

SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

SPRING '25
ARTS IN REVIEW

Mc Art Beat

Visual, Performing, and Media Arts News at Montgomery College





Cover photograph: Student works on Montgomery College mural
Courtesy of Katherine Knight and Montgomery College



Message from the Dean

DEAR FRIENDS OF MONTGOMERY COLLEGE ARTS,

Spring 2025 was an exciting time in the Visual, Performing, and Media Arts at Montgomery College. In addition to our extensive class offerings, an outstanding array of performances, exhibitions, and workshops showcased the immense talent and dedication of our students, faculty, and staff.

Our special events included *The Timeless Music of Robert Schumann*, a music and visual art collaboration in Globe Hall that drew rave reviews from its large audience of MC faculty, staff, students, and community members. The MC Student Chapter of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers hosted Media Forward 2025, bringing together students and industry leaders for an evening of networking, mentorship, and inspiration.

As always, we want to recognize the outstanding achievements, milestones, and contributions of our Visual, Performing, and Media Arts faculty, staff, and students. In this edition of *Art Beat* we reflect on Dr. Dawn Avery's remarkable career at MC and beyond. An internationally celebrated GRAMMY-nominated musician, scholar, founder of MC's World Arts Program, and winner of United States Professor of the Year, Dr. Avery leaves a legacy of creativity, inclusivity, and passion for the arts after 22 years at MC. We also check in with Professor Jay Crowder, who has been mentoring MC's Music Theatre students for 26 years. He discusses how his leadership roles in the DC theatre world inform his work at the College, including its recent sold-out production of *GREASE*. Finally, we highlight two fantastic projects led by Professor Katherine Knight. The first is an innovative new asynchronous online Drawing I course that offers an engaging and rigorous introduction to the arts to a widely expanded audience. The second is a pair of murals- one in the Cultural Arts Center and one in the President's office- designed and painted by MC students.

The Fall 2025 Arts Calendar will be out very soon. Please be sure to check our exciting schedule of theatre productions, dance performances, concerts, lectures, workshops, gallery exhibitions, and other arts programming at montgomerycollege.edu/artsinstitute.

We wish you a wonderful semester and hope to see you at an arts event very soon.

Frank Trezza, PhD

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**THE HEART BEHIND THE MUSIC:
JAY CROWDER ON GREASE,
MENTORSHIP, AND BUILDING
CONFIDENCE THROUGH THE ARTS
AT MONTGOMERY COLLEGE.**

Above: Jay Crowder with his students at the Kennedy Center

“

**Art is about communication.
If I can help students become
more comfortable, more open,
and more willing to share their
voice, then I've done my job.**

”



Above: Greasers. Photo credit: Anthony Vo

When audiences filled the seats for Montgomery College's recent sold-out production of GREASE, the air was thick with excitement, anticipation and more than a few humming the opening notes of "Summer Nights" before the house lights even dimmed. For the students on stage, the production was the culmination of months of rehearsals, careful preparation, and personal growth. And guiding them through every note and nuance was the steady hand of Music Director Jay Crowder, a longtime pillar of the college's performing arts community.

Crowder has been a fixture at Montgomery College for over 26 years, but his musical journey started long before he stepped onto campus. A classically trained pianist, Crowder's early life was steeped in music, accompanying school choirs and church congregations as early as sixth grade. That experience naturally led to a lifetime of collaboration with singers and performers — a passion that found a perfect home at MC when he saw a job listing for a position combining two of his great loves: musical theater and piano.

"It really fit what I had always prepared to do," Crowder reflected. "And looking back, it's funny how life prepares you in ways you don't even recognize at the

time." That blend of talent and timing helped him shape a career that not only touches students on campus but also keeps him deeply connected to the professional theater world beyond the classroom.

In fact, Crowder's commitment to staying engaged in the music industry is a cornerstone of his teaching philosophy. He has served for years as a music director and conductor in the Washington, D.C. theater scene and now supervises music selection and personnel for productions at the Kennedy Center. This ongoing involvement in the professional world ensures his students receive an education that's not just academic, but grounded in the realities of the performing arts landscape.

"Being involved in both worlds helps me bring real-world experience into the classroom," he explained. "It allows me to prepare students not just for our productions but for the level of excellence that professional theater demands."

That philosophy was evident in every aspect of this year's production of GREASE. While the title alone is enough to draw enthusiastic crowds, Crowder and the creative team aimed higher. The goal wasn't just to recreate the well-known musical, but to elevate it; both as a performance and as an

educational experience.

From the very start, Crowder, along with director Ian, envisioned a production that balanced the fun, nostalgic elements of GREASE with an authentic portrayal of the social dynamics and culture of the 1950s. “We didn’t want it to just be surface-level entertainment,” Crowder said. “Ian directed it like a play, not just a musical revue, and that gave the students the chance to dive into the characters and the period in a more meaningful way.”

Crowder’s contribution went beyond guiding the performers through the

score. His role also included arranging and adapting the music to fit the unique talents of the student cast. Drawing from various professional productions, including the London version, Broadway original, and its revivals, Crowder crafted an arrangement tailored specifically to the strengths and voices of the students.

“My little secret sauce,” he admitted with a smile, “was doing a lot of research across different versions of the show. I studied them all, and then chose what I thought would fit our students best and be the most fun to perform.”



Above: Summer Lovin'. Photo credit:Juliana Quirino



Above: Greased Lightnin'. Photo credit:Juliana Quirino

The effort paid off. The production was met with sold-out performances night after night, and for many students, it became one of the most rewarding artistic and personal experiences of their time at MC. But the true impact, Crowder believes, goes far beyond ticket sales or applause.

“I hope what students took away was that when you commit to something with love and hard work, great things happen,” he said. “Not all of our students want to be professional performers, some are chemistry majors, some are English majors, but the lessons

of teamwork, discipline, and confidence will stay with them no matter where they go.”

Crowder and the faculty team went the extra mile to make the GREASE experience as enriching as possible. One highlight was organizing a trip for the entire cast to see the world premiere of Schmigadoon at the Kennedy Center; a professional production that offered students a close-up view of seasoned performers at the top of their craft. Additionally, they invited Matthew Gardiner, the celebrated artistic director of Signature Theatre, to conduct

a master class on musical theater performance, providing students with professional insights right in their own rehearsal space.

These opportunities, Crowder emphasized, reflect his broader educational approach using the college's location in a vibrant metropolitan area to expand learning beyond the classroom. "We're fortunate to be surrounded by one of the country's richest theater scenes," he said. "It's not just about putting on a show, but about giving students access to the professional world that exists just beyond the campus."

As the production wrapped and the final bows were taken, Crowder didn't slow down. He is already preparing for an exciting new chapter at Montgomery College: the launch of a brand-new auditioned music theater ensemble. This ensemble will offer students an ongoing opportunity to refine their craft, perform in a variety of settings, and collaborate on both campus and county-wide stages.

"It's completely new for the college," Crowder said, visibly energized by the prospect. "It will give students the kind of continuity and community that's essential for real growth as a performer." The ensemble is expected to begin with around 15 members, but Crowder is open to expanding the group depending



Above: Hand Jive!
Photo credit: Anthony Vo

on the turnout for auditions. "We'll welcome students from all backgrounds, not just theater majors. If someone has the passion and talent, there will be a place for them."

Crowder was also quick to credit the collaborative spirit of his colleagues and the unwavering support of the administration. He offered particular thanks to Irene Alby, new full-time theater faculty, for her commitment to student engagement both on and off campus, and to Dean Trezza for his steadfast encouragement. "There's a real energy and teamwork here across the faculty, especially between the music and theater departments," Crowder

said. "It's exciting to see the program evolving and growing, especially after the challenges of the pandemic."

For Crowder, the core of his work, whether in the classroom, the pit orchestra, or the rehearsal room, is about building more than just skill; it's about cultivating empathy, confidence, and human connection.

"Art, at its heart, is about communication," he said. "And the more comfortable and open a student becomes, the more powerfully they can share their story, both on stage and off. We need that kind of human expression now more than ever."

As students and faculty look toward future productions and new opportunities, Crowder's passion continues to inspire the next generation of artists at Montgomery College, not only to reach for the spotlight but to find their voice in the process.



Above: Mooning
Photo credit: Anthony Vo



DID YOU KNOW?

A New Stage for Student Talent:

Montgomery College is launching its first-ever auditioned Music Theater Ensemble — led by Jay Crowder. The group will perform both on campus and throughout the county, offering ongoing professional-style rehearsal and performance opportunities for students from all majors. Whether you're a seasoned performer or someone new to the spotlight, auditions will be open to the entire student body.

MC MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

Celebrating Dr. Dawn Avery's Remarkable Career at MC



Above: Dawn Avery performing

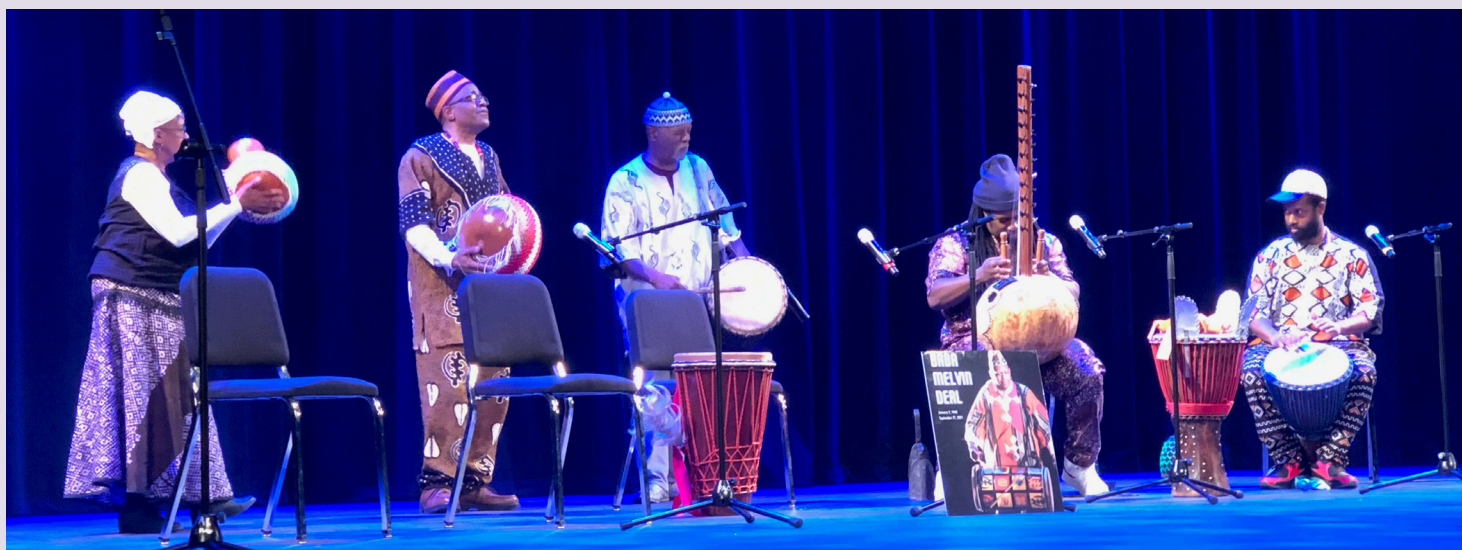
“ A GRAMMY and Native American Music Award-nominated performer and composer, Dr. Avery was the rare professor whose passion for teaching was matched only by her artistic accomplishments and international reputation. ”

Musician, scholar, and beloved professor, Dr. Dawn Avery retired from the Rockville Department of Performing Arts last June after 22 years at Montgomery College. In addition to teaching cello and composition, Dr. Avery founded and directed the College's World Music Program and World Ensemble. Her award-winning World Arts Festival, which she produced every semester for more than two decades, brought dozens of artists from around the world to campus for concerts, panels, workshops, and residencies. A GRAMMY and Native American Music Award-nominated performer and composer, Dr. Avery was the rare professor whose passion for teaching

was matched only by her artistic accomplishments and international reputation.

Of Mohawk Kaniènkeha descent, Dr. Avery has long been a leading voice in the Indigenization of classical music and higher education. Her PhD in ethnomusicology from the University of Maryland focused on Native Classical Music and Indigenous Theory and she has published widely on these topics, including the textbook *World Music and Culture* and her edited volume *Idawadadi: Coming Home: Stories of Residential School Survivors* with contributions by Aboriginal Women. She also commissions and records new works by Native composers as part of the North American Indian Cello Project.

As a musician, Dr. Avery has collaborated with musical luminaries across genres, including Luciano Pavarotti, Sting, R. Carlos Nakai, John Cage, Charles Wuorinen, and Philip Glass. Her work has been performed at the National Museum of the American Indian, the Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center, and several of her recordings have received Global Music Awards. Her short operas *Sacajawea: Woman of Many Names and Trials and Tears*, as well as her score for the award-winning film *Imagining the Indian: The Fight Against Native*



Above: The African Music and Dance panel and concert, one of Dr. Avery's favorite World Arts Festival events

Mascots, reflect her deep commitment to storytelling through music. In 2023, she won Best Composer at the Paris Women's Film Festival for *Iotsistokwaron:ion*.

Dr. Avery's distinguished accomplishments as a scholar and musician are equaled only by her remarkable achievements as an educator. In 2011, she was named United States Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In addition, her work with MC's World Ensemble earned her an Ambassador Award from the United Nations.

Former students describe Dr. Avery as both an extraordinary teacher and a transformational presence. According to one: "Professor Dawn Avery is a beloved friend and mentor. Her kindness and zest for life are contagious...She recognizes potential in students and helps them grow and flourish." Another former World Music Ensemble intern remembered, "Dawn exposed me to musicians from all over the world! ... Dawn has a way of seeing students' potential and gifts and tapping into them. She allows students to lead and share their talents. She challenges students to rise up and become leaders. She encourages

in a positive way and she is fun to be around!"

In turn, when reflecting on her successes as a teacher, Dr. Avery is quick to credit her students. "I've learned firsthand about cultures and music from over 171 countries thanks to the diversity and generosity of our students and I have been privileged to support them in that knowledge." She looks back fondly on the many final project presentations in her classes, which she calls "a cherished gift," explaining, "Students presented research, dance, instruments, flags, and brought family members and food. Many dressed in their beautiful traditional clothing. The respect, pride, and knowledge were shared by all."

Dr. Avery is a natural collaborator, building strong partnerships across departments to help create and sustain the World Music Program. As producer of the World Arts Festival, she worked with a wide range of departments, including dance, theatre, fine and media art, anthropology, mathematics, science, women's studies, and counseling. "I love that the College and its faculty support interdisciplinary collaboration and I continue to enjoy the support of innovation in the arts by the administration, the music department, the faculty, and the community. We all know how vital the



Above: The MC World Ensemble

arts are to both society and education."

Among Dr. Avery's most cherished memories at MC are the many World Arts Festival events that she planned, including RumiFest, the Ukraine cultural series, the African music and dance festival, and the Native Classical and Contemporary music program. In addition, she fondly remembers the 10 years that the World Ensemble participated in the United Nations Water Music Project, using music and dance to explore global issues around water sustainability. These events, and so many more, supported global education in a way that reflected the College's mission and student body and enriched the experiences of everyone involved.

Reflecting on her two decades at the helm of the World Music Program, Dr. Avery says, "At MC, we value a global education that reflects our college population. We are especially fortunate to have first-hand experience from our students of important cultural lessons. Students separated or shy about their traditions find solace and pride in our world music program. It improves communication, prejudice, global awareness, empathy, tolerance, personal growth, critical thinking, and many of our students have found wonderful careers related to the work that they did in the program."

Since retirement, Dr. Avery has continued to compose, teach, and perform. Now splitting her time

between Maryland and Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, she enjoys gardening, the beach, and playing with the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra. “I’ve been commissioned to write a few symphonies and a lot of chamber music,” she shared, referencing recent collaborations with the Salt Bay Chamber Festival and the Williamsburg Symphony.

One of her most meaningful post-retirement projects was with the Albany Symphony’s 2024 Water Music Festival which paired composers with small towns in upstate New York. “I was given Fort Plains, which was originally a Mohawk village. I worked with the community on musical, historical, and educational events that culminated in a day of Mohawk cultural celebrations along the Mohawk River and the premiere of my new symphony. It’s been wonderful to continue to bring music, history, and culture to people.” Dr. Avery also composed short works acknowledging the Indigenous people of the area. “These works are very touching,” she said, “as we all get to honor our ancestors and the land.”

Though she has officially retired, Dr. Avery still teaches part-time and remains deeply engaged with her students and community.

“My multi-layered career is a tapestry,” she said, “that includes performance, meditation, academia, ethnomusicology, composition, and more recently, my role as an Indigenous elder, that have allowed me to bring more to the College and to the students. I am glad to be slowing down a little, but I guess that is relative.”

When asked what she would miss most about Montgomery College, she didn’t hesitate: “The diversity of students, faculty, learning styles, and collaborations. A special shout-out to Dean Frank Trezza who has brought a lot of joy and commitment to the college and dept. chair Alvin Trask. They have a tough job and they truly understand how vital the arts are to maintaining our freedom of expression.”

Dr. Avery leaves behind a powerful legacy. As a former student recalls, “Dawn makes the cello sing. She laughs a lot. She is light-hearted. She is a joy... May she continue to share her beauty and talent as she retires on to her next adventure!” Looking ahead, Dr. Avery expressed her hope that the World Arts Program will continue to flourish for generations. “In my traditions, we plan for seven generations ahead,” she said. “Wouldn’t that be wonderful?”



Above: Dr. Dawn Avery, photo credit Deborah Martin

MEDIA FORWARD 2025:

**SMPTE AND MONTGOMERY COLLEGE UNITE TO
POWER THE NEXT GENERATION OF MEDIA MAKERS**



From left to right: Karl Kuhn (SMPTE leader and Carolina Galeano Strategic Content Manager (M (Former student and Director of Communication Crest Media) , Robert Stern (Guitar Center), Mich Broadcast Technician at National Geographic) P (Media Arts student)





Above: Students listen for tips and career guidance. PHOTO by Tun Lin Aung

Under the glow of stage lights and the hum of anticipation, the Theater Arts Arena at Montgomery College's Rockville Campus was transformed this February into a vibrant hub of creativity, connection, and career discovery. Media Forward 2025, an annual event hosted by the MC Student Chapter of SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers), brought together students, industry leaders, and technology experts for an unforgettable evening that was part networking, part mentorship, and all inspiration.

This year's event—held on February 27th—marked another powerful chapter in the evolving relationship between Montgomery College and SMPTE, a global organization with a century-long history of setting the

standards in film, television, and digital media. With over 75 attendees, including 60 student participants, Media Forward once again proved to be a catalyst for growth, confidence, and professional opportunity in the world of media production.

The roots of Media Forward at Montgomery College stretch back nearly a decade. The concept was born when MC students attended a Media Forward event hosted by Loyola University Maryland. Their enthusiasm, diversity, and genuine curiosity left a lasting impression on the SMPTE-DC Chapter managers—experienced professionals who saw in MC students the future of the media industry. They approached Montgomery College with a proposal: create a student chapter at MC with

the support of SMPTE-DC.

That moment sparked a movement. Since its founding in 2017, the SMPTE MC Student Chapter has worked tirelessly to create opportunities for students to explore careers, connect with professionals, and develop critical industry skills. Media Forward, the chapter's flagship event, has become the centerpiece of that mission.

The Media Forward event follows a carefully refined format designed to inform, engage, and empower. The evening begins with dinner, a valuable time for informal conversation and connection. This meal, made possible by generous sponsor contributions, plays a crucial role in welcoming students and fostering a sense of community from the start.

Following dinner, the heart of the event begins: the student-

moderated panel discussion, featuring professionals from across the media landscape. The 2025 panel was particularly impressive, representing a cross-section of career paths and lived experiences, including:

- *An MC alumna who now runs her own public relations firm after several successful years in production.*
- *A current producer/director at Montgomery College Television (MCTV) who spoke to the value of persistence and storytelling.*
- *The Lead Broadcast Technician at National Geographic, who brought infectious energy and deep technical knowledge.*
- *A former video production professional now working in sales at Guitar Center, who shared how*



Above: Professional products as giveaways for students. PHOTO by Tun Lin Aung

his career journey evolved from behind the camera to customer engagement.

- *A senior consultant from Sherwood Insights with decades of experience spanning engineering, large-scale production events, and sales.*

These professionals offered more than just insight—they offered real-world advice on how to survive and thrive in a constantly evolving industry. Students were encouraged to be themselves, to follow through on commitments, and to build confidence by building skills. One resounding message was clear: you don't have to forge the path alone—others have done it, and they're here to help.

After the panel discussion, students were invited into breakout sessions and sponsor areas, where they could speak one-on-one or in small groups with industry professionals. These sessions provided deeper engagement and gave students the chance to ask specific questions, share their interests, and even talk about potential job and internship opportunities.

New to this year's Media Forward was the addition of a fully equipped mobile TV production truck, stationed behind the Theater Arts Arena. Inside, students explored the control room, saw real-time camera feeds, and experienced what it's like to work in a high-pressure, live production environment. There was even a camera set up inside the arena feeding live footage to the truck, offering students



Above: Professor Joanne Carl, Faculty Coordinator for the SMPTE-MC Student Chapter.
PHOTO by Tun Lin Aung,



Above: Student experience live-truck field production right at the venue.
PHOTO by John Watson (MCTV)

a rare glimpse at real-world production workflows. This was possible through a partnership with MCTV, a relationship that spans 20 years. It's just one of the ways the MCTV staff members support the academic media production program.

Also on site:

- *DC News Now's HR representative offered personalized résumé tips and job search strategies.*
- *Univision sent a former MC student turned production professional who shared both career advice and sponsorship support.*
- *Sony, Evertz, and Blackmagic Design—all major industry players—offered interactive tech*

demonstrations and videos.

- *Blackmagic Design, a long-time sponsor, shared a video update from their California headquarters, giving students an overview of the cutting-edge gear that powers both MC studios and mobile production vehicles.*

Evertz provided students with laptops and allowed them to simulate building their own streaming channels—an exercise in real-time media management.

The emphasis on hands-on learning is a cornerstone of Media Forward. It's one thing to hear about a broadcast switcher or lighting rig—it's another to operate one under expert guidance. This kind of interaction helps bridge the gap between academic learning



Above: MC Students and faculty who volunteered their time to make the career event a success. PHOTO by Tun Lin Aung

and professional reality.

While the event is professionally polished, its planning is student-driven. This year, three student leaders and 14 student volunteers handled logistics, managed sponsor hospitality, and kept everything running smoothly.

Each sponsor was personally greeted by a SMPTE student chapter member, who helped them unload gear, set up stations, and feel at home. These small gestures often lead to big opportunities. As one organizer noted, “That student is now a memory in that sponsor’s mind—they’ll remember them, they’ll talk to them again, and maybe even mentor them.”

Mentorship is, in fact, a formal part of the program. Students in MC’s Media

Production Portfolio class are required to find a mentor, and Media Forward is the perfect place to start those relationships.

Media Forward doesn’t just serve undergrads. The event also attracts:

- *Young professionals beginning their careers in media.*
- *Career changers from other fields entering the production world.*
- *Experienced professionals seeking to retool or rebound from layoffs.*

This cross-generational dynamic adds richness to every conversation and reflects the event’s underlying goal: to

build a stronger, more connected, and inclusive media production community.

Moving Media Forward from November to February was a strategic shift—and a successful one. Students are now far enough into the academic year to ask meaningful questions, but close enough to graduation to start envisioning their future. The timing also ensures greater sponsor availability and alignment with academic programming.

Media Forward is just the beginning. The SMPTE MC Student Chapter hosts two guest speaker meetings per semester, providing ongoing opportunities for growth, mentorship, and industry exposure. These informal Thursday afternoon gatherings offer students another window into the professional world, right after their

production classes.

For updates, speaker announcements, and event recaps, follow the chapter on Instagram at @SMPTE_MC. It’s where student leaders share knowledge, promote events, and connect peers with resources and professionals in the field.

Media Forward 2025 was more than an event—it was a launchpad. For some students, it was their first real-world conversation with a working professional. For others, it was the night they realized they belong in this industry. And for everyone, it was a reminder that the world of media is as much about people as it is about production.

Here’s to another year of growth, mentorship, and moving forward—together.



Above: MC and MCTV celebrated students with free gifts. PHOTO by Tun Lin Aung

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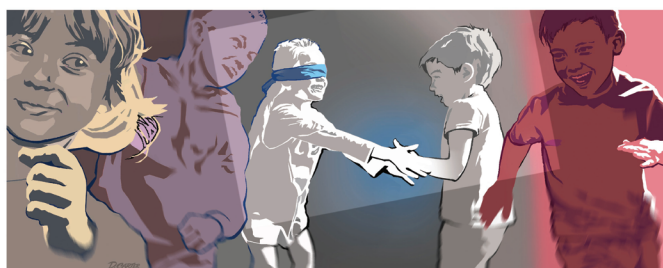
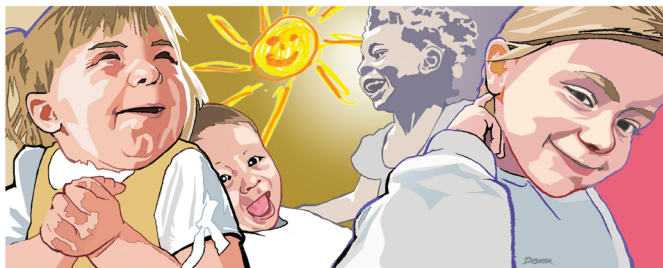
I once loved many things but now only loves one person,
who embodies all my previous loves.

The Timeless Music of Robert Schumann:

A Multimedia Concert in Globe Hall



Above: Professor William Chang and Yoonsoo Shin perform Schumann's *A Poet's Love*



Robert Schumann - *Scenes from Childhood, Opus 15*

Piano - MC Prof. William Chang
Voice (Tenor) - Mr. Yoonsoo Shin
Artwork - MC Professor David Carter

Above: A poster with images from Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood*

On April 4, 2025, Globe Hall at Montgomery College's Germantown campus hosted The Timeless Music of Robert Schumann, a collaborative performance featuring pianist Professor William Chang, visual artist Professor David Carter, and guest tenor Yoonsoo Shin.

The program combined live music and projected artwork, offering a multimedia presentation of two of Schumann's most beloved compositions- *Kinderszenen* (Scenes from Childhood), Op. 15 and *Dichterliebe* (A Poet's Love), Op. 48, accompanied by 29 original artworks by Professor Carter.

The evening opened with introductions by Carter and Dr. Sarah Campbell, Vice President for Liberal Arts and Education, followed by a solo performance of *Kinderszenen* by Chang. The 13 short piano pieces, which explore themes related to Schumann's childhood, were accompanied by Carter's illustrations projected above the stage. After a brief pause, the second half of the program featured *Dichterliebe*, a song cycle based on poetry by Heinrich Heine. For this, Chang was joined by tenor Yoonsoo Shin, who performed all 16 pieces in the original German. Translations and corresponding images were shown simultaneously.

Schumann's works are deeply expressive and emotional, and the visual interpretations added a new dimension to the performance. Dr. Campbell reflected, "Professor Chang's incredible performance was paired with Professor Carter's striking images, and the result was a beautiful exploration of Schumann's works both visually and aurally." Dean of Visual, Performing, and Media Arts, Dr. Frank Trezza agreed, describing it as "a stunning event," and adding, "I was blown away. I've seen David and William do similar events in the past, and they have gotten even better. Each piece informed the other and adding the singer was really spectacular."

This concert marked the third collaboration between Professors Carter and Chang, following earlier multimedia performances of *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns and *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky. It was their first joint project since the pandemic, with planning beginning in October 2024. Germantown Campus Dean Sharon Anthony played a key role in coordinating logistics and publicity, helping the concert earn a spot on Montgomery County's list of top five weekend events. The result was a well-attended program that drew a diverse audience of faculty, students, staff, and

community members. “It was wonderful to see both former and current members of the College community come out to support our talented faculty,” Anthony noted.

The evening demonstrated the College’s enduring commitment to interdisciplinary creativity and community engagement. Both faculty members expressed interest in continuing their collaboration and

hope to bring more of this kind of immersive experience to our students and community. While no formal date has been set, Professor Chang mentioned the possibility of a concert based on Tchaikovsky’s Romeo and

Juliet. The hope is that events like this, that highlight the remarkable talent of our faculty and bring together the MC community in a shared celebration of the arts, will continue to grow in scale and reach in the future.



Above: Dr. Sarah Campbell delivers opening remarks



Above: Professor David Carter welcomes the crowd to the concert in Globe Hall



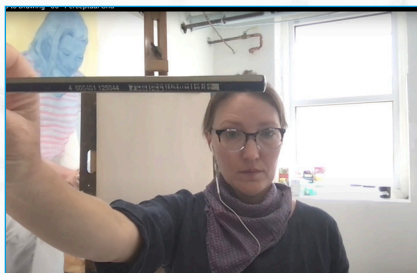


A NEW CANVAS FOR CREATIVITY

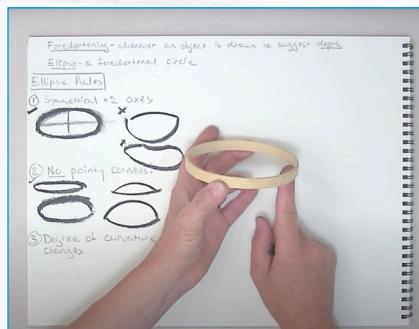
PROFESSOR KATHERINE KNIGHT LAUNCHES
MC'S FIRST ASYNCHRONOUS DRAWING COURSE

“You don’t have to draw like Da Vinci. If students engage with the material and strive for the benchmarks, they will improve. That’s a promise.”

Montgomery College’s Department of Visual and Performing Arts has taken a bold and innovative step into the future of arts education with the launch of its first fully asynchronous Drawing 1 course. Developed and taught by Professor Katherine Knight, the course offers students a flexible and deeply engaging pathway to master



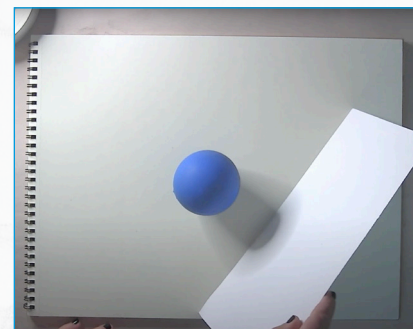
Above: Perceptual Grid/Mapping



Above: Foreshortened Circles/Ellipses

foundational drawing skills from the comfort of their own spaces, without compromising the rigor, depth, or community of a traditional in-person studio class.

This groundbreaking course emerged from the educational experiments and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. “Before that, it would never have occurred to me to try and teach Drawing online, or that it would have



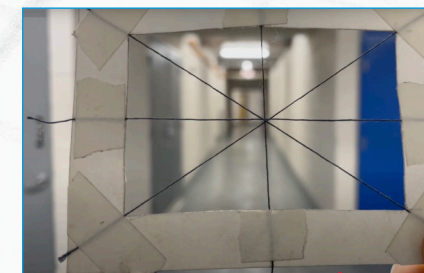
Above: Components of light/using light to model 3D forms

been successful,” Knight recalls. But teaching online during the pandemic offered a revelation. “Many traditional drawing techniques were actually easier to teach through a shared video point of view. Students could see exactly what I was seeing—how I was interpreting and translating three-dimensional objects into two-dimensional drawings. It allowed for a clarity that’s often missing when students have to imagine my perspective from across the room.”

These insights became the foundation of her sabbatical project: the development of a comprehensive library of standardized instructional videos that could support in-person learning—and ultimately, serve as the core of a fully online version of Drawing 1. The asynchronous course, now live for the first time, is a carefully structured, student-centered learning

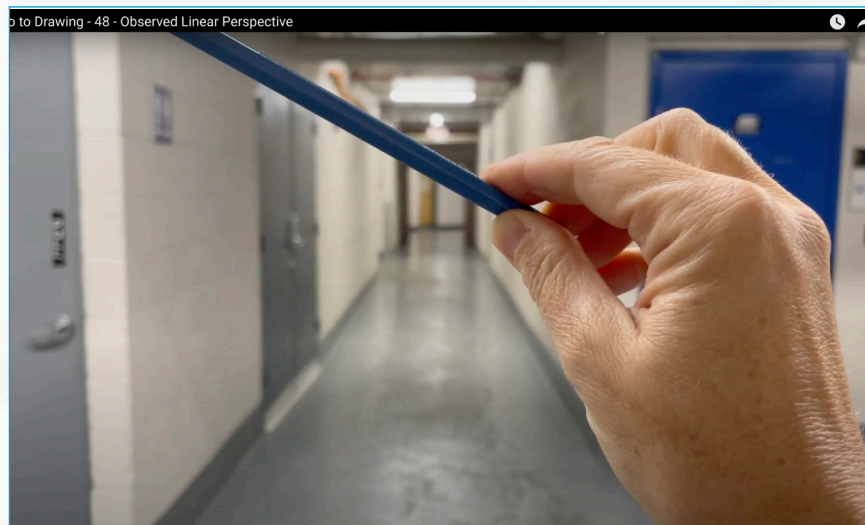
experience that mirrors the curriculum of Knight’s face-to-face classes.

The asynchronous Drawing 1 course is anything but passive. Students explore a full spectrum of foundational drawing topics, including contour drawing, sighting, comparative measurements, shading and value, figure-ground relationships, texture rendering, and both linear and atmospheric perspective. The course culminates in portraiture, a challenge that integrates all previously learned skills.



Above: Linear Perspective

What sets the course apart is not just the content, but the careful orchestration of assignments, feedback, and interaction. Students complete practice drawings and graded assignments weekly, engaging in a two-part feedback process. Each week, they submit a work-in-progress midweek and receive personalized video critiques from Knight. Using Zoom’s screen-share



Above: Using Sighting to support Linear Perspective

and annotation tools, she reviews each submission, verbally guiding students through their strengths and areas for improvement while digitally marking corrections. These video reviews, stored in the cloud, are accessible anytime—allowing students to pause, rewind, and replay as needed.

“I can draw directly on their images and show them how small changes can make a big difference,” she explains. “The feedback is clear and visual, and students have time to internalize it before finishing their final submissions by the end of the week.”

This asynchronous rhythm supports a

variety of learning styles and student needs. Knight observed during the pandemic that recorded demos were especially helpful for neurodiverse learners, English language learners, and students juggling demanding schedules. “The flexibility made a real difference. As a mom myself with a partner whose work schedule is all over the place, I know what a game-changer it can be,” she says.

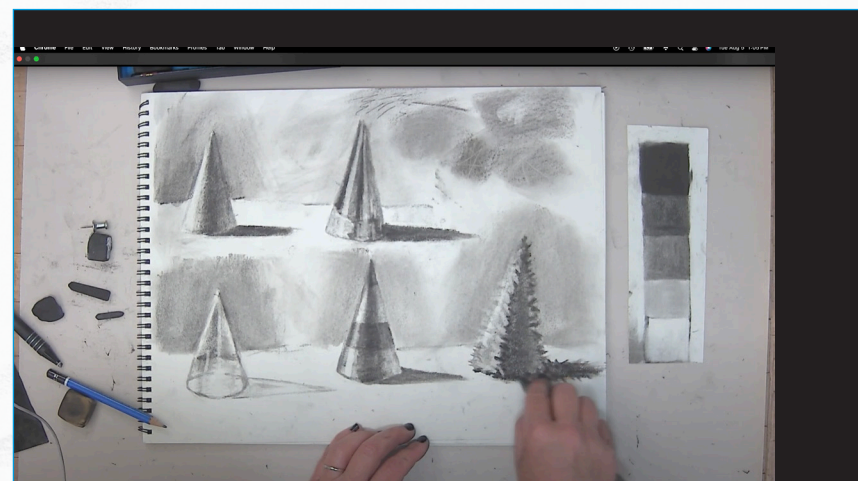
Despite the distance, the course is far from isolating. Students interact regularly through Blackboard discussion boards, where they post reflections and peer comments. Optional viewing of classmates’

video critiques creates another layer of engagement. “Just like in-person students who learn by watching others draw, my online students are tuning into each other’s feedback videos, cheering each other on, and picking up tips along the way,” Knight says.

Outside the Blackboard environment, students also use a confidential group messaging app, GroupMe, to reach Knight and their classmates in real-time. “It feels like a group text,” she explains, “but without sharing personal contact info. Students use it to ask questions, give and receive informal feedback, and stay connected.”

Technology underpins the course’s success. Knight uses ManyCam to film multi-angle demonstrations with picture-in-picture features, creating professional and intuitive instructional videos. Blackboard serves as the course’s home base, where each module includes clearly structured written instructions, recorded lessons, reference images, and student examples. Despite the asynchronous format, the course remains highly interactive.

While students are encouraged to take photos of their artwork for submission, Knight is deliberate about drawing the line—literally—between using photos as tools and relying on



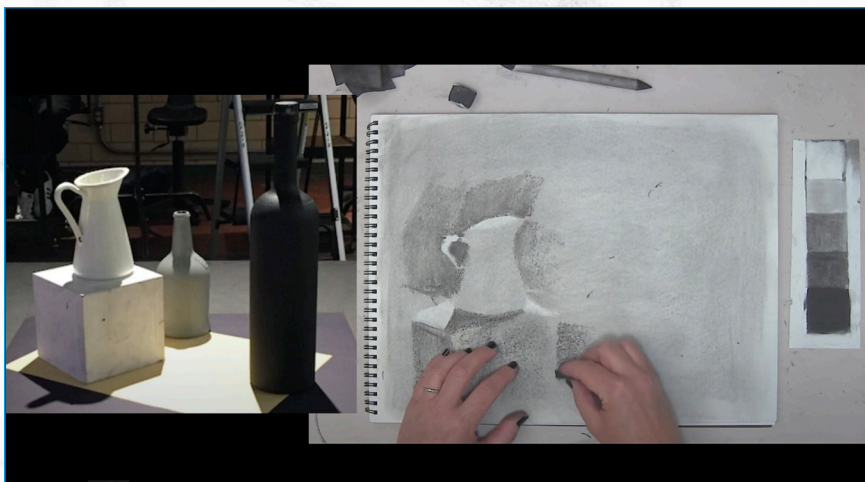
Above: Advanced charcoal techniques/ Texture demo

them as shortcuts. “In observational drawing, the goal is to train the eye and hand to see and interpret the three-dimensional world. Cameras flatten things in ways that often run counter to our artistic goals,” she notes. Early in the semester, she helps students understand these differences, which prevents most from defaulting to photographic reference. Later, with stronger skills and deeper understanding, students are reintroduced to photos as one of many tools in their artistic toolkit.

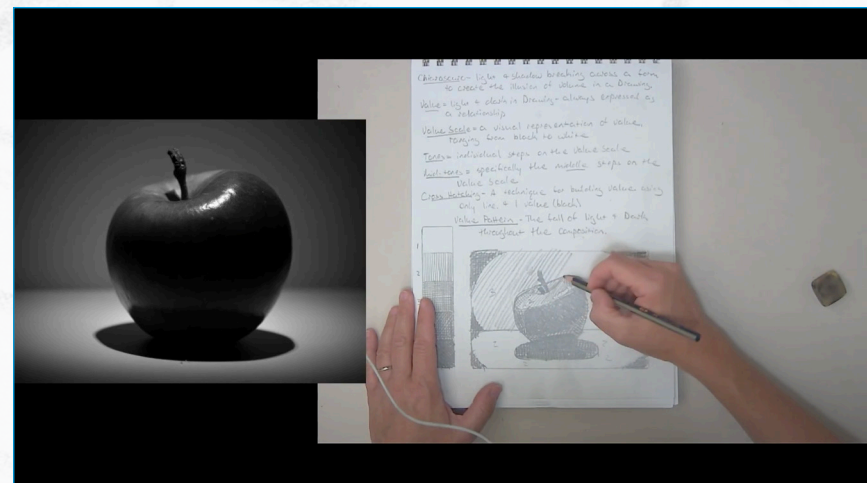
While Knight anticipated a number of potential challenges—technology hiccups, motivation issues, or temptation to use AI—she’s been

pleasantly surprised. “There were a few bumps early on as students adjusted to the format, but I built in time to handle that,” she says. AI, on the other hand, hasn’t been an issue. “I hope to stay one step ahead of what AI is capable of. There are strict submissions guidelines in place designed to discourage students from using AI by making it prohibitively annoying.”

Assessing progress in a virtual setting is no more difficult than in person, thanks to clearly defined goals and rubrics. Knight emphasizes that the course is about growth, not perfection. “You don’t have to draw like Da Vinci. If students engage with the material



Above: Working additively and subtractive with tonal charcoal



Above: Cross hatching demo

and strive for the benchmarks, they will improve. That’s a promise.”

So far, feedback from students and colleagues has been overwhelmingly positive. Faculty members including Norberto Gomez, Cristin Cash, and Mieke Gentis reviewed the course as part of Knight’s performance evaluation, offering strong support. Knight is already thinking about refinements for future semesters—such as reordering some early assignments, which would require re-recording videos.

She also believes this is just the beginning for online art education at MC. “I do think online drawing

courses will become more common in the future, especially at institutions like MC that value accessibility and providing students with as many possible pathways toward achieving their goals.”

In a field where tactile, hands-on learning has long been considered irreplaceable, Professor Knight’s Drawing 1 course proves that thoughtful pedagogy and smart technology can open new doors. In this online classroom, students aren’t just watching someone draw—they’re becoming artists in their own right, with tools, support, and a shared sense of purpose guiding their way.

STUDENTS BRING COLOR AND COLLABORATION TO CAMPUS THROUGH MURAL PROJECTS



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Two new murals celebrate diversity, creativity, and community at Montgomery College.



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This spring, two large-scale student-created murals were unveiled at Montgomery College—one in the Cultural Arts Center at Takoma Park/Silver Spring and another in the office of President Jermaine F. Williams. Both projects were led by Professor Katherine Knight, who coordinated dozens of students across disciplines to plan, design, and paint the works over the course of several weeks.

While the murals differ in tone and subject, they share a deep connection to the values of the College: community, diversity, and student creativity.

A Welcoming Message in Every Language

The mural in the president’s office, designed and painted directly onto the wall, was commissioned with a clear vision. “Dr. Williams wanted images of MC students and the word ‘Welcome’ in multiple languages, with

English present but not dominant,” said Professor Knight. The mural will join more new artistic additions to the President’s office, including an exhibition of photography and sculpture by MC students.

To fulfill that brief, students researched the most commonly spoken languages at Montgomery College. They came up with a list that included Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hebrew, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Zulu. “At one point, we realized that Google Translate had generated text that said ‘The cave is good’ instead of ‘Welcome,’” Knight recalled. The group quickly decided to have each translation verified by a native speaker. Remarkably, the students painting that day were able to confirm about half of the translations on the spot and the remaining languages were reviewed and corrected within the hour, thanks to students reaching out to friends and classmates.



Above: Preparations begin for the President’s office mural

“It became this perfect microcosm of what the project was about,” says Knight, reflecting its collaborative and multicultural spirit, with students working together across backgrounds to ensure the mural authentically represented the College’s diversity.

Studio art major Stephany Flores created the original design for the mural using photographs of MC students. She was joined by a small team who helped refine the layout to accommodate the space. “I honestly think the mural ended up looking better than my original design,” said Flores. “It took a lot of tweaking, but I like how it turned out.”

Film production student, Zora

Goldstein, who got involved with the project through an Illustration class, worked on both murals. In addition to planning and painting, she also created a short film documenting the creation of the President’s office mural. “It was just really cool how everyone was able to bring their own skills to the project,” she says, “Not everyone was necessarily an art major, but everyone was able to collaborate and contribute in their own way. We worked together and the finished product is great.”

Dancing in Paint

In contrast to the structured brief for the president’s office, the mural in the Cultural Arts Center was more open-

ended. “They just said they wanted something that reflected creativity and the performing arts,” said student artist Makayla Castillo, whose piece *Dancing in Paint* was chosen for the space.

Based on a photograph of dancers, the final mural features impressionistic figures mid-leap, capturing the energy of a live performance. To streamline the painting process, students traced outlines from a projected image and assigned colors by number.

Across both projects, students spoke of the unexpected joy of collaboration. The mural teams included not just art

students, but nursing, film, and music students as well. “It was an amazing mix, and everyone was so dedicated. They came on time, worked hard, and really owned the process,” reflects Knight. Goldstein agreed. “It was really cool how everyone had their own strengths and backgrounds,” she said. “It was such a good collaboration and the finished products were great.”

For many students, the murals represented not just artistic opportunities, but leadership and personal growth. “This was perfect for what I want to do in my career,” said

Castillo, who will attend MICA this fall to pursue curatorial studies after graduating from MC last May. “I want to lead big art projects like this—murals, exhibitions, community work. I’m so grateful I got this chance.”

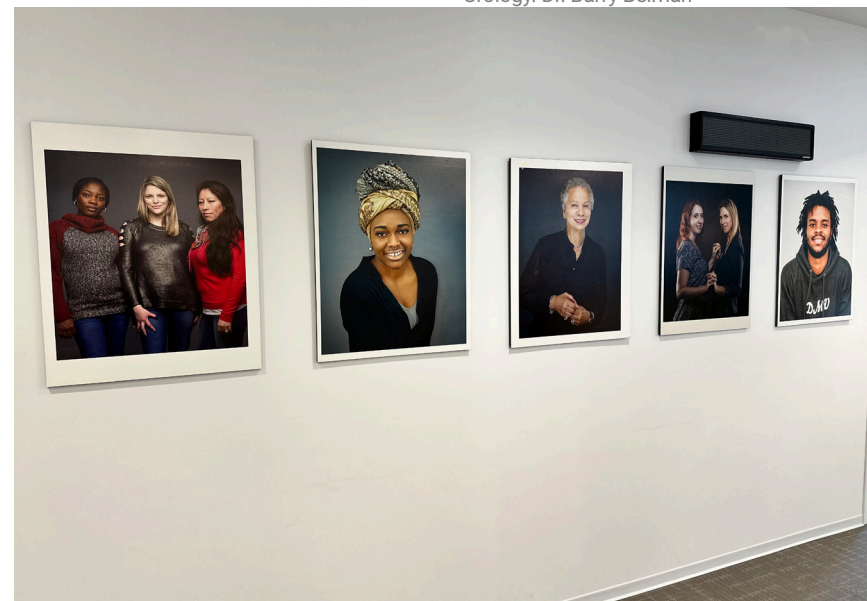
Both murals are now permanent installations, visible reminders of what students can accomplish together. For Knight, the experience was as much about process as product. “I think Dr. Williams wanted to celebrate our welcoming, accepting, diverse campus—and I can’t think of a better way to show that than through these murals,” she said.



Above: A new sculpture by MC student and retired Professor and Chairman of Pediatric Urology, Dr. Barry Belman



Above: *Dancing in Paint* in the Cultural Arts Center



Above: A new photography installation by MC students in the President’s office



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