. His research improves operations in public and freight transportation, with a focus on rural mobility and data-driven policy solutions. Read more [here](#).



Dr. Robert Tomko, Jr. | College of Medicine

Dr. Tomko received a 2025 Developing Scholar Award in recognition of his research on the ubiquitin-proteasome system, which plays a critical role in cellular function and disease. His work supports drug discovery efforts targeting cancer and infectious diseases, advancing both basic science and therapeutic innovation. Read more [here](#).

2025 FSU FACULTY AWARDS



Several ISL Faculty Affiliates have been honored in FSU's 2024-2025 Faculty Awards for their exceptional work in research, teaching, and mentorship. Read more [here](#).

Dr. Anne Barrett – *Graduate Faculty Mentor Award*

Department of Sociology, College of Social Sciences & Public Policy

Dr. Antonio Terracciano – *Distinguished Research Professor Award*

College of Medicine

Dr. Qing-Xiang Sang – *Distinguished Research Professor Award*

Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, College of Arts & Sciences

Dr. Yang Hou – *Inclusive Teaching & Mentoring Award*

College of Medicine

Dr. Eren Ozguven – *Community Engaged Research Partnership Award*

Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, College of Engineering

UPENN'S DR. GEORGE DEMIRIS VISITS FSU

As part of ISL's Fall Lecture Series, Dr. George Demiris from the University of Pennsylvania visited FSU on October 9, 2024, to discuss the role of technology in aging. His keynote at the Tallahassee Senior Center highlighted how AI, smart homes, and wearable devices can support independence and quality of life for older adults.

Later, at the Claude Pepper Center, Dr. Demiris explored how passive monitoring and AI can help prevent falls in older adults. His visit also included a panel with FSU faculty and a luncheon with students, encouraging thoughtful conversations on aging, innovation, and equity in tech-driven care. Read more [here](#).



HELPING OLDER ADULTS BEAT THE HEAT



By Amber DeJohn, PhD

Floridians are no strangers to extreme temperatures, but even by our standards things are heating up: summer 2024 was the hottest on record. By 2050, Florida is projected to experience more than 70 days each year with temperatures above 91°F.

While extreme heat affects everyone, older adults are especially vulnerable. They suffer from heat-related illness and death at significant rates. How can we better support older adults as the temperatures rise?

To explore this question, I've teamed up with Dr. Mark Horner and Geography master's student Abdul Fattah to better understand older adults' experiences with extreme heat. Through a survey funded by FSU's Pepper Institute, we're gathering insights on challenges, stress, and future preparedness plans. Though the project is ongoing, we're already seeing key trends.

Participants reported a range of coping strategies. The most common were wearing breathable clothing, drinking more water, and avoiding outdoor activities during peak heat hours. Still, 17% said wearing cooler clothing was difficult for them to manage. Alarming, one in five reported difficulty affording medical services during past extreme heat events, and a third said they've needed medical care during such events.

Concerns about the future are widespread. Over half of participants worry about rising costs of living, like energy bills and home insurance. About 50% expressed concern about increasingly severe weather events. Despite these worries, most said they do not currently have an adaptation plan; one in four older adults want to learn more about how to beat the heat.

These findings highlight urgent needs. Improving access to medical care and offering financial support for older adults on fixed incomes should be top priorities. These are multifaceted issues that require concerted effort from multiple levels of government.

One practical, low-cost step local governments could take is helping older adults develop personalized heat adaptation plans. These could include short-term resources like cooling center locations and hydration tips, along with longer-term strategies like goal-setting for climate-proofing homes. Without coordinated support, we leave individuals to face growing risks alone.

NOW RECRUITING! ONGOING RESEARCH STUDIES

The ISL supports interdisciplinary research on aging and is currently recruiting participants for studies on lab test comprehension, smartphone-based cognitive assessments, exercise, and anxiety in older adults.

Learn more and how to participate [here](#).

LAUNCHED! ISL BI-WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

The ISL is excited to launch a bi-weekly newsletter, your go-to source for the latest updates on aging research, faculty highlights, and ISL events. Stay informed and inspired as we share stories shaping the future of longevity!

Community members, subscribe to ISL emails [here](#).

PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

LABGENIE PROJECT



LabGenie is a web-based patient engagement tool designed to help older adults better understand and act on their lab test results. Developed using a user-centered approach, the tool presents visual explanations of results and uses AI to generate personalized question prompts based on a patient's health data. The project aims to improve patient engagement, self-efficacy, and shared decision making, particularly for older adults with multiple chronic conditions and limited health literacy. Long-term, LabGenie seeks to enhance patient portals and decision aids to support better health outcomes in at-risk populations. Read more [here](#).



ADHERENCE PROMOTION W/ PERSON-CENTERED TECHNOLOGY



The Adherence Promotion for Programs of Training (APPT) Project is a collaborative research initiative funded by the National Institute on Aging. Led by an interdisciplinary FSU team, the project aims to improve early detection and intervention for cognitive decline by supporting older adults in using mobile-based cognitive assessments and training tools at home. APPT uses AI to personalize reminder systems that boost user engagement and adherence. The ultimate goal is to enhance cognitive health, independence, and quality of life for aging populations. Read more [here](#).

PODCAST SERIES LAUNCHED: VOICES OF LONGEVITY | MEET THE RESEARCHERS

Voices of Longevity is a short-form podcast by the ISL, hosted by Outreach Assistant Victoria Valko. Each episode features quick, compelling conversations with ISL researchers about the science driving longer, healthier lives. Interested in being featured? Email us at isl@fsu.edu. Episodes posted on [ISL's YouTube channel](#) and on [ISL's Spotify](#).



UPCOMING: UROP MENTOR & PROJECT APPLICATIONS

The UROP Project Proposal Portal is now open, with proposals due by Monday, August 18. Interested in becoming a UROP Research Mentor? Attend an upcoming info session—hybrid options available throughout the summer. [Submit your proposal here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

The ISL gives our affiliates the opportunity to share their research and get feedback on that research during our **Brown Bag Lecture Series**. Members of Florida State's Campus and the Tallahassee community are welcome to attend online or in-person. Upcoming events [here](#).

Stay updated with our social media and newsletter to get updates on the upcoming guest speaker for the **ISL Speaker Series**.



SUPPORT US

Want to keep up with the latest from the ISL? Follow us on social media to learn about upcoming events, faculty research highlights, student features, and more.

- [Instagram](#) – @fsuisl
- [Facebook](#) – @Institute for Successful Longevity
- [X](#) (formerly Twitter) – @islsfu
- [LinkedIn](#) – Institute for Successful Longevity
- [BlueSky](#) – @fsuisl.bsky.social
- [YouTube](#) – @instituteforsuccessfullong6637
- [Spotify](#) - Voices of Longevity: Meet the Researchers



NOW RECRUITING! ISL SOCIAL MEDIA INTERN

The ISL is looking for an undergraduate student to join our team as a Social Media Intern starting in Fall 2025. This is an unpaid position ideal for students with at least two full semesters remaining at FSU who are interested in science communication, marketing, or aging research. Interested or want to refer a student? Email us at isl@fsu.edu.

2025 ISL Newsletter created by:



Victoria Valko
Outreach Assistant



Nehja Guillaume
Administrative Assistant

Content provided by:



Victoria Valko
Outreach Assistant



Dr. Zhe He
Director



Dhruv Kale
Application Developer



Dr. Lynn Patton
Associate Director



Dr. Amber DeJohn
ISL Affiliate