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PRESS RELEASE

California Commission on Aging

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**The California Commission on Aging Announces the
Cheryl Brown Gerontology Scholarship to Address Critical Needs in the State**

SACRAMENTO, July 25, 2024 --- The California Commission on Aging (CCoA) proudly announces the launch of the Cheryl Brown Gerontology Scholarship, a significant initiative aimed at fostering awareness and expertise in Gerontology, the multidisciplinary study of the aging process and individuals across the course of their lives.

The scholarship program, sponsored by the CCoA, honors Chair Cheryl Brown for her decades of work dedicated to improving the lives of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers in California and elevating the work of the Commission. Established in collaboration with Sacramento State University (CSUS), the program aims to attract students to the aging field and promote diversity and cultural sensitivity in the workforce serving older Californians.

“At Sacramento State, we are committed to inclusivity and support for all members of our community, particularly older adults,” said Dr. Robert A. Pieretti, Associate Dean for Students and Personnel at the College of Health and Human Services, California State University, Sacramento. *“We are delighted about and extremely grateful for the opportunities that the California Commission on Aging’s Cheryl Brown Gerontology Scholarship will provide for Sacramento State students, particularly for students in our Black Honors College. The scholarship aligns with the work of our faculty and students, who are dedicated to supporting older adults in historically marginalized communities as part of a diversified workforce. Scholarships like this are invaluable as we strive to reduce health inequities in California’s capital region through the provision of quality, accessible, culturally sensitive healthcare.”*

Predominately funded by a generous contribution of \$50,000 by AKT Community for Health and Independence, the initial phase of the program allocates a total of \$60,000 for students pursuing majors and minors in Gerontology. Notably, \$10,000 is specifically designated for students from the Inland Empire, encompassing San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

“AKT shares the Commission’s vision that aging populations and people with physical or intellectual disabilities should be able to age with dignity and respect in the setting of their choice,” said Bill Romanelli, spokesperson for AKT. *“The vast majority of older adults want to remain independent in their own homes – that reality calls for new approaches to minimize the need for in-person care through technology and promote living conditions that emphasize disease and disability prevention. The role of universities in creating these new approaches is vital, and we hope these scholarships will help foster that creativity.”*

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The initiative comes at a critical time as California faces a growing need for skilled professionals to serve a rapidly growing older adult population. By 2030, one in four Californians will be over 60 years old, highlighting the urgency of bolstering the workforce in Gerontology, healthcare, social services, and more. Additionally, California's older population is increasingly diverse, necessitating a workforce equipped to serve minority communities with empathy and expertise.

"The Commission is dedicated to advocating for the well-being and rights of older Californians," shared Karol Swartzlander, Executive Director of the California Commission on Aging. "Through initiatives like the Cheryl Brown Gerontology Scholarship, we not only invest in the future of our workforce but also advance our mission to serve as a catalyst for change that supports and celebrates Californians as they age."

As the state's principal advocacy body for older adults, the CCoA advises state leaders, legislators, and governmental agencies on policies and programs that impact the lives of older Californians and supports programs and services that promote equity, inclusion, autonomy, choice, access, respect, integrity, collaboration, and partnership.

For more information about the CCoA and its initiatives, including the Gerontology Scholarship Program, please visit <http://ccoa.ca.gov>.

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