

INSIGHTS

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


U M E S
November 2020
Volume 36 Issue 1

IN THE HOME STRETCH

Digital Media Degree Proposal Awaiting Final State Approvals

A multiyear effort to create a bachelor of arts degree in digital media studies at UMES now focuses on the state entities that must approve the proposal.

The program made its way through the department and school curriculum committees and the UMES Senate several years ago. The Division of Academic Affairs sent the proposal to President Heidi Anderson this summer, and she agreed to send it on for state approvals with her blessing.

In her endorsement of the new media degree, Dr. Anderson stressed the need for more people of color in the industry.

“As a historically black university with a diverse student body, UMES hopes to afford underrepresented students an opportunity to pursue a structured yet dynamic educational program that focuses on the media and entertainment industry while also supporting this very industry

with a well qualified, diverse pool of applicants who can participate at the highest level of decision making within global media companies.”

Both the [Board of Regents](#) for the University System of Maryland and the [Maryland Higher Education Commission](#) (MHEC) now must officially sign off on the program before it can be offered.

Provost Nancy Niemi and English Department Chair Dean Cooledge presented the proposal to the Board of



*Drs. Niemi and Cooledge
Photos by Jim Glover*

Regents’ Committee on Education Policy and Student Life in a virtual meeting in early September. The committee gave the plan its unanimous approval.

The degree proposal also survived the first hurdle in the MHEC approval process. The time period for other Maryland colleges and universities to comment to MHEC on the UMES plans expired on September 12 without any objections from other institutions.

Dr. Cooledge hopes the final approvals from MHEC and the regents come in time for new students to enroll in the program beginning in the fall 2021 semester.

Students who pursue the proposed undergraduate program in digital media studies will complete a total of 120 credit hours, including 42 credit hours of core courses, 18 credit hours of digital media electives, and six credits of a foreign language.

NEW ΦΚΦ MEMBERS

English Department is Well Represented

Dual English and marketing major Ewa Okulate and Shelby Brewington, an engineering major with a digital media minor, were invited to join [Phi Kappa Phi](#) this year.



The organization bills itself as the nation’s oldest, most selective and most prestigious

all-discipline honor society.

In addition to the students, English faculty member Gabriela Vlahovici-Jones will serve as president of the UMES chapter for the year. She joins several department faculty members who have led the local chapter including Michael Lane, Terry Kundell and former department chair Jacqueline Brice-Finch.

INSIGHTS ABSENCE

Did you miss the September and October issues of Insights, the official publication of the UMES Department of English and Modern Languages? So did we.

Our editor, faculty member Marilyn Buerkle, was sidelined by an unexpected surgery. After a lengthy medical leave, she returns to campus and Insights resumes publication with this issue.

STRATEGIC ADVICE

Keisha Brewer, who earned her UMES English degree in 2014, was a featured speaker at a regional [TEDx](#) event sponsored by Georgetown University in Washington, DC.



Ms. Brewer at her graduation in 2014

Ms. Brewer, the CEO of [The PR Alliance LLC](#), delivered a message titled "[It's Not Manipulation, It's Strategic Communication.](#)"

People who watched her speech after it was posted on YouTube described it in their online comments as "amazing," "effective," "profound" and "inspiring."

TAKING THE NEXT STEP

Gianni Flowers, a member of the class of 2017, began a master's program this fall in the [School of Communication](#) at American University in Washington, DC.



Ms. Flowers

Photo by Jim Glovier

She will earn a master of arts degree in [Producing Film, Television and Video.](#)

While a student at UMES, Ms. Flowers earned a digital media minor to accompany her English degree. She was also an active participant in [Hawk Radio](#) and served as a member of the student video crew on campus.

COACHING HER COLLEAGUES

Sade Bell, who served as one of the English department's first tutors in the university's newly created writing center more than a decade ago, is still busy assisting her peers.



Ms. Bell at her honor society induction in 2007

The 2008 alumnae is a teacher in the Baltimore City public school system, only now she's teaching other teachers.

Ms. Bell is a [Blueprint Literacy Coach](#). That's an instructional coach who works closely with the English department at a designated school to better instruction and improve literacy outcomes for students.

TEACHING #MeToo

[Bloomsbury Academic's](#) "#MeToo and Literary Studies: Reading, Teaching, and Writing about Sexual Violence and Rape Culture" will include a chapter written by English faculty member Amy Hagenrater-Gooding.



Dr. Hagenrater-Gooding

Photo by Jim Glovier

She describes the lessons in credibility and complicity she now includes in her modern drama class as a result of her students' reaction to the sexual assault of Blanche DuBois in "[A Streetcar Named Desire.](#)"

"In twenty years of teaching, I have rarely been rendered mute," Dr. Hagenrater-Gooding said. "Yet here I was, watching heads nod as young, seemingly progressive women had a hard time finding Blanche's claim of rape credible."

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Six of the ten UMES faculty members awarded funding from the university's [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) to attend this year's [Teaching Professor Virtual Conference](#) were from the Department of English and Modern Languages.

They included Department Chair Dean Cooledge; language instructor Phillip Broussard; and literature, speech and composition faculty Amy Hagenrater-Gooding, Sandy Johnston, Mari-jo Ulbricht and Gabriela Vlahovici-Jones.

The Teaching Professor Conference is typically an "in person" event. This is the first time the renowned organization has hosted its three day conference online.

The conference literature describes the event as an opportunity for teachers from around the country "to present their best thinking, solutions and strategies on teaching and learning topics faced by educators today."

PRESTIGIOUS ASSIGNMENT

The [Journal of Blacks in Higher Education](#) reports a UMES English alumnae has been named the Frank H.T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters and professor in Africana studies at [Cornell University](#) in Ithaca, New York.



Photo provided by Dr. Boyce Davies

Along with her 1971 B.A. in English, Carole Boyce Davies also earned a minor in French at UMES. She went on to earn a master's in African Studies from Howard University and a Ph.D. in African and Caribbean Literatures at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria.

The author of numerous books, Dr. Boyce Davies received a [lifetime achievement award](#) from the Caribbean Philosophical Association in 2017.

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BEING BLACK & LATINO

Language Professor Shares His Research

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, the [Foreign Language Instructional Center](#) and the [Center for International Education](#) coordinated a campus-wide virtual discussion on October 1.

The event was titled “What It Means to be Black and Latino in the U.S.” The discussion was led by the newest member of the department’s Spanish language faculty, Edgar Larrea.

Dr. Larrea shared his research on the discrimination



Photo provided by Dr. Larrea



experienced by those with the dual identity.

He noted that 24% of all Hispanics in the United States identify as Afro-Latinos, and that they tend to experience a kind

of “double” discrimination and greater economic disparities than do Hispanics who identify as white.

“The presentation led to an interesting discussion about identity and the links between identity, language, culture and color,” said FLIC Director Phillip Broussard. “Dr. Larrea embodies multiculturalism as he has family and heritage that span both Spain and Peru.”

NOVEMBER 17 DEADLINE

Applications for the U.S. [Critical Language Scholarship Program](#) will be accepted until 8 p.m. on Tuesday, November 17.

The CLS Program is part of a U.S. government effort to expand dramatically the number of Americans studying and mastering critical foreign languages. Students of diverse disciplines and majors are encouraged to apply. Participants are expected to continue their language study beyond the scholarship period, and later apply their critical language skills in their future professional careers.

NOT YOUR TYPICAL ABCs

Students enrolled in JAPN 101, Introduction to Japanese, participated virtually in [International Education Week](#), October 12-16, by demonstrating their knowledge of the unique Japanese writing system.

The students recorded themselves writing their names and the word “Japan,” using two of the three Japanese writing systems and the correct stroke order.

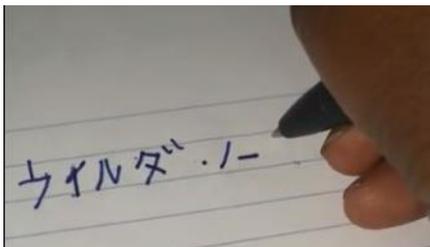


Image from freshman biochemistry major Nautika Wilder

Their instructor Phillip Broussard admits the language can be difficult. “The Japanese writing system and complex grammar makes Japanese one of the hardest languages to learn,” he said. “Despite this challenge, many students enroll in Japanese out of interest in one or more of the many positive cultural aspects of Japan.”

NEW LANGUAGE CLASSES

Hindi & Portuguese Scheduled for Spring 2021

Next semester UMES students will have additional options to choose from when they decide to study a foreign language. The Department of English and Modern Languages through its [Foreign Language Instructional Center](#) has scheduled introductory courses in Hindi and Portuguese for the first time.

HIND 101 will be taught by Arachana Gupta, a native of India, who has been teaching literature and composition courses in the English department since 2015.

Veteran language professor Carole Champagne, who has taught Spanish at UMES since 1999, will teach PORT 101.

Hindi, a phonetic language, is used regularly by 341 million people, making it the fourth most spoken language in the world. In addition to India, Hindi

is also spoken in Mauritius, Great Britain and Bangladesh.

Over the last decade, Portuguese has become the fifth most spoken language in the world. It is an official language of Brazil, Portugal, Angola and five other nations. It is spoken by over 250 million people in multiple countries on multiple continents. Portuguese is similar to French, Spanish and Italian, making it easier to learn for students who have studied other romance languages.

Both Hindi and Portuguese have been designated by the U.S. Department of State as “[critical languages](#),” a label the federal government uses to promote the study of languages deemed essential for participation in the global community.

Knowledge of either language will make UMES students more competitive in an international marketplace.

UMES now offers instruction in five of the 15 languages the State Department has listed as “critical,” including Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese and Portuguese. The study of those languages can lead to federally supported scholarships to practice the language in a native speaking country. (See details above.)



Ms. Gupta



Dr. Champagne

Photos by Jim Glover

MANY FOND MEMORIES

Former Student Radio Station is Demolished

It's a bittersweet sign of progress.

The building that once housed the UMES student radio station was demolished as part of a massive construction project to create a new home for the university's pharmacy program.

What was originally a small brick house for the manager of the campus farm became the place where countless students learned the business of radio and practiced their skills through a small AM transmitter whose signal barely covered the campus.

Even though students interested in media careers now broadcast over the internet in a high tech digital studio in the Engineering and Aviation Sciences Complex, the demolition of the original station was a nostalgic trip down memory lane for many.



When communications instructor Marilyn Buerkle posted the picture of the process on social media, more than 40 alumni reacted. Descriptions in their comments included remembering the station as their "home away from home" and their "secret hideaway."

A VIRTUAL REUNION

Dozens of former UMES Drama Society members held a Facebook get together with the group's longtime director and former English faculty member Della Dameron-Johnson, affectionately known as "Mama D."

The participants spanned decades and included one of the group's founding members, James White, who years later became a UMES administrator.



Image captured on Facebook.

COVID-19 AND HBCUs

Lawrence Banton, Class of 2012, is now a reporter at [Cheddar](#), a streaming video news network headquartered in New York City.



Photo provided by Mr. Banton

A recent assignment to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on HBCU campuses focused his attention on his alma mater.

In addition to information gathered from Cheney University, the nation's first HBCU, and the United Negro College Fund, [his story](#) also features interviews with a current UMES student and with Lester Primus, the university's vice president for administration and finance.

FINDING THE FUNDS

English faculty member Gabriela Vlahovici-Jones helped bring a \$50,000 grant to our campus.

The money, from the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#), an independent federal agency that supports the nation's libraries, will provide seed money to UMES to curate, promote, sustain and interpret the archives in the Special Collections Room of the [Frederick Douglass Library](#), creating a 21st century research resource.

Dr. Vlahovici-Jones was part of a five person committee that secured the grant.



Ms. Vlahovici-Jones

Photo by Jim Glovier

"SCARY STORY TIME"

Adjunct composition and creative writing instructor Diane Pearce had an unusual assignment recently. She was one of a series of authors selected to read during "Scary Story Time" at the 2020 [Horrorgasm](#) virtual convention.

Ms. Pearce read an excerpt from "Mary Wu." She described her story as a modern take on the old "Bloody Mary" horror story which was inspired by a group of older kids who frightened her daughter at school.

Horrorgasm is billed as a single day horror art event that celebrates multiple sub-genres of horror with group art exhibitions and entertainment.



Ms. Pearce

Photo by Bill Cecil

Insights is published monthly during the academic year. It is written and edited, except as noted, by communications instructor Marilyn Buerkle. Copy is proofread by composition instructor Sandy Johnston. Photos are by Marilyn Buerkle, except as noted. If you have information you would like to appear in this publication, contact our editor at 410-651-8349 or email her at mlbuerkle@umes.edu.