

INSIGHTS

Department of English and Modern Languages
SCHOOL of EDUCATION, SOCIAL SCIENCES, AND THE ARTS
DIVISION of ACADEMIC AFFAIRS


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FOLLOW THE LEADER

English Major Wins Campus Election... Again!

Vice President-elect [Kamala Harris](#) isn't the only woman of color whose leadership skills have been nurtured on an HBCU campus.

An official, socially-distanced, inauguration ceremony to salute the UMES students elected to campus leadership positions was held on November 7.

English major Ciani Wells was recognized as the president of the university's junior class for the



Ms. Wells

Photo by Jim Glovier

current academic year. It's a position with which she should be thoroughly familiar; she previously won election as vice president of the freshman class and as president of her sophomore class.

In addition to her current responsibilities as junior class president, Ms. Wells is a member of the [UMES honors program](#) and works as a peer tutor in the university's [writing center](#). So far, through five

semesters, she has maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average.

After she participated in a Black Lives Matter protest in her hometown of Philadelphia last summer, Ms. Wells came to a conclusion about her future. "A fire in me was ignited," she wrote following the march. "That day, I committed myself to uplifting my people and doing all that I can to combat racial inequality."

Ms. Wells is considering law school following the completion of her undergraduate degree.

THE FALL 2020 COMMENCEMENT(S)

Meticulously Planned and Eventually Canceled

A handful of English majors and a department staff member completed their degrees this semester and were looking forward to their commencement ceremony on November 20.

In fact, there were ten small, in-person, ceremonies planned for that day. In the interest of maintaining appropriate social distancing, the events were divided by school and scheduled simultaneously—five in the morning and five in the afternoon. Students would be restricted to just two guests; those guests had to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test and submit to symptom screening upon arrival. It was a difficult logistical

challenge, but the plan would have allowed each graduate their moment in the spotlight.

With barely a week to go before the ceremonies, Maryland's infection rate increased and a public health advisory was issued strongly encouraging all indoor gatherings to be limited to less than 25 people. Following that announcement, the UMES ceremonies were canceled.

In an attempt to capture the joy of earning a college degree, UMES President Heidi Anderson scheduled last minute outdoor photo sessions for graduates to be pictured with her wearing their caps, gowns and masks.



Debra Laforest, a staff member in the department's [Foreign Language Instructional Center](#), celebrates the completion of her degree in exercise science with President Anderson.
Photo by Jim Glovier

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TV TEACHERS GATHER

Media instructor Marilyn Buerkle participated in the annual faculty seminar sponsored by the [Academy of Television Arts and Sciences](#), the industry group that presents the national Emmy awards.



Ms. Buerkle

Photo by Jim Glovier

The three-day, virtual event featured live discussions with some of the people who create popular and noteworthy television programming.

The keynote speaker was [Tina Perry](#), president of [OWN](#) (the Oprah Winfrey Networks). Panel discussions included “The Art of Casting,” “Creativity in a Time of Crisis” and “The Power of TV,” a thoughtful discussion of how the homeless are portrayed on television.

CAMPUS CLEAN UP

The trailer that housed the original home of Discover UMES, a video unit designed to provide experiential learning for students interested in media careers, is gone.

As part of an effort to remove portable buildings no longer in use, the long outdated trailer was dismantled and removed early in November.



Photo by Jim Glovier

JUDGING TOP TALKERS

Public speaking professor Jennifer Keane-Dawes recently judged an academic competition sponsored by [Montana Technological University](#).



Dr. Keane-Dawes

Photo by Jim Glovier

Channeling her expertise as the former dean of the UMES School of Graduate Studies, Dr. Keane-Dawes evaluated MTU’s first online [3-Minute Thesis Challenge](#).

Graduate students competed for cash prizes and entry into a regional round of the contest. Conducted nationally, the events challenge students to communicate their project to non-experts in three minutes or less using no more than one slide.

WHO’S THE AUDIENCE? ENGL 101H Students are Published

The professor responsible for teaching basic composition skills to freshmen in the [UMES Honors Program](#) is pushing her students to move beyond formulaic five paragraph essay writing.



Dr. Hagenrater-Gooding

Photo by Jim Glovier

Amy Hagenrater-Gooding wants the students enrolled in ENGL101H to consider how writing for a specific audience will change the diction, detail and design of their piece.

That has led to a variety of efforts to engage the students in the process of preparing an essay for publication.

This semester Dr. Hagenrater-Gooding has collaborated with Bill Robinson, the

university’s director of public relations, who is sharing some of the students’ essays with the public on the UMES website.

“Not only are students creating the focus of their piece, but they are seeing the importance of process and revision with each piece going through me, Bill and final edits before publication,” she said. “It’s a powerful lesson on the power of words and the weight they can carry.”

Topics ranged from COVID-19 to cell phone usage and included reflections on education and race.

Three essays by ENGL101H students currently appear on the UMES News page. Danielle Edwards wrote “[Navigating a Pandemic – Go With the Flow](#).” Yazmin Stewart’s essay is titled “[A Young Black Girl’s Struggles in a White Society](#),” and Maxwell Taylor mused on technology use in “[Cell Phones: A Blessing and a Curse](#).”

TELLING THE UMES STORY

There’s a unique opportunity available to students who are looking for an internship in 2021. Up to three students will hone marketable skills, discover UMES history, earn upper level credit in their field *and* be paid for their efforts.

UMES has won a sizable historical interpretation grant to uncover and share our history. As part of that effort, an interdisciplinary committee is looking for students who will intern in the [Frederick Douglass Library](#) next year.

The students will assist UMES librarians and historians with inventorying, cataloging, and digitizing the amassed archival material on campus.

History professor [Kathryn Barrett-Gaines](#) is coordinating the effort. She says it’s a great assignment for students interested in local history, photography, literature, textiles, recordings, physical and virtual exhibitions, art and visual presentation, curating, archives, libraries, databases and more.

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CONGRATS ON THE NEW JOB!

Christina (Taylor) Riley, who earned her UMES English degree in 2009, is now a control room director at [WTTG TV, FOX5](#), in Washington, DC. Ms. Riley will be the leader of the technical crew during some of the station's live newscasts.



Ms. Riley

Photo by Jim Glovier

Most recently, Ms. Riley was a member of the NBC Sports studio crew in Washington. She has also worked at WAVY in Norfolk, Virginia and at WMDT in Salisbury, Maryland.

Ms. Riley developed her technical skills while a UMES student. She was a member of Hawk Radio and successfully completed nearly every hands-on production class offered by the department.

BABY HAWK HAS ARRIVED

Meet Artist Flair!

Artist is the son of Kyla Bibbins, a 2013 UMES English graduate. He arrived on September 20. His mother describes him as "healthy, happy and handsome."

As a senior, Ms. Bibbins earned the Student Leader of the Year award for her role as general manager of Hawk Radio. She has continued to serve her alma mater, returning multiple times to discuss her career in radio with students who would like to follow in her footsteps.

We hope she brings her buddy the next time she visits!



Photo captured from Facebook with the permission of Artist's proud mother

OFFERING AN OPPORTUNITY

An English major who graduated from UMES in 2001 and went on to earn a law degree from the University of Baltimore continues to give back to her alma mater.

Kendra Hayward serves now as deputy state's attorney for Somerset County. She recently welcomed Tyasia Rolon, a UMES criminal justice major, as an intern. Ms. Rolon is considering a career in the juvenile justice system.



(L to R) Ms. Rolon and Ms. Hayward outside the Somerset County courthouse

Photo by Jim Glovier

FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS

Briana Haley, who earned her UMES English degree in 2014, has always had an interest in film making.

She plans to pursue her passion as a graduate student. She is in the process of applying to the [Maryland Institute College of Art](#) in Baltimore.

Ms. Haley was also interested in travel. She returned last year from an adventure in southern China. She spent a year teaching English there.

"It was a great experience. I traveled a lot and met some interesting people," she said. "Right now I'm focused on doing something I've always been interested in, hence the grad app."

Currently, Ms. Haley is teaching at a preschool in her hometown of Baltimore.



Photo provided by Ms. Haley

HEADING TO GRAD SCHOOL

Nyla Green, a member of the Class of 2020, recently received an acceptance letter from Towson University.



Photo provided by Ms. Green

She will pursue a master's degree in [the professional writing program](#)

following the technical writing and information design track.

Ms. Green graduated summa cum laude in May with a 3.83 cumulative grade point average.

SPRING '21 SCHEDULE SET?

WHY NOT????

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FAMILY EXPANSION

LaToya (Fewell) Rosser, Class of 2006, is the proud mother of a new baby girl.

Imani Simone was born November 9. She is the second child in the Rosser family. Imani joins mom, dad and big brother Jay at home in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Her mom is ecstatic. "My children are absolute blessings," she said.

Ms. Rosser is on maternity leave from her job as a program manager in the business school at George Washington University.



Jay Rosser holds his new baby sister.

Photo by Ms. Rosser