

INSIGHTS

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


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SAYING GOOD-BYE FROM A DISTANCE *A Message From Our Department Chair*

Dr. Dean Cooledge joined the English department faculty in 2000; he became chair in 2016.

Photo by Jim Glover



Historic...challenging...unprecedented...difficult. These are the new clichés that describe the past two months. While this characterizes the moment and likely the near future, it is only a moment in time. To extend the cliché a bit further, take Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken." Facing a fork in the road, the poet chooses the road less traveled, hoping to someday return and take the other road. Of course, the journey takes him farther afield and he never returns. In typical Frost fashion, the poem is concise yet expansive. The path he chooses is but a touchstone to a life fulfilled—a life full of wonder, experience, challenges, failures and successes. Sometimes we choose a path in life and sometimes it is chosen for us. These days represent the latter.

With fully developed plans to complete courses, graduate from college, and bid farewell to the friends, faculty and campus that defined their lives for the past four years, our graduating seniors have found that the world has made many choices for them. These may seem hard to overcome. For many students this change has presented unforeseen challenges. Their parents sent them away to college to focus on getting a good education and a skillset that prepares them to succeed in life. Now they're back

home, with all of the challenges and distractions that UMES was supposed to save them from. But these are just challenges, and they can be overcome. Keep focused. Remember your goals. And just like a GPS map, recalculate your path to your future.

We are reminded of how much a college campus presents a comfort zone for students, not only to focus on studies, but also to find oneself. Frost is not choosing which direction to go at a traffic light; he is alone in the woods. He is a man facing nature and a man facing himself. This is a reminder that life's journey represents a pact between ourselves and the spirit that guides us. And so, like the chaos that beset the world one hundred years ago during another pandemic, we live in a world without order, without leadership, and without precedent. But then and now, these events shape a generation, and as everything happens for a reason, there too, will be opportunities and success. It is, after all, just a moment in time.

To our graduating English majors, we wish you a fond farewell from UMES, but not farewell forever. We hope we have given you the guidance to make your way in the world. Please come back and let us know how you are doing. The readers of this newsletter want to know how you are doing. We wish you only the best and look forward to hearing of your successes.

As we have known for a long time, we have an amazing department at an amazing university. As a department we have been on the cutting edge of

innovative teaching practices, both in the classroom and online. In fact, the current Center for Instructional Technology and Online Learning had its origins as a Title III activity in the Department of English and Modern Languages. We have always been committed to using Course Management Software (WebCT, Blackboard) and offered some of the first online classes at UMES. For about four years now, we've offered all the courses required to earn an English degree online, so this transition to online instruction was practically seamless for most of us. Across UMES, because of the University's commitment to online learning, UMES has had an easier time transitioning than some other institutions.

While the transition hasn't been smooth for everyone, and it has revealed challenges for students, our attentiveness to our students helps to keep them engaged. I have taught online classes for many years, yet last month was the first time I ever used Collaborate. What a revelation! For discussion-based classes such as mine, Collaborate has ensured we didn't miss a beat. This is a challenge for us all, but the innovation that defines us as a department helps us to adapt and improve and develop what is fast becoming the new normal.

Thank you everyone for your hard work and willingness to step up and help your colleagues rethink our ways of teaching and learning.

As always, the Department of English and Modern Languages is the place to do amazing things!

MINI-GRANT AWARDED

The University System of Maryland's [Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation](#) has awarded a \$1,000 mini-grant to faculty member Mari-jo Ulbricht.



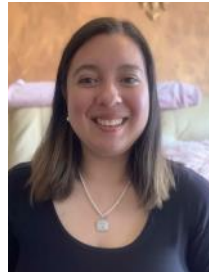
Ms. Ulbricht

The funding will assist Ms. Ulbricht in developing additional open educational resources (OER) for the English department's Principles of Composition I course. It also enables Ms. Ulbricht to participate in the center's Teaching Fellows Program.

The widespread use of OER—free, openly licensed teaching materials—enables many UMES English courses to forgo an expensive textbook requirement.

HOMETOWN CELEBRITY

Samantha Hernandez, a Spanish language student who—as previously reported in the April edition of this newsletter—was forced to return abruptly from her spring internship in Peru because of the COVID-19 pandemic, was featured in an article published by the [Prince George's Post](#).



Ms. Hernandez

Photo provided by UMES Office of Public Relations

Ms. Hernandez and her family live in Lanham, Maryland, one of the communities where the weekly newspaper is distributed. The story appeared in the paper's April 23-29 edition.

VOCALIST SELECTED

A UMES English graduate has been selected to sing the national anthem at a sporting event during the university's November homecoming festivities.



Ms. Carter

Photo provided by UMES Alumni Southern Maryland Chapter

Charmia Carter, who earned her degree in 2007, got the official approval from the UMES Athletics department last month. While a student, Ms. Carter earned academic credit for her participation in both the UMES concert and gospel choirs.

This is the first year UMES plans a fall semester homecoming celebration.

TECHNICAL OR CREATIVE?

A UMES English Graduate Chooses Both

When Achu Mba graduated in 2014, his internship at [C-SPAN](#), a D.C. based cable television network, became a full-time job.

Since then, he completed a master's degree in cybersecurity and launched a career as a government contractor. Despite his turn towards the technical world, he continues to use the creative side he developed as a UMES English major to host a popular video podcast and to write a novel.

He began work on the book, "[No Such Thing as Halfway](#)," in 2018; it was just released April 30.

The novel chronicles the love story of a couple who met through social media and is pressured by their parents to end their long distance relationship and choose a spouse from their own country. It is



Cover art of his novel and photo working on his podcast were provided by Mr. Mba.



described online as focused on "love, tribalism, and the importance we place on family traditions."

A native of Cameroon, Mr. Mba's immigrant experience is also the subject of his podcast, "[Stuck in the Middle](#)." Using the on-air pseudonym RifleX, he and his co-hosts explore issues of interest

to entrepreneurs, artists and innovators of African descent.

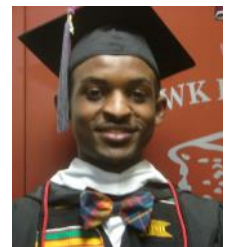
The weekly program's website has this intriguing introduction: "Lawyer, Doctor, Engineer, or Disgrace to the family. Four choices, that's all you get as a child of an African/immigrant parent."

"Stuck in the Middle" has grown an audience of some two thousand listeners and viewers since its creation in 2017.

Despite time and distance, Mr. Mba fits the definition "Hawk for Life."

"(I) haven't been up to the university in many years but somehow I still feel very attached to it," he said recently.

The feeling is mutual, Mr. Mba.



Mr. Mba at his commencement in 2014

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ENGLISH GRADUATE OFFERS ADVICE

When Opportunity Knocks, It's Up to You to Answer

By Justin Watson

Editor's Note: Mr. Watson, a Philadelphia native, earned his English degree at UMES in 2004. While on campus, he was a member of both the baseball team and WHWK, the student radio station, now known as Hawk Radio.

Because he has used his entrepreneurial spirit and a remarkable work ethic to forge a unique career path, we invited him to recount the variety of professional opportunities he has had doing what he loves: broadcasting and sports.

I started my career in broadcasting as a studio technician at [WMDT TV](#) in Salisbury while I was a student at UMES. I started as a teleprompter operator, then moved to video operator and picked up another position as a master control operator on the weekends at the same station.

After graduation in 2004, I started working at [CN8](#), in New Castle, Delaware. This was a Comcast regional network that was viewed from the New England area to North Carolina. I was a graphics coordinator for the evening news programs. I was also the assistant director for "Your Morning" until the program was canceled in 2009.

In 2008, I began working a remote sports broadcast for Comcast Sports. I was the "score bug" operator of what's known in the industry as the [FoxBox](#). I traveled to different sites along the east coast to work high school, college, and professional sporting events. This was one of my favorite positions.

I am a huge sports fan and played and coached baseball at UMES. During 2009, I became a staff member of [Comcast SportsNet](#), now known as NBC Sports.



Mr. Watson in 2003
Photo provided by UMES Athletics

In 2010, while still working for Comcast Sports, I decided to follow my original passion of being a radio personality. After my first day at WHWK, the UMES student run station, I knew that it was what I wanted to do with my life.

Unable to break into local Philadelphia radio, I decided to start an online radio show known as "The New Twist

Show." When I started that show, it aired live on Tuesday mornings.

The show became pretty popular in Philadelphia and that led to other opportunities.

In 2015, I was asked to be part of a new radio show coming to the Richmond, Virginia area known as "Soul n Sports." While building that show, I knew a person that would be a perfect partner. I asked the station to take a good look at fellow UMES alumnus Woleola Akinso. It was amazing to be able to work with a friend doing the same things we used to do on campus, debate sports!

Currently I have created and am running my own online radio station known as [New Twist Radio](#). New Twist Radio is an online radio station that airs 24/7 with music and original programming. I host the "Friday Vibes Morning Show" which airs each week at 7:30 a.m.

My desire for owning a radio station comes directly from having a management position at WHWK. If I had never held a management position at the student station, I don't know if I would've had ownership aspirations. I attribute WHWK for my love of radio operations and management. I am working to grow New Twist Radio into a multimedia business and hope to create a television station.



Promotion of his Friday Vibes online radio show provided by Mr. Watson

My experiences have enabled me to take advantage of yet another amazing opportunity. I have been the baseball coach at [Penn Wood High School](#), my alma mater, since 2006. Last year, I was asked to be the color commentator for Penn Wood's football and boy's and girl's basketball broadcasts.

Based on the various opportunities I've had the pleasure to engage in, I offer some things I've learned during my journey.

When you have an opportunity to expand your skill set, DO IT!

Broadcasting is a very competitive field with very talented people. So always take advantage of opportunities for growth.

Never let rejections get to you.

In broadcasting, people get hired for many different reasons. Some get hired because of experience, some because of talent, some because they know someone on the inside. Rejections will happen. It doesn't mean you're not good enough. It means something better is meant for you.

Get to know people and don't burn bridges.

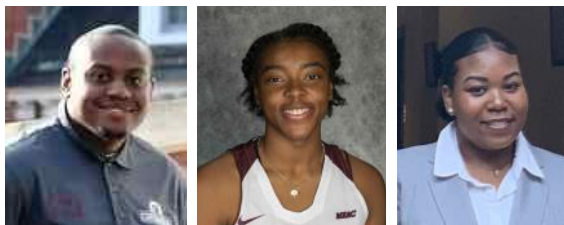
I was hired at my first broadcasting job at WMDT because I knew someone. As big as the broadcasting field may be, it's also very small. Many people know other people in the business and have established relationships. Remember, those people will talk to each other, and the conversation could be about you one day!

A VIRTUAL CELEBRATION

New Honor Society Members are Congratulated

AN INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

On April 23, the day the English department had planned to hold a formal induction ceremony for three new [Sigma Tau Delta](#) members, the honor society's advisor shared an online congratulatory message with the inductees and her faculty colleagues.



(L to R) Mr. Ferguson, Photo by Jim Glover; Ms. Redfern, Photo provided by UMES Athletics; and Ms. Wells, Photo by Valentine Anamelechi

"If things were normal, we'd all be gathering in the EASC tonight to celebrate the achievements of Christian Ferguson, Ciani Wells, and Kenetria Redfern ... Unfortunately, normal seems a distant memory," Amy Hagenrater-Gooding wrote. "I count myself fortunate to have had all three of these students in class. Not only are they

wonderful students, but they are also kind and compassionate humans. How fortunate we are to get to work with them!"

Dr. Hagenrater-Gooding's message spurred a cascade of supportive emails from many full-time faculty members who echoed her positive assessment of the inductees.

Two English faculty members are among the professors who have written brief personal reflections that describe their experiences during this unusual work-from-home semester. Billed as "Essays from the Frontlines," [Amy Hagenrater-Gooding](#) and [Mark Zockoll](#)'s contributions to the campus-wide project are posted on the UMES website and Facebook page.



Photo of Dr. Hagenrater-Gooding by Jim Glover, Dr. Zockoll's photo provided by UMES Office of Public Relations



STANDARDS & PRACTICES

Management Class Sees TV Through a New Lens

PhD COMPLETED !

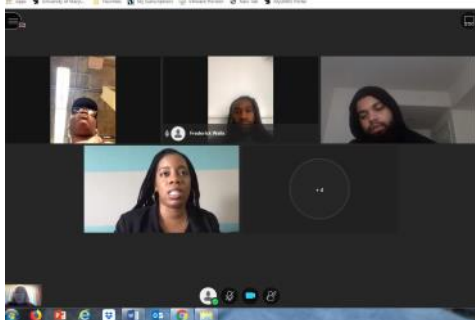
Students in the department's broadcast management class met an English department alumna who plays an important behind-the-scenes role at [OWN, the Oprah Winfrey Network](#).



Photo with Ms. Winfrey provided by Ms. Joseph in 2019

Sandra Joseph, a member of the Class of 2012, was a virtual guest in a Blackboard Collaborate session on April 6 to discuss her job leading OWN's standards and practices team.

S & P units are an integral part of a television network's day-to-day operations. They keep a company out of legal trouble by making sure each program meets the network's content standards. They review scripts, meet with producers, visit the set as programs are created, and assign the appropriate



Ms. Joseph discusses her job in a virtual session of TELC 303, Broadcasting Management.

voluntary television content ratings used to help the audience make decisions about what to watch.

While many of the students were unfamiliar with standards and practices departments before they met with Ms. Joseph, most had the same reaction as their colleague, Shaun Douglas. "I believe that this is honestly a great job to have," Ms. Douglas said following the discussion.

Renee Pope-Green, who grew up here in Somerset County and taught speech, theater and media courses in the UMES English department from 2008 to 2010, earned her Ph.D. last month. Dr. Pope-Green completed her UMES degree in [organizational leadership](#) by successfully defending her dissertation, "The Lessons of Skills Leadership Among Private Homeschool Social Entrepreneurial Leaders."



Photo provided by Dr. Pope-Green

Currently a full-time homeschool mom for her two middle school children in Los Angeles County, California, she also provides piano and musical theater lessons for a homeschool co-op.

What's next? "I plan to continue homeschool and social entrepreneurial research as a consultant for film and media," Dr. Pope-Green said.

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French language professor and honors program director Michael Lane makes masks to protect friends and family. He doesn't typically dress up for mask making, but he was also chairing a virtual session of the UMES Senate that morning.



Staff member Debra Laforest says her cat is praying for an end to her human's work-at-home schedule. Too many cat naps are being interrupted.

PICTURES FROM THE PANDEMIC

Snapshots of what "self isolation" looks like for the students and faculty of the Department of English and Modern Languages



English major Augustus Roberts (above) spends some of his spare time playing video games, and he's not the only one. That's also Joseph Byrd's "go-to" when stuck at home (below)



Faculty member Kimberly Galloway-Holmes' daughter, Annalee, appreciates the spring blossoms when she and her mom escape for a walk.



Look closely—you'll see Spanish language professor Carole Champagne's beagle, Chopin, nestled under his Easter toys.



Like everyone else, digital media faculty member Marilyn Buerkle is spending most of her time focused on a computer screen. So is her cat, Mack, who's trying hard to dodge her grip and move from lap to table.



Lots of baking going on at adjunct faculty member Kimberly Holmes-Wiggins' house. Yum!

All photos submitted by various members of the Department of English and Modern Languages family.