

# THE AWIMS ADVISOR

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News from the Alliance for Women in Medicine and Science

Dear Colleagues,

It's officially autumn and 2026 is just around the corner. In reflecting on 2025, I realize I have much to be thankful for. I am grateful for an exemplary AWIMS Executive Committee and AWIMS Advisor Editorial Board, and for the wisdom of our AWIMS Advisory Board. We continue to support our community in innovative ways, raising funds for the Coalition of Rainbow Alliances (CORAL) through the third annual Colors of Health Fashion Show. Our commitment to mentorship remains as strong as ever as we partner with our AMWA chapter to host a mentorship mixer in January.



We are gaining national recognition for groundbreaking work in mitigating bias in letters of recommendation. As a result of our impactful research program to sponsor and empower clinicians in academic medicine, RISE CAM, faculty are publishing their work in peer-reviewed journals. And our wellness survey helped us gain some great insights into how to structure wellness activities in the future; you don't want to miss our session dedicated to financial wellness in January! Our AWIMS Advisor editorial team continues to curate meaningful and impactful content that highlights our mission and vision each quarter.

Thank you for all you do to keep the spirit of AWIMS alive. Wishing each of you a beautiful autumn season, holidays filled with joy, and a happy New Year!

Vidhya Prakash, MD, Director of SIU AWIMS

*December 2025*

# The AWIMS Advisor Editorial Board



**Dr. Vidhya Prakash**  
Editor-In-Chief

"The greater the obstacle, the more glory in  
overcoming it."  
Molière



**Dr. Ayame Takahashi**  
Associate Editor

"The least I can do is speak out for those  
who cannot speak for themselves."  
Jane Goodall



**Ms. Bredina Haden**  
Associate Editor

"Find out who you are and do it on  
purpose."  
Dolly Parton

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# AWIMS Spotlight: Brandon Cox, PhD

## **Role at SIU Medicine:**

Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and cross-appointed to the Department of Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery. Director of the Multidisciplinary Biomedical and Biological Sciences (MBBS) Graduate Program.

**Born and raised:** A very small town in Virginia called Altavista

**Birthday month:** August

**Family:** Husband, 4 kids (ages 22 to 4), and 2 cats

**Favorite Book:** All-time favorite is *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein

**What do you like about the book?** I love the message that spans across generations. Kids think it's funny, and adults are touched by how the tree keeps giving whatever his boy needs at each stage of life.

**Hobbies:** Pottery, gardening, puzzles of all kinds, reading

**Most embarrassing moment (you are willing to share):** There are many that involve saying the wrong thing at the wrong time in front of the wrong people.

**What is your advice for achieving work-life balance?** Keep a to-do list of items that need follow-up so you can tackle small tasks in those short windows of time between meetings. Smartsheet has a template for this that can be customized. I also block time in my calendar for bigger tasks like writing.

**What is the best piece of advice a mentor gave you?** You never get what you don't ask for. This can also be translated to you never get a grant that you don't apply for.

**What is your unique contribution to SIU SOM?** In my role with our MBBS graduate program, my goal is to collaborate and advocate for our students. I am also working to create an alumni network for MS and PhD graduates.

**Anything else you would like to share?** I strongly believe in karma and try my best to help others when asked. You never know when kindness will circle back to you.





# AWIMS AROUND CAMPUS

## SIU School of Medicine Garner's an Honorable Mention in Faculty Development

SIU School of Medicine (SOM) was recently bestowed with an Honorable Mention in Faculty Development from the Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE). According to Dr. Susan Hingle, Associate Dean of Human and Organizational Potential at SIU SOM, "this recognition reflects the collective efforts of so many, including AWIMS, CHOP [Center for Human and Organizational Potential], the Academy, and OCPD [Office of Continuing Professional Development]. We truly believe we are ahead of the curve in how we think about faculty development, even if the full vision is not yet widely recognized." Dr. Hingle and team also noted that most of our departments at SIU SOM host their own professional development sessions such as Grand Rounds series. AWIMS is proud to be in the company of so many transformational and impactful organizations at SIU SOM, with a shared commitment to building our faculty and future leaders.



**Accepting the award from officials are (from middle to right):  
Heeyoung Han, PhD; Sookyoung Suh, PhD; and Debra Klamen, MD**

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# AWIMS AROUND CAMPUS

## Doctoring Your Finances: How to Budget, Invest, and Protect

Join us January 8, 2026, from noon - 1:00 pm for a practical financial education session presented by **Shreepada Tripathy, MD**. This program is designed to help new and early-career clinicians build confidence in managing their personal finances with simple, evidence-based tools.

At the conclusion of the session, attendees will be able to

- Create a realistic budget using the 50/30/20 rule to balance spending, saving, and debt repayment with their first paycheck.
- Understand their investment options by comparing stocks, bonds, and index funds to build a simple, long-term investing strategy.
- Understand essential insurance options, including life and disability coverage, and how they protect their financial future.

### In-person:

Dirksen Conf. Rm.  
Medical Library  
801 N. Rutledge | 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Springfield

### Webex:

[Click to join](#)

Meeting #/access code:

2487 768 6318

Meeting password:

dUwYHHpP336

Phone:

1-408-418-9388



## AWIMS - AMWA Speed Mentorship Mixer!

January 8th from 5-7 pm  
Dean's Lobby, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
801 N. Rutledge Street

RSVP using the QR code or

[CLICK HERE!](#)



# AWIMS IN THE COMMUNITY

## **3rd Annual Colors of Health Fashion Show: A Night of Awareness, Empowerment, and Community** by Dr. Erica Austin

The AWIMS 3rd Annual Colors of Health Fashion Show was nothing short of amazing! What began as a creative idea to blend fashion, education, and empowerment has blossomed into a powerful tradition that brings awareness to important health issues impacting our community.

Each color that graced the runway carried a story, and served as a reminder that behind every statistic is a life, a family, and a community touched by these challenges.

This year, our models lit up the runway across six impactful categories:

### **HIV/AIDS – Red**

HIV weakens the immune system, but with modern treatment, those living with HIV can thrive and live long, healthy lives. Knowledge is power, and testing saves lives.

### **Sexual Assault – Teal**

Too many survivors remain silent out of fear or shame. But silence must be broken. As Mariska Hargitay reminds us, "Sexual assault & domestic violence are difficult things to talk about. Talk about them anyway."

### **Autism – Blue**

Autism is not a defect, but a unique way of experiencing the world. Stuart Duncan's words remind us: "Autism is not a disability, but a different ability."

### **Prostate Cancer – Light Blue**

Men, take charge of your health—get checked. Just a few seconds could save your life.

### **Diabetes – Grey & Blue**

Most people with diabetes live full lives. With knowledge and care, diabetes is a condition that can be managed—and we control our own destiny.

### **Alzheimer's Disease – Purple**

While we cannot yet cure Alzheimer's, Dr. Sally Karioth reminds us: "Even if I can't cure, I can still care."



# Colors of Health Con't.

## Entertainment & Engagement

The incomparable Mahogany Knight served as our host, keeping the crowd energized and inspired. Alongside Mahogany Knight and Friends, a vibrant drag performance wowed the audience, complete with cheers and laughter that filled the room.



## Honoring Our Community

We also had the privilege of presenting two special awards that highlight the very heart of the AWIMS mission:

### ***AWIMS Community Engagement Award – Maria Ansley***

A gifted photographer at SIU Plastic Surgery, Maria uses her craft to empower women and tell their stories with honesty and grace. Her documentary work and her ability to turn pain into beauty through photography exemplify compassion, skill, and community uplift.



### ***Community Organization Award – Coalition of Rainbow Alliances (CORAL)***

CORAL is a volunteer-driven nonprofit that creates networking, support, and celebration for LGBTQ+ individuals and allies in Central Illinois. From Pride picnics to Thanksgiving dinners, CORAL has built a legacy of inclusivity and empowerment. We were proud to award CORAL not only recognition but also this year's event proceeds; over \$600 to support their work.

# Colors of Health Con't.

## A Celebration of Awareness & Action

The Colors of Health Fashion Show is more than just a runway event. It's a call to action, a celebration of life, and a reminder that awareness creates change. With each model, performance, and story shared, we continue to build a community of resilience, knowledge, and care.

Together, we are painting a future where health, equity, and compassion shine in every color.





# Articles and Quotes

In Honor of **Jane Goodall**,  
English primatologist and anthropologist  
April 3, 1934 - October 1, 2025

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"Change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the people who are doing something you don't believe is right."

"When I look back over my life it's almost as if there was a plan laid out for me - from the little girl who was so passionate about animals who longed to go to Africa and whose family couldn't afford to put her through college. Everyone laughed at my dreams. I was supposed to be a secretary in Bournemouth."

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

"We can have a world of peace. We can move toward a world where we live in harmony with nature. Where we live in harmony with each other. No matter what nation we come from. No matter our religion. No matter what our culture is. This is where we're moving towards."

## Articles

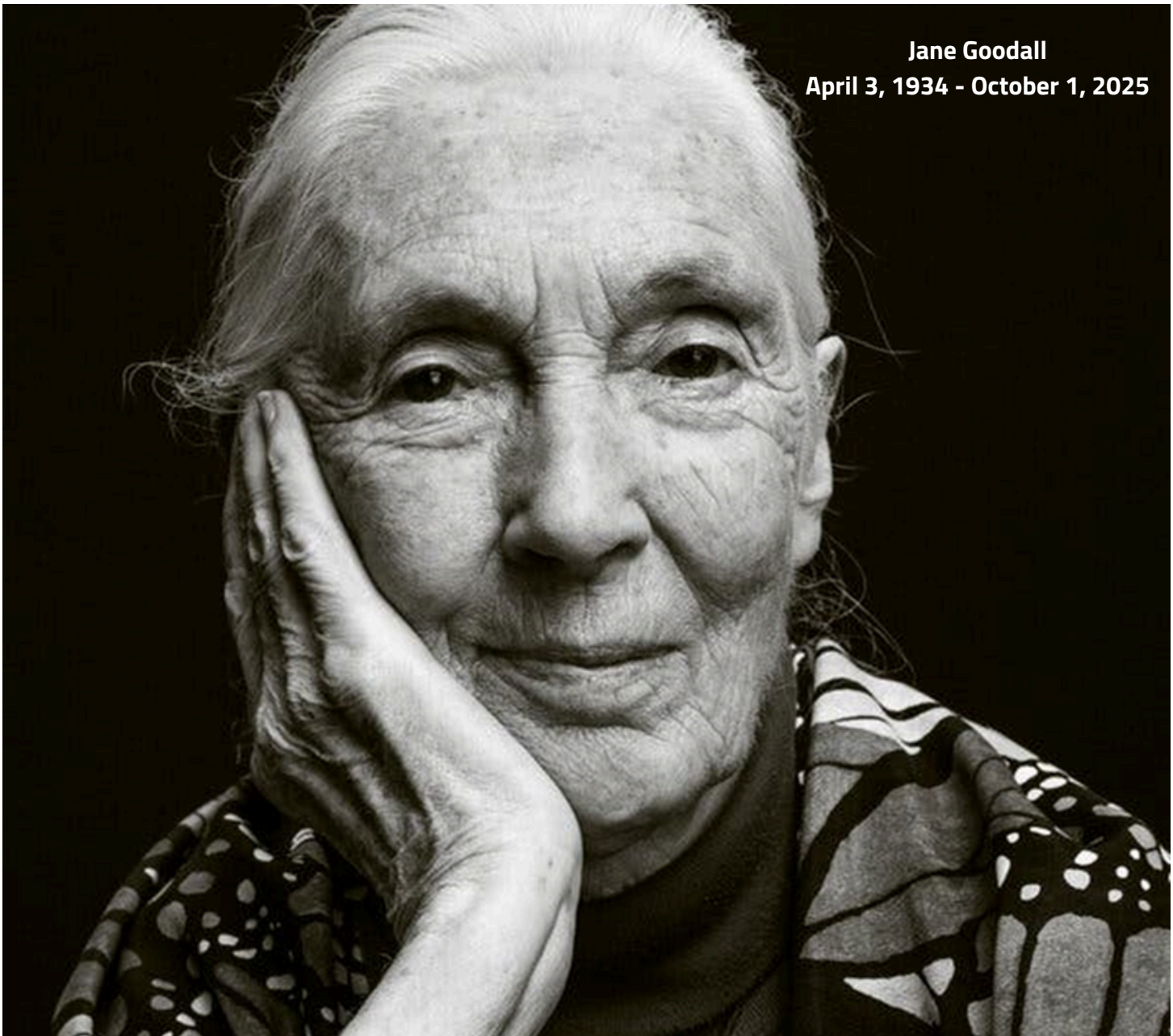
[7 Best Books Written by Jane Goodall](#)

[A Smarter Way to Disagree](#)

[Today's Women Leaders Open Doors for the Next Generation](#)

[Promotion Support for Women in Medicine \(PSWIM\) initiative: An innovative approach](#)

[Advancing Women in Healthcare Leadership](#)



Jane Goodall  
April 3, 1934 - October 1, 2025



# The AWIMS Advisor is Looking to Add to the Editorial Team!

Are you passionate about supporting the advancement of women in science and medicine? Do you enjoy writing and have a knack for reviewing content? We're currently seeking an enthusiastic individual to join our editorial team as an Associate Editor.

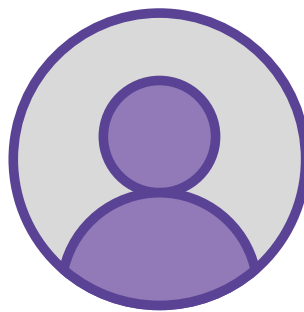
As an Associate Editor, you'll have the opportunity to:

- Contribute ideas and content that reflect our values, mission, and impact
- Help spotlight the accomplishments and stories of women in our community
- Collaborate with a diverse group of professionals
- Help shape high-quality publications that support the AWIMS community

Whether you're an experienced writer, reviewer, or simply interested in getting more involved, we welcome you to our team. This is a great opportunity to grow your editorial skills, add to your CV or resume, and expand your professional network. This opportunity is open to all SIU Medicine colleagues.

Let's continue building a strong, supportive platform together!

For more information or to express interest, please contact Dr. Vidhya Prakash at [vprakash59@siumed.edu](mailto:vprakash59@siumed.edu)



**Your Name Here!**  
Associate Editor

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# AWIMS Advisory Board



**Wendi El-Amin, MD**



**John Flack, MD**



**Susan Hingle, MD**



**Kari Wolf, MD**



**Debra Klamen, MD**



**David Steward, MD**



**Douglas Carlson, MD**



**Jody Lack, MD**



**Donald Torry, PhD**



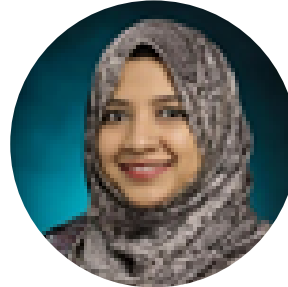
**Diane Hillard-Sembell, MD**



# AWIMS Executive Committee

## Education

Dr. Aysha Rafaquat and Dr. Robert Robinson



## Research/RISE WIMS Program

Dr. Heeyoung Han and Dr. Georgia Luckey

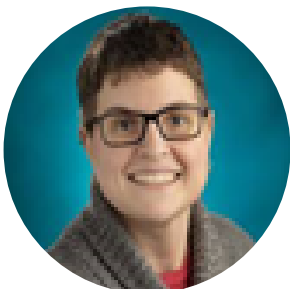


## Community Engagement

Dr. Erica Austin

## Mindfulness and Wellness

Dr. Alex Hopkins and Ms. Ruta Kulys



## Mentorship and Career Advancement

Ms. Tracie Johnson and Dr. Ayame Takahashi

