Presidential Favorites?

While it may not have been apparent to the casual observer, members of the UMES English department noted with interest the high profile roles played by department representatives in the recent inauguration of UMES President Thelma Thompson.

The 41-member planning committee, coordinating not only the investiture ceremony but a week-long celebration, included Miriam Gyimah and Lorna Rock. Dr. Gyimah is a graduate of the UMES English program and serves now as an assistant professor of English and African studies on campus. Mrs. Rock is currently the acting director of the University’s Office of Alumni Affairs, but we are happy to claim her as a former UMES English instructor.

The colorful procession of students and faculty that began the official inauguration on Saturday, September 13 was led by another department representative, Chester Hedgepeth. Dr. Hedgepeth was selected by Dr. Thompson to serve as university marshal. Two other department faculty members were assigned responsibilities as general marshals. Mignon Holland Anderson led the faculty to their seats in the university’s performing arts center. Bonni Miller led the contingent of student organization representatives.

Students from our department were also well represented. English major and president of the student government association Akeema Williams was a featured speaker at the event. Additional English majors joined the procession as leaders of student organizations, representatives of their native countries, and class officers. We note, with pride, that English major Kyana Woolridge participated as one of only six seniors who have maintained a 4.0 cumulative grade point average during their college careers.

Once the procession was concluded and the hundreds of guests took their seats, they perused an attractive program that included a history of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore written by our department chair, Richard Keenan.

Why so bright a spotlight on the English department? Perhaps our newly inaugurated president has a soft spot for us. She is, after all, a woman who holds bachelor, master and doctoral degrees in English!

The ABCs of Grant Writing

In these challenging economic times, academic leaders must look beyond traditional sources of funding.

As a result, UMES President Thelma Thompson has asked each faculty member to attempt to secure outside funding for projects on our campus.

But, not everyone is adept at the grant writing process. To help the English faculty perfect its efforts, our department chair Richard Keenan has scheduled a workshop. He has invited Catherine Bolek, director of the University’s Office of Sponsored Research and Programs, to our October faculty meeting. Ms. Bolek will offer her expertise on Tuesday, October 7 at 11 a.m. in room 2106 of Wilson Hall.
Next month a team of evaluators from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will be visiting the UMES campus. We know all of the departments that graduate teacher candidates will be well prepared for the team’s visit. However, we expect that the Department of English and Modern Languages will be especially impressive. Faculty member Barbara Seabrook has worked diligently each month in our departmental meetings to keep us well informed about what to expect during this important “inspection.”

We remind our faculty that one way to dazzle the evaluators is to be well versed in the university’s “conceptual framework” for students who plan a teaching career. It’s a blueprint of the kind of teachers we expect our students to be when they graduate. And, it’s a roadmap of the kind of teachers we endeavor to be here at UMES.

**WE’VE GOT PRIDE!**

Dr. Thomas serves as coach to a group of students who compete with other universities by correctly answering questions about a variety of topics, including history, science, religion, arts and popular culture. Each fall he holds a campus-wide tournament to select the new members of his team. The UMES academic team will hone its skills at regional tournaments over the next few months. Then, in the spring of 2004, the team will travel to Orlando, Florida to participate in the 15th annual Honda Campus All-Star Challenge. The Honda-sponsored event brings together hundreds of students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) nationwide to vie for cash prizes.

Last semester our team, including English major Earl Holland, earned $7,500 when it finished in the top eight of the sixty-four HBCUs competing in the All-Star Challenge. Test your mettle as Dr. Thomas searches for his new all-stars. The campus tournament will be held in the Student Services Center. But beware, Mr. Holland is back to defend his spot on the team. (Go Earl!)

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**TRIVIAL PURSUIT CHAMPIONS WANTED**

Students who love *Jeopardy* take note. A game-show-like competition is scheduled on our campus October 7, 8 and 9.

English department faculty member Jackie Thomas, searching for his next great UMES academic team, is coordinating the event.

Coach Thomas with last year’s academic team members (l to r) Earl Holland, Matthew Lang, Mumbi Thande-Kamiru, and Michael Davis.

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*Insights is edited by faculty member Marilyn Buerkle with the assistance of information technology specialist Kaye Pinhey. If you have information you would like to appear in this publication, please contact our editor at 410-651-8349 or mbluerk@umes.edu*
AFRICAN FEMINISM EXPLORED
UMES English Department Faculty Member Published

Miriam Gyimah is an assistant professor of English and African Studies in the department of English at UMES. Having received her doctoral degree in Comparative Literature specializing in African Diasporic Literatures and Cross-Cultural Feminist Theories, she continues to research and contribute scholastically in these areas. Recently, Dr. Gyimah contributed two works, a lengthy book-review analysis and a critical essay.

The first, found in the latest edition of the journal, West Africa Review, critically discusses “Aspects of Feminism and Gender in the Novels of Three West African Women Writers (Aidoo, Emecheta, Darko)” by Edith Kohrs-Amissah. This work revisits the Third World or African Feminist debate about feminist theoretical conceptualization, naming and identity by testing the theoretical contributions of leading scholars against selected works. After examining two prominent African women writers and one newcomer, the author concludes that all three artists to some extent fulfill the requirements of writing in the African feminist tradition and demonstrate that they can contribute to the debate on African women. Nonetheless, Dr. Gyimah critiques important scholastic omissions Kohrs-Amissah makes, as well as her limited geographical representation of African women with her study, thus finding that Kohrs Amissah does not push far enough to make a contribution in her analysis of this discussion.

The second, “Dangerous Encounters with the West: Gender, Power and Sexuality in Ama Ata Aidoo’s Our Sister Killjoy” is a critical analysis that has been accepted for publication for an upcoming anthology, Gender and Sexuality in African Literatures and Film, edited by scholars Ada Uzoamaka Azodo and Maureen N. Eke, to be published by Africa World Press at the end of 2003. The paper examines Aidoo’s female protagonist, Sissie, upon her travel to Europe and her befriending of a middle class German housewife. Sissie, the visitor, is objectified racially and sexually. Thus, the black female is nevertheless subjected and yet simultaneously desired and objectified as an exotic other.

Dr. Gyimah earned her bachelor degree in English from UMES. She pursued a master degree at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and completed her doctoral degree at Binghamton University in New York.

THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST

UMES’ Psi Mu chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, will be inducting new members on October 10 at 8 p.m. at the Student Services Center. The organization’s remaining four members, Kyana Woolridge, Sabrina Richardson, Kristina Collins and Ha’lim Mustafa, hope to induct approximately seven new members.

Sigma Tau Delta seeks to recognize and bring together top students who have a vested interest in English as a major or a minor. Such students are recognized as active members while associate membership is conferred on students who, although not majoring or minor ing in English, have taken a specified number of courses in the discipline.

A critical part of qualifying is that students must be at least second semester sophomores and possess and maintain a cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0.
Mark your calendars now! UMES President Thelma Thompson cordially invites you and a guest to the University’s annual holiday celebration on Friday, December 12 in the ballroom of the Student Services Center.

Planning is underway now to make this a memorable evening. In addition to great food and live music, you and your guest will also have the opportunity to offer well deserved recognition to the faculty and staff members presented with service awards that evening.

We know that your holiday date book will fill up fast. So, be sure to make plans now to attend the UMES party. Formal invitations will be sent to your campus address.

**TECHNO-SAVVY GRADING COMING SOON**

*English Faculty Get Ready*

PeopleSoft marches on! After conducting our first electronic course registration last semester, grading by computer will be our next big step forward. In order to avoid unnecessary bumps and bruising, the English department faculty had a PeopleSoft refresher course recently.

Staff member Sharone Terrell gave a hands-on demonstration of the options PeopleSoft offers academic advisors in the department’s media training center, room 2106 in Wilson Hall. The media center was equipped through a federal grant under the U.S. Department of Education’s Title III program.

**HOLIDAY PARTY**

**IMPORTANT DATES**

- **Mid-Term Exams**
  October 13-18

- **Mid-Term Grades Due**
  October 21

- **Course Selection**
  Seniors Only
  October 27

- **Course Selection**
  All Students
  October 28-November 7

- **Applications Accepted**
  Spring ‘04 Graduation
  October 27-December 3

- **Senior Finals**
  December 11-12

- **Undergrad Finals**
  December 15-19

- **Commencement**
  December 20

*(l to r) Page Hammond, Kathleen Winter and Clement Okafor in the Wilson Media Training Center.*