STATEWIDE WRITING CONTEST

UMES English 101 Student Writes Prize Winning Essay

When the call came for entries in a recent writing contest sponsored by the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland, Inc. and the African American Studies Department at the University of Maryland, Emily Shepherd saw an opportunity for her English 101 classes. She asked her students to submit an essay as a class assignment.

The entries were to address a political or social issue critical to contemporary politics and the African American community.

One of Ms. Shepherd’s students, Trevor Worthy, wrote about Maryland’s criminal justice system. He made a persuasive argument that racism may be responsible for the disproportionate number of black males in state prisons. He also offered suggestions for policy changes and pointed out the role that religious faith can play in helping young people avoid crime.

Mr. Worthy’s entry was selected as the statewide winner. “I believed the chances of winning were very slim,” he said. “I was very surprised that I was chosen.”

Mr. Worthy is a freshman business administration major from Lanham, Maryland. His English instructor is proud of his accomplishment.

“Needless to say, I am very happy for him,” Ms. Shepherd said.

LET THEM EAT CAKE (OR COOKIES)

English Major’s Mom Bakes For Honor Society Fundraiser

Money isn’t the only way to make a valuable contribution to a worthy cause. Our English honor society got an edible donation recently.

When the UMES chapter of Sigma Tau Delta was planning a fundraiser, the mother of a member offered to bake dozens of cookies and brownies so the students could hold a bake sale.

Senior English major Heather Molnar’s mother, Holly Trice, is a clerk in the University’s financial aid office and the owner of The Cookie Jar, a home based baked goods business. The enterprise is a family affair. “She does the baking and (my grandmother) does the mixing,” Ms. Molnar said. She joked that her role is to taste test the goodies.

Ms. Trice’s recent contribution to the honor society is not the first time she’s used her culinary talents to assist UMES students. For the last three years she has made similar contributions to help raise money for the UMES Concert Choir. “She loves to help out whenever she can,” Ms. Molnar said. Her recent contribution was a big success. The honor society bake sale sold out in record time and netted the group $75.
LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

English Staff Member Assists in Volleyball Team’s Winning Season

The English department was watching the results of the recent women’s volleyball Mid Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) championship tournament more closely than usual this year. That’s because a new department staff member wears a second hat as assistant coach for the UMES team.

Eric Hammond joined the department this semester as a technical associate in charge of media related equipment and facilities. He started his involvement with the UMES volleyball team in 2002.

“Working as a coach allows me to continue to learn every day,” he said. “Most of all, I really enjoy the interaction with the quality of athletes whom we recruit. They are truly fantastic players and young ladies.”

This was a particularly rewarding season for Mr. Hammond and Coach Don Metil. The team was the MEAC Northern Division regular season champion. “This year was even more special since we didn't lose a single conference game,” Mr. Hammond said. (Matches are played best 3 out of 5 games or “sets.”)

So it was with high hopes that the team headed to the MEAC tournament to face its arch rival Florida A & M University (FAMU), the team that defeated them last year in the finals of the championship tournament.

Unfortunately, FAMU defeated the Lady Hawks in the finals to claim the conference title again this year. “This season, we had the tools, strategy, and mental fortitude, but we couldn't match their constant intensity and focus,” Mr. Hammond said.

With four graduating seniors on this year’s team, some coaches might relegate next season to a period of rebuilding, but not Mr. Hammond. “Coach Metil and I are already working on building the strongest UMES team ever,” he said. “We will use the experience of this year's success to grow next fall.”

ENGLISH EDUCATION NEWS

Accreditation Team Evaluates UMES Teacher Education Programs

by Dr. Barbara JoAnn Seabrook
Coordinator, UMES English Teacher Education

Preparing Educators with

NCATE PROGRAM ACCREDITATION VISIT

A NCATE/MSDE accreditation team visited the campus October 25-29 for its joint review of the UMES teacher education and counselor education programs. The team was comprised of nine individuals representing the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Maryland State Department of Education.

The NCATE team members were: Dr. Gerry Giordano, University of North Florida (Chair); Dr. Ken Witmer, Frostburg State University (Co-Chair); Dr. Larry Powers, Alabama A&M University; Dr. Carol Long, Winona State University; and Dr. Martha Sue Freeman, Cullman Middle School.

The MSDE team members were: Dr. Kathy Angeletti, University of Maryland College Park; Dr. Joi Kerr Walker, Morgan State University; Judy Beiter, Anne Arundel County Public Schools; and Norma Allen, Maryland State Department of Education.

To receive NCATE and MSDE accreditation, institutions must meet rigorous standards. Accreditation requires that teacher candidates demonstrate in-depth content knowledge, professional dispositions, and the skills to deliver their knowledge so that their students can learn.

The UMES teacher and counselor programs were initially accredited in 2004. UMES will receive the official report from the October visit sometime in April 2009. The next visit for UMES will be in 2015.

ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM CHANGES

Effective Spring 2009, all students enrolled in professional education courses (EDCI, PSYC, EDSP, EDUC, EMAT, SPED) will be required to have a criminal background check in order to do any type of work (field or clinical experience including practicum and internships) in a school setting. Information about the procedure and the application form for the background check are available on the UMES Department of Education website.

English education majors must pass PRAXIS I (reading, writing, and math) during the sophomore year to officially apply to the teacher education program. Certain substitutions are now permitted. Effective April 1, 2008, in lieu of passing the PRAXIS I test, students may use cutoff scores on certain standardized tests: a composite SAT score of 1100 (prior to April 1995, the SAT score equivalent was 1000), an ACT composite score of 24, or a GRE composite score of 1000.
The group of thirteen students met WBOC anchorman Steve Hammond and other station personnel. Mr. Hammond took their questions after they watched a live broadcast of the CBS affiliate’s six p.m. newscast. He told them the building represented an investment of $11 million by the station’s owner.

The students were accompanied by their instructor, Marilyn Buerkle, a former WBOC news director. “I’m amazed by the new technology,” she said. “Computers enable the crew to do a very sophisticated broadcast with far less people. It’s really a much different process than the one I supervised.”

Each year for 14 consecutive years, Associate Professor Mignon Holland Anderson has held a Shakespeare Competition among her sections of Honors English 101. The performances are particularly entertaining, and this year was no exception.

Several of the students came in costumes of their own making, all presented synopses of assigned pages of the play, and most completed one to two minutes of memorized dramatic performance of selected scenes from this fall’s dramatic tragedy: Othello: the Moor of Venice.

Because the prize winners are exempted from the final exam for the course, the competition is typically very lively. This year’s winners from the two honors 101 sections included 21 students who scored a project grade of 96% or higher.

More than 125 people participated in the recent international conference, “The Role of Languages in World Peace,” held on the UMES campus and sponsored by the African Language Research Project under the direction of English faculty member Chester Hedgepeth.

“I was most pleased by the attendance and active participation of our international guests from Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, Canada, and the Caribbean, and by the presentations of our own faculty,” Dr. Hedgepeth said.

The chair of the English department, Betty Taylor Thompson, joined a number of English faculty members in making presentations. The keynote speaker, Sudanese Ambassador Dr. Akec Khoc, described the event as both informative and interesting. “I am grateful for the warm welcome and reception accorded to me and my delegation,” he said. “It was a unique occasion which we greatly enjoyed.” He also expressed his gratitude that arrangements had been made for him to meet with a regional delegation from the Sudanese community during the conference.

Spanish language students will hold a holiday fiesta Thursday, December 11, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Food Science Exhibition Hall. The event is organized by faculty member Carole Champagne.

The UMES Gospel Choir, under the direction of faculty member Della Dameron Johnson, offers a concert Saturday, December 13, at 5 p.m. in the Ella Fitzgerald Center for the Performing Arts. Admission is free.
GREETINGS FROM GWINN

Retired faculty member Sandra Christian makes her home now in Gwinn, Michigan where she continues to write poetry (see box, right). She also continues to interact with students.

This month she’ll be a guest lecturer at Houston Community College in Houston, Texas. She’ll discuss the poetry of Jane Kenyon with students enrolled in the college’s “Women in Literature” class.

Ms. Christian taught composition and poetry classes when she was a member of the UMES English department.

AUTHOR FEATURED

The Island of Chincoteague sponsored an all-day Powwow, followed by a Potlatch supper, at its new park recently. More than 100 people, including many members of surrounding Eastern Shore American Indian tribal groups, enjoyed cultural arts demonstrations including beading and flint knapping, as well as traditional American Indian music.

The Kite Koop and Bookstore celebrated the event with a reading and book signing by novelist/storyteller and English faculty member Mignon Holland Anderson. Ms. Anderson has strong roots in both the African American and the American Indian communities.

ENGLISH STUDENTS RECRUIT NEW ENGLISH MAJORS

Nearly 1,500 high school students from around the region came to the UMES campus for the seventh annual Tri-County College Fair last month. They met with recruiters from more than 130 different institutions. Our department was well represented by a group of senior English majors.

GRIEF

Inside your hollowed-out body, organs, tissues, long bones removed for transport to others, I wanted to fold myself and pull your skin over my own hollowed heart. Fire together, stir into air like jewels in sunlight live under the moon.

When your ashes arrived I placed them in the barn box you gave me for Christmas. Thought hard about desire.

Thought hard about removing a few fine pieces of ash to mix in pudding and eat, so you wouldn’t completely leave me.

Oh, how primal is grief. The heart tin-foil bending. The chest a cabinet falling from its hinges.

Years now and I talk with you every night. Tell our sons to release my ashes to the same ground and air where you linger, wait for the girl who first walked with you beneath the baring sycamores.

Sandra Hart Christian
2008
DRAMA STARTS A CONVERSATION
Roundtable Discussion Focuses on Diversity and Discrimination

The UMES Drama Society, under the direction of faculty member Della Dameron Johnson, tackled controversy head-on in its choice of material for this year’s fall theater production.

Two one act plays that shared a focus on the interaction and miscommunication between gay and straight people were presented recently in the Ella Fitzgerald Center for the Performing Arts.

One of the performances was followed by a roundtable discussion with ten panelists including several students, an historian, two ministers, an academic administrator, and experts in literature and drama. Three English faculty members and a student majoring in English were invited to serve on the panel.

Dr. Dameron Johnson explained her decision to focus attention on the subject as what she perceived as “a need for an open discussion among our community.”

The discussion was, at times, emotional and included highly charged testimonials from audience members. Particularly heated exchanges occurred when the topic was tied to the disapproval of homosexuality by certain religious communities.

The student who served as assistant director of the play, William Wallace, said he struggled with an internal conflict between his faith and his sexual orientation. “You can judge me by my character,” he said.

The conversation included a broader range of topics regarding diversity and discrimination including religious freedom, gender bias, and an individual’s constitutionally protected right to freedom of expression.

“I just want to go to class and feel like I’m welcome,” said English major Justin Stewart who serves as president of Uniquely Defined, a campus support group created by gay and lesbian students.

SONG AND DANCE
English Major Performs With Concert Choir

An English major shared the spotlight with the UMES Concert Choir at the group’s recent fall concert.

Sophomore Cherish McMillan was invited to perform an interpretive dance to accompany a selection sung by the choir.

Ms. McMillan volunteers as a dance instructor for a local church where a class of 15 children learn modern, interpretive, and praise dance routines.

Ms. McMillan said her recent solo performance was unique. “It was my first time dancing with a live choir singing behind me,” she said.

This year’s concert also included an appearance by Norfolk State University Vocal Jazz Ensemble.

The UMES Concert Choir performs under the direction of Sheila Harleston.

WELCOME TO A NEW MEMBER OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT FAMILY!

Graphics and film instructor Joe Davis and his wife, Andie Plamondon Davis, have a new daughter. Marissa Jewel Davis arrived on Friday, November 28. She weighed eight pounds, nine ounces and was 21 inches long.

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