

Eloquence & EMINENCE



29th Annual
Emeritus Faculty
Lecture Series
• Spring 2026

*This free lecture series
features retired UW faculty
renowned for their scholarship
and teaching excellence.*

The Economic and Social Status of the Elderly: Beware of the Mean

Timothy M. (Tim) Smeeding, PhD

*Lee Rainwater Distinguished Professor of Public Affairs and Economics,
Hilldale Professor Emeritus, La Follette School of Public Affairs, UW–Madison*



The goal of this lecture is to convey an important piece of advice. Never begin a sentence with ‘The elderly are...,’ or ‘The elderly do...’ No matter what you are discussing, some are, and some are not; some do, and some do not. The most important characteristic of the aged is their diversity. The average can be very deceptive, because it ignores the tremendous dispersion around it. Bottom line: beware of the mean. This lecture will discuss how this realization, which applies across all domains of aging inquiry, changes and challenges our science, as well as policy, and practice.

Dr. Smeeding was the founding director of the Luxembourg Income Study from 1983–2006 and has advised both the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the World Bank on poverty and inequality. He was director of the Institute for Research on Poverty at UW–Madison from 2008–2014 and is the 2017 John Kenneth Galbraith Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. He won the 2022 Roger Herriot Award for Innovation in Federal Statistics, and the 2023 Robert J. Lapham Award from the Population Association of America for the application of demographic knowledge to policy issues. He became an elected fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in March 2025. For more information, his website and CV can be found at the La Follette School.

Wednesday,
April 15, 2026
2-4 pm

at the Pyle Center,
702 Langdon St., Madison, WI

Refreshments
to follow

Registration Requested:



[aging.wisc.edu/
eloquence-and-
eminence-lectures](http://aging.wisc.edu/eloquence-and-eminence-lectures)

To request special accommodations,
contact Jenni.Suplinski@wisc.edu
by March 27th