

Fall 2020

UMBC

MAGAZINE

FIRST IN CLASS

It's no secret why first-generation college students thrive at UMBC. Our staff and faculty from similar backgrounds make it the center of their work. — page 28





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A Semester Like No Other

UMBC's classes and campus life may look completely different this year, but the community pulled together to make the best of a challenging situation and to continue to offer an exceptional learning experience for students.

By Jenny O'Grady

Pictured: Backstage during an in-person socially-distanced theatre class.

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Showing Up for the Season

Amid strict protocols, men's and women's basketball planned to return to the court to play a short season. Even if they can't hear the roar of the crowd, Retriever Nation is still rooting for the home team.

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For UMBC alum and physicist **Nathan Kurtz**, the only thing scarier than a surprise visit from a polar bear is a melting ice cap.

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Call & Response

With the deaths of George Floyd and others, and the wave of protests that followed, many Retrievers are hearing the call to question what got us to this point and do everything they can to dismantle structural racism in our country.

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No Artist Stands Alone

In isolation during the pandemic, many of us are consuming or creating art and media, but we're having to reinvent how to share that pleasure with others.

By Johanna Alonso '20, Randianne Leysbon '09, and Imani Spence '16



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ON THE COVER

We're thankful for good camera lenses and PPE that allowed us to photograph this semester in a safe, distanced manner—like this shoot with first-gen student **Julia del Carmen Aviles-Zavala** and her family. You'll also notice many self-submitted photos, because when you ask Retrievers to pitch in they're ready to help.

Visit *UMBC Magazine* online year-round at magazine.umbc.edu for plenty of web extras! Thoughts, complaints, or suggestions about *UMBC Magazine*? Get in touch at magazine@umbc.edu.

TO YOU



Dear Retrievers,

By the time you read this letter, 2020 will almost be over. I sincerely hope that you and your families are safe and healthy during these challenging times.

It boggles the mind to think of all that has happened around the world since we last spoke—and how quickly many of those changes occurred. Just days after our spring issue went to press, for instance, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to ravage our country, George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police,

and it felt like the weight of a second pandemic was upon us. Add to that a long and divisive national presidential election, the continued pressures of working and schooling from home, and a wavering economy, and, yeah...it's been a year.

And yet, in the months of summer and fall, I have watched members of the UMBC community come together in a way I've never seen in my 15 years here. While working from our homes, I have watched Retrievers grieve together, lift each other up, and think critically about history, activism, and allyship. I've seen professors dig deep to provide meaningful experiences online for our students. In our communications, we are working to make sure our language is as inclusive as it can be—and that we're flexible as those needs evolve. And many of us are anxiously cheering for an alumna who is literally working on a COVID-19 vaccine as we speak. (Our own University president is taking part in the clinical trials, by the way! See page 3.) All of this fills me with hope.

In this issue you will read about Retrievers speaking openly and thoughtfully about their responses to the call to dismantle structural racism (page 34). You'll meet inspiring first-generation college students, faculty, and staff who fuel each others' work (page 28). You'll see scientists and teachers and artists and so many others doing their best to bring light to the world during a time of immeasurable darkness and loss.

I feel incredibly lucky to be able to share these stories and grateful for a world where we can still meet each other in a mailbox twice a year, even if not in person. As we reach together to shape the new year, I wish you peace, health, and all the grit you need to carry you through. May we all emerge stronger.

—Jenny O'Grady
Editor, UMBC Magazine

WEB FEATURES

See web-only videos, interviews, and more—like this series of Retriever Educators—all year long at magazine.umbc.edu.



Teacher leads by example for her students as a union rep.



A mission for fit, healthy city kids



Diversity officer, shaping equitable MBAs

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For more information on the Alumni Association, visit alumni.umbc.edu. To learn about giving, visit giving.umbc.edu.

UP ON THE ROOF



UMBC President Freeman Hrabowski and his wife Jackie recently volunteered to take part in a 25-month clinical trial of the COVID-19 vaccine invented by alumna Kizzmekia Corbett '08, M16, biological sciences, with her team at the Vaccine Research Center at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. We talked with the Hrabowskis to learn more about why being a part of this historic trial is so important to them both.

UMBC Magazine: *Why did you decide to volunteer for this trial?*

Jackie Hrabowski: Well, it's for a couple of reasons, starting with the fact that this pandemic has affected minorities, and African Americans specifically, more directly than most. And so, it's important for us to be represented in the solution. If we're looking for cures, we need to be involved and to be able to step up to that, despite all of the fears. The second reason, of course, is that the person who is developing this vaccine is a UMBC alum, and we're very proud of her. And we always believe in supporting our students. We know that they're the best at whatever it is that they decide to do. So those are the primary reasons...but I also think we need to be role models and walk the talk. If we say it's important to do this, we need to be able

to demonstrate it through our actions, not just with our words.

Freeman Hrabowski: Exactly. We're seeing people of color and particularly African Americans dying at higher proportions, higher rates than anyone from this disease right now. And we need to help find the solutions. And right now the vaccine our alumna **Kizzmekia Corbett**, has developed is very promising. And, as Jackie says, of those to whom much is given much should be required. And we feel very fortunate to be in that position right now. I have been the beneficiary of so much support from so many people that we want to do our part during this time.

And of course many Black people will say, yeah, but we know about these studies. I grew up with Tuskegee study. So, I recognize the prejudice that was shown and the abuse by the

medical and scientific community towards Blacks in the past. But the question is, what do we do now? Right now we need this vaccine for everyone. And the encouraging news is that we can see people of all races involved in the development and the implementation of this plan for this vaccine.

UMBC Magazine: *You both clearly understand how important it is to set a good example.*

Jackie Hrabowski: It's like the story of my dad growing up in rural Virginia. He and my mom were always out in the community helping people. We didn't have a lot of money, but it was about giving our time and our effort...and supporting people as much as we can. And growing up, I was always there in the background, running with him, taking somebody somewhere, giving them something. And so as I got to be a little older...I asked my dad, why do we have to always be the ones going and taking people and doing things for people? And he looked at me, and he just quietly said, "Because we can."

Freeman Hrabowski: I just love that....It just gives me goosebumps. And you know, there are certainly a lot of limitations about things that we can't do. We often don't do as much as we can...but this is a time when we, as human beings, have a responsibility to step up to the plate for the public good, for the common good. This is the time when we need to be focused on people beyond ourselves.

Visit magazine.umbc.edu/vaccine-trial to see a video interview with Dr. Hrabowski about his participation in the vaccine trial. Photo courtesy of University of Maryland School of Medicine.

"Right now we need this vaccine for everyone. And the encouraging news is that we can see people of all races involved in the development and the implementation of this plan for this vaccine."

DAWG'S EYE VIEW



A DRAMATIC ENTRANCE TO CAMPUS

We all miss campus and **David Hoffman**, director of UMBC's Center for Democracy and Civic Life, isn't helping with this gorgeous picture of the sky over the Performing Arts & Humanities Building.



@CoCreatorDavid



THE SHOW MUST GO ON

TEDxUMBC, a November event appropriately themed Unmasking Uncertainty, drew on the experiences of the UMBC community. Discover how **Asif Majid '13**, transformed his play "Snapshots"—a series of phone calls between lovers and friends talking about sexuality, Islam, and cultural appropriation—to the pandemic platform: Zoom. Read more at magazine.umbc.edu/asif.



@tedxumbc



SHARING IS CARING

We may not have been on campus to pick up our snazzy pronoun pins for International Pronoun Day, but UMBC students can log onto their self-service page anytime and share their pronouns (along with their chosen name, gender identity, and more!).



@womencenterumbc



CALLING ALL ARACHNID ENTHUSIASTS

Halloween is over, but biology professor **Mercedes Burns** is keeping us in the spirit with her research featured in a *New York Times* story about knots forming within clusters of daddy longlegs. "We still don't really know what triggers these aggregations," Burns is quoted. That's not comforting!



@UMBCBiology (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



A REAL NAIL BITER!

For their 6th annual spooky creation, commonvision released the pandemic version of *Hallowzine* digitally this year. Cover art by **Raquel Hamner '21**.



@commonvision



HOT DAWGS

We all missed the annual puppy parade this year since COVID stole Homecoming. We hope a few photos of our campus members' cute pooches—decked out for Halloween, no less—help ease your disappointment.



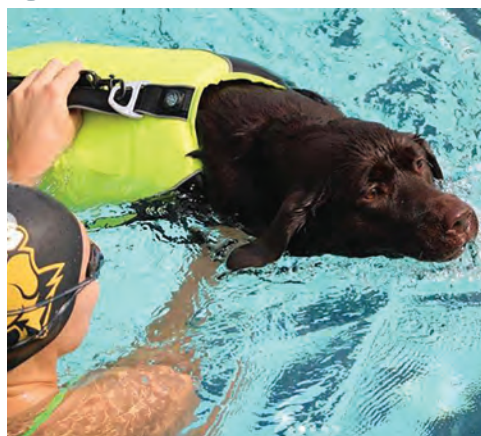
EXCITING RHODES AHEAD

Congratulations to **Sam Patterson '21, M29**, the second student in UMBC history to receive a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship! We're so #UMBCproud of your accomplishments, Sam!



MICROSCOPIC MARVELS

Despite what it looks like, **Tagide deCarvalho's** image—which placed #11 in the 2020 Nikon Small World Photomicrography Competition—features no skeleton, but instead, a microscopic view of red algae.



SWIMMING & DIVING RECRUITS STAR ATHLETE

UMBC's championship-winning Swimming & Diving teams are excited to announce their newest member. Officer Chip's main event will be the doggie paddle.



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?



Share your Retriever perspective on social media using the hashtag #dawgseyeview, and your image could be included in a future issue of *UMBC Magazine*!

THE NEWS

Leading by Example



UMBC's **Kimberly Moffitt**, professor of language, literacy, and culture and affiliate professor of Africana studies, was appointed interim dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS), effective August 17.

"UMBC has been my academic home for the last 14 years, and I consider it an honor to be able to serve in this capacity at this particular time when my skill set can be best utilized to support the work ahead," says Moffitt. "It will require grace and patience to successfully navigate the upcoming year, but I know the commitment of this community to our students, to our work, and to ourselves and as a result, CAHSS will thrive."

Moffitt earned a B.A. in political science from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, an M.A. in mass communication from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in mass communication and media studies from Howard University. She became the first Southern Regional Education Board Fellow from Howard University and completed a teaching postdoctoral fellowship at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, before holding a faculty position at DePaul University. She joined UMBC in 2006 as an assistant professor of American studies, and, prior to her appointment as interim dean, served as director of the language, literacy, and culture doctoral program.

"Dr. Moffitt brings to her new position an outstanding record of scholarship and leadership in shared governance," says Provost **Philip Rous**, "including serving as president and vice president of UMBC's Faculty Senate, a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, UMBC's NCAA Faculty Athletic Representative, and as a member of several other university committees."

As a media scholar and critic, Moffitt's work centers on topics that encompass ideas of citizenship, identity, representations, and belonging in society. Specifically, she explores the mediated representations of the Black body and its extremities (e.g., hair), often in programming such as Disney and other media. Her research seeks to understand how these representations influence communication among different cultures, affect policies within institutional structures, and impact the self-esteem and self-worth of those occupying Black bodies. She has an extensive publication record, including five co-edited volumes and numerous scholarly articles and book chapters.

In addition to her service at UMBC, Moffitt also extends her expertise into the greater Baltimore community by facilitating workshops on diversity and inclusion as well as appearing as a featured guest on several media outlets, both locally and nationally. Moffitt is a founding parent of Baltimore Collegiate School for Boys charter school and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She also recently received the 2020 Scholar-Activist Award from the National Communication Association's Critical and Cultural Studies Division. She was also recently named a 2020 National Communication Association's Critical and Cultural Studies Division Scholar-Activist award winner.

Moffitt builds on the remarkable legacy of Dean **Scott Casper**, who stepped down as dean on August 17 to become dean emeritus and president of the American Antiquarian Society.

— Tom Moore

Read a Q&A between Moffitt and Brian Frazee '11, M.P.P. '12, public policy, president of the Alumni Association Board of Directors, at magazine.umbc.edu.

Setting the Standard

UMBC Vice President for Information Technology **Jack Suess** has been awarded one of the highest national recognitions offered to professionals in his field: the EDUCAUSE Leadership Award.

EDUCAUSE is a nonprofit association that focuses on information technology (IT) in higher education and includes more than 2,300 member colleges, universities, and groups. Suess '81, mathematics, M.S. '94, information systems, received the award during the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference, held virtually in October 2020.

"This is a tremendous honor for me. Given that my entire career has been at UMBC, it also is testament to the innovative and collaborative culture of the UMBC community," Suess says. "In particular, I want to highlight the technology leadership of my Division of Information Technology colleagues. Through all of their efforts, UMBC is looked at as a model for the use of technology in higher education."

Suess was nominated and selected to receive the Leadership Award for his commitment to innovation and advancing research and scholarship in technology. He is also being honored for creating a culture of collaboration and opportunity among faculty, staff, students, and other higher education stakeholders, and for his work in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

"Leaders around the country admire Jack's valuable contributions to IT and higher education. He is a fine example of enlightened leadership," says UMBC President **Freeman Hrabowski**. "We all know Jack leads effectively by serving selflessly. What makes him most extraordinary is that his emotional intelligence matches his impressive technical skills."

Suess has been involved with EDUCAUSE for more than two decades, serving on a variety of committees before joining the board of directors in 2014 and serving as chair of the board in 2018.

At UMBC, Suess has previously received the UMBC Presidential Staff Award (2004) and the UMBC Alumni Volunteer Award (2000). He served on the inaugural advisory board for UMBC's Center for Women in Technology from 1998 to 2013.

— Megan Hanks Mastrola

Welcoming Retrievers Back Home



When the NCAA canceled the 2020 spring and fall championship seasons due to the pandemic, UMBC Athletic Director **Brian Barrio** developed a new game plan for Athletics communication staff: create UMBC's first-ever Letterwinners Club. Similar to other universities' clubs, the Retriever Letterwinners Club looks to welcome alumni home to UMBC by creating a network to connect them with current student-athletes and UMBC Athletics.

"I think it's going to be a unique opportunity for student-athlete alumni from all walks of life, every sport that UMBC Athletics has ever sponsored, to really be able to connect and come together as one family," says Assistant Director for Annual Giving **Seth Nagle**.

Athletic communications staff also used the launch as an opportunity to update data on athletes throughout the years. Led by Communications Director **Steve Levy '85, interdisciplinary studies**, the staff dug through every athletic team's roster since the start of UMBC Athletics in 1966 to create a full list of club members. Levy's 30-plus years at UMBC has made him an indispensable resource. This long-term knowledge of Retriever Athletics is particularly helpful for team rosters prior to 1995—these lists are not available online and their accuracy is reliant on whoever put the media guide together for the team that year.

Going through UMBC Athletics' archives helped ensure that all former student-athletes were automatically inducted into the

Letterwinners Club. Current student-athletes will become members at the end of their final year playing for UMBC. The club also includes alumni members of spirit teams like the Down and Dirty Dawg Band and Dance Team.

Nagle explained that the club is UMBC Athletics' way to thank alumni for their contributions to its various sponsored programs over the years.

"Letterwinners clubs are fairly common around the nation, and it was definitely something we wanted to implement at UMBC just to really show our gratitude for all the dedication, time, blood, sweat, and tears that you put in as a student-athlete during your time here," says Nagle.

No matter how long ago an alum played for or cheered on UMBC Athletics, Barrio wants them to know that they are part of the Retriever family.

"If you played here 35 years ago, then you are part of the family today. Period," says Barrio. "And we want to get through to our current student-athletes as well that, you know, you've chosen to be a part of the Retriever family and, because of that commitment you made, we're going to give it back to you for the rest of your life."

Barrio emphasized that alumni are "Retrievers for life." In the release of the Letterwinners Club at the virtual Retriever Athletics Fall 2020 State of the Department meeting, Barrio reinforced that UMBC is home no matter whether you played only for

a season, you were last on the roster, or an All-American.

"It's so important from a culture standpoint that all our former student-athletes understand that they're always welcome here, and they can always come back," says Barrio. "And they don't have to explain who they are, and it doesn't have to be through their old coach."

Brian Hodges '07, financial economics and American studies, M.A. '10, economic policy analysis, and UMBC men's basketball alum, says he has always bled black and gold. Throughout his time as a student-athlete at UMBC, Hodges made many connections to the University and the UMBC community. He continued to maintain these connections through a period of membership on UMBC's Alumni Board of Directors and as an avid fan of the men's basketball team—even driving to Charlotte, North Carolina, to watch their historic NCAA upset.

"I am very much a strong advocate of UMBC and am very proud of my degrees," says Hodges.

The announcement of UMBC's Letterwinners Club gave Hodges a means to further connect with the UMBC community. Specifically, the club connected him with his former teammates as well as all the men's basketball players that came after him.

"I was elated when I first read about the Letterwinners Club and started thinking about all of the possibilities that could result from its creation," says Hodges. "It will definitely assist in connecting me with the University in a different way."

While Athletics is doing due diligence to reach out to alumni, they can also register themselves through Athletics' website. Barrio emphasized the importance of having as many alumni as possible register to be members.

"Behind each one of those names is a great story, it's somebody's life story," says Barrio. "And so, the way I look at it, we've got hundreds of life stories out there waiting to be discovered."

—Morgan Casey '22

Photo courtesy of UMBC Athletics.

Learn more at umbcretrievers.com.

THE NEWS

A Semester Like No Other

The first half of UMBC's academic year may have looked different from years past, but Retriever pride remained steady as the community pulled together to make the best of a challenging situation and continue to offer an exceptional learning experience for our students.

Teams of more than a hundred staff and faculty worked through the summer to plan the "Retriever Return" to campus, placing the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community at the forefront of all decision-making. With 91 percent of courses fully online and 7 percent hybrid, just 2 percent took place in-person this fall. Extensive monitoring of symptoms for those on campus helped to keep the campus safe while learning and working.

"I have been amazed by the level of talent and commitment, compassion by everybody involved in the planning.... Everyone has shown an unbelievable dedication to the UMBC community," said UMBC President **Freeman Hrabowski**. "We have stepped up to the plate and supported our students and each other, and we should all feel inspired by this."

While the number of people working and living on campus may expand slightly in the spring, the focus will continue to be on distance learning and the safety of the community as instructors draw upon what they learned about how to best reach students remotely. Through the new Planning Instructional Variety for Online Teaching, or PIVOT, program, hundreds of faculty spent the summer training to create robust, high-quality remote classroom experiences. Many also embraced ways of making classes more personal by incorporating pets, leading group cheers, and building scientific labs in their own basements.

"I can't wait to be back in a classroom with students...It's my favorite thing to do. But this is a global pandemic... so how do we use the tools we have and the innovation UMBC is known for to make the best learning experience possible for our students?" said **Kate Drabinski**, principal lecturer in gender, women's, and sexuality studies.

Students also took advantage of the new Fostering Online Learning Improvement and Opportunity, or FOLIO, program, which offered an extra layer of asynchronous tools and support for students navigating the world of online instruction for the first time.

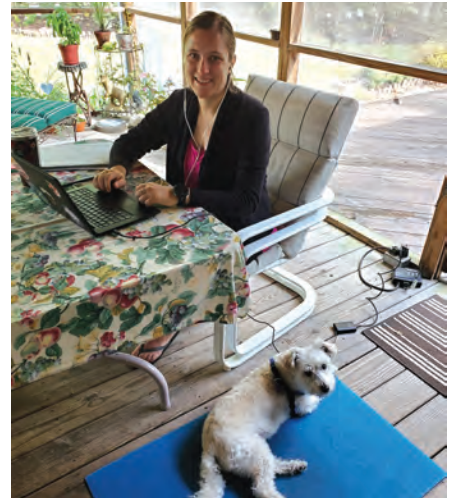
"My professors are being very accommodating," says senior geography and environmental systems student **Hugh O'Connor**. "They all make sure students feel welcome to have a video call with them almost anytime in lieu of office hours and post recordings of lectures to help students stay on track. Some professors have even decided not to require textbooks because they know financially times are tougher for some students due to the pandemic."

The cost to attend UMBC will decrease 22 percent compared to last fall for in-state undergraduate students registered for courses offered by the main campus. Since March the Stay Black & Gold Fund has also distributed more than \$270,000 in emergency funding and continues to assist students in need, especially those who are not eligible for funding from the federal CARES grant and have exhausted their financial aid options. Although the Retriever Essentials Food Pantry had to close for in-person visitors, organizers worked with UMBC Police to create pre-packed bags of nutritionally balanced nonperishable food and travel-sized toiletries for community members in need.

While UMBC's incoming undergraduate students didn't get to experience some of the firsts of a typical semester this fall, they all received a special box of swag to mirror some of the special traditions they would have experienced on campus, said **Nancy Young**, vice president of student affairs. Those living on campus also enjoyed Friday night bingo, Saturday night movies, and other special socially-distanced get-togethers.

"We wanted to convey the traditions to our new students and make them feel welcome," said Young, who invited students to decorate their rooms at home with the Retriever pennants and posters they sent. "We surprised them, and it was a huge hit. They were all really excited."

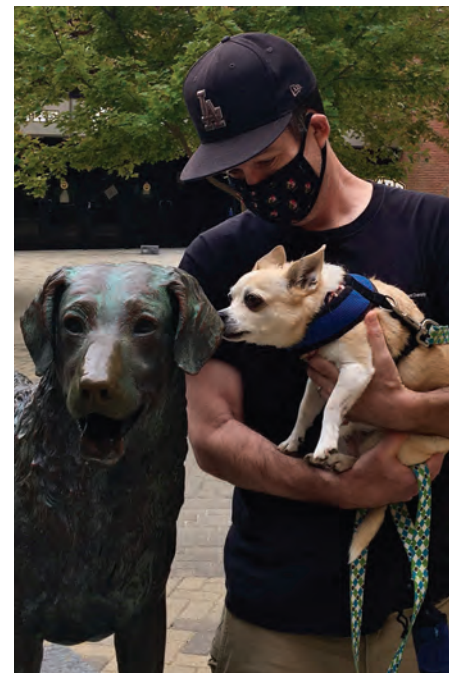
—Jenny O'Grady





Capturing the Moment

Whether working from home or studying and playing (carefully) on campus, community members joyfully chronicled the strange semester in a variety of ways. Photos courtesy of Melissa Penley Cormier, M.F.A. '17, Abigail Granger '10, Amanda Knapp, Cindy Greenwood, Emily Sale, David Hoffman, Ph.D. '13, and Marlayna Demond '11.



AT PLAY

Goals Achieved



When UMBC women's lacrosse coach **Amy Slade** received a phone call several months ago but did not recognize the number, she didn't initially answer. Slade later called back, and it proved to be a good move.

The caller told Slade she was one of eight people being inducted into the 2020 class of the National Lacrosse Hall of Fame. This ceremony was originally scheduled for October but has been postponed until mid-to-late 2021 due to COVID-19.

Slade is the fourth person—and the first woman—inducted into the Hall of Fame with Retriever ties. Former men's lacrosse coach **Don Zimmerman**; player **George McGeeney '82**, economics; and contributor **Dick Watts** are the others.

Slade will start her 12th season as a coach for UMBC in 2021, including three years as assistant coach. She said this honor means a great deal to her.

"In the midst of a pandemic, it was really cool to find out," Slade said. "The fact that the

lacrosse world is recognizing me...that's a cool feeling. It feels really special to be remembered."

Slade was already well known in the lacrosse world due to her accomplishments while an attacker at the University of Virginia. There, she captured the prestigious Tewaaraton Award—given to the nation's top player—in 2004. Slade (then Amy Appelt) scored a Virginia-record 90 goals and 121 points as the Cavaliers captured the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) crown and then the national championship. The ACC also picked her as the player of the year.

Slade left Virginia with the record for goals (258), points (373), and consecutive games scored in (66).

UMBC Athletics Director **Brian Barrio** believes that some of the success Slade found as a player has helped her as a coach because she reached such high levels.

"She knows the path up that mountain to being an elite athlete," Barrio said. "She can show them that. I thought it's important and that our

athletes know. Not all of us have what it takes to get to the top of the mountain.... Amy clearly [does]. She's unbelievable in a lot of ways."

Right now, Slade is focused on the 2021 season. She wants good players who also are good people, something she thinks will give the team a strong foundation. Slade feels the 2021 team will have just that.

The Retrievers graduated just one player from the 2020 team that played only six games before the pandemic shut down everything, but they are bringing in 10 new players that Slade is excited about having on the team. Although the schedule for the spring is still being determined, she is hoping this new team can make some noise in the America East.

"I'm thrilled with the types of kids we're getting," Slade said. "They're fast. They're coachable. From an ability point, the sky's the limit for them."

Now, Slade is glad she returned the phone call she didn't answer and is looking forward to the Hall of Fame induction.

"I would also like to thank UMBC for the amazing opportunity to continue my passion," Slade said in a statement. "Six years ago, when the program was at a crossroads, the athletic department and [deputy athletics director] **Jessica Hammond-Graf** trusted in my leadership to get this program back on track. UMBC has allowed me to take my love of this game to the next level."

—Jeff Seidel '85



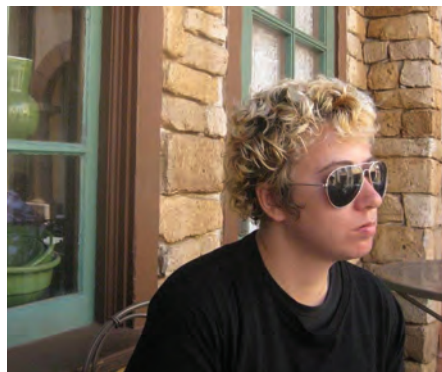
Visual Activism

Available for in-person viewing by appointment this fall, UMBC's Center for Art, Design, and Visual Culture presented *Southern Rites* by American photographer Gillian Laub.

In *Southern Rites*, Laub engages her skills to examine the realities of racism and raise questions that are simultaneously painful and essential to understanding the American consciousness.

Experience the exhibit in 360° at cadvc.umbc.edu/southern-rites.

Creating a Literary Space for the ‘Nobodies’



It should surprise no one that a degree in American studies might lead a graduate to create a literary magazine centered on a shared piece of Americana—the fast food chain Taco Bell. After all, **MM Carrigan '04**, founder of *Taco Bell Quarterly*, often tells people that an American studies (AMST) degree “taught me how to consider, examine, think.” Carrigan uses this foundation in creative writing by “telling the stories of objects and places, and rigorously examining how they operate inside of me. That’s also a description of AMST, in a nutshell.”

UMBC Magazine: How would you describe the publication to your mom?

MM Carrigan: Well, my mom always wished for me to create something popular. I think many writers will relate to the idea that our moms just want us to write one of those best sellers or make millions self-publishing on Amazon. So I would excitedly tell her, Mom: I made a popular Taco Bell magazine where all the writing is about Taco Bell!



UMBC: Now, how would you describe it to Taco Bell executives?

MC: *The New Yorker* covered in nacho cheese.

UMBC: When did the idea occur to you to start a literary publication devoted to this fast food restaurant?

MC: In the spring of 2019. One of those late morning ideas after the second cup of coffee hits.

UMBC: Your first two volumes have been prolific! Have you been surprised by the variety of ways people can write about Taco Bell?

MC: Not surprised—I trust writers, I trust in the brilliance of writers. As writers, we continuously approach the same subjects over and over: love, grief, loneliness. I believe Taco Bell is another one of those subjects we can approach over and over.

UMBC: What’s one or two of your favorite pieces?

MC: From Volume 2, Jake Bailey’s “Psychosis at the Bell” excited me—a punk poem exploring schizophrenia and Taco Bell. Terry Horstman’s “Malik for the Win,” a traditional piece of longform sport writing, through the lens of a basketball Taco Bell promotion. I just love how we get a range of writing.

UMBC: In another interview, you mention being surprised that people took the first call for submissions seriously—why do you think they did?

MC: I was a nobody. I didn’t have a large platform or back catalog of clever tweets. I was just a single writer, with an absurd idea. There isn’t really a space or community for the “nobodies,” so when I invited them to come hang in the metaphorical parking lot of a Taco Bell, I think writers latched on right away.

UMBC: In a time where our country seems endlessly divided over life-or-death issues, Taco Bell feels like a universal, shared American experience. How do you think we can foster more shared experiences like this?

MC: We used to gather around the television to watch man walk on the moon, or Michael Jackson moonwalk. We shared those cultural

moments together. But as our interests and lives become increasingly niche, we seem to only share large-scale tragedies together. We must continue to seek out those places, experiences, objects we can still share as a whole. We must look in surprising places.

UMBC: What sort of writing did you do while at UMBC?

MC: I dabbled in bad poetry and short stories. But as weird as it sounds, I found my voice writing American studies papers, which I majored in. There were never any tests in AMST. It was all writing, all talking, all the time. I took a lot more creative liberties in my prose than I should have in academic papers, but I always received the nicest feedback from professors telling me how much they enjoyed reading my work.

UMBC: Did any one faculty or staff member encourage you in a way that’s stuck with you?

MC: I’m very lucky to have been taught by such a dynamic, passionate group of American studies professors in the early 2000s. A moment that sticks with me is Dr. **Ed Orser** reading a passage from a book, and he wept in front of the class, so moved by what he had read. That was the passion and emotion they brought to the material. I could have walked away jaded after studying the broad history of American systems, institutions, and culture. Instead, I walked away wanting to tell these stories in dynamic ways.

UMBC: Other than submitting to Taco Bell Quarterly, what’s the advice you’d give to upcoming graduates, interested in the arts?

MC: Live más, dream más. Your dreams are heavy to carry. It would be easier to discard them, and go into something more practical. But keep lugging, keep dreaming. You’ll be good.

— Randianne Leyshon '09

AT PLAY

Showing Up for the Season

Daniel Akin sat out most of his sophomore year of basketball due to a torn meniscus. When the pandemic hit last spring, he worried his senior season would be lost, as well. So, when he found out the Retrievers were planning to play a 2020 – 2021 season after all, Akin was thrilled.

“It means a lot to be able to play this year because of the initial suspense of not knowing whether we were even going to have a season,” says Akin, a senior sociology major.

Thanks to diligent, strict adherence to COVID-19 testing guidelines, and a supportive community, both Retriever basketball teams plan to compete this winter. Although current state guidelines will prevent fans from attending the games to start the campaign, coaches and players alike are excited to make Retriever Nation proud from afar.

“This season comes with so many obstacles, but we’re ready for the highs and lows of the season. We’ve decided to attack this newfound, temporary way of gameplay with a positive attitude and open mind,” says **Johnetta Hayes**, UMBC women’s basketball head coach.

So, what exactly does prepping for a season amidst a global pandemic look like? Structured. And a little bit weird. After returning to campus, players adhered to a six-week resocialization plan where they were sequestered into pods and began the process of reacclimating to training.

“We work out and then have to leave the gym. We do film over Zoom and other things as a team as much as we can to make it so we are closer on the court,” says **Jen Gast ’21, psychology**, a forward on the women’s team.

Teams adhered to strict sanitation protocols, weekly COVID-19 testing for anyone involved in play, no shared spaces among other sports, and vigilant symptom monitoring, among other safety precautions.

“I am extremely proud of our student-athletes and their resiliency and adherence to our protocols during these challenging times,” says **Stacy Carone**, associate athletic director, sports medicine. “Our sports medicine team built solid protocols, but our student-athletes are the stars of this show.”

For fans, the return of the season was bittersweet since they couldn’t attend games. Instead, they continued to cheer for the home team from living rooms around the country.

Local fan **John Lotz** shares, “Even if my wife and I can’t be there in person, we want to show our support to the players. We want them to know that we will be rooting for them while watching at home as much as if we were at the games.”

Superfans who wanted to be at the games in spirit could purchase cardboard cutouts to have displayed in the stands. Those who bought season tickets have access to exclusive streaming content.

“We wanted to create a unique season ticket package that gives our loyal fan base an opportunity to continue to support UMBC basketball as our student-athletes return to competition,” explains **Seth Nagle**, assistant director for annual giving, athletics. “The familiar faces on gameday, even in cardboard cutout form, will remind our athletes of the overwhelming support we have received.”

More than anything, players and coaches are just happy to get back to doing what they love.

“It’s been great to be around our players, staff, and overall basketball family again,” says **Ryan Odom**, men’s basketball head coach. “We’ve been working hard to prepare for the season and our players have been great. They come to work hard every day and are excited about the prospects for the season.”

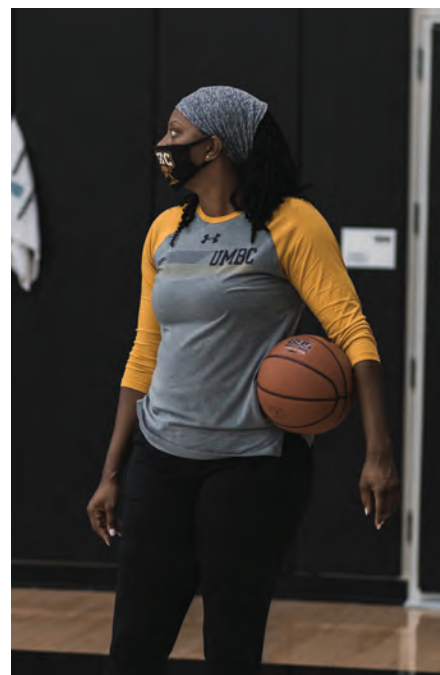
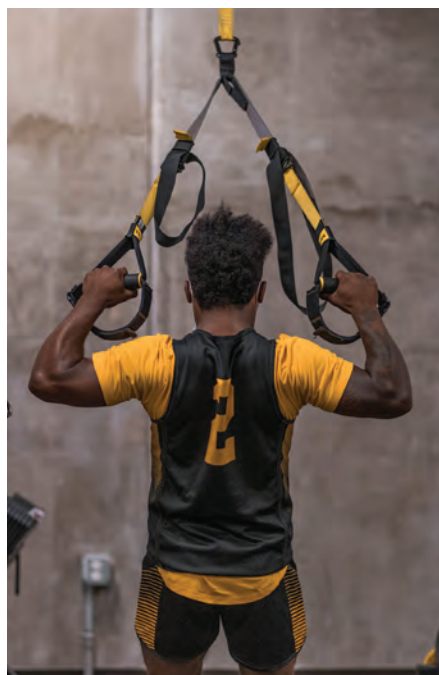
— Kait McCaffrey



Top row: #0 junior Mya Moye, #32 senior Dimitrije Spasojevic, #4 freshman Brianna Sliwinski (left) going against #14 graduate student Juliet Esadah.

Bottom row: Ryan Odom, #2 senior Darnell Rogers, #13 senior Jen Gast, Johnetta Hayes.

Photos by Dmitri Floyd '21, media and communication studies.



DISCOVERY

Chasing Antibodies



Today, many Americans are asking themselves versions of this question: “Was that bad cough I had in January COVID-19?” Without comprehensive nationwide testing, it’s been impossible to measure in real time the total number of Americans who have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. However, there is another way to come up with a reliable estimate, and **Kaitlyn Sadtler ’11, biological sciences**, is leading the charge.

The 10,000-participant study Sadtler is orchestrating at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will look for antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 in volunteers’ blood, allowing the research team to estimate just how many people have been infected across the country—whether they had symptoms or not. The project originated with a Twitter conversation about how Sadtler could use her expertise to support the current crisis.

“I think that a lot of people, including anyone with an immunology background, or a relation to infectious disease, was just sitting there thinking, ‘Okay, what can I do to help in this situation?’” says Sadtler, an Earl Stadtman tenure-track investigator at the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, a division of the NIH.

“Once we had that realization that we could mail in blood, the study expanded very rapidly,” Sadtler says, since the original plan would have

required volunteers to have their blood drawn at NIH. However, even she and her team didn’t expect the overwhelming response to their call for volunteers—more than 400,000 people replied.

Sadtler’s team and partners at the University of Alabama-Birmingham and University of Pittsburgh enrolled 11,000 volunteers based on U.S. Census data to comprise a representative sample of Americans and sent them their test kits. The samples were then delivered to Sadtler’s laboratory at the NIH, and by the end of September, her team had finished measuring antibodies in more than 10,000 samples.

The results, Sadtler says, “will give us a statistically robust viewpoint of how many people have actually probably had this thing.”

There are other questions the data can help answer, too. Because volunteers supplied a range of information about themselves, the researchers can tease out the roles of different demographic factors on the disease.

For example, the virus has disproportionately affected Black people in the U.S. Sadtler’s data may help explain whether race itself correlates with a greater chance of disease exposure and poor outcomes, or if effects of the disease more closely track factors like education level, employment status, or access to healthcare, which often follow racial lines in the U.S.

There’s a lot to dig out of the data. Our team plans on releasing useful data as quickly as possible, but we will be mining and analyzing this data set for months to come,” Sadtler says.

So what comes next? “We do it again—twice,” Sadtler deadpans. Among other things, the repetition will allow the research team to see how the antibody response changes over time. That information will help determine whether booster doses will be required for an eventual vaccine.

The COVID-19 study aligns with Sadtler’s other projects, which focus on the body’s immune response to medical device implants and wound healing. Her work sits at the interface of engineering and immunology. It’s her “engineering mindset,” as Sadtler describes it, that’s helped her succeed.

Sadtler credits her broad education at UMBC for her ability to bridge different fields. “Something that I really liked about UMBC was that it was so focused on undergraduate education and really making it a good environment for undergraduates to learn,” she says.

In Sadtler’s last semester, **Tamra Mendelson**, professor of biological sciences and her academic advisor, offered her a position working on her research. “Before starting my postbac in immunology at the NIH...I was out in gaiters helping collect fish in streams across Maryland,” Sadtler recalls. “I was able to experience biology as a whole...so I could figure out what my niche was.”

Sadtler’s UMBC experience wasn’t all academic. She played on the women’s rugby team, overlapping years with her sister, **Samantha Bennett ’09, biological sciences**. “It was a great outlet and a great group of women.”

Whatever the reason, and no matter how busy she is with her important research, Sadtler will always be a Retriever wanting to come home, she says. “I can’t wait to make my way back to UMBC.”

— Sarah Hansen, M.S. ’15

Photo by Ryan Lash/TED.

Enshrined But Not Guaranteed



Michelle Scott reminisces about her grandmother's tradition to call her grandchildren when they turned 18. "She'd call, wish us a happy birthday, and then ask if we had registered to vote." If they hadn't, they were asked to call back after registering.

"My grandmother knew the power of the vote," remembers Scott, associate professor of history and affiliate in the departments of Africana Studies and Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. "She understood voting was not just about having the privilege to vote for the president but also about voting on local issues."

This year marks the centennial of the 19th Amendment that enfranchised women. "It's important to remember that suffrage was a push for that more perfect equality for women; it wasn't the beginning or the end," explains **Amy Froide**, professor and chair of UMBC's history department.

Voting was almost not included in the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, the nation's first women's rights conference, explains Froide. Most salient to women were the right to access higher education, hold property, manage their own wages, and be able to get a divorce and retain custody of their children. "It wasn't until the late 1800s that women realized the vote would help them attain these rights," says Froide.

Another thing not included at the convention were the voices of Black women. With the exception of Frederick Douglass, only white people were invited. Scott, an expert in Black women's history; Froide, an expert in British history and European women's history; and **Susan Sterett**, professor of public policy, acknowledge how systemic racism plagued the women's rights movement from its inauguration.

"Even today, celebrations about the 19th Amendment disregard the Black women who contributed to enfranchisement," explains Scott. "Ida B. Wells-Barnett," says Scott, who researches her anti-lynching work, "founded the Alpha Suffrage Club for African American women in 1913." Some of the other Black women are Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, whose speech "We Are All Bound Up Together" was delivered at the 11th National Women's Rights Convention of 1866. And Mary Church Terrell delivered her address "The Progress of Colored Women" at the 1898 National American Woman Suffrage Association.

To help students gain a greater perspective of what these women were up against, Scott uses storytelling as a strategy. "My grandmother was

an excellent storyteller," shares Scott. "I learned a lot about her life through her stories." Her grandmother Marion Vincent was born in Baton Rouge in 1919. When she was of legal age to vote, Vincent was prevented from voting due to voter suppression tactics. She moved to California where she was eventually able to vote, almost 70 years after the 19th amendment was ratified.

"There was massive disenfranchisement of African Americans before the 1965 Voting Rights Act," explains Sterett. Sharing lived experiences like Scott's grandmother's helps students understand the complexity of implementing constitutional law.

Maureen Evans Arthurs '13, gender and women's studies, agrees. Recounting her matriarchal lineage, Evans Arthurs names her family members that laid the foundation for her unique position today. Her great-grandmother Pearl Johnson was born to sharecroppers in 1887. Her grandmother Irene Shepard was born in 1918. Evans Arthurs' mom, Renee Smith Guelce, was born in 1956. "I was born in 1986. My sister was born in 1982. We are the first people in my family to grow up with the birth right to vote."

Evans Arthurs voted for the first time in 2004, 84 years after the 19th Amendment was ratified. Today, she is the director of Government Affairs for Howard County Government, helping shape the future for the next generation.

— *Catalina Sofia Dansberger Duque*

Evans Arthurs and her mother Renee Smith Guelce, courtesy of Evans Arthurs.

Increasing Access



the internet is not equally accessible to all. UMBC's **Foad Hamidi** recently received a collaborative Rapid Response Research

(RAPID) grant from the National Science Foundation to increase high-speed wireless internet access to communities in Baltimore.

Not having access to the internet has heightened existing inequities during the pandemic, says Hamidi, assistant professor of information systems. "It impacts families in different ways, whether it's related to education, employment, or social connections," he explains.

Hamidi and his collaborators will work to amplify the internet in accessible spaces, such as libraries and community centers. "We need to investigate conditions necessary for communities to have an active role in shaping, creating, and taking ownership of the technologies they need," he says.

— *Megan Hanks Mastrola*

DISCOVERY

Meaningful Representation

Assigned an oral history project in 2007 for her master's degree in community arts at Maryland Institute College of Art, **Ashley Minner**—now professor of the practice and folklorist in the Department of American Studies at UMBC—knew exactly who she would ask to interview. She walked across the street from her parents' house and knocked on Uncle John's door.

"There will never be a person like Uncle John," says Minner, an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. "I don't know, he was just like that, always telling stories. He was a character. When he was younger, he had pork chop sideburns. He had a really thick Robeson County accent. He was a good man. I believe he was touched by God, he was—he is—a Lumbee Legend."

John Walker, if not a direct relative of Minner's, played that role along with his wife Jeanette Walker Jones, telling her about their shared heritage and regaling her with stories of their youth in North Carolina, where many Lumbees moved from in the 1950s and '60s to Baltimore in search of work.

Minner's project snowballed from there, leading her to interview more elders and gather stories and photographs that have become increasingly precious as the generation ages. The research has helped tell the wider story of Lumbee migration to Baltimore, specifically to the neighborhoods of Upper Fells Point and Washington Hill, affectionately called "The Reservation."

In fall 2019, Minner met with staff in UMBC Special Collections to discuss the creation of a home for her work and other Baltimore Lumbee-related research and ephemera. To be housed in the Maryland Folklife Archives, Minner's recordings will become part of "the Ashley Minner collection," along with other documents and photographs shared by tribal members.

"This collection really demonstrates how the university connects with the surrounding community in Baltimore," says **Beth Saunders**, curator and head of UMBC's Special Collections and Gallery. "Ashley really dug into local archives and did the legwork and other researchers will be able to benefit from that."

Minner sees the archive as a necessary repository for stories and photographs that

otherwise might be lost as the Lumbees who previously lived and worked close together spread out into the counties surrounding Baltimore. She hopes the creation of the archive will encourage more Lumbees to dig into their past while also finding pride in their present. Many don't know their own history, she says.

"I think being able to point and explain and show pictures and ground them in the fact that our people have been here for close to a 100 years now and have really made contributions, that does something. That helps with security, self-esteem, and feeling empowered—like you do belong, like nobody lied to you. You are who you are."

Minner bridges multiple spheres with her work—she's an artist, a scholar, and also a granddaughter, a friend, a fellow tribal member. The only hat she can take off, as she puts it, is her UMBC hat. Otherwise, "what I'm doing and what I'm about is bigger than a job," says Minner, "bigger than a job title or discipline."

Part of having her feet in two worlds is training students how to develop holistic approaches to public scholarship and community collaboration. In fall 2019, Minner was hired as the director of UMBC's new public humanities minor. "We're lifting up stories that get pushed to the margins," says Minner. "And we spend a lot of time on ethics. The last thing I want to do is turn a bunch of college students loose on communities that might be harmed through the interaction."

Minner is uniquely suited to the directorship, says **Nicole King**, associate professor and chair of the Department of American Studies. "Her broad range of experiences and skills speaks to the many positions we all hold in our everyday lives. These human aspects are often flattened in an institutional context. Yet, Ashley is more than all of these credentials and roles because her practice focuses on seeing the humanity and beauty of everyday people and places. What Ashley offers to our students at UMBC is lived experiences that are both ordinary and extraordinary and an understanding of the connections between the two."



From this perspective, Minner can see how outsiders often miss the mark when trying to tell the Baltimore Lumbee story. "They latch on to urban renewal and displacement," explains Minner, "but the elders don't see it that way. They're not victims, that's not the story they want to tell. It's important to teach folks to listen deeply and to check in and make sure people are being represented the way they want to be represented."

— Randianne Leysbon '09

Headshot by Jill Fannon, M.F.A. '11, for Bmore Art.

Opposite page, clockwise: Photo of Lumbee Tribe members commemorating the Baltimore American Indian Center winning the 2017 Maryland Heritage Award in the category of place, by Edwin Remsburg; Jeanette W. Jones holds the September 1957 issue of Ebony magazine, which featured an article on the Baltimore Lumbee, photo by Sean Scheidt '05, visual arts; The Inter-Tribal Restaurant was owned and operated by the Baltimore American Indian Center; photo courtesy of the Center, provided by Minner; Photo of Lumbee items by Edwin Remsburg; The Baltimore American Indian Center is the hub of cultural activities for area Indians, photo permission granted by the Hearst Corporation, provided by Minner.



IMPACT

Supporting Entrepreneurs



Want to grab a drink at a brewery with ecological stewardship in mind? Looking for a vet to visit your pets at home? Feel like posting a fantastical color-changing cup of tea (with cotton candy on top) on social media? What about recommendations for a photobooth company (now with virtual options)? Entrepreneurial Retrievers are making names for themselves in almost every vocation—but a pandemic can make it difficult for small businesses to thrive.

To help showcase and support these small business owners and independent contractors, in summer 2020 the UMBC Alumni Association launched the UMBC Alumni Business Directory. The directory provides a one-stop search for Retriever-owned businesses and helps UMBC alumni network and do business together.

“I love the idea of the Alumni Business Directory—showcasing the work and achievements of our graduates,” says **Marian Saunders White ’87, information systems management**, president of The Refinery, LLC, a management and business operations consulting firm. “I’m proud of the work that our firm has accomplished this far and I know I was able to start and operate the company because of the educational foundation I received at UMBC, as well as the ongoing support I get now from other alumni.”

This new service launched in the midst of a pandemic to help support alumni-owned businesses that have had to adjust their operations in response to COVID-19.

“The pandemic has taken a toll on everyone, and we know many alumni-owned businesses have been negatively affected,” says **Sara Lerma Jones**, associate director of Alumni Engagement. “The business directory was already in progress, and we accelerated its debut as a way to highlight and support these businesses. The directory is another way for our alumni to connect with and support each other, and highlights the entrepreneurial spirit of our graduates.”

Each week, a different alumni-owned business from the Alumni Business Directory is highlighted and promoted on the Alumni Association’s social media channels as an additional layer of support. “I’m happy to contribute to the ongoing success story of UMBC,” says Saunders White, “and to see the many different ways we are contributing to our communities.”

—Eddie Jenkins

Brittany Wight ’08, visual arts, of Wight Tea Company, shares a cup of tea with a customer.

To search or join the UMBC Alumni Business Directory, visit alumni.umbc.edu/businessdirectory.

Retrievers Behind the Scenes



As travel has come to a standstill for many students worldwide, it’s more crucial than ever to have someone like **Adwoa Hanson-Hall** on the job. In

her work as an international student advisor for the Office of International Education Services (IES), Hanson-Hall knows how important it can be to have someone who knows the ins and outs of immigration and international travel on your side.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your work?

A: I work mainly with new and current international students at UMBC. This includes immigration advising related to F-1 visa requirements, general support for our international student population regarding cultural adjustment, and outreach to newly admitted international students who are still abroad. I also coordinate our You Are Welcome Here (#YAWH) Scholarship program.

Q: Why do you feel that service is so important, especially now?

A: Moving to a new country can be very jarring. Additionally, adjusting to an academically rigorous university like UMBC while navigating cultural nuances has its challenges. Our work mitigates the stress related to following immigration rules and provides support services so our students can focus on thriving academically and personally while engaging meaningfully as part of the UMBC community. In the current climate, this support is even more necessary.

Q: What else would you like people to know about your work?

A: Over the past six months, international students have faced real uncertainty. In the midst of all these changes, UMBC has rallied to support international students in our community. From President Hrabowski and the University leadership, to colleagues at the graduate and undergraduate levels, individual professors, and student organizations like the SGA and GSA, each facet of our UMBC community has shown care and concern in some way. Thank you everyone!

Lifelong Learning

Professor **Bimal Sinha**, who founded UMBC's statistics department in 1985, is a beloved and decorated faculty member who has helped transform UMBC into a national leader in statistics education. He's also transformed the lives of countless students, some of whom have gone on to become leading statisticians around the globe.

After more than 30 years at UMBC, in 2015, Sinha and his family decided to take their commitment to the university even further. Sinha and his sons, Jit and Shomo Sinha, pledged \$750,000 to create the Sinha Endowed Professorship in statistics at UMBC. The professorship will permanently fund a new statistics faculty position at UMBC. The family was joined in their commitment by 40 alumni and friends of the university. This summer the total endowment stood at \$900,000.

In October 2020, the Maryland E-nnovation Initiative Fund (MEIF), administered by the Maryland Department of Commerce, announced that it would match the amount currently pledged to the endowment with an additional \$900,000. That will bring the total endowment of the professorship, now renamed the Sinha E-nnovate Chair, to \$1.8 million.

The Statistics Department's researchers specialize in many areas, including machine learning and big data analysis. The work of statisticians is often behind the scenes of headlines about other fields, such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, genomics, and drug development. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, statistics is one of the fastest growing career fields in the nation.

By supporting the Sinha E-nnovate Chair, "MEIF is playing a crucial role in connecting philanthropy to the economic development mission of Maryland's research universities," shares **Gregory Simmons, M.P.P. '04**, vice president for institutional advancement. "MEIF is a compelling resource to universities and research parks like bwtech@UMBC as we work to build Maryland's innovation economy."



The UMBC community also values this grant as a chance to recognize the impact Sinha has had on the university, his field, and students around the world.

"Kudos to Dean **Bill LaCourse** for his leadership and to Professor Bimal Sinha for his amazing body of work," President **Freeman Hrabowski** shares. "Bimal has not only engaged in groundbreaking research for decades, but has also produced and championed an impressive number of influential Black statisticians throughout Africa."

Sinha has spearheaded the African International Conference on Statistics, held in a different African country each year since 2014. In 2018, UMBC signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Limpopo in South Africa to foster collaboration and exchange. A number of graduate students from African countries have also flourished with Sinha's mentorship.

Sinha's sons remember that beyond his academic accolades, the way their father has always interacted with his mentees is what made the deepest impression—whether meeting international students at the airport or inviting groups of students to their family home for dinner.

"We are proud of the contributions our father has made to the Department of Mathematics and Statistics," Jit and Shomo shared in a statement. "Equally importantly, we believe that now more than ever, the health and growth of public higher education institutions such as UMBC play a pivotal role in advancing opportunities for the next generation of students."

Today, Sinha finds himself in the enviable position of approaching the sunset of his career knowing that he has made a significant positive impact on the lives of countless people, from his students and colleagues to his family. The results of his compassion, his leadership, and his generosity will ripple even farther than his impressive contributions to the field of statistics.

"When I joined UMBC in 1985, I could not have imagined the growth and success the university would go on to experience over the subsequent 35 years. I feel honored and fortunate to have played a small role in the evolution of this beloved institution," Sinha says. "I am grateful to my colleagues, students, collaborators, friends, and administrators for their partnership. Through this gift, I want to ensure that future generations of leading scholars will view UMBC as an attractive home to advance their contributions to the field of statistics."

— Sarah Hansen, M.S. '15

The fund is open to receiving additional contributions to optimize the MEIF match and strengthen the endowment's future. Visit giving.umbc.edu for more info.

Campaign Corner

To date, UMBC's Grit & Greatness Campaign has raised more than **91% of the total goal*** to Make Big Breakthroughs, Forge True Partnerships, and Transform Lives.

Raised through October: **\$137 million**

Total goal: **\$150 million**

Learn more at giving.umbc.edu

** As of October 31, 2020*

IMPACT

Shop Talk

When Royce Bradshaw '70, political science, was hired in 1969 by Chancellor Albin O. Kuhn to be the first director of the not-yet-formed alumni association, he worked as an office of one for an alumni population of 240. Barbara Quinn '78, ancient studies, wore multiple hats as executive director of Alumni Relations from 1979 to 1993. Today, under the leadership of Stanyell Odom, the director of Alumni Engagement, UMBC boasts 83,000 Retriever alumni. The three sat down for a socially distanced discussion of how their work has shifted over the years. Read the full interview at magazine.umbc.edu/shop-talk.

Stanyell Odom: It would be really helpful to get an understanding, Royce, of how you became the first alumni director.

Bradshaw: I came to UMBC after getting out of the Army with a wife and child. The Cold War GI bill passed and I decided to use it. My second child was born 10 days before UMBC opened.

I was very active in student government even though I was driving a taxi to support my family at the same time. I was the first student appointed to the faculty senate. I worked very closely with Dr. [Albin] Kuhn. He was a guy you could call and get a meeting with the same day.

After completing my degree requirements at UMBC—the second student to do so—in 1969, Chancellor Kuhn asked me to stay on at UMBC as his graduate assistant. In 1971, I became the first director of Alumni and Development and served for one year. During my tenure I helped organize the Class of 1970 gift—we wrote to corporations and asked them to donate to a student emergency loan fund, and in return we would do projects for them. We raised \$13,000, which was no small amount of money at the time!

Odom: Barb, during your 15 years as executive director of Alumni Relations what are some major ways that your office engaged alumni and big things that happened under your leadership?

Quinn: There are actually two things. The first wasn't a project that I particularly liked but it turned out to be a good thing—the first alumni directory. Creating something like this (and without a computer!) takes so much work.

The second thing, one of my favorite projects, was the Second Generation Scholarship. It was started by James Wiggins '75, political science, and a committee of other African American alumni. It was a lot of work but it was so much fun.

Odom: We actually think it's one of the first, or possibly the first, alumni-endowed scholarships at the University.

Quinn: It's a huge source of pride for me. Because I know how much work went into it, and it was a really cool thing. Stanyell, what are you most proud of?

Odom: I think for me the pinnacle of my experience at UMBC was the 50th anniversary celebration. I'll never forget the moment when the fireworks went off and it was done and the night was over and it was like, we did this. It was such a feeling of accomplishment because through that work I got a closer relationship and a strategic partnership with the alumni board and the association.

When I think about how we characterize our alumni, I see their immense pride of being part of the school's story. I've been here to see the prominence and the reputation of the University continue to evolve. It's not that we're without our problems—we certainly have our challenges—but the way we approach problem-solving as a community, it feels really good. Even now when we're having town halls online about what's happening in the world, alums are invited so that they understand: We're all a part of this together.

The Second Generation committee continues to illustrate this, and our Alumni Association Board of Directors is also a perfect example. They award annual scholarships to students, and they wanted to double their endowment to \$200,000 by 2020. They took the lead and said, "We want to help with this fundraising. It doesn't have to all be UMBC. Here's what we want to do." Before the campaign ended they actually had \$225,000. Barb, doesn't it feel good to know that things you helped put in place are still moving forward?

Quinn: It feels like it's coming full circle.

Odom: I think we're ready for the next big thing.





Barbara Quinn '78, Royce Bradshaw '70, and Stanyell Odom chat outside of OCA Mocha in Arbutus. The coffee shop, founded by Michael Berardi '19 and Deep Patel '19, invested in a comfortable outside space to safely accommodate customers.

ON THIN ICE

By Daniel Oberhaus

When the *Polarstern* set sail from northern Norway in September 2019, it was looking to get stuck in the ice. But this goal—a death knell for so many historic exploration ships—would be much harder for this modern research vessel to accomplish due to a shrinking ice pack.

The *Polarstern* was embarking on history's largest scientific expedition to the Arctic to date. But before the first wave of scientists could start their research, they had to find a suitably robust ice pack, known as a floe, to make their home. This is harder than it sounds in the rapidly warming Arctic. An increasing amount of ice doesn't survive the summer, which means boats have to travel further north in search of suitably thick ice. But after a nearly two-week journey from Norway, the *Polarstern* had found its mark.

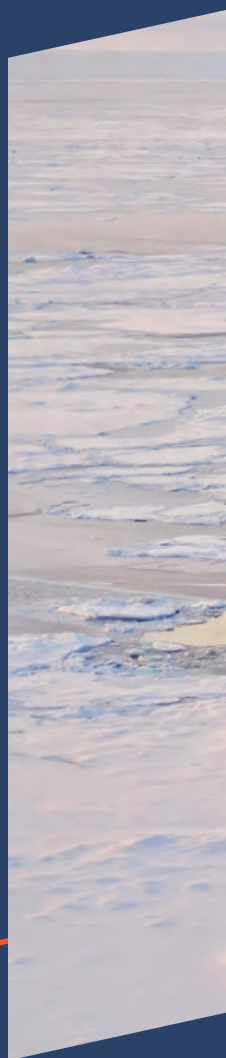
And this is how **Nathan Kurtz, M.S. '07, Ph.D. '09, atmospheric physics**, ended up standing guard on some floating ice 300 miles from the North Pole armed with a rifle and a mandate to keep an eye out for polar bears.

Kurtz was part of the first wave of more than 600 scientists from 20 different countries who over the course of the year cycled through the ship as it drifted more than 1,500 miles locked in a massive sheet of ice. The goal of the Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate (MOSAiC) expedition was to better understand the link between the Arctic environment and climate change.

Polar bear lookout was “not something I saw myself doing when I was in grad school,” says Kurtz, who didn't see any bears that day, but by the time he returned to civilization a month later he'd had his fill. “However, UMBC really did prepare me to face challenges,” says Kurtz. “For me, grad school was hard, but it helped me with self-confidence—that this can be done and I can do this.”

Neither Kurtz nor his shipmates had traveled all the way to the Arctic to be polar bear sentinels. It was just a necessary part of the journey that allowed them to do their real job: collecting massive amounts of data on the woefully understudied polar environment. Over the course of its Arctic sojourn, the *Polarstern* hosted scientists studying everything from zooplankton beneath the ice to the clouds floating above it.

But for Kurtz, the ice itself was the main attraction.



**For UMBC alum Nathan Kurtz,
the only thing scarier than a
surprise visit from a polar bear
is a melting ice cap.**

Alfred-Wegener-Institute /
Markus Rex (CC-BY 4.0)



Alfred-Wegener-Institute /
Lianna Nixon (CC-BY 4.0)



From Icy Moons to Polar Ice Caps

Kurtz's arrival in the Arctic was the culmination of over a decade of research studying Arctic floes from afar. But his original focus was ice even farther away—the icy moons of Jupiter. A shift in funding from NASA had Kurtz pivot his focus from astrophysics to earth sciences. “But physics applies to the moons of Jupiter and to the Earth,” Kurtz puts it dryly, “so it wasn’t so difficult to switch my focus.”

One of Kurtz's advisors at UMBC, **Raymond Hoff**, professor emeritus, says UMBC students are uniquely positioned to lead in atmospheric physics, considered a unique subset in a field that often prioritizes astronomy or astrophysics. UMBC's relationship with the Earth Science Division of NASA Goddard Space Flight Center to form the Joint Center for Earth Systems Technology allows students to play an active role in ongoing research.

Hoff himself brought valuable Arctic experience to his classroom, and Kurtz remembers being struck by his advisor's journeys to the Arctic in the early 1980s. “What amazed me about the Arctic was the stark and pristine beauty of the landscape,” says Hoff. “Even at -45°F, you would find yourself outside marvelling at the ice crystals which fell out of clear blue skies as any water vapor there would freeze and fall out on your parka.” For about 20 years, Hoff measured pollution at Alert, Northwest Territories, Canada, about as far north as he could get on land. There, researchers discovered that sulfur pollution from Europe and Russia was getting into the high Arctic.

“As a result of our work,” shares Hoff, “the Arctic nations brought in scientific agreements to reduce the inputs of mid-latitudinal pollution going to the Arctic. Some of those pollutants were really surprising since they were pesticides which were used in the tropics. It brought home how small our planet is.”

Kurtz's work four decades later would continue to rely on the cooperation of numerous stakeholders, as scientists collaborated to study—and perhaps stymie—global warming.

Bridging the Ice Knowledge Gap

As a graduate student, Kurtz worked on methods for determining sea ice thickness based on data from NASA's ICESat, a polar observation satellite launched in 2003. After earning his Ph.D., Kurtz has continued his work on the properties of polar ice as a scientist at NASA Goddard's Cryospheric Sciences Branch.

To understand how ice around the poles is changing and what this can tell us about the climate, Kurtz and his colleagues relied heavily on laser data from ICESat, a satellite that passed over the poles bouncing laser light off the ice 40 times per second to get a high resolution map of the sea ice thickness. But when ICESat's last laser failed in 2009, NASA was left without a dedicated satellite to study the ice caps.

NASA's solution was slightly more hands-on than a satellite—following the laser failure, NASA launched Operation IceBridge. Like ICESat, IceBridge used laser altimeters and radar to observe the Arctic ice sheet, except now they'd use a manned turboprop plane to accomplish the same thing.

Kurtz took over Operation IceBridge in 2015 and helmed the mission until 2018. Hoff shares a story of tuning in to NASA TV to see a story labeled incorrectly on the TV Guide channel as "Ice Bride." It was really about IceBridge. "You have to laugh," says Hoff. "I was happy to watch that story and see Nate standing on the ice in the Arctic talking about how important ice thickness is to our understanding of the progression of global warming."

Each season, Kurtz would travel to the poles for weeks at a time to survey the ice from the air. In the Arctic, Kurtz and his team would depart from an airbase in Greenland and spend upward of eight hours per day in the fuselage of a plane as it zig-zagged back and forth across the Arctic Circle. They would pass the time monitoring the instruments, watching movies, or simply taking in the alien landscape below.

"The scenery outside was really amazing," Kurtz says. "I never got tired of looking out the window."

Even if Kurtz wanted to spend more time in the IceBridge plane, the extreme polar weather limited operations to about three months out of the year, which made it difficult to comprehensively survey the polar regions. The upshot was the plane could carry far more instruments than ICESat, including ice-penetrating radars that could only work at low altitudes. In this sense, IceBridge drastically improved NASA's understanding of the dynamics of polar ice—but Kurtz wanted to get closer still.

Since 2018, Kurtz has been studying polar ice data sent back by NASA's shiny new orbiter, ICESat-2, at Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. But when he heard about the MOSAiC mission, Kurtz saw a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. "I had done the airborne work, but on-the-ground field work is so different," he says. "Being there would give me a totally different view of how the ice forms and help inspire me to use airborne and satellite data in a different way."



Nathan Kurtz
on the ice doing
research. Photo
courtesy of Kurtz.



Alfred-Wegener Institute /
Lianna Nixon (CC-BY 4.0)

Alfred-Wegener-Institute /
Esther Horvath (CC-BY 4.0)



A New Era of Polar Exploration

One does not simply book a ticket on a month-long trip to the Arctic, of course. After securing the funding to participate in MOSAiC's research program, Kurtz was required to participate in extensive training in New Hampshire and northern Alaska before departure. Over the course of several weeks in summer 2019, Kurtz and fellow scientists learned how to shoot a rifle and a flare gun, escape from a sinking helicopter, orchestrate a sea rescue, and protect themselves from polar bears. They were also trained in the art of doing science in the Arctic, learning how to use a giant drill to extract an ice core and drive a snowmobile.

The extensive training was necessary to prepare the scientists for the brutal environment. During the Arctic winter, temperatures can dip dozens of degrees below zero, and starting in mid-October, the *Polarstern* would witness five months of total darkness.

Kurtz recalls reading novels like *Endurance*, which chronicles explorer Ernest Shackleton's harrowing efforts to reach the South Pole in 1914. "This book kept sticking in my head even though I felt safe on the ship. There were all kinds of modern communication in case we needed help or ran out of something or if there was some kind of emergency—we could at least talk to someone," says Kurtz. "Shackleton and his group had none of that. I can't even imagine."

In this modern journey, participants would face some of the same challenges as past expeditions—unstable ice sheets, the threat of frostbite, the prospect of hungry bears, diminishing stores of fresh produce—along with new ones: they were limited to just 50 kilobytes of email data per day—barely enough to send a photo. But aside from a brief bout of seasickness during the passage from Norway, Kurtz quickly adapted to the life of a polar seafarer.

A Fresh Perspective on the Ice

To be sure, the days were both literally and figuratively long. When Kurtz and his crewmates arrived in the Arctic at the tail end of summer, the sun was hanging just below the horizon, casting the already alien landscape in a perpetual twilight glow. But given how much work there was to do, the extended daylight was a blessing. As the first of six expedition teams that cycled through the *Polarstern* that year, Kurtz and his colleagues were responsible for setting up dozens of experiments and research infrastructure that would be used by other scientists over the course of the year.

The nature of the field experiments that surrounded the ship speaks to the diverse expertise of the crew. Some of MOSAiC's more far-flung field sites were up to 30 miles away, accessible only by helicopter. Others took place thousands of feet above and below the ship, where dirigibles or underwater robots collected data and relayed it back to the surface.

Kurtz's experiments were just a few minutes' walk from the *Polarstern*. They were designed to measure changes in the ice's thickness, density, thermal conductivity, and other properties, which will serve as a ground truth for polar measurements taken from space. The dynamics of the Arctic floe have a lot to tell us about our planet; Kurtz's experiments are helping us decipher its language.

Being on the ice gave Kurtz a refreshed perspective of an area he could previously only appreciate from satellite data or the window of a plane, both in terms of the immense scale and barren beauty of the Arctic landscape and what it means to study the ice.

"Science by its nature is very dry and technical, so you're not necessarily thinking about why something is important when you're solving an equation, you just do it," Kurtz says. "But going to take these measurements to make sure we understand what's happening and what it means for the future put a very different context on the work I do."

Kurtz says he was struck by the realization that his two elementary school-aged children—who love to hear stories about his polar bear interactions again and again—will likely never see what he saw during his trip. The Arctic is warming much faster than the rest of the world and its ice sheet is receding at an alarming rate. Over the past few decades it has lost enough winter ice to cover Alaska, Texas, and Montana combined, and many of the regions that used to stay frozen during the summer are now ice-free. Scientists are only just beginning to understand how the Arctic affects and is affected by climate change, but the work of Kurtz and other MOSAiC scientists will fill in a crucial gap in that knowledge.

Kurtz's retired advisor Hoff adds, "One thing UMBC can be very proud of is the number of its graduates and alumni who are contributing to decision making and making important decisions about the most critical issues which will affect the planet."

CLIMATE RESEARCH AT UMBC

Researchers across UMBC are using unique, interdisciplinary approaches to explore global environmental challenges. Here are just three examples.

Lipi Mukherjee, Ph.D. '20, atmospheric physics, developed an algorithm to identify the abundance and type of particles present just under the surface of the ocean. Her algorithm is 6,000 times faster than previous methods.

"That's the difference between impossible and doable," says Mukherjee's advisor, **Pengwang Zhai**, assistant professor of physics.

Mukherjee's model, which analyzes data collected by orbiting satellites, mostly detects colored dissolved organic matter. These particles can be poisonous to sea life and they can also serve as a proxy for carbon stored in the ocean, which is important to understand in the context of climate change.

Ruben Delgado, assistant research professor at the Joint Center for Earth Systems Technology, studies a different resource: our air. Delgado's group uses data collected by aircraft, satellites, and ground-based systems to understand where, when, and how much of certain pollutants appear near ground level.

The research led to a new regulation that has decreased air pollution in the region. Impressed, in 2016 the Environmental Protection Agency asked UMBC to serve as the central hub for a fast-growing network of instruments.

Some of Delgado's research students regularly post their findings on a website affectionately known as the "Smog Blog." During the worst of this fall's fires in the West, officials from Pennsylvania called to check on the status of blog posts.

"That's when we give the wake-up call to the students: 'By the way, your work is being used by government officials,'" Delgado says.

Nicole Trenholm spends much of her time on small boats in the Arctic Ocean, exploring everything from ocean currents to algal blooms to microplastics in ice cores.

Trenholm, a geography and environmental systems Ph.D. student, addresses messy questions about the relationships between melting Arctic glaciers and changes in the surrounding biological communities, from phytoplankton to polar bears.

Trenholm is taking advantage of her fieldwork experience to bridge the gap between climate data collected from afar and ecological data collected on the ground. "Glacier melt isn't just influencing sea level rise—it's also influencing the future health of marine ecosystems, fisheries, and water quality," Trenholm says. "And that's a story that's not been fully investigated at this point."



I AM
FIRST
@UMBC

Junior Kaitlynn Lilly is a tutor
at Arbutus Middle School.

Julia del Carmen Aviles-Zavala
and her family.

FIRST IN CLASS

It's no secret why first-generation college students thrive at UMBC. Our network of first-generation staff and faculty makes it the center of their work as educators and researchers.

By Jenny O'Grady

Sometimes, an “aha moment” appears as a bright light bulb. More often than not, though, the spark that fueled it is what really matters.

For **Juwon Ajayi**, that moment first happened in Nigeria. As a kid, he accidentally stuck his finger in an electrical socket. He laughs about it now, but that somewhat painful experience got his brain ticking. How was the power traveling? Why did it hurt so much?

Like many kids, Ajayi found pleasure and intellectual stimulation in Legos and dreamed of someday building his own car. When his family moved to America, he had an inkling of what he might do with his academic leanings—but college felt a bit like uncharted territory.

“It was hard. There was a big learning curve,” says Ajayi, a senior computer engineering student who started off with three years at Anne Arundel Community College while other members of his family were taking similar paths. “Everything was new. Considering my major, there was really nobody that could help me when I didn’t understand...so I basically had to try to understand it myself.”

Thankfully, when Ajayi transferred to UMBC, he found a home first with the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program and then with the McNair Scholars community, a nationwide program focused on helping first-generation students be successful in college and graduate school. Today, he’s on his way to earning a degree and also making a difference by helping new McNairs find their way. But for many students, the hardest part is getting in the door in the first place.

“As far as the application process, I was pretty much on my own. I really just kind of winged it, which was not the best, looking back,” says **Kaitlynn Lilly**, a junior majoring in physics and mathematics. Lilly wound up landing on her feet despite the challenge of writing the dreaded personal essay for her college application. “That was the biggest

curveball for me. It was scary—so much depends on how you come off on a piece of paper, right?”

As the first in her family to graduate from high school, **Julia del Carmen Aviles-Zavala**, a junior psychology major at UMBC at The Universities at Shady Grove, also found the process extremely intimidating at first.

“I was constantly feeling unsure of what class to take and anxious as to if my classes would transfer to my major once I got to UMBC,” she says. “Honestly, I was just not sure how ‘college’ worked, and I did not have a concrete idea of an outline for my next four years.”

UMBC is known for being a champion of students from all backgrounds, so it’s no surprise to find that first-generation college students make up approximately 25 percent of the current student body—or that UMBC would be a huge draw for faculty and staff who come from very similar backgrounds. Fueled by their own experiences, they created the First-Generation Network, resulting in programming—covering everything from social skills to financial aid to planning for grad school—and research, and a community truly dedicated to the success of first-generation students.

IT’S PERSONAL

Amanda Knapp is proud of where she comes from.

As a country girl from rural West Virginia and the daughter of two parents who hadn’t finished high school (her mother later completed a B.S. in Nursing in 2018), Knapp took joy from the friends and ideas she found in academia. Knowing she’d need to pay her own way to college but eager to get away, she worked multiple jobs through high school and college—including one as the bumblebee mascot for an Old Country Buffet and

another loading tractor trailers with mail and heavy packages until the wee hours of night.

It was tough work, but it gave Knapp the freedom to make important connections at SUNY Buffalo, like managing a 3,000-member ski club and joining the women’s rugby team. There, not only did she find friends and professors who helped guide her but a pathway to her current work as associate vice provost and assistant dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs at UMBC.

“Working in this field is a way for me to give back to a profession that literally changed the course of my life,” says Knapp, whose position gives her direct ways of helping students via student success efforts, the Academic Success Center, and the year-old First-Generation Network.

“To be able to help someone remove those barriers so they don’t have to face them—or just know that they have someone who cares about them—is what makes our campus so special. There are so many of us on this campus.”

Faculty and staff who are first-generation college graduates themselves often can see the issues their students are facing before the students themselves.



Students celebrate a recent First-Generation Day at UMBC.

That means a big part of the work is giving students tools they didn't even know they yet need, says **Michael Hunt '06, M13, mathematics**, director of the UMBC McNair Scholars Program and a current doctoral student in the language, literacy, and culture program at UMBC.

Hunt describes a common scenario: A student applies for summer research opportunities all over the country and is accepted by a second-choice location. The student wants to know if they have other options, but the first place is giving them a deadline to respond. The student stresses, not knowing what to do.

"So, what do I do? I say, 'Well, did you email them? Did you pick up the phone and call them?' And the student says, 'We can do that? I'm allowed to do that?'" says Hunt, a graduate of both the McNair and Meyerhoff Scholars programs. "So you get them to sort of recognize what they are able to do and help them take that to the next level. And that's what it is for us. It's okay; I'm going to show you how to play the game."

Hunt has always been an outgoing person and educator, warm and affirming. In the age of social distancing, he and the McNair team have upped their game in new

ways, offering fun and informal ways of socializing, including web-based "hype sessions," student group chats to provide both academic and social structure.

As a fellow first-generation college student, **Bill LaCourse**, dean of the College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences, loves to see and hear about these projects working for students. Growing up in Connecticut, as the first in his extended family to attend college,

LaCourse worked as a bike mechanic, a hospital laundry boy, a cook, and a stock boy in order to save up for college.

Along the way to his eventual doctorate in chemistry, LaCourse learned how personal relationships and mentorship can really make the difference for students trying to figure out their options.

"We all can mentor each other," he says. "We are all role models to somebody whether we are a good role model or a bad role model. That's something that's important to have because as I went forward, I had my good ones, but I had my bad ones as well."

Looking back on his own experiences, LaCourse sees value in what he learned. Today he works to create inclusive environments for underserved students in his college and beyond.

"The whole mission for me is to have people not make the same stupid mistakes I did," he admits. "They don't have to waste their time and learn everything the hard way. I've done that. I've come through the brush and

the copses to get where I needed to go. They can have it better because of what I went through."

LOOKING DEEPLY AT CAUSES, SOLUTIONS

If personal relationships are one side of the student success coin at UMBC, the other is research.

In her work with Knapp in the Academic Success Center (ASC), **Dclana Gregg, M.S. '04, instructional development systems, Ph.D. '19, language, literacy, and culture**, hears about student experiences directly. As director of assessment and analysis and a first-generation student herself, Gregg's position also lets her combine her interests and daily work into her research.

Driven by UMBC student data and surveys, Gregg's recent doctoral dissertation focuses specifically on the experiences of first-year and transfer students who are the first in their families to attend college. The goal? To determine which experiences on campus—such as service learning and internships—make the most difference and why.



"I am First!" our first-generation buttons proudly proclaim.



Students celebrate their special day together in The Commons.

"After they had these community-based experiences, what students said was they felt socially connected, they felt like they learned how to work on a team.... And they felt academically connected," says Gregg, feeling like they were using what they learned. "And this gave them a sense of belonging. They understood what their purpose was. It wasn't just like 'I'm going to college because I'm supposed to.' It's 'Oh, I see myself in a career that I could do with this degree.'"

As the youngest of 11 children in a low-income family, and a McNair alumna herself, McNair program coordinator **Antoinette Newsome** works one-on-one with students as they navigate their classes and relationships with professors as well as plan for a future in graduate school. Because of her background, Newsome feels a deep pull to study the ways this work impacts first-generation college students and the responsibility of institutions in the retention of these students.

"It is imperative for first-generation college students to find faculty and staff who come from similar circumstances because oftentimes we feel alone in navigating this huge higher education

system," says Newsome, who is working toward a Ph.D. in student affairs at University of Maryland, College Park.

"Knowing that your professors and/or staff members will understand what it means when you have to miss class due to taking care of a family member or maybe have to be late since you live off campus and work multiple jobs is important," says Newsome. "Life happens to our students and knowing

surprise that the fourth, fifth, and sixth year graduation rate of these populations continues to fall well below the national average," says Lee.

However, she found when educators take an anti deficit approach to their work, seeing the value in cultural wealth and personal stories, they can begin to face a number of common barriers to success: business continuity challenges, lack of

"Everyone I know on this campus works really hard. Part of it, I think, came from the way we had to grow up and navigate college on our own. UMBC isn't the most wealthy institution, but we can figure it out. We come together. We ask questions until we get the answer and we make it happen."

– Amanda Knapp

that faculty understand the reality and can provide some support through it is very comforting for these students."

At this fall's Hill-Robinson McNair Lecture, **Jasmine Lee**, director of inclusive excellence and initiatives for Identity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Division of Student Affairs at UMBC, reiterated

the need for mentors of color for students of color, especially within the first-generation community. As a product of the Eastern Michigan University McNair Scholars program, Lee's doctoral research uses a storytelling-based approach to identify common factors for academic resilience among certain groups of underserved students—Black, first-generation, and low-income—at predominantly white institutions.

"Separately, any of these challenges or barriers can feel overwhelming. They can lead to hopelessness and can lead to academic disengagement. Take them together, and it is absolutely no

nurturing supportive resources, and lack of representation. For Lee, the research plays into her everyday work at UMBC.

"Students need affirmation, support, and advocacy," she says. "Affirmation shows up in our micro-affirmations. Seeing them, the sense of mattering, that they belong, that when I see you across the hallway, I smile. That I remember things about you because you matter to me."

All of these findings help our students, these researchers say. That's a goal and an imperative, says LaCourse.

"We need to scour the data to look for the people who have excelled without anybody's help and give them some reward for that," he says. "And then in the meantime, we can focus our attention on those who need it—and my thing is that everyone has potential. We led them into the door at UMBC, however we do that, we are morally and ethically committed to give them the best education possible. That's our job."



Approximately a quarter of current UMBC students are the first in their families to attend college.



Amanda Knapp shares special first-gen cords with some new grads.

NETWORKS OF SUPPORT

Finding the right people in college is so important, just as much for guidance and lifting one's spirits as for having a community to cheer you on when you've succeeded. That's why UMBC offers a variety of groups for new first-generation students, no matter what their background or where they hope to go.

In addition to the McNair Scholars, for 30 years, UMBC—now within the scope of the Office of Academic Opportunity Programs—has run several federally funded programs offering services and mentorship to underrepresented minority students as well as low-income and first-generation students. Educational Talent Search covers grades six through twelve, and Upward Bound focuses on high schoolers.

Corris Davis '98 M6, biological sciences, M.P.P. '19, who oversees the office, intentionally hires first-generation students as staff because it helps the pipeline of support overall.

"My office sits in a really unique place," says Davis, who is also pursuing a doctorate in public policy at UMBC. "We're able to see what goes wrong in K-12, and we're able to try to correct those things in some of our participants before they get to higher ed."

Similarly, via the Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success, or ACES Montgomery, program, senior del Carmen Aviles-Zavala received assistance en route from high school and through her two years each at Montgomery College and UMBC at Shady Grove, respectively. Through the program, she also made friends

with other first-generation students, she explains.

"Any question I had about FAFSA, registering for classes, or keeping track of my credits, ACES was always there to guide

pandemic, the group has offered monthly virtual brown bag sessions and a virtual First-Gen Day celebration.

"We're starting out small, but we're always thinking, 'What can we do to serve more?'" says Davis. "We're growing into something we hope will be more structured. The goal is to just help build this community.... When students can find people who are willing to go out of their way to make sure they're successful, that's a wonderful thing."

SIGHTS SET ON SUCCESS

Once Ajayi got himself on track with the McNair program, his focus went from his own needs to those of others. As the lead McNair Student Ambassador, he checks on fellow scholars at least once a week. He's even created detailed spreadsheets to help his friends track their grades and applications to graduate school—something he had to figure out on his own.

"Hearing Mr. Hunt say that the reason that we're all brought together is so that people who have been through what we're going through right now can teach us some things that we may not have been taught at home or we may not think of on campus....makes me feel very grateful."

– *Brandon Wilson, McNair Scholar*

me," she says. "Although their profession is to help students, I always felt such genuine interest in my academic wellbeing. I truly have felt that my coaches want me to succeed, and I have been able to do just that because of them."

Knowing that there are plenty of first-generation college students beyond the ones directly affiliated with McNair and the other programs, Davis and others on campus started a First-Generation Network to open up mentorship opportunities and connect faculty, staff, and students on campus. Even during the

"When I was at my community college, that's when I started developing an idea of trying to help other students mainly because if I am struggling at it, there's a 100 percent chance they are probably struggling at it, too," he says. "We're kind of like a community helping together. So as an ambassador, if it's something that I can help with, I will help with it."

Senior psychology major **Ting Huang** has found assistance from the Shady Grove community as well as the McNair program, even from afar.

"At Shady Grove, many of the faculty and

staff helped promote a diverse environment that made me feel comfortable reaching out for help. I think that that was the most important support I have gotten as a first-gen student because I remember being very afraid to reach out when I was in Montgomery College and I felt so afraid applying for transfer to UMBC," she says. "But now, with the help of McNair, my mentors, and other campus resources, I've built confidence and I'm applying to graduate school in December.

"Our job is to believe in them. If anybody's going to believe in them, we are."

— Delana Gregg

While classes were happening in person, Lilly found a special way of passing along the help she's received—by tutoring students at Arbutus Middle School. The four hours a week she spends working on math with sixth graders is good practice; someday, she hopes to be a professor.

"I really like having an impact on somebody. And so I think it's really—I think it's a fun challenge to be able to take what you know and explain it in a way that somebody else will be able to understand. And just seeing the change in students as you work with them for a long time is really, really important to me," she says. "And... means more than any accomplishment that I could have for myself, just seeing somebody else be able to go through those same things."

Making it into college is one thing for first gens; finishing is quite another. So, when Commencement day comes, UMBC's first-generation community likes to make a big deal of it. In December 2019, the last in-person commencement before the pandemic forced the ceremony

to go virtual, Knapp posed with a group of graduating seniors wearing special green and white cords and "I am First-Gen" pins.

Knapp gets a bit verklempt just thinking about it. Maybe that's because she can see herself—and the journey—in those students.

"It's just such a special moment for everyone," says Knapp. "They're so excited, like 'Wow, you're honoring me.' And then we get to tell them how proud we are of them."

First-Generation Celebration photos taken pre-pandemic.



First-gen staff Delana Gregg and Peter DeCrescenzo



Staff celebrate their first-gen students in The Commons.



First-gen alum Damarius Johnson '19, Africana studies, celebrates his big day.

CALL & RESPONSE



In a recent essay, UMBC President Freeman Hrabowski notes, “In difficult times, we come to know who we are.” Never has that been more true than this year or at this point in our nation’s history.

With the killing of George Floyd and other instances of police violence and the wave of protests that followed this spring and summer, many in our Retriever community are hearing the call to question what got us to this point and do everything they can to dismantle structural racism in our country.

In so many powerful ways, their voices echo those of some of our earliest Retriever alumni, who staged sit-ins on campus to protest the Vietnam War and civil rights injustices. In the spirit of this moment, many in our community are still protesting—but also taking to social media and finding new ways to make change from within their workplaces.

It’s difficult, but necessary, work. The moment is calling for an answer, and our Retrievers are responding. Because this is who we are.

Illustrations by Elise Petersen

THE LONG GAME



Diane Bell-McKoy '73, sociology and social work. Image courtesy of Associated Black Charities.

For several decades now, **Diane Bell-McKoy '73, sociology and social work**, has worked to make African American individuals and families in need economically self-sufficient and to infuse philanthropic organizations with policies that create positive outcomes for people of color. *UMBC Magazine* talked with Bell-McKoy, CEO of Associated Black Charities and the Greater Baltimore Committee's 2020 Regional Visionary awardee, about why making long-term change takes both patience and perseverance, but is always worth it.

***UMBC Magazine:** What are you trying to achieve through your work with philanthropic organizations, public policy makers, employers, trainers, and educators?*

Bell-McKoy: Our goal is to shift the lens to provide the facts, the history, and the current policies to let people begin to really see how we ended up where we are today. Because it was very intentional—and going forward we can make different decisions to change the outcomes and the workforce ecosystem as it relates to systemic racism as a

root barrier. When Black and brown people have the opportunity to move up, the greater economic opportunity means that they can also buy a house, they can start a business, and they can contribute a great deal more to their families and to the economy.

So my days are always around educating, around influencing, around advocating, around sharing our policy.... It's about meeting with our fellow philanthropists, helping them see the world differently and then giving them the desire to go deeper into those policies, their practice, and their culture.

***UMBC Magazine:** Your organization's "10 Essential Questions" guide really forces folks to look at their operations through an equity lens. Is this as eye-opening as it sounds?*

Bell-McKoy: I keep thinking, is that rocket science? Doesn't this benefit all of us? But it feels like rocket science some days in having the conversation because you're really asking people to rethink, to relearn how they were taught in terms of that history that wasn't given to citizens. A lot of the positive history hasn't been available about Black and brown

people. I find myself on a reading journey right now learning as much as I can more about the history of Black and brown people in this country.

And it's important...for us to do the hard work now because we're now awake much more across the country. That's why I'm passionate about it. It's been my journey all of my life. It was my journey at UMBC. It's been my journey around what can I do, how can I make a difference for Black and white people?

***UMBC Magazine:** You've been doing this work for so long. What do you tell young people who are looking to make change?*

Bell-McKoy: There are many ways that you can help in the now, including doing your own reading, your own research about why this exists. There are lots of opportunities locally and—particularly now that we're in a virtual world—to join lots of webinars and conversations across the country so that you can more deeply educate yourself. And because we have the ability to touch people all across the globe through the virtual environment, there are opportunities for students to be a mentor, for them to add some value to someone's life.

Continue to use creativity, continue to use all your genius to make a difference in people's lives. But understand that also—as you get to the next stage in your career coming out of UMBC and you're becoming a millionaire—you need to invest back in all those organizations trying to change the system knowing that you can become a part of the patient capital needed to achieve system changes that then benefit a greater number of persons. You do have to steel yourself for the incremental. This may mean when the big change comes, many of us may not be here to benefit from it, but...that's a part of it. It has to be an intentional journey.

SUPPORT SYSTEM

As protests sprung up in cities across the country this spring, alumni like public historian **Allison Seyler '10, M.A. '12, history**, and computer programmer **Carlos Lalimarmo '11, computer science**, found themselves compelled to participate. Today, as the nation continues to contemplate ways of making change, they, like so many others, are thinking deeply about how to be good allies to people of color.

UMBC Magazine: What ultimately drives you to participate in action against racism?

Seyler: As someone who deeply loves Baltimore City, I try to stay informed about the issues our community faces; one of those issues is police brutality. The longer I have lived here, the more I learned the necessity of making time to listen to Black leaders—women and men—who wholeheartedly devote themselves to this city; they have been calling for police reform for years. So for me, the choices I've made to protest this year were linked to that. I felt in order for me to show up for the Black community in Minneapolis who are mourning George Floyd, the Black community in Louisville who are mourning Breonna Taylor, and really, to show up for Black folk across the nation, I needed to show up for Baltimore.

I had these eerie flashbacks to marching for Freddie Gray and felt an all too familiar sadness that families have lost their sons, daughters, fathers, sisters so unnecessarily. As I felt a sensation of “this is happening again,” my heart just dropped. How could we be at the same point we were in 2015? I think I'm driven to participate as a human being who cares intensely for others, but also because I believe that collectively, protestors can use their voices and actions in sustainable ways to force real change to happen.

UMBC Magazine: What do you see as your role as an ally and how do you hope it will be seen by others?



Scenes from local protests by Carlos Lalimarmo '11, computer science (top and bottom left) and Allison Seyler '10, M.A. '12, history (bottom right).



Lalimarmo: I think being informed is the baseline for participation, whether you agree with demonstrators' message or not. You can't participate responsibly without being informed. The protests themselves have become an issue, and the best way to understand them is to experience them firsthand. So I go when I can. When I think I understand and agree with the message of a particular protest, I'll stand or march with the group to show support.

UMBC Magazine: What would you say to someone who isn't sure of how to get involved but would like to?

Lalimarmo: I think a lot of people who would like to be more involved but aren't sure how are probably more involved than they realize. Supporting the people close to them is important work that I'm sure they're



already doing. If not, strengthening personal relationships is a solid place to start.

Seyler: Honestly, I would remind them that there's no better time. And I would channel two mantras that are said often, but get to the core of this work: This is a marathon, not a sprint. This is a movement, not a moment. If someone wants to get involved and is looking for a starting point, I would suggest starting with something small and human: read memoirs by Black authors like D. Watkins, Kondwani Fidel, and Chris Wilson. Pick up a copy of *A Beautiful Ghetto* by photographer Devin Allen and fill your mind with images that show the beauty of other peoples' humanity. Sign up for a workshop by activist Britney Oliver to learn about being anti-racist in your actions and words. Your actions and involvement makes a difference.

RIPPLE EFFECT

For Jason Grant '10, M17, a defining moment happened on a bus ride to a Meyerhoff Scholars event at UMBC President Freeman Hrabowski's house his freshman year.

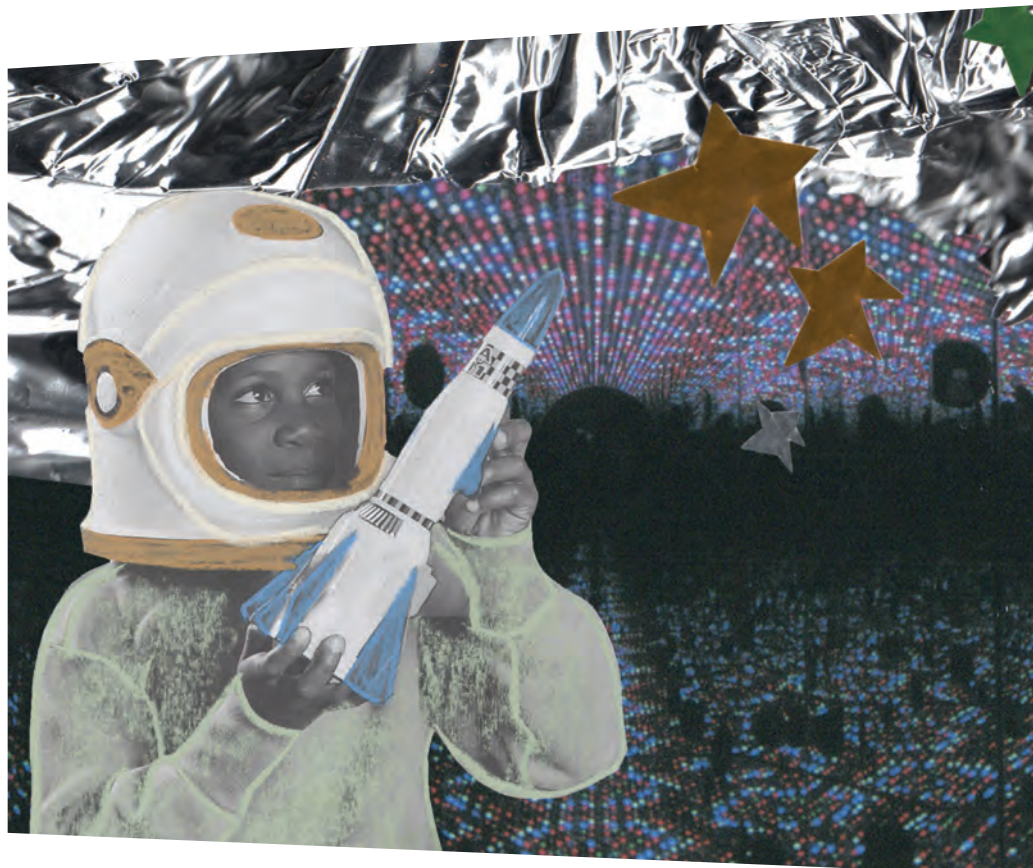
A senior asked Grant about his major (computer engineering) and then proceeded to pepper him with specific questions about his classes and his plans for graduate studies. That brotherly interest, says Grant, turned out to be the norm, not the exception.

"People kept telling me," remembers Grant, now an assistant professor of computer science at Middlebury College, "if you go to UMBC and join the Meyerhoff program, you're going to have a community of people. I didn't actually realize how important that was, but it turned out to be extremely critical."

In their careers, Grant and many other Meyerhoff alumni are replicating that family atmosphere—valuing the unique contributions of each member and raising up others alongside them around the country.

Immanuel Williams '11, M18, mathematics, grew up doing math worksheet after math worksheet, his father handing him new problems to solve and instilling a desire to understand complicated equations. So later in life, when his colleagues made assumptions about how as a Black man, his father must have been missing from his life—he stopped them short.

He and his wife **Kelley Williams '13, environmental studies**, wrote a book called *The Adventure of Jamear: Shapes All Around*, which celebrates the relationship of a father helping his son discover math. For Williams, a lecturer at California Polytechnic State University, the book launched his work at six Boys & Girls clubs around Los Angeles and San Francisco, providing math boot camps for hundreds of elementary school students for the past three summers.



Williams taps his own college students as volunteers to help personalize all the feedback students receive. "We're reaching marginalized communities in terms of race and economic status," says Williams, "so that feels really good."

Grant has carried the Meyerhoff vision to Vermont, where he's taken on leadership roles for the small population of students of color at Middlebury to see a face that looks like them. As advisor for the Black Student Union, "it allows me to network and to get a feel for the climate of all students of color here in this predominantly white institution, and how they're trying to navigate that space," says Grant, current president of the Meyerhoff Alumni Advisory Board.

This year at the ACM Richard Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing Conference, Grant served as deputy chair for research competition and poster competition. "This made me put my money where my mouth is," says Grant. "Telling students to go to the conference was one thing, but them seeing me on the

conference program allowed me to be a vocal leader in that space as a professor."

Nicole Parker '11, M19, biochemistry and molecular biology, works as a lobbyist, connecting research institutions with federal dollars. She sees her role to advance policies that broaden minority participation in STEM and increase diversity in science and engineering careers. She puts it plainly: "I'm passionate about making changes so that the entire biomedical research enterprise operates like the Meyerhoff program."

The ripple effect of the Meyerhoff program is clear—whether in K-5 after-school programming, at rural universities where representation is crucial, or lobbying Congress to fund research programs for scientists from diverse backgrounds.

"In four years at UMBC, those Meyerhoff values are so ingrained in us every day," says Parker. "You can't forget it when you go on to the next place."

—Radianne Leysbon '09

I'M STILL SAYING HER NAME

What stands out in my memory of Cynthia Wesley on that afternoon 57 years ago is the moment our eyes met.

It was a fleeting exchange, and yet in that instant I sensed my friend's kindness and optimism. She was 14, I was 13, and on that warm Friday in mid-September it was possible to set aside thoughts of the cruelty and racial violence roiling our hometown of Birmingham, Alabama. We were just two kids, excited at the start of a late-summer weekend.

"See you Monday," she said.

I might have forgotten those words and our brief moment of connection had they not been stamped into my memory by the events that unfolded two days later. Cynthia was one of the four Black girls who died on this day [September 15] in 1963, when an act of hate shattered the 16th Street Baptist Church. I was with my parents at our own church, Sixth Avenue Baptist, a mile away, when we first heard news that our sister congregation had been bombed.

Only later did we learn the names of the four girls who were murdered: Denise McNair. Carole Robertson. Addie Mae Collins. And Cynthia Wesley, my friend.

Just as today we say the names of the many who have been unjustly killed by police officers, the names of those four girls became part of the call for change that energized social protests in the 1960s. In time, a shift in public sentiment compelled lawmakers to take action, and they passed legislation that strengthened voting rights, expanded access to higher education, limited some forms of discrimination, and changed society in countless other ways.

To many who have benefited from those changes, the Birmingham I knew as a child sounds like another planet. Our schools lacked even basic resources. Away from the support and protection of our Black community, we couldn't go to the movies or eat in most restaurants.



Pictured left to right: Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, and Denise McNair. Stained Glass from 16th Street Baptist Church image courtesy of The George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Whites-only signs on water fountains and bathroom doors served as constant reminders of our second-class status.

Today, discrimination and racism take different forms. For millions of Black children and their families, and in many communities of color or where poverty is the norm, conditions are equally bleak, and young people are numbed by instability, hopelessness, and the threat of violence.

On many days, the challenges of this period seem overwhelming, and I find myself thinking about what we faced as a society in the '60s. Months before the church bombing, I was among the hundreds of children who were jailed for marching with Martin Luther King Jr. through the streets of Birmingham in a protest against racism. The long nights in jail were terrifying beyond words, and yet we emerged with hope that the world didn't have to remain as it was.

Our progress since then has clearly been uneven. I thought society had long moved beyond a point where we would see the authorities lock up innocent children, and yet it's happening even now at our southern border.

The four girls, and the explosion that killed them, remind us of the best and worst of human nature. Each day, I see photos of their young faces on a poster from Spike Lee's 1997 documentary, *4 Little Girls*. The poster hangs in the family room of my house, and sometimes I pause in front of it and simply wonder, What might they have become? How much potential to love and create was lost on that day?

And then I think about other Black girls, born in the years that followed, who survived and are thriving in this imperfect world.

Kizzmekia Corbett is a National Institutes of Health scientist leading efforts to develop a coronavirus vaccine.

Alicia Wilson, the vice president for economic development at Johns Hopkins University, grew up in inner-city Baltimore and is focused on revitalizing the city.

Chelsea Pinnix, an associate professor and the director of the radiation-oncology residency program at the University of Texas's MD Anderson Cancer Center, is improving the treatment of patients with lymphoma. **Adrienne Jones**, the first woman and the first Black person to serve as the speaker of Maryland's House of Delegates, is a champion for the state's children and families.

These four Black women, all graduates of the university where I am president, are amazing role models and leaders. What inspires me in this difficult time is that there are countless others just like them, women and men who have overcome untold challenges to do meaningful work and improve lives.

While thinking about what happened 57 years ago is still painful, I believe that my friend Cynthia, were she alive, would also be inspired by these stories. The message that got us through the 1960s is as true as ever: The world really can be better than it is today. I've seen it myself.

— Freeman Hrabowski, UMBC President

This article was originally published on the website TheAtlantic.com and is republished here with The Atlantic's permission.

ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Recently, there have been calls across the U.S. to defund the police and correctional facilities in response to the continued violence from police toward the Black community. But what exactly does defunding the police mean for youth currently in the juvenile justice system and for those most at risk of entering?

For 30 years, UMBC's Choice Program has engaged, mentored, trained, and advocated for more than 25,000 youth in Maryland. It provides a series of programs to disentangle young people from the juvenile justice system and to strengthen youth and family ties to the community through increased educational and vocational opportunities.

UMBC's **Eric Ford**, director of The Choice Program, and **Frank Anderson**, a doctoral student in language, literacy, and culture and the associate director of programs, talk about how the Choice model can provide a complex answer to a complex problem.

Anderson: What is defunding the police and what does that mean for Choice?

Ford: Defunding the police means reallocating funds to diversion programs so that youth will not get involved in the criminal justice system. It means investing in providing training to first responders in communities across America around restorative practices or providing additional mental health and substance abuse support for young people. Reallocating funds to these programs means communities will be able to provide the interventions and supports needed to individuals who are now being criminalized.

What do you think, Frank? What is our moral responsibility in this work?

Anderson: It's important for me to reflect about what my moral and ethical responsibility is and whether my moral checkbook balances out at the end of each day. Am I creating more opportunities

than what I'm taking? Am I working to share and distribute more resources than what I am taking? If not, then maybe it's time for me to move to the side. I'm grateful you and peers are there to hold me accountable to keep pushing myself everyday to understand my role within the greater community.

What personal value of yours makes this work so important?

Ford: Truth. Being able to build on our Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) framework has been such a rewarding experience for me. It has validated a lot of my personal beliefs, personal goals, and what I learned at Hampton University. For so long discussing the truth about what has happened in the past to marginalized people has been taboo in certain spaces. Being able to share the truth about my ancestors and people who have come before me and have it embraced has been transformational for me. This is exactly what our TRHT work aims to do. We support communities and a process to foster important difficult conversations around race equity and transformation. I am thankful for it every day.

Anderson: You are the longest-standing person of color to lead Choice. What about

that makes the job difficult? What about that excites you?

Ford: My first position at Choice was as a caseworker. That experience led me to other opportunities. I returned to Choice to be assistant director and worked my way through the ranks. Ascending to the director of Choice is something I am very proud of. As a man of color, you always carry the weight of your racial or ethnic group and the weight and pressure to be successful. Coming into this position, I experienced some imposter syndrome sitting in spaces that I had not been before and wondering whether I belonged in those spaces. Over time I have gained confidence through feedback I have received from my peers, my mentors, and my family.

It has been a wonderful experience to not only represent Black men and represent all the participants of color and young men of color. I represent a possibility for them. One of my proudest moments at Choice was when an AmeriCorps member was introduced to me in my office. He was a young Black man. He looked around my office and was in awe. He said, 'Wow, this could be me one day.' It hit me that it's not just about reports, proposals, and grant writing but it is also what I represent for Black men throughout the country.

Eric Ford, first on the right, and Choice youth unveil a mural created at Lane Manor Recreation center in partnership with Artivate Inc. Image courtesy of Ford.



CALL TO ACTION

In 2017, Christine Osazuwa '11, interdisciplinary studies, left the U.S. She eventually settled in London—a place where she says she's never seen quite so much natural integration of people of all races, cultures, and walks of life. Even so, when the news of the death of George Floyd reached her this spring, Osazuwa, director of data and insights for Warner Music Group, never felt quite comfortable expressing her feelings in the form of public protest.

"There's nothing like a pandemic to remind you that you're an immigrant.... I'm a guest in someone else's country," she says, noting she can't vote, either.

So, instead, she did what she does best—she wrote about it. What started as a short series of Facebook posts fueled by her own life and experiences eventually became a longform essay titled "How To Be a Better Ally." In five steps—consume content and goods made by Black people, question your employers and your privilege, for instance—Osazuwa implores her white friends, ultimately, to take the time to familiarize themselves with the Black experience.

Osazuwa grew up within a first-generation Nigerian American family in a predominantly white suburb of Baltimore.

"I know all about Hanukkah, I can pronounce the last names of my Polish friends, I know basically every word to *Mean Girls*, I can dance to "Cotton Eyed Joe," I can sing along to "Sweet Home Alabama," I can name all of the Kardashians, and I've had my fair share of meatloaf and coleslaw.... Obviously, these are mostly trivial, stereotypical examples but the point is, I have grown up surrounded by white culture," she writes. In creating this piece, she hopes to give readers a push to learn about Black culture without adding to the weight Black people are already carrying.



Christine Osazuwa '11, interdisciplinary studies. Photo of Christine Osazuwa by Out Since Tuesday.

"As a white person, you can get through life completely fine without ever understanding another person's culture," she explains. "There was no expectation the other way around. I had to know your shows and mine. I had to read your books and mine. I had to know your history and my own. And now, we say it is not our job to educate you because we've spent our entire lives learning and doing everything twice."

— Jenny O'Grady

Visit magazine.umbc.edu/call-and-response to read Osazuwa's full essay.

"As a white person, you can get through life completely fine without ever understanding another person's culture. There was no expectation the other way around."

— Christine Osazuwa '11, interdisciplinary studies

INCLUSION MATTERS

Created in June, the UMBC Inclusion Council brings together faculty, staff, students, and alumni from all across campus to help address issues of equity and inclusion at UMBC. We talked with the council co-chairs, **Keith J. Bowman**, dean of the College of Engineering and Information Technology, and **Ariana Arnold**, director of the Office of Equity and Inclusion, about what's ahead for this group.

Q: What have the first meetings of this group been like? How would you describe the energy in the (virtual) room?

Bowman: We began with several weeks wherein everyone could talk about their experiences, visible and non-visible elements of their backgrounds, and their commitment to the work. It was an incredible set of meetings where folks expressed their passion for the work of the Inclusion Council. It made me feel truly proud of our UMBC community and its commitment to social justice.

Arnold: It was extremely meaningful... because we never met until we were already virtual. So we felt like it was really important to make those personal connections. I think that really started us on a good path for people being able to be honest when having discussions about sometimes difficult topics, as well as being compassionate towards each other, which is really what we're trying to build here.

Q: The Council no doubt has a lot to think about and plan (everything from curriculum, faculty and staff diversity, to intersectionality and restorative practices, etc.). What issue or project are you personally most excited to work on, and why?

Arnold: I would love to be on all of the committees...but I'm really excited about the work of the faculty and student retention and belonging groups. We had 146 people interested in being part of those working groups, which was amazing. And these are both places where we can have a significant impact on the campus.

Bowman: I am most excited about being able to provide a platform and mechanisms to elevate the work that many have been doing more towards substantive actions.

Q: What do you hope people will be saying about this work a year from now? Or five years down the road?

Arnold: What I'd like to be able to say a year from now is that we are doing the work and not just, you know, talking about the work. And that five years from now we've had a measurable impact on campus in terms of both inclusivity...meaning that people from all political, racial, ethnic, religious, cultural backgrounds, abilities, and nationalities have become engaged and that we've improved the sense of inclusion and belonging on campus.

Bowman: I hope they can see visible and defined changes, but I also hope they continue to have expectations since we know success is never final at UMBC.





NO ARTIST
STANDS
ALONE

Lockdown, quarantine, shelter in place—a new vocabulary defines this period of our lives that requires us to maintain space to protect one another. Alone, we spend our time consuming or creating art and media, but many are also having to reinvent how we share that pleasure with others.

We see comedians attempting to navigate satire from living rooms, movie releases being delayed in hopeful anticipation of a less restrictive future, and book tours being curtailed for long awaited novels. For other artists, this public pause has engendered a more private creativity—a book of poems examining anti-Asian racism, lush and gentle photographs of essential medical personnel in their personal protective equipment, a step back from the stage to perform a play over Zoom.

In facing a pandemic that's disrupted the normal rhythms of open mics and art exhibits, these Retrievers have continued their craft, carving out unique ways to then share their creations.

Can we shape and share art in community even during a global pandemic? The answer is continually a resounding yes.



Above: Pieces of art from OCA Mocha's summer exhibit.

Opposite page: A medical professional photographed for Care in the Garden, a series by Jill Fannon.

AN EXHIBIT IN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As Hannah Bashar '20, art history and biology, worked to curate pieces for campus-adjacent coffee shop OCA Mocha's "Art During the Time of COVID-19" exhibit, she found herself inspired by the unique ways the contributing artists had drawn from the isolation and monotony of recent months to create impactful art.

"Some artists find inspiration in their new and changed landscapes and environments," says Bashar, OCA Mocha's former arts intern. She cites pieces by photographer Julie Miller, which depict the strikingly empty urban areas that the artist passed in her walks through Silver Spring.

Other works featured in the exhibit were influenced by changes in routine; during the pandemic, Miller picked up the practice of joomchi, a centuries-old Korean art medium that involves layering paper in order to create unique shapes and textures. Miller's artist statement describes the process of joomchi as meditative and "perfect for a day of isolation."

Bashar wasn't necessarily seeking art that made deep philosophical arguments about the pandemic. Instead, she wanted to display works that she thought viewers could relate to. "OCA Mocha stands for the community and it's a strong force within the Arbutus community, so I want people to walk in and feel as though they can relate to what is on the walls," she explains.

This means the exhibit ranges from powerful celebrations of Black women's resiliency in textured acrylic paintings by Kathleen McPartland to playful textiles, like a diploma box filled with a yarn rug made to look like a pizza by April Berardi '16, modern languages and linguistics.

Bashar, who plans to pursue a career not in curation but emergency medicine, says that the unusual circumstances of this show made it an especially meaningful one to end her two-semester-long internship. "My own experience curating this show paralleled the theme of the exhibition, which is about how COVID has caused us to adapt and change with the times," she says. "I felt like my experience curating the show was, in fact, part of the show itself."

—Johanna Alonso '20



Umar Khan performs in a backyard comedy show in D.C. in August 2020.

"ALL COMICS WILL TELL YOU THIS, BUT WE HAVE TO BE SOME OF THE MOST DELUSIONAL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD."

– UMAR KHAN

COMIC RELIEF

Umar Khan knew he had a chance with the crowd when he kicked off his stand-up comedy career a decade ago as a student—most of the faces in the audience were his friends and fellow Retrievers, gathered around the Sports Center stage on the second floor of The Commons. "I think there were like eight people there, and I remember walking away thinking it went well, although I'm sure if I watched it now..." Khan trails off.

"All comics will tell you this, but we have to be some of the most delusional people in the world," laughs Khan '10, psychology. "What person in their right mind thinks they can captivate an audience of strangers for a set amount of time and on top of that make them audibly laugh?"

Armed with a notebook full of jokes he cringes at now, Khan performed at UMBC a few more times during his senior year. He kept going after that, making inroads into the DC comedy scene, maturing his content and honing his stage presence, performing shows almost every night while pursuing his day job as an elementary/middle school psychologist in Baltimore City. Fast forward 10 years, and COVID-19 hit comedy like so many other arts and industries.

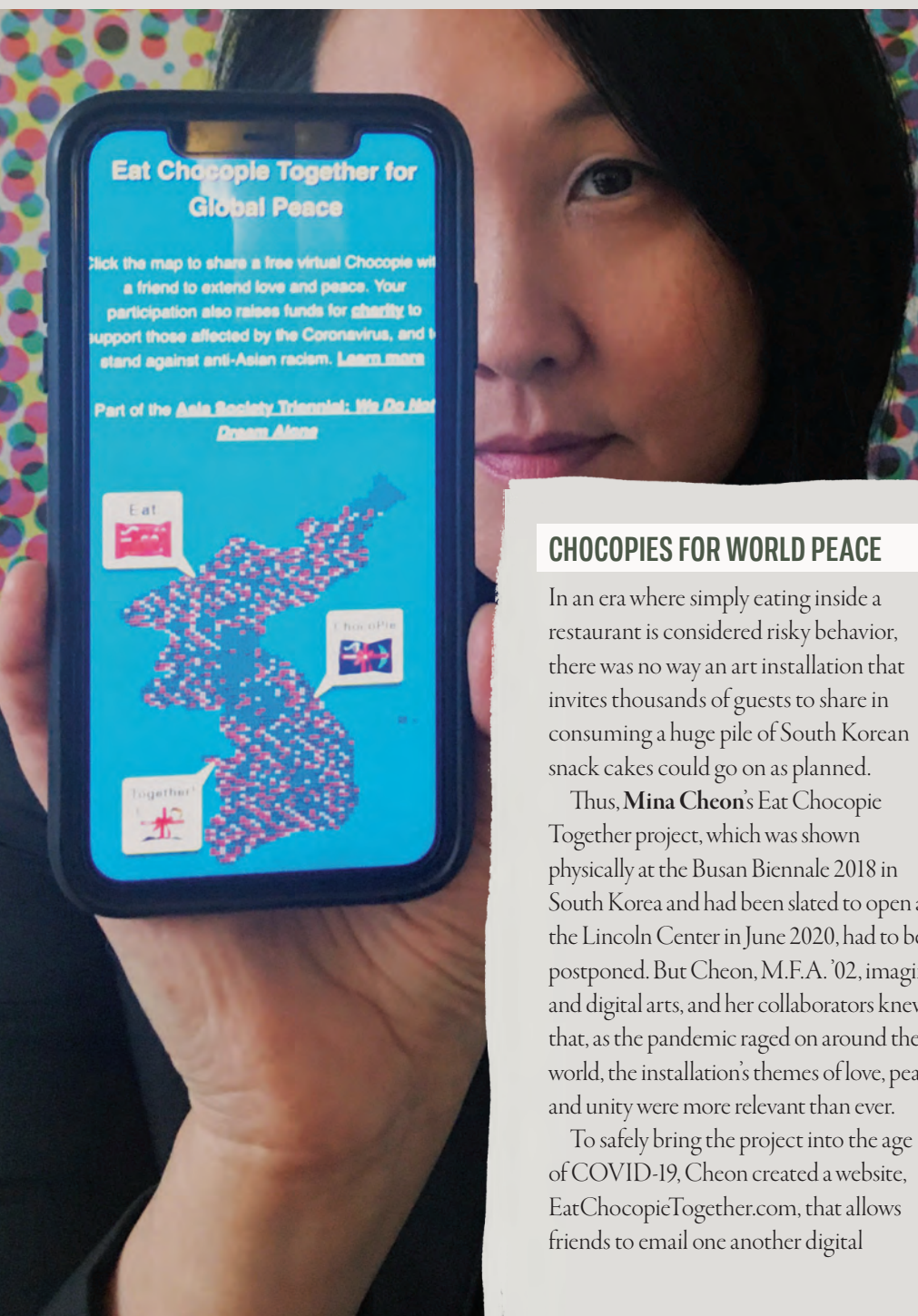
"Now with COVID-19, everyone is having to take steps back," says Khan. "If you used to sell out theaters, well, when is anyone going to pack a theater again? So now you're going into comedy clubs. And the people headlining comedy clubs are getting pushed down to the next level. And it just keeps going."

"I'm so thankful I have a career—my immigrant parents were right," Khan laughs, "dreams are stupid. You gotta get a government job with benefits and a pension."

In August, Khan was able to return to the stage, in a backyard show following pandemic protocols. "People are so hungry for entertainment and there's so much going on in the world right now," says Khan. "We were pushing the line and people were loving it. It was so fun."

"You can tell people just want to feel some sense of community, and a comedy show offers you that community because you're all laughing at the same thing. And you can leave and talk about the show—sharing the experience. It will be one of those shows we'll look back on and be like, 'oh remember when we had to do that during COVID-19?'"

— Randianne Leysbon '09



CHOCOPIES FOR WORLD PEACE

In an era where simply eating inside a restaurant is considered risky behavior, there was no way an art installation that invites thousands of guests to share in consuming a huge pile of South Korean snack cakes could go on as planned.

Thus, **Mina Cheon**'s Eat Chocopie Together project, which was shown physically at the Busan Biennale 2018 in South Korea and had been slated to open at the Lincoln Center in June 2020, had to be postponed. But Cheon, M.F.A. '02, imaging and digital arts, and her collaborators knew that, as the pandemic raged on around the world, the installation's themes of love, peace, and unity were more relevant than ever.

To safely bring the project into the age of COVID-19, Cheon created a website, EatChocopieTogether.com, that allows friends to email one another digital

versions of the marshmallow-filled treat. The chocopies are represented by graphics modeled after real chocopie wrappers but newly designed by the artist and emblazoned with one of five words: love, peace, share, eat, or unite. The recipient can "eat" the snack by clicking the graphic, and each chocopie sent and received contributes \$2 to the Korean American Community Foundation COVID-19 Action Fund.

"It's an extended version of the original. It's taking all the inspiration, the sentiment, the spirit of Eat Chocopie Together, but going virtual allowed us to explore the different packaging with the multiple themes" and to fundraise, Cheon says. As of September, the project reached its \$5,000 goal.

The original meaning of the installation lies in the history of the chocopie; the confection is incredibly popular in both South Korea and North Korea, despite being banned in the latter country. Sharing chocopies is "meant to bring awareness of the two Koreas working towards peace and unification," according to a press release published by Asia Society Triennial.

The virtual version of the project emphasizes an even more global message, according to Cheon. "We are socially distanced and separated, but we can still connect," she says. "That was such a big, empowering idea, that we could still heal through our virtual connection."

—Johanna Alonso '20



Top: Mina Cheon stands alongside 100,000 chocopies at a 2018 exhibit in South Korea.

Left: Cheon holds a map of North and South Korea depicting the virtual snack-pie-sharing project.

Above: A digital sweet to share for peace.



JC Payne is making the most of performing on digital platforms, but he looks forward to the return to the stage.

**"IT'S LIKE
LEARNING A
NEW LANGUAGE."**

– JC PAYNE

ALL THE WORLD'S A DIGITAL STAGE

Like most things that cannot be held in person due to the coronavirus pandemic, theater has found its virtual home on Zoom.

These digital performances can be quite similar to the existing practice of staged readings, in which actors deliver their lines with little to no sets or costumes, often while sitting. But to tell some uniquely 2020 stories, some actors, playwrights, and directors have taken this medium to a new level.

Among them is **Jurdan "JC" Payne '21, theatre**, who has spent the past few months performing in virtual plays featuring casts located throughout the country. Most recently, in a ten-minute play called *High, Low, Uh-Oh*, Payne is one of two characters on a video chat. He calls to wish a friend happy birthday, unable to celebrate in person due to COVID-19.

It was the first time Payne had ever used his own house as a set and his own possessions—ketchup mixed with water to simulate blood and a sock puppet through which he sang "Happy birthday," for example—as props. Most of the props

weren't listed in the script; instead, Payne used whatever he had laying around the house to supplement the existing material.

(And yes, that does mean he already owned a sock puppet with googly eyes).

"It was kind of new territory for me," he says. "It's different from being on stage but also really different from filming a short film or a commercial."

Another element of working in theater that has changed in recent months are auditions, says Payne. Whereas actors were once expected to dedicate 8- to 10-hour-long days to auditioning, the pandemic has solidified the fact that virtual auditions can be just as effective and informative as in-person ones, signaling a welcome shift from the traditional long audition days.

"I hope that eventually theaters will adopt that practice moving forward," Payne says. Still, he notes that a self-tape, as they're called in the industry, can be challenging because it requires the auditioner to act as lightning designer, cinematographer, and director, all while trying to perform.

"It's like learning a new language," he says.

—Johanna Alonso '20

ART BY APPOINTMENT

Bonnie Crawford describes looking at art like a religious experience. So when COVID-19 interrupted her life, she realized that what she missed most was experiencing art with her friends. Over the course of a month, Crawford, M.F.A. '08, imaging and digital arts, invited people by appointment to view her work of dental floss weavings in the shed in her backyard.

"There's a unique mindset when someone is looking at art," says Crawford, who didn't want people to lose out on that opportunity during the various stages of lockdown.

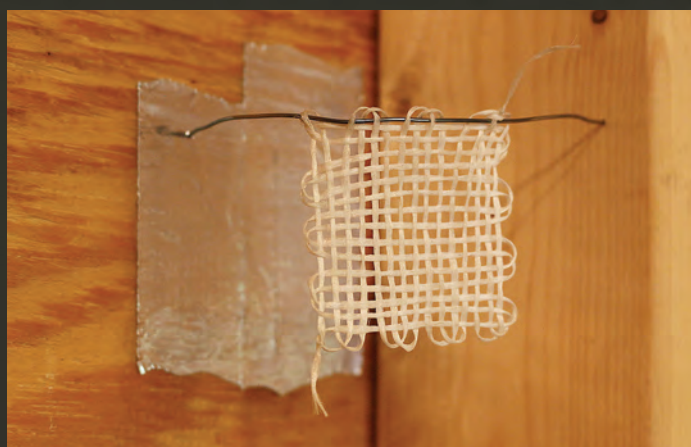
Crawford was worried at the beginning of the pandemic that she would possibly never make art again; she was finding it meaningless. Her weavings had usually been a way for her to channel creative energy, so she reinvented how to share her work with others, which gave her renewed purpose.

Crawford's dental floss weavings grew from the work she does on her Instagram feed, @brushhouse, where she shares pictures of her family brushing their teeth, sometimes including a guest appearance from a friend. The weavings extended from her desire to do more formal work. They range from small enough to fit in a wallet to a tall floss weaving that hangs like a tapestry.

"I would go to my studio until I had to use the bathroom," Crawford laughs. This meant driving across the city to go at home, wanting to err on the side of caution in the face of a novel virus. In this way, Crawford slowly made progress on her largest dental floss weaving. When she was finished, she asked her sons and boyfriend to clear out their things from the shed and then got to installing.

The exhibition was up for about a month, available for viewing on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Using an app to schedule appointment slots, in total 90 people came to see her work. "I hoped that it fulfilled that spiritual need for others like it did for me," she says.

—Imani Spence '16



Bonnie Crawford's dental floss weavings ranged in size from a quilt to a pocket square. She displayed the art in her emptied out shed.

“MY HOPE IS THAT THESE
POEMS CAN TOUCH THOSE
WHO ARE FEELING LOSS,
LONELINESS, OR THE
COMBINED GRIEF AND RAGE
OF EXPERIENCING RACISM.”

– CALISTA OGBURN



Above: Calista Ogburn poses with books of her poetry.

Opposite page: Jill Fannon's Care in the Garden photography series set essential personnel in their PPE against lush backgrounds.



COMMUNITY OF POETS

Calista Ogburn '21, health administration and policy, began writing poetry as a way to orient herself in a new environment. As a high school sophomore in Seoul, South Korea—after moving from Vietnam—Ogburn was looking for community, so she joined a public speaking club that introduced her to speech tournaments and poetry readings.

At UMBC, Ogburn has continued to use poetry as a means of making a home for herself. She credits **Lia Purpura**, writer in residence at UMBC, with helping her reimagine her poetry and her process as a writer. Ogburn, who is the communications director for the Student Government Association, also connected with other students in the Retriever Poets, a student group that encourages poetry through open mics and workshops. Ogburn's first book of poetry, *a splash of yellow*, edited by fellow Retriever **Morgan Mullings**, media and communications studies, was published

just for Ogburn and her friends; a project to prove to herself what she could accomplish.

Ogburn's second book of poetry was for a broader audience. Written in the beginning stages of COVID-19, *this is it* addresses racism towards Asian Americans, on personal and institutional levels as misunderstandings about the virus have influenced people. As a senior health administration and policy major watching a public health and political crisis, she felt called to action.

“My hope,” Ogburn shares, “is that these poems can touch those who are feeling loss, loneliness, or the combined grief and rage of experiencing racism.”

this is it was a group effort, says Ogburn, praising Mullings, who also edited this volume. Support from other Retriever Poets helped push Ogburn to truly confront the emotions that she was feeling and gave confidence to her voice. Since her time in South Korea, Ogburn realizes that she's “always had a community of poets.”

—Imani Spence '16

MEANT TO BE CONNECTED

To counter her anxiety in the time of COVID-19, **Jill Fannon, M.F.A. '11, imaging and digital arts**, decided to photograph people who are responding to the pandemic directly—healthcare workers. Her collection, *Care in the Garden*, features these essential workers in quiet intimate moments outside of the hospital.

“We’re meant to be connected and we affect each other, deeply,” says Fannon, who doesn’t see this project about the art of photography as much as about capturing a moment. She has found herself asking “What will we want to know about COVID-19 50 years from now?”

When Fannon began her project in April 2020, many people didn’t expect that the country would still be facing a pandemic half a year later. Her work, Fannon says, has kept her from experiencing what many people are calling “quarantine fatigue.”

It’s been a special experience, Fannon shares, for her to meet these medical professionals in these intimate moments. While most people are working from home, healthcare workers are forced to do everything possible to keep their work from coming home with them, mentally and physically. For these healthcare workers, concerned about transmission to their families, this has transformed their spaces drastically. One of the subjects of the photo series described to Fannon how she would take all her clothes off outside her home, throw them in the laundry, and shower before touching her family.

Photography has always been a way Fannon expresses herself and finds joy, but in this moment, she wanted to use photographs for the greater good—showing the humanity of essential personnel even hidden behind their PPE. The contrast between their face shields, scrubs, and the lush scenery tells a powerful story about how people are finding stillness and peace during a health crisis.

—Imani Spence '16



HOW TO THROW A HAMMER

With Andrew Haberman '21, computer science, and Davina Orieukwu, assistant track and field coach



*It's widely accepted that you need to practice a skill for 10,000 hours before becoming an expert. **Andrew Haberman '21, computer science**, has a different number in mind—20,000 throws. Twenty-five throws a practice, five days of practice a week, 10 months out of the year for four years. And even after that, he knows that success is never final. So he makes another throw.*

Along with shot put, weight, and discus throws, Haberman specializes in the hammer throw. This is not a tool from your dad's shed. For men's regulation competition, it's a 16-pound metal ball attached by a steel wire to a grip. While the object of this competition is—like all throwing competitions—to launch your object the farthest, with hammer throw, speed is also a big factor.

*As part of track and field, throwing is more obscure than some events, but UMBC has a storied history in this discipline. **Cleopatra Borel '02, interdisciplinary studies**, is a four-time Olympian shot putter representing Trinidad and Tobago, placing 7th in Brazil in 2016.*

*On the practice field, again and again, the rhythmic sound of Haberman's shoes scuffing the throwing circle are followed by a thunk as the hammer lands in the grass, a rooster tail of dirt following each toss. Haberman and his throwing coach, **Davina Orieukwu**, talk through foot placement, chest height, release angle, and many other minute readjustments to his technique. Over and over, Orieukwu reminds him, "push the hammer all the way around," to get the most efficient throw. So how does anyone get to 20,000 throws? Start with the first one.*



Tools of the Trade

1. A hammer—this implement is a 8.8-pound (for women) or 16-pound (for men) metal ball on a wire with a handhold. But in a pinch, other heavy implements attached to a chain and grip will work.
2. Wide open space—this is not a sport to practice near a lot of windows.
3. Upper body strength—this would be helpful to start, but you can always build it up while you practice.
4. A coach or mentor—no YouTube video can substitute for hands-on guidance.

Step 1: HAMMER TIME



First acquire a hammer or throwing implement. These aren't the most accessible pieces of equipment like a pair of running shoes or a soccer ball. Hammer throw isn't a part of most high school track and field teams, but Haberman's coach at Century in Carroll County had access to some of the heavy equipment and allowed the throwing athlete to practice on his own. Haberman saw the hammer throw as a way to extend his athletic career, gaining experience in a more uncommon discipline to make him a more attractive athlete to colleges.

But you don't need a regulation hammer to start off. During practice, Orieukwu has Haberman and another throwing athlete, sophomore **Thomas Hamby**, use a variety of weighted objects. First, Haberman warms up with a literal ball and chain. This implement weighs twice as much as the hammer he'll use in competition, so he's gaining strength and developing better technique by handling the heavier object. Hamby throws a hefty chain looped around a handle to start.



Step 2

WHEN—NOT IF—YOU FALL, GET BACK UP AGAIN

Hone your technique. Maybe at first this is watching YouTube tutorials by world-class athletes or binging compilations of “fails” to see all the ways that things could go wrong. As Oriekwu repeats during practice, “losing connection with the ground is losing connection with the ball.” For the uninitiated, stumbling or falling down is to be expected in the beginning. Imagine this: You are trying to balance your body while swinging a weighted ball over your head twice and then spinning anywhere from three to five times (called “the wind”), building up momentum to the moment of release. The faster the speed of your spins, the more velocity your hammer has.



Everyone, says Haberman—even with four years of experience—loses control of the ball. The key, he notes: “Be as relaxed as possible, but strong and intentional at the same time.”

Step 3

ARM & HAMMER

Learn better form. Haberman says his STEM background certainly helps, as he thinks through the physics of the pull of the hammer as his body rotates to gain speed. Oriekwu tells him to watch his “flat 2.” Haberman knows that means during his second rotation, “my hammer rises really high in my orbit, so that keeps me from throwing farther,” he says.

As the ball increases velocity with each turn, it’s important to retain a triangular shape with your arms—your chest forming the base, your arms the two legs of the isosceles triangle, and the hammer at the vertex. If the hammer gets ahead or behind your triangle, you’re in trouble, says Haberman.

Step 4

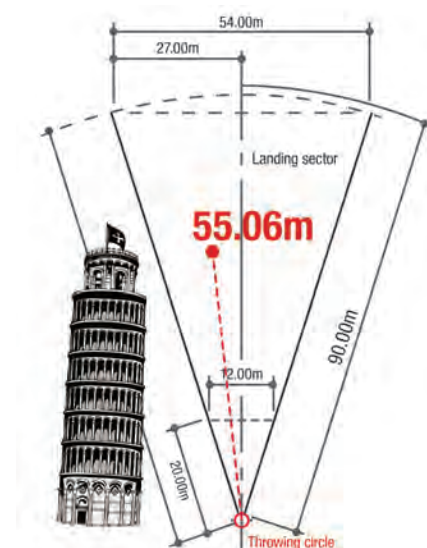
PASS IT FORWARD

Start mentoring others. So much of hammer throwing is a mind game, shares Haberman, who credits older team members with helping him learn good habits early on: relax, make jokes during practice, and stay neutral to avoid emotional highs and lows that can derail an athlete. Hamby, who just picked up the hammer throw in fall 2020, says that Haberman, now a senior, is his go-to source for advice.

The older athlete sees his responsibility and tries not to pass long throwing neuroses. “I consistently think I can do better, but sometimes that works against me,” says Haberman. “Thomas picks up on my attitude and I don’t want it to negatively affect him.”

With that, he lifts the hammer, executes the wind, and completes another throw—number 20,001 and counting.

— Randianne Leysbon '09



Haberman's career record toss is 55.06 m (180.6 ft). That is approximately as long as the Leaning Tower of Pisa is tall.

ALUMNI ESSAY

Finding Joy in the Classroom

“Why are chemists so great at solving problems?” Theresa Bruce ’09, asks her eighth grade social studies class at KIPP Harmony. Her corny joke elicits no verbal responses but doesn’t go unanswered as students engage with the icebreaker online. “Because they have all the solutions!” Bruce guffaws.

In a year where teaching looks like nothing before, Bruce and other educators are grappling with how to best reach their students, academically and relationally. But the cheesy jokes are nothing new, admits Bruce. “That’s just who I am.” A Sondheim Scholar who majored in political science and social work, Bruce was runner up for the 2020 Baltimore City Teacher of the Year. It’s easy to see why, as her energetic and enthusiastic demeanor comes through clearly, even mediated through the multiple computer windows she uses to instruct her scholars from afar.

But Bruce didn’t set out to be a teacher—she had her sights set on being a hot-shot lawyer. So how to explain her past decade working as a Baltimore City school teacher? She shares this in her own words.

When I left high school, I had my mind made up that I was going to be a lawyer. I was going to be the next Johnnie Cochran. Forget if the glove didn’t fit, I was going to have my own catchphrase and it was going to blow up. I was going to be riding in limos with all of the entertainers. Then UMBC got in the way of that fantasy.

Being a part of the Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars program made me realize that I wanted to work toward something greater than myself. My celebrity ideals weren’t putting the common good first—they certainly didn’t push for society in a way that is helpful, meaningful, and beneficial for all. When that switch happened inside me, my mentors at UMBC were instrumental in helping me pursue a new goal, nurturing me, and pushing me along a path that led to public policy.

So how did I end starting my tenth year teaching as a Baltimore City school teacher? After I got my master’s in public policy at the University of Chicago with a focus in K through 12 urban education reform, I realized that I needed to actually be in a teaching role before I could make policy that affected education. Additionally, I believe that every child deserves the opportunity to make choices in their lives. I feel like I got the best public education possible in Baltimore City, and I got it for free. A motivating factor for me is the belief that every child should get what I got.

I’ve always loved school, so UMBC was the perfect fit for me. It was undeniably cool to be smart. So that’s the atmosphere I try to create in my classroom. We all have favorite subjects, and I understand that for



some of my students, social studies may not be their favorite. But I want these young people to find some joy when they come into my room—to feel like they can talk with me and connect. I want them to know that I support them in their goals. UMBC taught me the importance of lifting up other people’s dreams.

Looking back on my time as a student, I have so many people I’m grateful to for putting up with me, quite honestly, because I was a headache. I always had an idea. I always wanted to do something. And I wasn’t always listening. Despite that, Dr. **Roy Meyers**, professor of political science and affiliate professor of public policy, was my biggest champion. Dr. **Cheryl Miller**, associate professor emerita, public policy and political science, challenged me to think bigger than myself. Dr. **Tyson King Meadows**, associate professor of political science, taught my very first poli-sci class and never stopped pushing me forward. **Delana Gregg, Ph.D. ’19, language, literacy, and culture,**

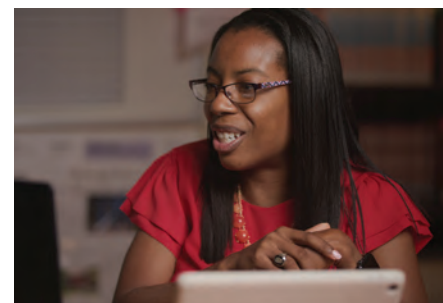
“I’ve always loved school, so UMBC was the perfect fit for me. It was undeniably cool to be smart. So that’s the atmosphere I try to create in my classroom.”

a powerhouse in the Academic Success Center, was a constant force in helping me shape my career path while being a sounding board for all of my ideals.

So now, as an educator myself, I ask how I can best push and champion my students. The biggest step I can take—and this doesn’t matter if you’re in a brick-and-mortar building or if you’re online—is to make a relationship. Yes, they’re harder to build virtually, but when young people can relate to you as a person, they’re more apt to try. When you acknowledge them and their efforts, they’re going to try even harder. There’s an old saying I think about often: People don’t care what you know, until they know you care.

My biggest reward right now is sparking the minds of the next generation. Our young people come to us with so many gifts. They’re talented in ways that might just take a little nudging for them to realize. But I know how many people took time for me, and I want to make my students feel the same. I want them to know I care about their success, beyond their grades. How can I help them discover who they truly are, pursue what matters to them, and be an agent for change?

Part of the way I help them along this path is by putting books in front of them—all the time. There are over 700 books in my classroom that I’ve amassed, partly through



donations via the Donors Choose platform and partly by spending my own money. Quarterly, I host a Starbooks session for my students within my classroom, usually around a theme, like non-fiction texts or graphic novels. It gives young people a chance to sample books and see what they might enjoy. Slowly but surely, I’ve been seeing an increase in my scholars’ excitement about reading books and checking them out of my classroom.

Now that we’re meeting virtually, it’s been hard to not gather in the classroom I’ve lovingly decorated and filled with books and materials. My scholars and I have created our own community in the classroom, and it’s been interesting in this pandemic to rethink the way community needs to develop. All things considered, I am thankful because even though we’re in the midst of a global virus, I’ve been pushed to rethink the way I engage the students, not only in the work, but how to grow relationships with them as well. So we’re creating a new classroom, a new virtual one. It may not be as big or as colorful, but it’s got great potential.

Watch more of Theresa Bruce’s story online as part of our Retriever Educators series at magazine.umbc.edu/theresabruce.



CLASS NOTES

UMBC Class Notes is compiled by *UMBC Magazine* staff from items submitted online and by mail by alumni as well as from news articles and press releases received by the University. This edition of Class Notes contains information processed by October 31, 2020.

How to Submit Class Notes

The deadline for submitting Class Notes for the next print issue of *UMBC Magazine* is April 25, 2021. Notes and photos may be submitted via email at magazine@umbc.edu or online at magazine.umbc.edu.

Photo Guidelines

Digital photos should be taken on the highest-quality setting. They should be 4 x 6 inches or larger and 300 ppi. Save the attachment as a TIFF or JPEG. Questions? Please email magazine@umbc.edu.

1973

F. Linda Cohen, psychology, published a family memoir in 2019 titled *Sarinka: A Sephardic Holocaust Journey: From Yugoslavia to an Internment Camp in America*.

1975

Harold (Hal) Dalton, philosophy, remembers his days on the UMBC Retrievers baseball team fondly. Dalton recently retired after a 34-year career as a police officer with the Annapolis Police Department.

1979

Gary Brooks, history, was appointed in July to the Bowie State University Board of Visitors.

1981

Mardel Miller-Kowalewski, American studies, became president of the Susan B. Komen Maryland Board of Directors in July 2018.

1983

Dennis Caughy, visual arts and social work, retired after over 25 years of private practice, volunteering at community mental health centers, and presenting workshops on a variety of mental health issues.

Linda Fiore, visual and performing arts music, is now director of communications at United Lutheran Seminary's two campuses in Philadelphia and Gettysburg. She was featured in a *Boston Globe* profile about living in close quarters with other people during the pandemic in response to her book, *The College Roommate from Hell*.

1986

Richard Byrne, English, is the editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*, the flagship publication of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC.

Paul Czajkowski, mechanical engineering, recently celebrated 40 years with Mueller Associates. As their chief mechanical engineer, Czajkowski has worked on major projects for the Smithsonian Institution, Northrop Grumman, and others.

Claire Katz, philosophy, was named a Presidential Professor for Teaching Excellence at Texas A&M University, where she has spent 14 years. The highest teaching award given by the university, the title is bestowed by the president of the university in perpetuity for the duration of her career.

1989

Marc Marshall, information systems management, is a managing director for Huron, focusing on helping clients in industrial businesses modernize their supply chains.

1990

Jennifer Walsmith, computer science, was named in *Washingtonexec.com* as one of Top 25 Cyber Execs to Watch in 2020. Her team at Northrop Grumman provides a critical cyberdefense platform to the Defense Intelligence Systems Agency for detecting and thwarting the 36 million cyberattacks the Defense Department faces every day.

1991

Tim Haab, economics, worked as chair of the Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics at the Ohio State University to create a more diverse environment. With the help of his team, the department went from around 11 percent women to over 40 percent women.

1992

Lafayette Gilchrist, Afro-American studies, performed his song "Tomorrow Is Waiting Now" live on WRTI 90.1. Baltimore-based contemporary jazz pianist Gilchrist released his second solo album, *Dark Matter*, in 2019.

Under the leadership of **Ralph Semmel, Ph.D., computer science**, the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab was named number three on *Fast Company's* top 100 list of "Best Workplaces for Innovators." This list contained names like Google, Amazon, and Dell.

1994

Tim Reyerson, interdisciplinary studies, was promoted to general manager of the Ballistic United Soccer Club. While at UMBC, Reyerson captained the soccer team to two conference titles and a 15-3-1 senior season.

MAKING A PATH TO MENTORSHIP

Ashwag Alasmari, M.S. '15, Ph.D. '21, information systems



When **Ashwag Alasmari, M.S. '15, Ph.D. '21, information systems**, was pursuing her undergraduate degree in Saudi Arabia, she was breaking new ground in many ways. The computer science department at King Khalid University had just opened to women. Alasmari herself was one of the first women in her family to seek a degree.

Two things stuck out to Alasmari as she blazed this path: She noticed how few opportunities existed for her to connect with her peers outside of the classroom, and she realized that as “the first” in so many of her endeavors, she would have a hard time finding like-minded mentors.

At her university, Alasmari wanted to find a supportive community of women with similar interests and goals, but programming to encourage this among students did not exist. Alasmari says there wasn’t really a reason to spend time on campus except to go to classes—which were separated by gender. “I think at that time the most significant obstacle I encountered was a lack of role models and mentors who could inspire me,” she says.

In October 2020, the American Association of University Women—one of the world’s oldest leading supporters of graduate women’s education—awarded Alasmari an international fellowship for her work in leading innovative community projects to empower women and girls, for creating the exact mentoring relationships she lacked as a student.

Alasmari was drawn to UMBC not only for its geographic location near Baltimore and Washington D.C. but also because of the range of courses in computer science, health informatics, and human-centered computing that she could take as a student. UMBC’s proximity to many regional hospitals, federal agencies, and prominent research organizations

was also appealing to Alasmari, who was eager to conduct research related to patient care and use of technology.

As a master’s student at UMBC, Alasmari found that an important element of the academic experience was being a part of the community and making connections with her peers and instructors.

In 2013 and 2016, Alasmari attended the Grace Hopper Celebration, an annual conference that brings women in tech together for presentations, panels, and professional development events that highlight the contributions of women to computing. She was struck by how valuable the networking opportunities were at these events. Most importantly, it was there that Alasmari learned the organization was looking to expand and establish chapters around the world, including in the Middle East.

Today, Alasmari manages the online Women in Computing in Saudi Arabia community, which is now 3,000 members strong. She launched this chapter in December 2015 with a one-day event at Badir Technology Incubators at King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The event, which Alasmari organized, featured women from academia and industries who shared their experiences and knowledge with attendees.

“I appreciate that I am part of this work,” she says, adding, “I’ve been growing with the community.”

“Our organization helped to bridge the gap between local context and the international community,” she says, noting that the community provides support to members through funding to attend conferences, and annual meetings highlight the important work being done by women in computing in Saudi Arabia.

While Alasmari continues to brainstorm ways to connect women in tech, her dissertation focuses on how people with multiple chronic conditions share information in online health information portals, combining her interest in human-computer interaction and information retrieval. “I seek to understand how patients formulate their health-related information needs on online questioning and answering communities such as WebMD and PatientsLikeMe, and what factors significantly contribute to the quality of the information needs,” Alasmari explains, adding that she focuses primarily on kidney disease and COVID-19.

Alasmari is advised by **Anita Komlodi**, associate professor of information systems at UMBC, and **Lina Zhou**, a former information systems faculty member. She says that they both provide mentorship to her and give her room to grow as a student. It was under their guidance—the very thing Alasmari was seeking in Saudi Arabia—that she began to understand how leadership and community involvement were integral to the academic experience.

As a female computer science student at King Khalid University, Alasmari had access to few scholastic resources outside of the classroom. Her only opportunity to access the internet was through one-hour increments she signed up for in advance. But things will be different for the current generation of students—Alasmari has paved the way for change. Women in Computing continues to grow a larger audience, providing mentors and support to women across Saudi Arabia interested in technology.

“I hope the community will grow into more collaboration with international and regional tech organizations. I hope for a more inclusive and diverse environment within the field of computing that especially supports the participation of women and underrepresented minorities.”

Her unique experiences, says Alasmari, “inspire me and spark my motivation to elevate the status of women in my own country and the entire world.”

— Megan Hanks Mastrola

Below: Group picture at the 6th ArabWIC conference in Morocco in 2019. Photo courtesy of Alasmari.



CLASS NOTES

1995

Khadijah Ali-Coleman, interdisciplinary studies, earned her doctorate in community college leadership from Morgan State University in May. A former UMBC McNair Scholar, Ali-Coleman co-founded the education research group Black Family Homeschool Educators and Scholars. She also became the new director of Education and Community Engagement at Montgomery Community Media and teaches communication studies at Montgomery College.

Ginina Jackson-Stevenson, Afro-American studies, was sworn in as the first African American female magistrate in Anne Arundel County Court history in August.

Christopher Rudolf, social work, resigned from Charlestown Retirement Community in September after 25 years of service as a social worker/resident services coordinator.

1996

Greg Cangialosi, English, is the cofounder of incubation and education nonprofit Betamore and early-stage investment group Baltimore Angels. Cangialosi, who created the Cangialosi Business Innovation Competition at UMBC, was included in Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors featuring the 110 top community builders in Baltimore tech and entrepreneurship.

Candace Dodson-Reed, English, chief of staff in UMBC's President's Office and executive director of UMBC's Office of Equity and Inclusion, was included on *The Daily Record's* 2020 Top 100 Women awards list.

1997

Gwendolyn Francavillo, sociology, received tenure and promotion to associate professor in 2018 and was promoted to chair of the Department of Health and Human Performance of Marymount University in August. Francavillo has been active as a public health expert during COVID-19, leading nationwide mental health De-Stress Sessions for the American Public Health Association.

Karen Sutton, M.A., history, was the only doctoral student from a historically Black college to receive the region four American History Ph.D. award from the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in Maryland. She presented her dissertation, *The Nickens Nine: Free African Americans in Lancaster and Northumberland Counties, Virginia during the American Revolution*, to the society.

1999

Lola Eniola-Adefeso, M7, chemical engineering, along with UMBC President **Freeman Hrabowski** took part in a Q&A with the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative about UMBC's Meyerhoff Scholars Program.

2000

William Gee III, computer science, CEO of Balti Virtual, was nominated to Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors for bringing the Baltimore community together to think of new uses for virtual and augmented reality.

2001

Kafui Dzirasa, M8, chemical engineering, writes about his experiences as a Black scientist for Cell.com in an essay titled *For Black Scientists, the Sorrow Is Also Personal*.

2002

Balvin Brown, interdisciplinary studies, graduated from the Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy, having served as vice president of his class. He received the Physical Fitness Award in recognition of his performance and achieved the rank of Police Marksmanship Expert.

Rachael Gunde Faulkner, social work, was selected to *The Daily Record's* "Successful by 40 Very Important Professionals (VIP)" list by a panel of last year's winners.

2003

Kate Tracy, M.A. '01, Ph.D., psychology and human services, was appointed to serve as the project director for the pilot COVID-19 Testing and Monitoring Program for the University System of Maryland. The project involves approximately 600 research faculty, staff, and students returning to research labs at UMBC and two other University of Maryland institutions.

2004

Delali Dzirasa, computer engineering, CEO and founder of Fearless, received the Government Contracting Company of the Year award from the Maryland Tech Council. Dzirasa, who founded Hack Baltimore, was included in Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors featuring the 110 top community builders in Baltimore tech and entrepreneurship. Dzirasa was also selected to *The Daily Record's* "Successful by 40 Very Important Professionals (VIP)" list.

Sarah Kaukeinen, visual arts, paused her work as a senior graphic designer at Battelle to work on site at one of Battelle's Critical Care Decontamination Systems, decontaminating N95 masks for reuse by healthcare workers during the PPE shortage.

John Klausmeier, mechanical engineering, is highlighted for his success as a NASCAR crew chief in Speedway Media, having started in the position for 100 Cup Series races.

A. Jay Nwachu, psychology, and his wife Crystal welcomed their daughter Ilerioluwa (Ileri) Lebechi Nwachu in August 2020 to join her sibling Chidike. Nwachu, president and chief innovation officer of Innovation Works, was nominated to Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors for his work bringing resources to social enterprise founders in Baltimore neighborhoods.

Hadieh Shafie, M.F.A., imaging and digital arts, explains her twist on the centuries-old craft of paper quilling on MyModernMet.com. Her most recent sculptures feature hand-painted strips of paper rolled to form slender pyramids and thick coils.

Alicia Wilson, political science, was selected to *The Daily Record's* "Successful by 40 Very Important Professionals (VIP)" list by a panel of last year's winners.

CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

2005

Ben Lloyd, M.S., public policy, is acting director of administration for Harford County executive Barry Glassman.

Tyi McCray, M13, chemistry, joined Pinterest as the global head of Inclusion and Diversity. She will work directly with Pinterest's CEO to direct the company's strategy to create a more diverse culture at the company.

2006

Jeff Martin, political science, published an article in *FierceHealthcare.com* titled *Ensuring Premium Revenue Accuracy During COVID-19*. Martin's company, Discovery Health Partners, provides premium restoration services to Medicare Advantage health plans.

Daniel Van Dussen, Ph.D., gerontology, was appointed to an endowed professorship at Youngstown State University.

Balaji Viswanathan, M.S., computer science, was interviewed in *Forbes India* about the three robots developed by his company, Invento Robotics. The robots are now being used by some hospitals in India and China to disinfect rooms, take patients' temperatures, and set up video calls to doctors.

Jake Weissmann, social work, was selected to *The Daily Record's* "Successful by 40 Very Important Professionals (VIP)" list by a panel of last year's winners.

2007

Jason Barbour, M.S., computer science, founder of Erias Ventures and organizer of the Data Works MD meetup, was nominated to Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors for his work building the technology community in Baltimore.

Todd Blatt, mechanical engineering, founder of Custom 3D Stuff and member of Baltimore Node, was nominated to Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors for his efforts to bring creators together through projects like the crowdsourcing of 3D printers to make face shields.

Karsonya Wise Whitehead, Ph.D. '09, language, literacy, and culture



In 1980, while spending the summer with family in South Carolina, 13-year-old **Karsonya "Dr. Kaye" Wise Whitehead** noticed that the corner grocery store owner had kept up the "Whites Only" and "Colored Only" signs. She was offended and wanted him to take them down. The teen decided to stage her first protest. She told her grandmother that she was going to march every day in front of his store until he took the signs down.

The proprietor took them down from the counter. But he later had them framed and put on the wall to make them "art."

"My grandmother gave me a similar framed 'Colored Seating Only' sign so that I would always remember that moment in my life," says Whitehead.

While she didn't really get the result that she wanted, Whitehead did see that her actions could make a direct change in her community. This lesson would guide Whitehead as she found ways to amplify her voice.

After living in New York City, Whitehead, along with her husband Johnnie and their sons, Kofi and Amir, moved to Baltimore more than 16 years ago. She taught in Baltimore City middle schools for four years and was named Maryland History Teacher of the Year before she left to pursue her Ph.D. in language, literacy, and culture in 2006 at UMBC.

In 2005, a friend sent Whitehead copies of the 1863–1865 diaries of Emilie Davis. "When I realized that I was reading the diaries of a free black woman, I knew that I wanted to transcribe and publish them," recalls Whitehead. To learn how to accomplish this task, Whitehead enrolled at UMBC.

"Dr. Wise Whitehead's commitment to both local and national social justice issues exhibits the best of UMBC," says **Kimberly Moffitt**, interim dean for the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, LLC professor, and affiliate professor of Africana Studies. "How we work to support our graduate students in their desires to excel and thrive beyond a classroom setting."

"It changed my life," Whitehead says of the language, literacy, and culture program.

"I knew that I wanted to be in a field where I could research, write about, and teach Black women's history."

And that writing that Whitehead wanted to do about Emilie Davis? It became her dissertation as well as her first book.

In 2015, Whitehead was approached by Beverly Burke, then-news director of WEEA, 88.9, out of Morgan State University, about coming on to do one- or two-minute African American history spots on the station. Three years ago, the station's general manager Malarie Pinkard Pierre approached Whitehead with the idea of giving her an afternoon slot for her own talk show.

Now her show, "Today with Dr. Kaye" runs on WEEA, Monday through Friday from 3 to 5 p.m. "It's unbelievable! That's prime drive time, when you've got three generations in the car listening," says Whitehead. At the start of every show, she begins with, "We have conversations that matter."

"We have conversations that are designed to challenge us, to make us think, to make us laugh, and sometimes to make us cry," explains Whitehead, an associate professor of communications and African American studies at Loyola University. "When I got into doing this show, I made a commitment to speak to, with, and for the people of Baltimore City."

While she loves her activist work, Whitehead admits that her greatest joy is being a wife and mom. "Before I had the show, I was a Black mommy activist. I was involved in a lot to help my sons...to help carve out a world where they can get home safe," she recalls.

"Baltimore is a city that's in a lot of pain, and people are searching for someone who's going to tell them the truth, listen to them, and fight for and with them. I've made a lot of good friends and colleagues who are willing to do battle with me," says Whitehead. "I've fallen in love with this city, and I'm willing to fight to bring about changes."

— By Michele Wojciechowski

On November 11, Karsonya Wise Whitehead was the keynote speaker at UMBC's 42nd Annual W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture.

Watch the full lecture at magazine.umbc.edu/conversations-that-matter.

CLASS NOTES



Courtney Warrick '18 and Jesse Bradley '16 married on October 18. They met through UMBC's Dance Department.

Lujain Said, interdisciplinary studies, graduated with a master's of public health and graduate certificate in public health microbiology and emerging infectious diseases at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health while working as an intern for the DC Department of Health.

2008

Abraham Beyene, M16, chemical engineering, shared how the Meyerhoff Scholars Program and MARC U*STAR Program impacted his life and career on the Stereo Chemistry podcast.

Will Delawter, psychology, was inducted into the Chesapeake College Hall of Fame for his accomplishments in baseball, including being named an All-American during his tenure. He has been teaching in public schools for 10 years and is the assistant baseball coach at Catocin High School.

Julius Moore, computer science, co-created Tetragram, a phone app for patients and medical professionals to understand the side effects of 22 chemical compounds found in Maryland medical cannabis products.

2009

Babajide "Jide" Saba, health administration and policy, president and owner of the Maryland Bobcats FC, joined the National Independent Soccer Association as Maryland's only officially professional outdoor men's soccer team. Saba co-owns the team with **Ankur Patel '10, economics,** and **Ayokunle "Sam" Ayanleye '10, management of aging studies and biological sciences.**

2010

Patrick Rife, visual arts, co-founder of Pixilated, was nominated to Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors for his efforts to bring start-up founders together.

Adrienne Starks, Ph.D., biological sciences, was named to the State of Alabama STEM Council. Along with others on the council, she will advise state leadership on ways to improve STEM-related education, career awareness, and workforce development opportunities across the state. She also received the Equality Can't Wait Challenge grant to expand the power and number of women in STEM.

2011

Yasmin Karimian, political science, president of Suspended Brewing Company, became one of the 89 United State of Women (USOW) ambassadors. As a USOW ambassador, she will raise awareness for issues women face in the Baltimore area.

2012

Maria Celeste Brooks, M.S., sociology, was recognized by Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center for her efforts and support as a senior client specialist during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lauren Coulson, visual arts, published her debut novel *Ether-Touched* in May. The young adult fantasy follows Vylaena Azrel, who has one goal in life: lift the curse set upon her by the goddess Ikna, dooming her to feel others' pain as her own.

For his latest body of work, *Breathing Zone*, LA-based photographer **Gionatan Tecle, visual arts,** explored the idea of social distancing—not just amidst the COVID-19 pandemic—but in "normal" life, too.

Letitia Travaglini, M.A., Ph.D. '16, human services psychology, is currently a staff psychologist and research investigator at the Baltimore VA Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center. She recently received a Career Development Award from the VA that focuses on the assessment and management of chronic pain among veterans with serious mental illness.

Courtney Perdue, media and communications, helped write the 10-episode second season of Netflix's two-Daytime-Emmy-winning show, *Trinkets*.

2013

Robbin Lee, media and communication studies, visual arts, was promoted from deputy director to executive director of Baltimore Homecoming. Lee is also a member of the UMBC Alumni Association Board.

Asif Majid, interdisciplinary studies, was named a Mellon/ACLS Public Fellow. At his postdoctoral program, he works as a community impact analyst with the San Francisco Arts Commission.

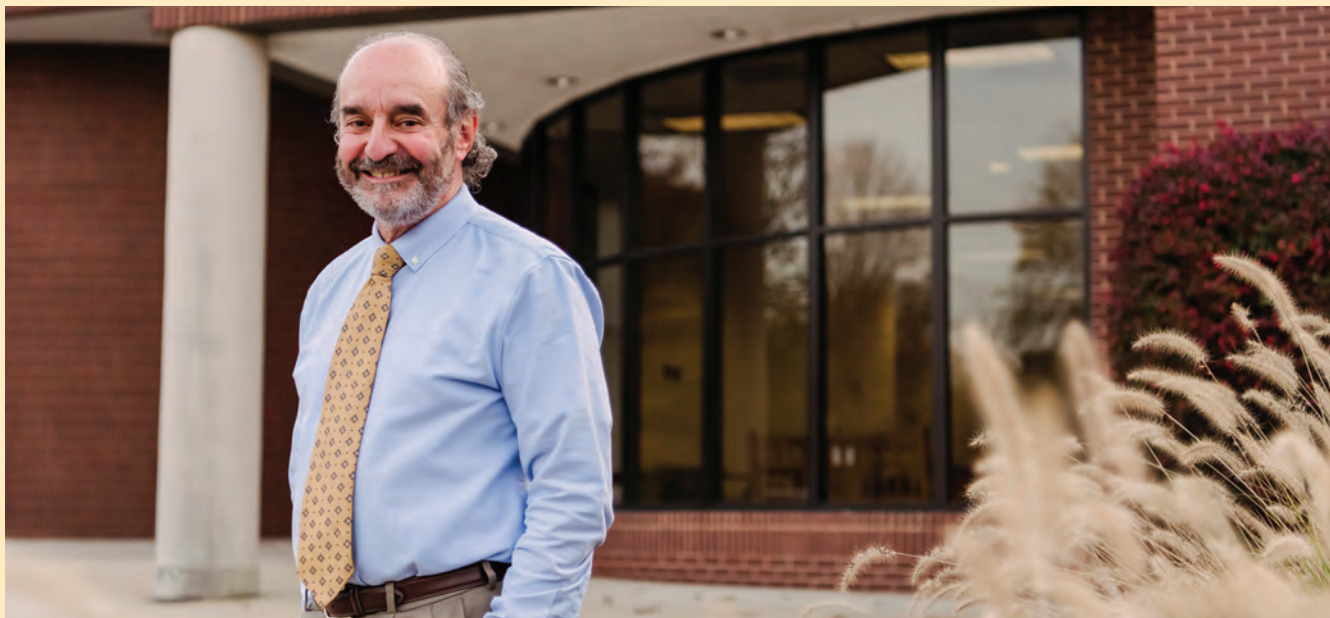
Jonathan Moriarty, visual arts, computer science, CEO of Rowdy Orb.it, was nominated to Technical.ly's RealLIST Connectors for his work to bridge the digital divide in Baltimore during the pandemic.

Damani White-Lewis, political science, graduated from UCLA last year with a Ph.D. in higher education and organizational change. His dissertation received four national awards and honors, and his findings were published in *The Journal of Higher Education* and *Teachers College Record*.

Brandon F. Young, M21, biochemistry and molecular biology, earned his Ph.D. at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). He was inducted into MUSC's prestigious Student Leadership Society. Young recently accepted a FIRST Fellowship position as a post-doctoral researcher at Emory University where he is working on discovering new drugs for infectious diseases.

AN ACT OF KINDNESS INSPIRES A LEGACY

Ricardo Zwaig '77, Spanish



In 1977, **Ricardo Zwaig** was nine credits away from completing his degree in Spanish at UMBC. Instead of working toward graduation, he had dropped out and was working at a pharmacy near campus, trying to decide what his next move would be.

That next move came in the form of **Louis Kaplan**, then interim Chancellor of UMBC, walking up to the counter waiting to be rung up. Zwaig couldn't have known at that moment that the trajectory of his life was about to irrevocably shift.

"I immediately recognized who he was and asked how things were going at UMBC," says the Honorable Zwaig, now a judge for the District Court of Maryland in Howard County. "After learning that I had been a student at UMBC, Dr. Kaplan found it inconceivable that I was so close to graduating just to throw in the towel."

Economic hardships had made it nearly impossible for Zwaig to pay for his final semester.

In his mind, he was already in work mode. Just one day prior he had interviewed for a job at a lumber yard, having already completed orientation there. Whatever he needed to do next, he thought to himself, it had to produce enough money to live off.

However, speaking with Kaplan about his circumstances as a former student stirred something in Zwaig. "After some more small talk about my situation, Dr. Kaplan told me to call him if I needed help finishing school," he remembers.

By week's end, Zwaig was face-to-face with Kaplan's secretary asking to see him.

Good luck, good karma, whatever you want to call it, Zwaig says, he found himself on the receiving end of generosity and good faith that set him on a whirlwind path to a remarkable career. His meeting with Kaplan instantly became the cornerstone of his time at UMBC—to which he always comes back all these decades later.

Kaplan handed over a check that covered Zwaig's last semester's tuition and put Zwaig in touch with a scholarship service in Baltimore. In 1981, in recognition of Kaplan's contributions to UMBC during his tenure, the Student Government Association established the Louis L. Kaplan Scholarship Fund—an endowment that offers financial support to academically gifted students close to finishing their degrees.

"He covered my tuition, my books, everything," says Zwaig. "I don't know why I deserved such kindness and generosity from Dr. Kaplan, but it's something I have never forgotten and it's something I've always tried to repay in some way."

Together with other alumni, including his brother, **Michael Zwaig '81, history**—also a lawyer—Zwaig established the Esperanza Scholarship Fund. Since its inception in 2010,

Zwaig has been a key donor and vocal supporter. Awarded to full-time undergraduate or graduate students of Hispanic or Latine/x/a/o descent—or those committed to the advancement of minority students—the scholarship provides students with financial support to continue their studies, removing some of the economic pressure to leave school. Since its launch, the Esperanza Fund has awarded scholarships to 15 students.

"The scholarship may not exactly level the playing field, but it sets the stage for equitable opportunities," says Zwaig. "It was important for me to be a part of its success after experiencing firsthand the difference someone's generosity can make."

Kaplan's unexpected mentorship and financial support opened doorways for Zwaig to pursue his passion for law—a passion that was admittedly tinged with a bit of romanticism.

"I wanted to practice civil rights law," he says with a hint of a smile in his voice.

Zwaig earned his J.D. from the University of Maryland in 1982. In 1983, he was admitted to the Maryland Bar.

Civil rights law wasn't exactly where Zwaig ended up, but he thrived in trial work. After practicing law for 27 years, he applied for judgeship and won it in August 2010, making him the first Latino male judge in the history of the state.

"UMBC has always been positioned to produce great future leaders," says Zwaig, and the proof is in his life's trajectory. "My ongoing contributions to the Esperanza Fund are just a small way to ensure those leadership opportunities are just as readily available for minority students."

— *Nikoletta Gjoni '09*

ESPERANZA SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Established: 2010

Scholars Served: 15

Committee Members:

Jessica Contreras '98
Roxanna Goodwin '01
Shivonne Laird '99
Gustavo Matheus '90
Joseph Morales '00
Alfredo Santiago '08
Michael Zwaig '81
Ricardo Zwaig '77

CLASS NOTES

2014

Kathryn Feller, Ph.D., biological sciences, joined Union College faculty as an assistant professor of biology.

Alicia Lyons, biological sciences, earned her American Society of Clinical Pathology Medical Technologist Microbiology certification after graduating with an M.S. in health sciences in clinical microbiology from The George Washington University in 2019.

Samuel Manas, sociology and English, was awarded a White House Correspondents' Association Scholarship. Manas has covered subjects ranging from homicides to proposed prescription drug medication regulations and has also worked on proposing business plans for newsroom products.

Karan Odom, Ph.D., biological sciences, published research revealing the key role women have played in revolutionizing our understanding of female bird song on Phys.org.

Lauren Smith, psychology, received her master's degree in social work from the University of South Carolina. She now works as a teletherapist providing mental health services to children.

Michael Wu, music, will play King Kaspar in Lyric Opera Kansas City's production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* this December.



Cara Dekelbaum '16, jazz performance, performed with comedian Sinbad in his house band at Caroline's on Broadway in New York City.

2015

Abigail Jackson, biochemistry and molecular biology, earned her Ph.D. in chemistry from Duke University in July. She also completed an internship at the Environmental Protection Agency and worked with UMBC chemistry and biochemistry professor Paul Smith. Her work was also published in *ACS Infectious Diseases* and *Metallomics*.

Yoo-Jin Kang, modern language and linguistics and interdisciplinary studies, received American University's (AU) 2020 Inclusive Excellence award. Kang is co-chair and founder of AU's People of Color Faculty and Staff affinity group.

Emilia Mahaney, information systems, is celebrating receiving her green card after being in the U.S. since her freshman year at UMBC. During that time, she met and married her husband **Justin Mahaney '15, business administration technology**, worked for cyber security company Cybrary, bought a house, and had a son.

Jeremy Neal, computer science, CTO of Tribe, co-founder of Baltimore Black Techies Meetup, was nominated to Technical.ly's ReallIST Connectors for his building of a worker-owned cooperative for tech talent in Baltimore.

Sofia Thompson, Africana studies, an executive assistant and publicist, was on the marketing team for the launch of the first-ever livestream 3D Fashion Show for DC-based luxury brand Hanifa.

2017

Beruk Habte, economics, developed a free contact-tracing application called Tracker. The app notifies users if they've come in contact with another user that tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

Mark Satter, political science, was awarded a White House Correspondents' Association Scholarship. Satter plans to continue writing, covering politics and national security from Washington, D.C.

2018

Philip Adejumo, biochemistry and molecular biology, former team captain of the swimming and diving team, is training to represent Nigeria in the next Olympics. Adejumo is also pursuing an M.D./Ph.D. at Yale while training.

Courtney Warrick, modern languages, linguistics, and intercultural communication, married **Jesse Bradley '16, history**, on October 18. The pair met during UMBC's Dance Department Spring 2015 Senior Dance Showcase.

Noah Zazanis, psychology, started his master's of science in epidemiology at Columbia University. He is currently collecting primary data on risk factors for pelvic floor dysfunction and prolapse in transmasculine populations.

2019

Randall Ainsworth, philosophy and history, was awarded the inaugural Honorable Elijah E. Cummings scholarship at the University of Maryland Carey Law school.

Dominic Crofoot, computer science, and **Emily Sullivan '21**, were one of six teams to win the University System of Maryland's COVID App Challenge. Their app Snuggub searches one's local area for COVID-19-related restaurant changes and instructions.

Richard Cunningham, media and communications studies, joined NPR's The Kojo Nnamdi Show as an associate producer after interning for the show.

Richard DeShay Elliott, American studies, ran for a House of Delegates seat in Prince George's County's 24th District. This run for office follows his leadership role in Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' Maryland campaign.

Casey Haines, biological science, described the importance of diversity in science as well the barriers blocking it in an article for *Anthropocene Magazine*. She also published research revealing the key role women have played in revolutionizing our understanding of female bird song for Phys.org.

Dan Lee, computer science, earned a Phase I Small Business Technology Transfer grant as CEO of Dentuit Imaging for his company's development of AI that can detect tooth decay from dental x-rays.

2016

Cara Dekelbaum, jazz performance, performed with comedian Sinbad in his house band at Caroline's on Broadway in New York City.

Anna Gifty Opoku-Agyeman, M26, mathematics, one of the founders of this year's viral #BlackBirdersWeek, wrote an essay in Newsweek about attracting and supporting Black scholars in STEM.

Estelle Ra, biological science, founded The Counting Stars Foundation. The organization was a finalist in the AddVenture summer pre-accelerator program for high school and college students.

Gunnar Schimoler, economics, played for the Chesapeake Bayhawks in his first Major League Lacrosse tournament at the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.

2020

Johanna Alonso, English and media and communication studies, became *The Daily Record's* new business reporter.

Charmaine Hipolito, translational life science technology, was featured in BioBuzz's internship spotlight for her work with AstraZeneca.

KJ Jackson, sociology, extends his basketball career as a guard for BC CSU Sibiu, a professional basketball team in Romania.

Maya Mueller, mathematics, presented her poster, "Application of a SEIRD model to track the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria," at the 41st Annual Conference of the International Society for Clinical Biostatistics. Hers was selected as one of the top three presentations at the conference.

Evangeline Rose, Ph.D., biological sciences, published research revealing the key role women have played in revolutionizing our understanding of female bird song on Phys.org.

Mariya Shcheglovitova, Ph.D., geography and environmental systems, and **Milan "Bee" Brown '21**, were published in *The Professional Geographer*. Their work investigates the disinvestment of park maintenance in majority-Black areas of Baltimore City as well as the role of local residents in helping maintain the quality of recreational spaces.

Sedrick Smith, Ph.D., language, literacy, and culture, wrote about the decisions educators face in deciding whether to use the 2020 presidential debates as a teaching tool in the *Baltimore Sun*.

Friends We Will Miss

Jan K. Coleman '95, psychology, a retired social worker and former president of the National Council of Jewish Women, passed away on October 6. For many years she worked for the Wellness Community in Baltimore providing social work services to the elderly and ill.

Shirley Basfield Dunlap, Ph.D. '18, language, literacy, and culture, directed plays celebrating African American life and experience in regional theaters across the country before settling in Baltimore as an associate professor and coordinator of theatre arts at Morgan State University. Dunlap brought diligence, commitment, and generosity to the LLC community where she was beloved for her humor, critical questions, spirituality, and creative thought and action. She passed away on June 15.

Judith Wilkie Fowler, hired by the English Department in 1989, died on June 15. As an educator, Fowler was well aware of many students' struggles with language and began to lay the foundation for a program at UMBC that could act as an integrated tutoring program for writing. Eventually she would become a full-time writing coordinator at the then-newly created Writing Center—now fully coordinated via UMBC's Learning Resource Center with curriculum and tutoring. There she trained tutors and went above and beyond what was expected to assist students.

David E. Gluck '76, psychology, who had an infamous and uncredited role in John Waters' 1972 comedy *Pink Flamingos* and later worked as a computer analyst at the Social Security Administration, died June 2.

Shain-Dow Kung passed away on August 2. Kung was a faculty member in the Department of Biological Sciences at UMBC from 1974 to 1986. In 1985, he was appointed associate dean for faculty and personnel. According to his family, Kung was very proud of the time he dedicated to working at UMBC and his accomplishments there.

Judith Kay Olson Sterling passed away August 23. Sterling worked at Albin O. Kuhn Library, eventually retiring from the position of assistant director for Systems and Technical Services. She was active in the American Library Association and after retirement she volunteered with resettlement services for refugees.

Jack Prostko was the first full-time director of the Faculty Development Center. Prostko, who passed away on September 23, came to UMBC to direct the year-old Center in 2000. He brought a wealth of experience in the field of professional development having been associate director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Stanford, one of the nation's oldest such centers. He served UMBC faculty through consultations and programs for eight years.

Suzanne Rogers-White '03, American studies, passed away on April 3, 2018. She is remembered by her friends and family as an animal lover.

Eugenie Vitak '73, biological sciences, passed away on June 30. Vitak worked in the Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery for 20 years until her retirement in 2014. UMBC also played a vital role in Vitak's marriage of 47 years to her husband **George Vitak '73, biological sciences**, whom she met as a student, and who served as director of campus card and mail services and other positions at UMBC for nearly 40 years.

E. Richard "Dick" Watts, who served as the University's first athletics director from 1967 to 1985 and as the men's lacrosse coach from 1971 to 1993, passed away on October 23. Watts played a vital role in building the foundation for the burgeoning Division I program that exists at UMBC today. During his tenure as athletics director, Watts oversaw the completion of the UMBC Fieldhouse, the Natatorium, and UMBC Stadium. As the lacrosse coach, Watts amassed 178 wins in 23 seasons. Watts is a member of three Halls of Fame, including the U.S. Lacrosse National Hall of Fame (2008). Recognized as an outstanding player, coach, administrator, and supporter, Watts was inducted as "a great contributor."

Tyra Phillips Womack '84, English, passed away June 10. She had been the announcer of WEAA's "Gospel Grace Afternoon" for many years and had worked for the station for over 30 years. In grieving her sudden loss, friends remember her as having a distinctive voice while she always reminded churches to send in their announcements to the radio station "legibly handwritten or typed."

THEN & NOW

Electoral College

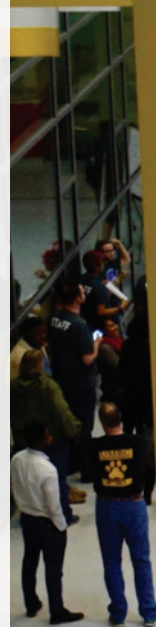
Most of us spend election night in our homes, nervously tapping away at our laptops, anxiously consulting cable TV pundits, and (possibly) eating a pint of ice cream along the way. For students away from home, UMBC has since 2004 created a much more exciting and communal way to spend the evening—an Election Night Extravaganza, to be precise—filling large sections of The Commons with balloons, streamers, and activities to celebrate democratic engagement.

Thanks to COVID-19, this year's celebration was reenvisioned via the online chat platform Discord, complete with chat rooms to match the communities found in the #skylight-room, #sports-zone, and other physical spaces everyone was missing this semester.

Never has coming together been more important, wrote David Hoffman, Ph.D. '13, director of UMBC's Center for Democracy and Civic Life, at the start of this year's event which drew almost 200 people. "We are a community and will continue to be a community after the election."

Pictured: Photo from the 2016 Election Night Extravaganza. Inset: Glimpses of this year's virtual version.

— Jenny O'Grady





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ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Even when we're apart, the Office of Alumni Engagement continues to reach out and connect with our graduated classes of Retrievers. Your alumni e-newsletter, the *Retriever Roundup*, will always include the most up-to-date ways to engage with the University and fellow alumni.

In spring 2021, we're launching *Retrievers Connect*, a platform to provide alumni and students resources to make meaningful professional and career connections. Stay tuned to our social media channels for the latest updates including a special announcement about the 2021 Alumni Awards.

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