

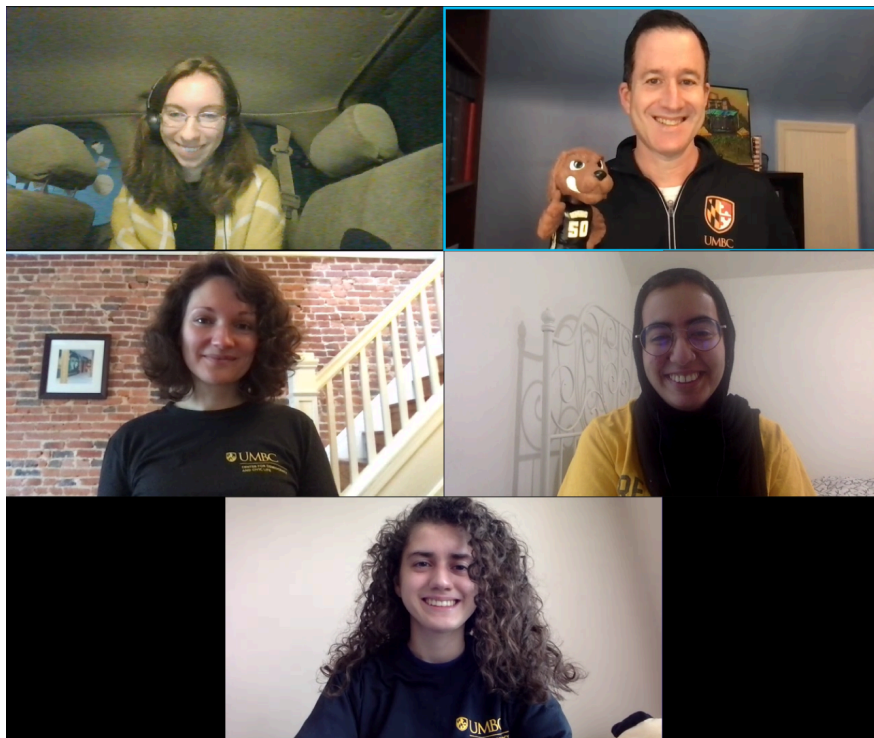
# COMMUNITY MATTERS

MAY 2021

*A newsletter of the Center for Democracy and Civic Life at UMBC*

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## NOTE FROM THE STAFF



Hello and welcome to *Community Matters*, a newsletter from the Center for Democracy and Civic Life at UMBC. The Center's work builds from the idea that all of us, and the ways we pull together to address challenges and create our shared future, truly matter. This newsletter offers a window into this work.

As we enter the final weeks of the Spring 2021 semester, we are reflecting with gratitude on the contributions many members of our community made to Center for Democracy and Civic Life initiatives during the 2020-2021 academic year. We cannot list all of them here, but want to recognize those who have made some of the greatest investments of time and care as [STRiVE](#) coaches, [Alternative Spring Break \(ASB\)](#) leaders, and [Partnerships for Listening and Action by Communities and Educators \(PLACE\)](#) Fellows.

STRiVE 2021 coaches:

- Ezekiel Ajayi
- Nailah-Benā Chambers
- Mehrshad Devin
- Tyler Fultz
- Jasmine Lee
- Juhi Naik
- Simon Stacey
- Diane Stonestreet

ASB 2021 leaders:

- Faith Davis
- Rehman Liaqat
- Mokeira Nyakoe
- Wendy Zhang

PLACE Fellows

- Violeta Brito
- Tony Cano
- Shannon Cheek
- Sydney Fryer
- Nic Nemec
- Emily Paul
- Lexi Stone
- Briscoe Turner

We also are grateful to Felipe Filomeno, who serves as Co-Principal Investigator on the PLACE Project.

You can read more about the individuals we have mentioned on the [Affiliates page](#) of the Center for Democracy and Civic Life website.

Thank you to everyone who has helped to sustain our campus community this year and supported civic learning and democratic engagement during a challenging time. We appreciate you.

Best,

David Hoffman, Romy Hübler, Dominique Henriques Melo, Tess McRae, and Tirzah Khan  
*Center for Democracy and Civic Life Staff*

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## FEATURED NEWS

### Romy Hübler Honored with 2020-2021 Jakubik Family Endowment Staff Award



At UMBC's Presidential Faculty and Staff Awards on April 7th, Romy Hübler, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life's Assistant Director, received the 2020-2021 Jakubik Family Endowment Staff Award for her extraordinary contributions to student success. She has earned the respect of the UMBC community for her creativity, resourcefulness, and dedication, and for the care, insight, and attention with which she mentors students.

*"Romy is a remarkable leader who has inspired students, colleagues, and national partners. She is brilliant, compassionate, tireless, and effective." — David Hoffman*

The Jakubik Family Endowment Staff Award was established by former Assistant Provost Stan Jakubik to recognize UMBC staff members who go above and beyond to support students in their endeavors.

Read more about Romy [here](#).

## Alternative Spring Break (ASB) 2021 Symposium



On April 16th, participants in Alternative Spring Break (ASB) and campus partners convened at the ASB 2021 Symposium. Participants reflected on their experiences, and campus partners shared opportunities for them to continue their social change work at UMBC and beyond through research, service, facilitation, advocacy, project development, and other forms of community engagement.

Campus partners in attendance included:

- Candace Dodson Reed, Office of Equity and Inclusion
- Christine Mallinson, Center for Social Science Scholarship
- Ekta Daryani, Student Government Association
- Jeff Cullen, Student Conduct and Community Standards
- Kacie Lawrence, Career Center
- Kasey Venn, Shriver Center
- Lisa Gray, Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion, & Belonging
- Meghan Lynch, Graduate Student Association
- Rebecca Ferguson, Retriever Essentials



## Change Makers Dinner



On April 21st, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and the Office of Sustainability hosted a virtual Change Makers Dinner focusing on environmental sustainability. More than 20 UMBC students, faculty, staff, and alumni spent the evening having informal, small group conversations with local leaders who are addressing environmental sustainability in their work: Kim Coble (Executive Director, Maryland League of Conservation Voters), Dana Stein (Maryland State Delegate, District 11), and Gabriel Watson (Data Scientist, Chesapeake Commons).

*"Each one of us has a responsibility and a stake in working toward a more sustainable world, which can be a daunting thought. But the work to address this big issue (or any big issue, for that matter) doesn't have to be big: we can start small by taking action to advance environmental sustainability in our own community, including by having conversations like this one." — Change Makers Dinner Participant*

Change Makers Dinners bring members of the UMBC community and local leaders together for conversations about ways we can address important issues as individuals and as a community. Previous Change Makers Dinners focused on structural racism (July 2020) and women's political empowerment (September 2020, in collaboration with the Women's Center and Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion, & Belonging).

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## RETRIEVER TALES



At the Center for Democracy and Civic Life, we believe that stories are everything. We're speaking with members of the UMBC community about their stories: what brought them to UMBC, what it means to them to be here, and what they hope for the UMBC community. Each month, we'll be releasing new episodes of the Retriever Tales podcast in this newsletter. UMBC's student newspaper, *The Retriever*, wrote about the new podcast [here](#).

What experiences come to your mind as you listen to these stories? Let us know at [civiclif@umbc.edu](mailto:civiclif@umbc.edu).



Rees Draminski '22, Senator with the Student Government Association, explains what he has learned about engagement and impact during his time at UMBC.



Charis Lawson '20, former Civic Literacy Intern with the Center for Democracy and Civic Life, reflects on her journey of finding community at UMBC after being homeschooled.



Poulomi Banerjee '16, M.P.P. '21, Acting Assistant Director of Annual Giving, illustrates her transformation from disconnected first year student to enthusiastic alumna.



Lia Purpura, UMBC's Writer in Residence, shares her thoughts on artmaking as a way of connecting with community on campus and beyond.

[Click here to listen to these episodes.](#)

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# UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES & VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

## Changing Maryland (RSVP Required)

*Monday, May 3, 2021 • 5:00 - 6:30 PM*

Changing Maryland is an opportunity for UMBC students, faculty, staff, and alumni to learn about getting involved in the lawmaking process and contributing to the civic health of our state. Join a conversation with state leaders whose legislative efforts address policing, prison and inmate rights, and environmental sustainability.

Part of this program will take place in facilitated small groups where participants will have a chance to interact with state leaders and each other.

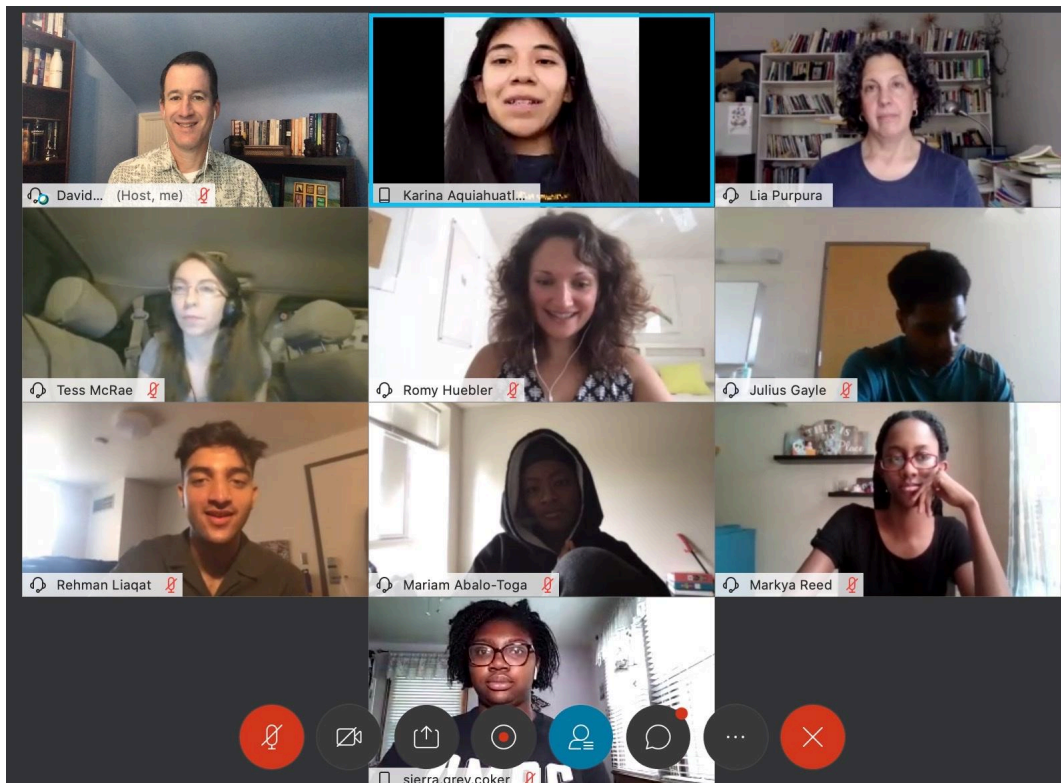
State leaders will include:

- Kim Coble, Executive Director, Maryland League of Conservation Voters
- Jessica Feldmark, Maryland State Delegate, District 12
- Brian Frazee, Vice President of Government Affairs, Maryland Hospital Association and President, UMBC Alumni Association
- Cory McCray, Maryland State Senator, District 45
- Charles Sydnor, III, Maryland State Senator, District 44
- Jake Weissmann, Chief of Staff, Office of the Senate President

Space is limited and an RSVP is required: <https://forms.gle/USraw3HyY8CVT9gu5>.

Changing Maryland is hosted by the Center for Democracy and Civic Life in collaboration with the Student Government Association and the Graduate Student Association.

## Civic Courage Journaling Project Gathering



*Friday, May 28, 2021 • 3:15 - 4:45 PM*

The Civic Courage Journaling Project creates opportunities for individual reflection and group conversations about personal experiences that have important, often hidden civic dimensions. Civic Courage, identified by the [Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement \(CLDE\) Theory of Change](#) as one of the capacities necessary for active and engaged citizenship, encompasses the ability to take risks, work through tension, be patient in the face of challenges, stay open and engaged, take responsibility for the foreseeable consequences of one's actions, face changes bravely, and act in accordance with one's core values and beliefs.

UMBC student, faculty, staff, and alumni journal bearers respond to prompts from the Center for Democracy and Civic Life by creating entries in their journals. We share the prompt via email during the week before each gathering. If you'd like to be involved with the Civic Courage Journaling Project, send us an email: [civicle@umbc.edu](mailto:civicle@umbc.edu).

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The Center for Democracy and Civic Life's 2020-2021 staff has included four undergraduate interns, all of whom have worked virtually throughout their terms. Three are departing or have concluded their work with us:



Dominique Henriques Melo '22, Community Civic Engagement Intern, supported Alternative Spring Break 2021 and research initiatives.



Tirzah Khan '21, ConnectionCorps Intern (graduating May 2021), launched the Retriever Tales podcast and supported political engagement initiatives.



Charis Lawson '20, Civic Literacy Intern (graduated December 2020), supported political engagement initiatives.

Thank you Dominique, Tirzah, and Charis for making wonderful contributions that have helped to foster a thriving civic culture at UMBC. We are grateful that you are part of our story.

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AND CIVIC LIFE**

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