

## NORD GRANT APPLICATION

T.J. McCallum

Department of Psychological Sciences

### **Experiential Learning for Undergraduates: Aging and Functional Change**

In my ten years teaching the undergraduate course, *Aging and Adult Development*, I have found it exceedingly difficult to effectively convey to my students the depth and breadth of many of the physical declines associated with aging. My attempts to facilitate empathy and understanding led me to create an experiential assignment in which students are required to mimic a functional decline associated with the aging process. The assignment requires students to observe and record their daily activities on an average day with a focus on how much effort and attention is required for each activity. They then must temporarily acquire an aging-related functional disability for a day as comparison. For example, students have worn mittens for the day, placed pebbles in their shoes, gone without glasses or contacts, placed earplugs in their ears, and/or restricted the use of their dominant hand to mimic the effects of arthritis, declines in visual acuity and hearing, and of a stroke. Students consistently report gaining a better understanding of the difficulties in carrying out activities of daily living when afflicted with these various conditions. In fact, this assignment is often listed as the best part of the course on student evaluations.

I would like to take the students one-step further in this experiential process.

Recently the engineers at M.I.T. developed AGNES (Age Gain Now Empathy System).

AGNES is a suit worn by students to better understand the physical challenges associated with aging. The suit is designed to approximate the vision, hearing, strength, flexibility, and balance of a 70-year-old individual. Though AGNES is not available for sale or rent, there are other physical limitation simulation suits on the market. I would like to acquire two of these suits for students to use for the aforementioned assignment. Further, rather than having them mimic disability individually, I would like them to pair off. Most older adults have at least one functional disability and a majority of older people live with another person with at least one functional disability. Wearing an age simulation suit and spending time with another person either in another suit or with another disability will allow the students to better experience, understand, and ultimately empathize with the realities of older adults.

### **Budget & Justification**

#### **Physical Limitations Simulation Suit- size medium**

Suit includes earplugs to mimic hearing loss, goggles with specialized lenses to mimic the effects of cataracts, belts to limit movement mimicking arthritis, gloves to mimic a dulled tactile senses, as well as joint-sticks to mimic stiffness and numbness and ankle and wrist weights to mimic decreases in strength and stamina.

[www.enasco.com/product/SB32746\(B\)G](http://www.enasco.com/product/SB32746(B)G)

***\$1,800***

#### **Physical Limitations Simulation Suit- size small**

Suit includes earplugs to mimic hearing loss, goggles with specialized lenses to mimic the effects of cataracts, belts to limit movement mimicking arthritis, gloves to mimic a dulled tactile senses, as well as joint-sticks to mimic stiffness and numbness and ankle and wrist weights to mimic decreases in strength and stamina.

[www.enasco.com/product/SB32746\(A\)G](http://www.enasco.com/product/SB32746(A)G)

***\$1,980.00***

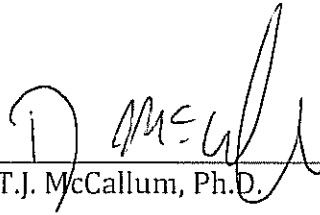
## Chronic Care Challenges Simulation Tools Kit

This kit is designed to increase the understanding of sensory and functional impairments associated with aging. It includes six pairs of simulation glasses that illustrate diseases such as cataracts and glaucoma, a CD that mimics hearing loss frequencies, as well as tools to mimic declines in fine motor skills and changes in taste and smell.

[www.enasco.com/product/SB25942G](http://www.enasco.com/product/SB25942G)

**\$144.50**

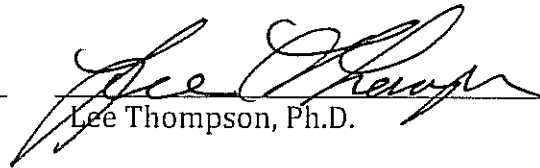
**Total Costs: \$4,105.50**



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Lee Thompson, Ph.D.

Chair, Department of Psychological  
Sciences