



UMB News

Face to Face: Redefining Aging

April 9, 2021 | By [Alex Likowski](#)

“Grow old with me,” poet Robert Browning famously wrote. “The best is yet to be.” That can be true of course, but it’s by no means a guarantee. Browning lived to age 77, which for the 19th century was quite good. His wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, however, died at age 55.

But the idea of ensuring healthy, vibrant, and meaningful lives well past retirement age has never had so much support in popular culture as it does right now, largely due to the fact that the population is getting older. In the U.S., between 2006 to 2016, the population age 65 and older grew from 37 million to 49 million — an increase of a third in just a decade. And that’s expected to nearly double to more than 95 million by 2060. Maybe more surprising, the 85 and over population is projected to more than double from 6.4 million in 2016 to 14.6 million in 2040 — just 19 years from now. The two main reasons for this are increased longevity due to medical advances and workplace safety improvements, and the baby-boom generation born during America’s post-war economic explosion.



(l-r) Diane Martin, Rona Kramer, Bruce Jarrell, Nicole Brandt, and Jay Magaziner

A longer life doesn’t necessarily come with a better quality of life, however. Along with age comes a panoply of challenges. Many face deterioration of everything from joints and

muscles to eyesight and memory. Seniors also risk isolation and a sense of purposelessness after retirement. The good news is that we can influence that process with nutrition, exercise, learning new things, and staying engaged. Bill Burton, the man Governor Tawes once called “the Captain of the Chesapeake,” was asked his secret to longevity after half a century as a newspaper columnist. He said, “If you have something to do tomorrow, you probably won’t die today.”

Unfortunately, a recent ProPublica/Urban Institute study shows more than half of workers who enter their 50s in stable employment are pushed out of those jobs before they plan to retire. The damage can be both financial and emotional, leading to a slew of unanticipated health issues as well as a loss of important social

contact.

The quality and availability of basic services like health care are also critical quality-of-life components, and that's where Maryland shines. *USA Today* rated Maryland the second-best state for older Americans saying, "It ranks as one of the best in the education, income, and health components." *US News* agreed with that, ranking the Old Line State sixth-best in health care.

Maryland is also at the front of the pack with other services, like advocacy for elder rights, community wellness and nutrition, financial education and fraud protection, and support for aging in place.

The newest trend, and one the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) is proud to be a part of, is the development of Age-Friendly Universities. In 2012, Dublin City University in Ireland developed the Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University (AFU), highlighting the unique role that institutions like ours can play in responding to an aging demographic across societies and around the world. Today, there are more than 75 universities – including UMB – with the AFU designation.

How to redefine aging and the role universities like UMB can play as Age-Friendly Universities was the topic of the April 8, 2021, edition of *Virtual Face to Face with President Bruce Jarrell*. Joining UMB President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, were guests Rona E. Kramer, JD, Maryland Secretary of Aging; **Nicole Brandt, PharmD, MBA, BCGP, BCPP, FASCP**, professor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice and Science and executive director of the Peter Lamy Center on Drug Therapy and Aging, University of Maryland School of Pharmacy; **Jay S. Magaziner, PhD, MSHyg**, professor and chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health and director of the Center for Research on Aging, University of Maryland School of Medicine; and **Diane Martin, PhD**, associate professor at the University of Maryland Graduate School and director of UMB's Geriatrics and Gerontology Education and Research program, also known as GGEAR.

Watch the entire discussion, including questions and answers with the audience, by accessing the link at the top of the page.

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