



The Wisdom Institute

UMBC's Association for Retirees

Spring 2026

Vol. 8 Issue 1



Kizzmekia Corbett-Helaire, leaning on the railing in the hallway leading to her lab at the Chan School of Public Health. Photo credit: The President and Fellows of Harvard College

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Upcoming Events

**Happy Hour Zoom
Microtalks
with Kathy O'Dell**
Tuesday, February 10
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

**"The Tree of Life"
Presentation by
Dr. Kevin Omland**
Biological Sciences 004
Tuesday, February 24
4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

**UMBC Theatre's
Wizard of Oz**
Proscenium Theatre
Sunday, April 12

**Happy Hour Zoom
Microtalks
with Kathy O'Dell**
Thursday, April 16
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

**9th Annual
Signature Event,
w/ Dr. Kizzmekia
Corbett-Helaire**
**Chesapeake Employee
Insurance Arena**
Friday, May 15
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

On the back page!

A Message from the Director

By Diane Lee

Don't miss **The Wisdom Institute's 9th Annual Signature Event** on May 15th at the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena on campus. We are thrilled to have our own Kizzmekia Corbett-Helaire as our luncheon speaker this year. Dr. Corbett-Helaire earned her BS degree from UMBC, where she was a Meyerhoff Scholar and a National Institutes of Health Undergraduate Scholar. Since graduating Magna Cum Laude, she earned her doctorate in Microbiology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She is now a leading vaccine expert and viral immunologist.

Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett-Helaire is the Melvin J. and Geraldine L. Glimcher assistant professor of immunology and infectious diseases at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, as well as a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Freeman Hrabowski Scholar. These appointments follow her seven-year tenure at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, under Director Dr. Anthony Fauci. While at NIH, Dr. Corbett-Helaire led a team that developed a vaccine to combat COVID-19 in record speed—a challenge that

would put her in the national spotlight and help shape the trajectory of the pandemic. "It was Kizzmekia's previous work that led to what we knew about the coronavirus, and prepared us for making that vaccine so rapidly," noted her former boss and vaccine co-inventor, Dr. Barney Graham. Dr. Corbett-Helaire's patented technology is used in many vaccines around the world, including those released by Moderna, Pfizer, and Novavax. Altogether, Dr. Corbett-Helaire boasts a robust patent portfolio, including Eli Lilly's COVID antibody therapies, which were used to save the lives of critically ill patients during the early stages of the pandemic. In addition, she has a flu vaccine that recently concluded a Phase 1 clinical trial. In all, she has 20 years of experience studying various viruses, garnering several prestigious awards and recognitions along the way, including selection as one of Time Magazine's 2021 Heroes of the Year. Currently, her Harvard lab investigates immune responses to viruses in order to inform vaccine development. Dedicated to science and outreach, she also spends a considerable amount of time educating the public about vaccines.

Hoping to see you there, with warm regards,
Diane



Update from the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Planning, Dr. Yvette Mozie Ross

UMBC Undergraduate Enrollment: Momentum, Mission, and a Promising Future

Over the past several years, UMBC has quietly but steadily built one of the strongest undergraduate enrollment pipelines in its history. The Fall 2025 admission cycle provides especially compelling evidence that the university is delivering on its mission as a public institution that serves Maryland and the nation with excellence, access, and inclusion.

A record-setting first-year class. For the second consecutive year, UMBC enrolled the largest entering first-year class in the university's history. Fall 2025 welcomed 2,271 new first-year students, exceeding last year's previous record of 2,240 and surpassing all prior cohorts. This achievement occurred within a highly competitive national enrollment environment.

UMBC attracted 14,810 first-year applications for Fall 2025 - a 3% increase over Fall 2024 - and admitted 10,984 students, of whom more than

2,270 chose UMBC. That growth reflects both UMBC's academic reputation and the institution's continued success in converting interest into enrollment. Just as important, these students continue to arrive academically strong. The median high school GPA for Fall 2025 admits was 4.0, with a 75th percentile of 4.4, while the median SAT was 1330 and the median ACT was 30. UMBC is attracting students who are both highly prepared and deeply motivated to succeed.

Growing access across Maryland. Enrollment gains are not simply large, they are strategic and inclusive. One of the most important signals of UMBC's public mission in action is our success in Baltimore City. Fall 2025 first-year enrollment from Baltimore City increased by 35% compared to Fall 2024, expanding access to UMBC for students from one of the most diverse and economically vulnerable school systems in Maryland. The result is a student body that increasingly reflects the communities UMBC was created to serve. The Baltimore City Admissions Advisory Group has been particularly instrumental in helping the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Orientation identify and develop strategies for attracting, recruiting and enrolling academically talented students from Baltimore City with a strong focus on those attending public schools.

Advancing Hispanic and Latino student representation. UMBC also continues to make meaningful progress in serving Maryland's growing Latino population. New Hispanic and Latino first-year enrollments for Fall 2025 increased by 14% over Fall 2024, building on a multi-year trajectory of expanding representation and access. This growth is especially

significant because Latino students remain one of the fastest-growing high school populations in Maryland.

UMBC's ability to translate that demographic change into enrollment success reflects intentional recruitment, community engagement, and a campus climate that signals belonging and opportunity. The Hispanic and Latinx Admissions Advisory Group has been instrumental in advising the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Orientation on strategies for attracting, recruiting and enrolling academically talented Hispanic and Latinx students.

International resilience in uncertain times. Nationally, international undergraduate enrollment remains fragile, shaped by visa backlogs, geopolitical instability, and shifting federal policies. Against that backdrop, UMBC achieved something especially notable: Fall 2025 international first-year enrollment increased by 2% over Fall 2024, even as many institutions experienced declines. UMBC now draws international applicants from across the globe - from East Asia and South Asia to Africa, Latin America, and Europe - reinforcing its global profile while enhancing classroom diversity and cross-cultural learning. The fact that international students continue to choose UMBC in an uncertain climate speaks to the university's academic credibility, affordability, and student support systems.

A powerful signal about UMBC's future. Perhaps the strongest indicator of UMBC's trajectory lies not just in who enrolled this fall, but in who is applying next year. Fall 2026 undergraduate applications are already up 5.5% over Fall 2025, marking the highest demand for UMBC undergraduate admission in

the institution's history. That growth is particularly meaningful because it comes at a time when the number of high school graduates in much of the Northeast and Midwest is beginning to decline. UMBC is gaining market share even as the market tightens. Demand at this level gives UMBC powerful leverage to shape the incoming class - balancing academic excellence, affordability, diversity, and workforce alignment in ways that advance the institution's strategic priorities.

A strong and steady enrollment future. Indeed, undergraduate enrollments are strong at UMBC. Record-setting first-year classes, expanding access for Maryland students, growth in Hispanic and Latino enrollment, stable international enrollment, and rising application volume for Fall 2026 together show that students continue to see UMBC as a place where opportunity, quality, and value come together. At a time when many colleges are facing enrollment pressure,

UMBC is attracting more students who want to be here and who are prepared to succeed. That puts the university on solid footing as it looks ahead to the next generation of UMBC undergraduates.

Yvette Mozie-Ross, Ph.D., oversees admissions, financial aid, advising, and registration. A UMBC alumna with 35+ years in higher education, she leads UMBC's data-informed enrollment strategies to expand access, strengthen recruitment, and support institutional growth.



Post-UMBC Stories

The Joy and Importance of Volunteerism in Retirement



Helping with Laundry. Photo credit: Cheryl Miller

Cheryl Miller's Story

I have found much joy in one of the ways I spend my time in retirement. I volunteer one Saturday each month at the Grassroots Route 1 Leola Dorsey Day Resource Center, located at 10390 Guilford Road, Suite A in Jessup, MD. The Center is part of the Howard County, MD Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center and "provides hot meals, showers, laundry, referrals to social services ... to individuals who are housing insecure or otherwise in need." I had no idea there was such homelessness in Howard County, one of the wealthiest counties in Maryland. The Route 1 Center served 1,553 persons in FY 2025, though it is only open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. It also operates a food pantry and clothing pantry. For contact information on volunteerism opportunities, visit (grassrootscrisis.org) or call 301-778-9900.

Cheryl Miller is Associate Professor Emerita in the Departments of Political Science and Public Policy and Associate Dean Emerita of CAHSS. She joined UMBC in 1988 and retired in 2015, with service including Faculty Senate President and Chair of Political Science.



Jodi Crandall. Photo credit: Jodi Crandall

Jodi Crandall's Story

Like many of you, I contribute to many organizations, one of which is Goods for Good (G4G), which I learned about from my niece, who often volunteers there. I began working with G4G by donating clothing and toys but soon learned about both ongoing projects and special monthly events coordinated with partner organizations. One of the ongoing projects involves preparing and delivering a meal for residents at a local shelter. My cousin and I prepared a set of 25 bagged lunches and delivered them to men at a local shelter. Other ongoing projects involve not just donating clothing or toys but also organizing them. In September, my cousin and I volunteered, along with parents, teenagers, and young children, in partnership with several organizations, to create toy bags for low-income children, cards and bookmarks for children and seniors, and handmade pet toys for rescue animals. October's special event was creating a "Boo in a Box" to provide Halloween cheer for a family in a shelter. G4G has Adult or Student Zoom orientation sessions about their mission and how to contribute or get involved. Visit: goodsforgooddc.org

(Stories cont'd on page 4)

(Stories cont'd from page 3)

JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall was a Professor in the Department of Education at UMBC, where she co-directed the MA Program in ESL/Bilingual Education and established and directed the interdisciplinary PhD program in Language, Literacy and Culture. Previously, she was Vice President of the Center for Applied Linguistics, where she directed projects in refugee and international education.



Hard at work. Photo credit: Kathy Raab

Kathy Raab's Story

When I retired from UMBC and finished my part-time gig as University Liaison for RLTV (Retirement Living Television), I looked for volunteer opportunities. I decided to work with FISH of Howard County (fishhoward-county.org). FISH is an organization started in 1976 to provide food, referral information, and limited financial assistance for rent, utilities and prescriptions to county residents. I liked that it's a totally volunteer organization and that I could work from my home. Phone volunteers work one day a month to gather pertinent information from needy residents and discuss their current needs with an advisor, together deciding if and how we can help. Over the years I ended up becoming an advisor and training new volunteers. I also serve on the Board.

Working with FISH can be physically comfortable since I don't even need to get out of my PJs, but it can also be emotionally draining. To balance that and all the time I've spent over the years at my computer or on the phone, I've been dancing—aerobically—for 50 years. Most of all, working with FISH makes me very grateful that I don't have to worry about putting food on the table or living without electricity. It's heart-wrenching how many of my neighbors do! If you know someone in Howard County who needs help, here is the FISH phone line: 410-964-8660. For questions about the organization, you can e-mail me (raab@umbc.edu).

Kathy Raab retired in 2006 from the President's Office after 36-years in various departments, including Ancient Studies, American Studies, English, and Special Sessions. 🍷

Scholars Corner

Windows and Grids – A Brief Survey of 50 Years of Painting

Vin Grabill



Vin Grabill. Photo credit: Vin Grabill

Though I retired from UMBC in 2020, after serving as a faculty member of the Department of Visual Arts for 32 years, I have most definitely not retired from art making. I'd like to offer here a brief survey focusing on one aspect

of my work that relies on a window frame motif - a pictorial device that has allowed me to play with figure/ground relationships, layering strategies, and the superimposition of multiple layers of image "reality."

I began painting 55 years ago while an art major at Oberlin College. Around that time, I began making volumes out



[1] Future Ruin 2, 1974 Photo credit: Vin Grabill of purple translucent plexiglas, filling them with fluorescent light, and positioning them in the ground to suggest a kind of futuristic archeological outcropping. "Future Ruin 2" consists of two individual volumes that are meant to hint at some kind of more extensive illuminated grid structure that, while now buried underground, is partially revealed via a corner poking up through the surface. [1]

I decided to pursue graduate studies, and once I was accepted to the M.I.T. Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) MS program in 1979, my hope was to utilize M.I.T.'s abundant technical resources to incorporate a solar energy component to my outdoor plexiglas sculpture.



[2] Cuitzeo 3, 1987. Photo credit: Vin Grabill

However, other more tantalizing opportunities presented themselves. I soon became enamored with video, primitive as it was in those early days. Inspired by the example of several international media artists in residence at CAVS, I developed a way of working with video that I termed “painting in time,” a distinct departure from the traditional narrative formulae of television.

Many of my video works utilize rapid editing that results in a kind of visual

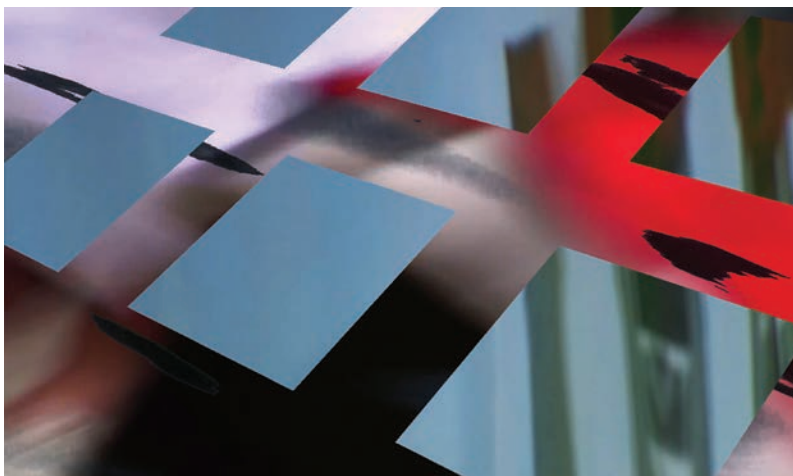
music, where individual edits are akin to brushstrokes. But I’ll focus here on video works that relate directly to my painting. In 1986, when residing in Mexico for eight months, I made a series of paintings based on photos I took while driving through various locales in Mexico. I then built four window openings directly into the canvas and inserted four images - two Mexican “loteria” cards and two lenticular (3D) photos taken while driving back home in the U.S. These four images served as an animation of dreams and memories coursing across my viewpoint while

driving in Mexico. [2] As soon as I returned home, I translated this concept into a video, with small frames of video scenes moving across the driver’s view. Watch “Leaving the Ground,” 1988: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/18331946>

“Frontier,” 2010, is a more recent example of my “painting in time” video art. This video piece reflects my ongoing interest in window/grid structures, and it anticipates my recent painting more directly. In “Frontier,” a slowly moving window frame grid allows for the superimposition of separately edited visual sequences – one set of imagery seen as “inside” the window frame and a second image set seen outside. [3] Watch “Frontier,” 2010: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/17480413>

While continuing to work in video, I turned my attention in the 2010s to pursuing window frame superimpositions via Photoshop (photography-based) composition, as opposed to painting or video. Most of the imagery I utilized derived from photos shot through a large lens aimed at a television screen. Commercial TV footage was stretched and manipulated by the lens, yielding a range of abstracted material I then used for either the inside or outside (or both) of the window frame structures.

(Windows & Grids cont’d on page 6)



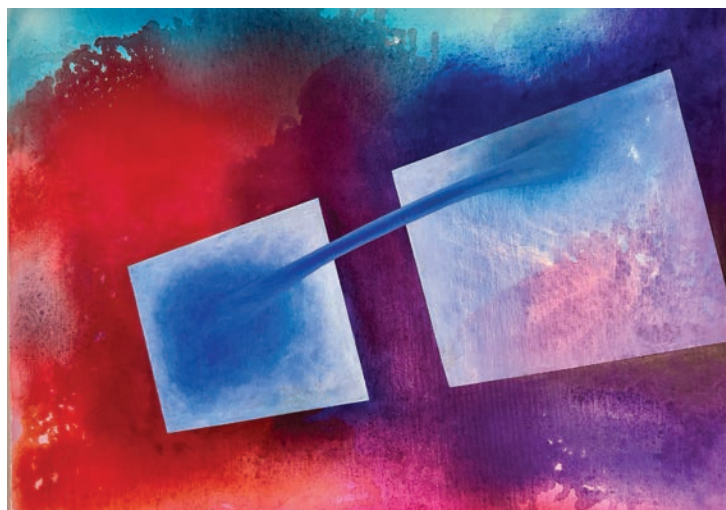
[3] Frontier (video still), 2010. Photo credit: Vin Grabill



[4] Vigilance, 2012. Photo credit: Vin Grabill



[5] TV Nation, 2010. Photo credit: Vin Grabill



[6] Reach, 2023. Photo credit: Vin Grabill

(Windows & Grids cont'd from page 5)

This series of works resulted in a digital image that I then printed onto canvas.

For some of these pieces, such as “Vigilance,” I used unmanipulated shots taken in mall parking lots to suggest a connection between the television medium and our commercial infrastructure. [4] In other works, both sets of imagery derive from abstracted television footage. While a driving principle in any of my works focuses on the basic elements of compositional design – color, line, and shape – vestiges of the television origin of the imagery can be deduced. A good example is “TV Nation.” While both layers inside and outside the window frame are quite abstract, the stylized smiling lips and candy cane colors might suggest to the viewer that the image has something to do with commercial media. [5]

What I’ve discussed so far has touched on my interest (obsession?) with the figure/ground, inside/outside opportunities from fusing two sets of imagery together, whether via sculptural forms, painting, video, or digital photographic works. Here now is a brief description of my return to painting on canvas initiated since my retirement.

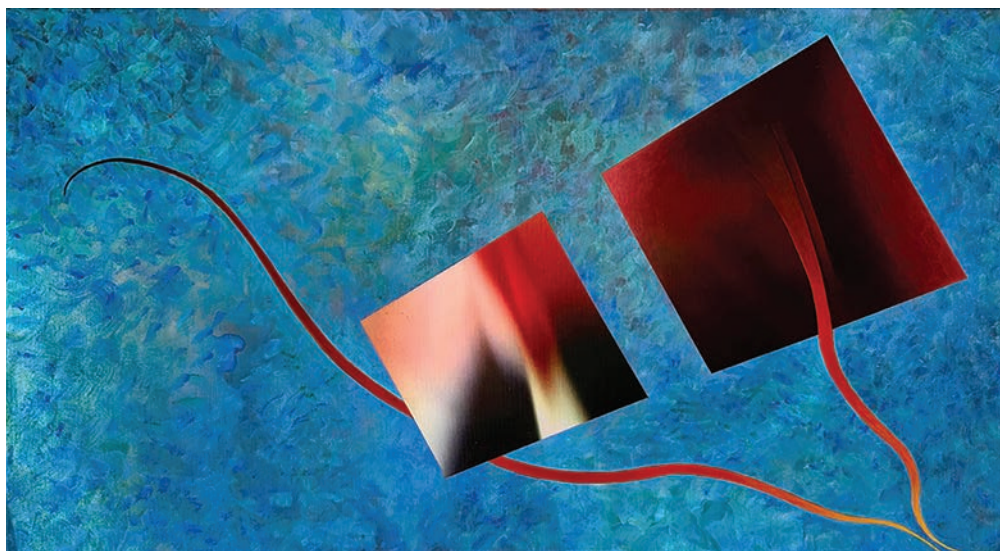
After a good 32-year run teaching and producing video art at UMBC, my first

instinct upon stepping away from the faculty position I thoroughly enjoyed was to give video a rest. Returning to painting in 2020 was a great way for me to kick off this new phase of my life.

Currently, I’m working on a series of paintings that continue my interest depicting spatial imagery inside and outside of window frame structures. I’ve added a new twist on earlier efforts, however, by painting a connecting element between the inside and outside spaces. I’m thinking about these connecting links as synapses – either synaptic connections between two disparate areas or detached synapses depicting a disconnection. “Reach,” 2023, is an example of figure/ground push/pull – the light blue window shapes could be seen as either in front

or behind – with the blue connecting “synapse” paradoxically connecting two areas within the window frames. [6] And “Lapsed Synapse 4” depicts the alternative condition where a synaptic impulse emerges from inside the window space but does not make a connection with another “node” inside or outside the window space. [7]

As mentioned above, painting ultimately is about the composing of color, line, and shape. The grids, windows, and connecting elements that I incorporate are elements that help organize the painting and give it some readability. I look forward to continuing to explore painting (as well as video at some point) as I proceed onward into my retirement years, my hope being to keep the synapses firing! Many of



[7] Lapsed Synapse 4, 2025 Photo credits: Vin Grabill.

my paintings, including all presented here, can be viewed via my Flickr site: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/vgrabill/albums/>

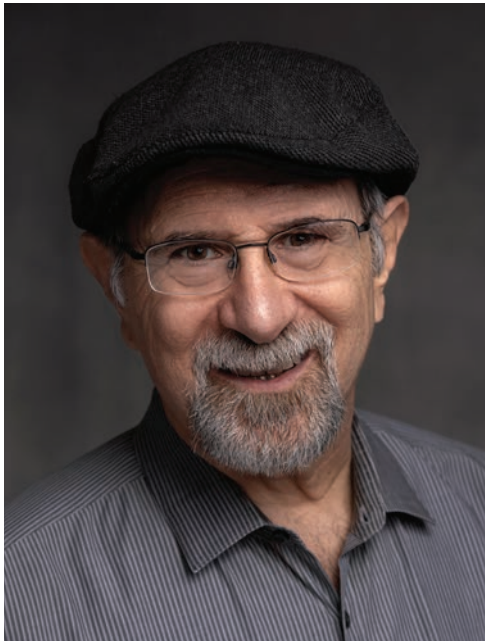
Vin Grabill has exhibited works in painting, sculpture, video art and digital still formats since 1980. His single channel and installation video works have been exhibited nationally and internationally. In addition to pursuing his own work in video, Vin has collaborated on video projects with numerous poets, choreographers, and musicians.



You May Be Old, But Are You Wise?

Science is working on an answer.

By Don Akchin



Don Akchin. Photo credit: Don Akchin

“Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”
-Psalms 90:12

Although I happen to belong to a group called Wise Aging, I am not an active wisdom seeker, but I wouldn't object if some of it fell on me from time to time. But since wisdom is often associated

with age, and my years have already surpassed the requisite three score and ten, I do admit to being curious whether my words can be best classified as wisdom or gibberish.

For millennia, the nature of wisdom and its sources have been the domains of philosophy, religion, and spirituality. And perhaps they should remain in those domains. But in an era when science is the ultimate authority on nearly everything, it's no surprise that science – in this case, psychology – is trying to horn its way into the territory.

To cite one recent, benign example, the Mather Institute, which conducts research about wellness and aging, asked 750 adults aged 55 and up how they described wisdom. “No two respondents described wisdom in exactly the same way,” its research brief reports. Survey participants did agree, however, on a few common characteristics. For 80%, a wise person accepts their own limitations. Two-thirds thought the wise were realists, and a majority thought they were in control of their own lives and had strong relationships. On the other hand, most of the adults did not associate wisdom with success or intelligence. Age does not equal wisdom, they decided. More than 70% agreed that wisdom increases with age, but only 39% thought age and wisdom were strongly related.

Psychological wisdom research has only become a popular field for the past three decades, according to Judith Gluck, a professor of psychology at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. One of her recent papers discusses how difficult it has been to get consistent empirical evidence on wisdom when different researchers use different definitions. Fortunately, she writes, researchers have now developed several “integrative models of wisdom.” Cognitive-focused models start with awareness of “uncertainty, unpredictability,

and the limitation of one's knowledge,” and they acknowledge that different perspectives, shaped by different values and life contexts, are legitimate. Personality-based models emphasize curiosity about life, a willingness to question beliefs, and compassion for others. Developmental models try to explain how wisdom develops and why some people grow wiser as they live their lives.

Gluck concludes that “the relationship between wisdom and age is complex because wisdom is a complex construct in itself.” But the author believes wisdom research must continue to understand how wisdom develops and how to encourage its development, “not just to improve individual well-being but also to increase humanity's chances of survival.”

Look, I don't want to do anything to harm humanity's odds for survival, but is slicing and dicing causative factors and indexing personality traits really getting us anywhere? Is the goal to arrive at criteria so we can determine how wise we are on a scale of 1 to 100? Is there value in having standardized tests to identify students with high wisdom potential? Does anyone believe that delineating the causative factors of wisdom will guarantee that future leaders of business, government, and religion will be the wisest of the wise?

I'm all for science (despite never making higher than a C on any college course that ended in -ology), but science has this powerful urge to strap a subject to the table, perform a vivisection, catalog the constituent parts of each internal organ, and draw conclusions about the nature of its reality. Sometimes it produces new understanding. Sometimes it just drains the life out of the subject.

(Science cont'd on page 7)

(*Science cont'd from page 8*)

I think the latter is the case with the scientific approach to wisdom. The slice-it-and-dice-it approach to knowledge seems to yield less useful understanding than a holistic approach, the way it has always been understood by philosophers, the religious, and the spiritual. Wisdom is practical guidance in the art – not the science – of living.

Who is wise? To the Jewish sage Ben Zoma, it is “the one who learns from every person.” Being curious and open to multiple perspectives counts. A wise person is also humble enough to know what they don’t know. As Socrates put it, “The only true wisdom is knowing you know nothing.”

As for wisdom’s connection to age, having many life experiences can certainly help develop wisdom, but it’s not automatic. It depends on what you learn from those experiences. You can be wizened and still not be wise.

In addition to being the husband of Wisdom Institute member Lisa Akchin, Don Akchin writes weekly about aspects of aging for a Substack publication, The EndGame. This column originally appeared in that outlet. Don is the author of The AfterWork: Finding Fulfilling Alternatives to Retirement, available on Amazon. 🍵

Armchair Travels

Is There a Limit to How Much We Can Travel in Retirement?

Larry Wilt

“How much can I do in retirement?” We all ask this. When we plan to travel, we wonder what our limits are. I went to China alone at the age of 70, in 2019, to see if I could find my limits. Spoiler: I didn’t find them. I am writing this to suggest that you too can

maybe do more than you think you can. The biggest barrier to adventure travel is one’s psychology.

All my friends and relatives said I shouldn’t do this trip. I took a UMBC course in Chinese only to learn that I didn’t learn enough to travel in China. I scoured travel guides only to learn that it is a lot easier to go on a tour. But off I went, with accommodations reserved only for the first few and last few days of a 36-day trip.

Five days in Hong Kong got me acclimated. I stayed in a hostel, as I usually do -- \$51/night. I then headed down to the island of Hainan, because I wanted to feel warm. It was the start of the Chinese New Year holiday, so all transportation was overloaded. I had to lay over at Maoming because I could not get a train ticket straight through to Hainan. Nobody I met in Maoming spoke English. But Google Translate worked, even for some long conversations.

It took me three rough days to get to Haikou, the capital city of Hainan. The streets there were quiet; most of the

vehicles there are electric. I stayed at a hostel for \$25/night in a private room with private bath. The travelers there were interesting, dominated by English teachers on holiday from the North -- lots of group discussions in English.

At a street food market, I sat near a Chinese family. Their 20-something daughter, Flower, had learned English from TV. She took me around the city several times, once for unusual local foods, one of which translated to “chicken droppings.” I arranged for private Chinese lessons. I didn’t learn much Chinese, but I got invited to dinner and to play tennis – twice. I found a dim sum restaurant where I ate breakfast every morning.

I booked a bicycle tour starting at Wuzhishan, in the center of the island. I didn’t know how I was getting to Wuzhishan until the tour company owner offered me a free ride. The bike tour itself was exhausting, but filled with interesting stops, like a spider farm where venomous spiders are raised for medical research and a stop for local street food. I enjoyed a roasted duck egg.



Sharing a meal with new friends. Photo credits: Larry Wilt.

I headed down to the southern coast to enjoy its beaches. It was loaded with rude and crude Russians. I got a first-hand account of Chinese treatment of Uyghurs by a Turkish bartender at the hostel near the beach.

I flew back to Hong Kong and from there ventured into Shenzhen to experience Chinese consumerism at a mall. Most of the goods seemed high-end. Scattered throughout were large Hello Kitty icons and similar infantilized cute things. I ate dinner at a seafood restaurant that featured a Brazilian salsa band. I disputed an overcharge for my meal, paid only what I thought I owed, and left in a hurry. I made it back to the USA two days later. It was an adventure, but it was never too much. One has to be flexible and have a good sense of humor to travel like this. But the experiences are truly unique.

Dr. Larry Wilt served as a library faculty, 1981- 2014, and as Director of the Library, 1990 - 2014. His academic work was in Philosophy and Information Science, with focus on Epistemology and Discourse Analysis. 🕯

Prescription Update

Kathlyn Miller



Happy New Year! For 2026, Via Benefits has issued a new debit card for those eligible for the Health Reimbursement Account (HRA). The debit card is intended to be used with your Medicare Part D plan for prescriptions purchased at a pharmacy. Last year, if you forgot to bring your debit card with you when you purchased prescriptions and had to pay yourself, did you know that you may be reimbursed for those prescriptions? Prescriptions purchased through December 31, 2025, may be reimbursed through March 31, 2026, by using the ViaBenefits app on your phone or by contacting ViaBenefits at my.viabenefits.com/maryland or by phone 1-855-556-4419.

This year, remember to ask for a new formulary (drug list) from your 2026 Medicare Part D plan so that both you and your doctor will know which prescription drugs are covered. Only covered drugs count toward the 2026 \$2,100 out of pocket max. If your prescription drug is not covered, ask your doctor to request an exception from your Medicare Part D plan. If your plan approves the exception, the drug is covered and will count toward the \$2,100 out of pocket cost. If the drug is not approved, check other discount plans to see if it is less costly, such as GoodRx. Your pharmacist will help with that, but please know that the cost of prescription drugs purchased through GoodRx are not included in the 2026 \$2,100 out of pocket amount.

Coming soon! Watch for a survey on the transition from the State of Maryland prescription drug plan to the Medicare Part D plans. This survey will be emailed, not mailed. To ensure your information is correct, please visit: <https://wisdom.umbc.edu/contact-us/mailling-list-information-update-form/>



Members Corner

NAME: Kathy Lee Sutphin

ROLES AT UMBC: Assistant Dean, College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences (2005-2020); Coordinator of Special Projects, Department of Biological Sciences (1995-2005);

RETIREMENT YEAR: 2021

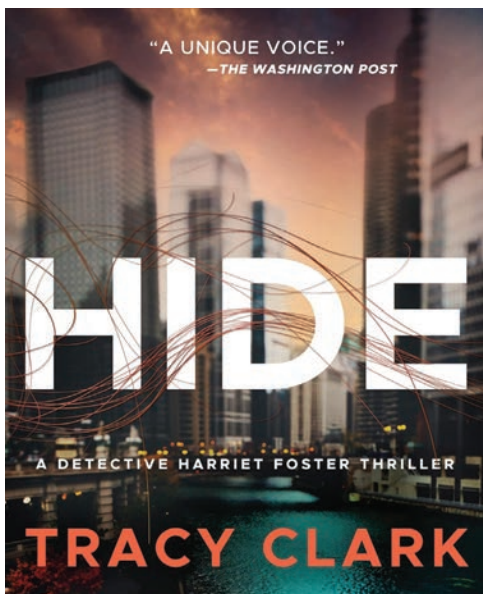
Blessings come in all sizes and the most recent one for the Sutphin family weighed 7lbs.10 oz. and was born on December 8, 2025. As seasoned grandparents, my husband and I are very pleased to welcome grandchild number eight, Nicholas Lawrence Bonczar, son of daughter Mallory Sutphin and



Introducing Nicholas Lawrence Bonczar. Photo credit: Kathy Lee Sutphin

husband, Larry. A UMBC grad like her mother, Mallory '06 is a clinical therapist specializing in OCD who plans

to return to work in March with Nana (me) providing part-time childcare.



Book Talks

Reviewed by
Dr. Pamela Williams Morgan

Hide: A Detective Harriet Foster Thriller

by Tracy Clark. Seattle: Thomas & Mercer.
ISBN: 13: 978-1542037570

Hide, A novel from the mystery, thriller, and suspense genre, is set in Chicago, Illinois. The novel recounts the day-to-day work life of homicide detective Harriet Foster with all of its challenges and impacts. This riveting literary work offers readers insights into crime solving. These insights seem to point to one character only to take dramatic twists that frequently implicate another potential villain.

In the spirit of true transparency, I confess that I am not a fan of murder mysteries since my imagination is far too vivid not to provoke nightmares. However, I did not want this book to end, which was quite a surprise to me! To say that the ending was unexpected would be an understatement!

I highly recommend this novel. Now, I am excited about reading the already purchased sequel! Yes, there is a sequel, which is entitled *Fall* and seems to pick up where *Hide* ends!!

Report on the Newsletter Survey

Linda Baker and John Jeffries

As part of our ongoing efforts to understand how well the Wisdom Institute Newsletter serves the needs and interests of our retiree community, the Newsletter Committee invited members to participate in a survey during the past year. Fifty-nine of you responded. Your feedback—both in the structured questions and the open-ended comments—gave us a clearer picture of what you value, how you engage with the newsletter, and where you think we might make adjustments.

Across the responses, we saw a consistent appreciation for staying connected to UMBC and to one another. Many of you shared that the newsletter helps maintain those ties. You also suggested a number of small refinements, such as including more retiree profiles, keeping articles concise, and occasionally incorporating wellness or cultural features. Subgroup differences—between faculty and staff, recent and long-retired members, and those who read more or less of each issue—reflect the diversity of our community and offer helpful insight as we plan future issues.

Reading and Format Preferences. Most respondents told us they read at least part of the newsletter all of the time or most of the time. A majority prefer receiving it by email, though a significant portion still values the printed version delivered by mail. These preferences tell us that continuing to offer both formats remains important.

Which Features Resonate Most. When asked about interest in the newsletter's regular features, several sections stood out as especially valued. Upcoming Events, the Director's Message, and UMBC Stories received the strongest average ratings. Together, these sections reflect what many rely on the newsletter to provide: timely information, institutional updates, and personal connection.

What Members Value Most. In open-ended comments, many members emphasized that the newsletter helps them stay connected—to UMBC, to campus developments, and to former colleagues. Stories about members, updates on retiree benefits, and information about what's happening at the university were frequently mentioned. These responses affirm that the newsletter plays a meaningful role in keeping our community linked together.

Suggestions and Areas for Adjustment. Although half of commenters said no changes were needed, others offered ideas for refinement. Among the most common were requests for more retiree profiles or interviews; suggestions that some articles be made more concise; and occasional interest in photos, wellness-related topics, or links to talks or videos. These suggestions point toward small, manageable enhancements rather than a need for major changes.

Ideas for Future Topics. Responses to the question about future topics were diverse. Some members expressed interest in UMBC's current issues and direction, including funding, administrative changes, and academic developments. Others preferred personal or community-oriented content, such as stories about retirees, or insights into the student experience on today's campus. A few suggested optional interactive features—short reflective prompts or calls for brief submissions from readers.

Looking Ahead Together. We appreciate the time many of you took to share your thoughts and suggestions. We have already responded to some suggestions for future issues. For example, the new Post-UMBC Stories feature was designed to provide information about what members are doing in retirement, supplementing Members Corner. Interest in learning more about current students at UMBC led to our invitation to Vice Provost Yvette Mozie Ross to write about student enrollment. 🙏

Upcoming Wisdom Institute Events, Spring 2026

February 10, Tuesday, Happy Hour Zoom Microtalks, 5-6 p.m.

Join your colleagues sharing stories.

**February 24, Tuesday, Presentation by Dr. Kevin Omland: “The Tree of Life.”
Biological Sciences 004, 4-5:30 p.m. See below for details.**

April 12, Sunday, UMBC Theatre’s Wizard of Oz matinee, Proscenium Theatre, 2 p.m.

April 16, Thursday, Happy Hour Zoom Microtalks, 5-6 p.m.

**May 15, Friday, 9th Annual Signature Event, with Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett-Helaire,
11 a.m-2 p.m. Chesapeake Employee Insurance Arena on Campus**

Possibly an outdoor adventure in late March or in May.

Please find more information on wisdom.umbc.edu and sign up for the events.



Understanding the Tree of Life

Did you ever wonder about who we are, where we came from, and where we fit in on the evolutionary tree? Our own Dr. Kevin Omland will share his inspiring and thoughtful response to these questions on February 24, 2026 at 4:00 pm on campus in the Biology 004 seminar room.

Dr. Omland challenges evolutionary misperceptions and maintains that evolution is a branching tree where all species-humans included-are evolutionary cousins, not ancestors or descendants. He reminds us that every organism alive today shares the same 3.5 billion years of evolutionary history! We are each uniquely adapted to our own environment. At the same time, he notes, we are all interconnected. Dr. Omland’s talk promises to foster a deeper appreciation for the remarkable complexity and diversity of life on Earth, our evolutionary history, and how this informs our interactions with other living things on Earth. Hope you can join us. Please go to wisdom.umbc.edu to sign up.

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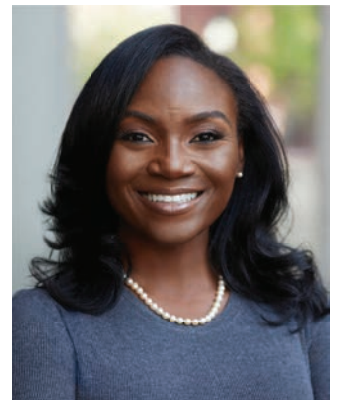
Wisdom Institute's 9th Annual Signature Event

Guest Speaker: Kizzmekia Corbett-Helaire

May 15th, 2026

UMBC Campus,

Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena



Do join us May 15th and welcome Kizzie, as we knew her best, back to campus. This will be a very special occasion, so put it on your calendar now. Registration information will be shared closer to the date. Look for a postcard in your mail, messages in your UMBC email accounts, and on our website, wisdom.umbc.edu. We expect that this talk will be of interest to a large number of WI members, so please be sure to register early. For the first time this year, the registration form will include the options of registering only for the reception, only for the luncheon itself, or for both reception and luncheon. We hope to see you there!