



COMMUNIQUÉ

A Publication of Mississippi Valley State University for Faculty, Staff, Alumni and Friends | April/May 2019 Vol.16 Edition 4

480 “MIRACLES” CELEBRATED DURING MVSU’S 67TH COMMENCEMENT

Miracles happen all around us, and on May 4, Attorney Victor McTeer told 480 graduates of Mississippi Valley State University that’s precisely what they are.

“You are a miracle. I don’t know what you did that was so miraculous, but you’re here... you got this far. You’re about to get your paper, and your future has endless promise. That is a miracle,” said McTeer during the 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. ceremonies held in MVSU’s R.W. Harrison Sports Complex.

McTeer then detailed his own tumultuous childhood—his mother passed away a few months after giving birth to him, and his father died unexpectedly two years later leaving him to navigate through life as an orphan in Baltimore, Maryland.

“I was adopted by two elderly black women who decided that they would use every opportunity

See “Commencement” page 13



BREAKING GLASS CEILINGS: SIMON NAMED FIRST FEMALE BAND DIRECTOR OF MVSU, SWAC

A Mississippi Valley State University staff member has shattered the glass ceiling.

Dr. Kerry Anne Simon of Memphis, Tenn. has been named MVSU’s new director of university bands following the retirement of Kenneth Milton.

This announcement makes her the first female band director not only in MVSU history, but also the SWAC—MVSU’s collegiate athletic conference.

Simon has served as the associate director of bands at MVSU since Aug. 2017. She will officially begin in her new role July 1, 2019.

MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs said he is confident in Simon’s ability to lead the university’s band program.

“We’re excited to have Dr. Kerry Simon carry on and build upon the excellence of our University Bands program,” said Briggs. “As an alumna of MVSU, she has deep roots and an undeniable passion for The Valley. I am looking forward to seeing great things from her. Congratulations, Dr. Simon!”

Simon said she still hasn’t grasped the fact that she has made history.

“It hasn’t hit me yet,” she said. “This is a male-dominated field, for sure. I think we’re in the time now where people are paying more attention to women in the workplace.”

Simon said that throughout her career, she has realized that being a female band director is a “big thing.”



See “Simon” page 13

MVSU STAFF MEMBER RECEIVES 2019 MISSISSIPPI TRAILBLAZER AWARD

Mississippi Valley State University Assistant Professor of Social Science Dr. Cassie Sade Turnipseed was recently awarded the 2019 Mississippi Trailblazers Dr. Cindy Ayers Legacy Award.

The Mississippi Trailblazers Board of Governors selected Turnipseed because of her work bringing attention to the Mississippi Delta, the people, history and culture of the Delta, citing it as, “it is phenomenal, unparalleled and unmatched.”

She was formally honored during the Mississippi Trailblazers Awards Ceremony and Black-Tie Gala, hosted Saturday, April 27, at the BancorpSouth Conference Center in Tupelo.

“Honoring the legacy of “grandmama-nem” in a university setting gives artistic license and academic credential to the sweat equity contributions made by cotton pickers throughout the American South,” said Turnipseed.

“Our intentions are to reflect the historic preservation efforts underway at Mississippi



Valley State University and the cultural works of Khafre, Inc. The cotton pickin’ culture in the American South is what most people love

best about the American culture. Even more interesting is the fact that America’s phenomenal wealth and culture is for the most part sourced in cotton. This is the reason and purpose I hold as my philosophical approach to teaching, ‘Know Thyself,’” she added.

Since 2003, the Mississippi Trailblazers Awards has recognized many of Mississippi’s most dedicated citizen-servants, who have made distinguished and significant contributions to diversity and multicultural exchange through their professional accomplishments and public service.

The award’s namesake, Dr. Cindy Ayer, distinguished herself in her own right as a pioneer in areas ranging from banking to farming.

“Her life is a legacy and her work continue to leave a legacy. The same can be said for you and your work,” stated The Mississippi Trailblazers Board of Governors to Turnipseed in a letter announcing her as the honoree.

MVSU’S ARNOLD, COLLINS SELECTED AS “TOP 30 UNDER 40”

A Mississippi Valley State University staff and faculty member was recognized by The Greenwood Commonwealth Newspaper as two of this year’s “Top 30 Under 40” recipients.

MVSU’s Mikhail Collins and Dr. Ben Arnold were among 30 individuals, all under the age of 40, who were highlighted for their significant leadership roles in business, education or other major community organizations and for making a positive mark in the greater Greenwood area.

Collins currently serves as the Senior Accountant/Accounts Receivable Supervisor at MVSU—a position he has held for the past five of his 10 years at the institution.

A graduate of Rust College, Collins is proud of his time at Valley and equally proud of being named a “Top 30 Under 40” recipient.

“I do not take it lightly to have been chosen for such an esteemed honor,” said Collins. “There are countless other young professionals who I feel are much more deserving of this honor.

Nonetheless, as young professionals, it is our charge to be an ideal model for aspiring young professionals.”

One of Collins’ passions is working with young people, and he expressed how it is his mission in life.

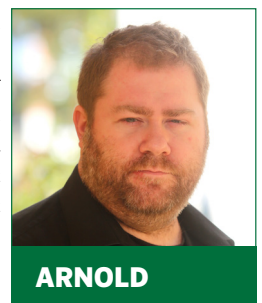
“I have always had a passion for cultivating young minds; thus, my mission at MVSU comes as second nature. Being selected as a recipient of ‘Top 30 under 40’ is a refreshing reminder that my work is not in vain. I sincerely believe that to whom much is given, much is required,” Collins added.

Arnold, a percussionist and associate professor of music, has worked at MVSU for 12 years.

He is originally from Ohio and received a Bachelor of Music Education from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio; Master of



Music Percussion Performance from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville; and a doctorate in Music Arts and Music Education from Boston University.



Arnold enjoys working with students at MVSU and said music had been a part of his life since he was a kid.

“I have been a professional musician since I was 13 years old, so it seemed like the right career move,” he said.

As part of the recognition, Arnold and Collins were invited to an awards dinner where they were formally presented with the award.

In addition, they were featured in the Greenwood Commonwealth’s “Top 30 Under 40” special publication.

MVSU MOURNS LOSS OF LONG-TIME BAND DIRECTOR LEONARD “CHIEF” TRAMIEL

The Mississippi Valley State University community was saddened by the passing of alumnus and long-time former band director Leonard “Chief” Tramiel of Greenwood.

Tramiel passed away Saturday, April 6, 2019. He was 75.

“Mr. Leonard Tramiel is indeed a Valley legend,” said MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs. “He will truly be remembered, loved, and revered by our MVSU family. Many of our alums have shared the positive impact that he has had on their careers and lives. We are saddened by his passing, but his lore remains with us.”

A native of Shreveport, La., Tramiel first joined the MVSU family as a student. Upon graduating from The Valley in 1965, Tramiel launched his career as a band director in Fayette, Ala. He then continued his career as band director of Druid High School in Tuscaloosa as he earned a master’s degree from the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa.

Under his leadership, the Druid band became the first black ensemble to integrate the Alabama Bandmasters Association concert band festival in 1969.

Tramiel returned to MVSU in 1973 as the director of university bands. Known for his energetic spirit, visionary leadership and unassuming humor, he led the “Mean Green Marching Machine” for more than 30 years, becoming Valley’s longest-tenured band director to date.



While at MVSU, Tramiel’s iconic ensembles included Symphonic, Marching, and Varsity Pep Bands, the “New Jack Swing” floor show band as well as Trombone, Euphonium and Tuba ensembles.

In addition, he served as the chapter sponsors for Kappa Kappa Psi/Tau Beta Sigma Honorary Band Fraternity and Sorority.

Following a successful career decorated with several awards and much recognition, Tramiel

retired from MVSU in 2013. However, his influence and spirit continue to guide the Mean Green Marching Machine.

“When you talk about SWAC Bands, Tramiel’s name definitely makes the list. The man is a legend,” said former Director of University Bands Kenneth Milton, who worked with Tramiel for several years, in a recent interview.

“I’ve always had a lot of respect for him, and I always will,” he added.

COURT OF APPEALS BRINGS COURTROOM TO MVSU



The Mississippi Court of Appeals convened on the campus of Mississippi Valley State University April 9 to hear oral arguments. The proceedings, hosted in the Carver A. Randle Auditorium of the W. A. Butts Social Science Building, was hosted as part of the Court of Appeals’ Court on the Road program, in which the court schedules proceedings on college campuses a few times each year. The visit was the court’s fourth visit to MVSU in recent years.

MVSU PRESIDENT RECOGNIZED AS PATRIOTIC EMPLOYER BY DEPT. OF DEFENSE

Mississippi Valley State University President Dr. Jerryl Briggs was recently recognized as a Patriotic Employer by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Briggs received the distinction as part of the Department of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program for contributing to national security and protecting liberty and freedom by supporting employee participation in America's National Guard and Reserve Force.

He was formally presented with a certificate, lapel pin and Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve by Veteran Service Officer Larry Harris.

"I am very appreciative for receiving this award," said Briggs. "As a former reservist, spending six years in the US Marine Corps Reserves, I truly understand the importance of supporting our troops efforts."

According to Harris, Briggs was nominated for the award for his support and recognition of MVSU staff, faculty and students who serve in all branches of the military through a wide-range of measures, including flexible schedules, time off prior to and after



deployment, caring for families, and granting leaves of absence if needed.

The award is presented to one individual quarterly, Harris said.

ESGR, a Department of Defense program, was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and

understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment. ESGR is supported by a network of more than 3,750 volunteers in 54 committees located across the United States. To learn more about ESGR, visit www.esgr.mil.

MVSU'S IBRAHIM EARNS INTERNSHIP WITH AMERICAN EXPRESS

Mississippi Valley State University strongly encourages students to pursue internship opportunities to get their feet wet, and Mubarak Ibrahim will be diving in head first this summer with an internship with American Express.

Ibrahim, a junior Computer Science major from Abuja, Nigeria, will be joining the multinational financial service corporation's Software Engineering internship program as a software developer.

He said that he is excited about the opportunity to work with a Fortune 500 company like American Express.

"My expectations are to be involved in exciting and challenging projects that will cultivate my skillset and grant me the opportunity to be part of something that makes a difference. I also expect to develop professionally and personally

as I seek career success," he said.

Ibrahim's job responsibilities will be to function as a core member of a product engineering team. He will also receive the opportunity to participate in problem-solving as well as the designing and development of new customer-facing applications on multiple channels.

"I will be responsible for converting cutting-edge and innovative technology ideas into products solving real-world problems," Ibrahim said. "I am preparing for my internship by working hard on my computer science class projects as they provide valuable knowledge on how to tackle projects and work as a team player," he added.

Dr. Latonya Garner, chair of MVSU's Mathematics, Computer and Information Sciences Department, said internships are a



See "Internship" page 15

MVSU ALUM NAMED MS BUSINESS JOURNAL'S TOP ENTREPRENEUR

Tim Lampkin is a bonafide entrepreneur who works tirelessly to positively impact his community.

His love for entrepreneurship, his gift for community-building and his passion for Mississippi (particularly the Delta) were recently highlighted when the Clarksdale native received the Mississippi Business Journal's Top Entrepreneur Award.

Lampkin, who is a 2009 graduate of Mississippi Valley State University, was among 23 innovators from across the state honored for changing the world for the better and making their mark as business owners and thought leaders.

The honorees, who were nominated by colleagues or peers, were formally presented with the prestigious award during an awards ceremony hosted in Jackson.

Lampkin expressed his gratitude for the award and noted that his time at MVSU has been impactful in giving him the intellectual courage to do all that he is currently pursuing in his community.

"I'm truly grateful and honored to be named one of the 2019 Top Entrepreneurs by the Mississippi Business Journal," Lampkin said. "My journey at MVSU prepared me to work with various organizations and start several businesses."

Lampkin is the chief executive officer of the nonprofit social impact agency Higher Purpose Co. which has been making moves that he's grateful to be a part of.

"We are intentionally focused on building community wealth with Black residents across Mississippi," Lampkin explained.

"Our definition of community wealth is anchored by owning our financial, cultural, and political power. We truly believe in our collective vision to uplift our local economy and communities," he added.

Lampkin said his team is currently working to pilot a business fellowship program in Coahoma County over the next few months with plans to eventually expand to other counties. They're also finalizing the details of the Higher Purpose Funding Network which aims to connect minority entrepreneurs to affordable capital for their business.

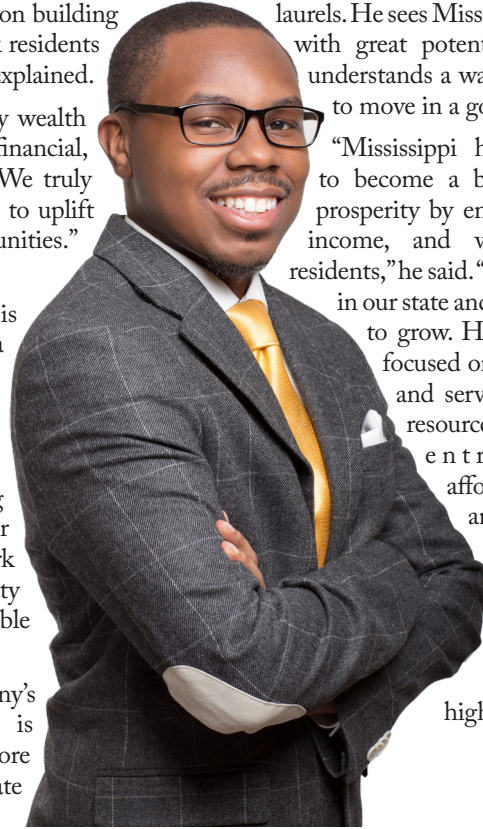
In addition, the company's paid internship program is looking to hire up to three more undergraduate or graduate

students from Mississippi.

While the recognition received by Lampkin from the Business Journal is something he is proud of, he said he has no plans to rest on his laurels. He sees Mississippi as a place filled with great potential and believes he understands a way to help it continue to move in a good direction.

"Mississippi has the opportunity to become a beacon of hope and prosperity by empowering poor, low income, and working-class Black residents," he said. "The racial wealth gap in our state and nation is continuing to grow. Higher Purpose Co is focused on providing solutions and serving as a community resource by coordinating entrepreneurship, affordable housing, and land ownership programs."

To learn more about the work of Higher Purpose Co., visit www.higherpurposeco.org



ALUM KEYNOTES MCIS AWARDS BANQUET



Mississippi Valley State University's Mathematics, Computer, and Information Sciences (MCIS) Department recognized its top scholars during its Annual Student Awards Banquet Thursday, April 25, in Dining Hall IV of the H.M. Ivy Cafeteria.

This year's event, themed "An Evening with the Stars, Celebrating Success", was highlighted by keynote speaker Sylvia Taylor. A 2003 graduate of MVSU, where she received a Bachelor of Science Computer Science, Taylor is also the winner of the 2015 Miss Nevada United States pageant. Currently, Taylor is an Information Technology Project Manager and also has her own specialty consulting firm, Taylor Strategic Consulting Group.

MVSU STUDENT SELECTED FOR COMPETITIVE BANK OF AMERICA TECH PROGRAM

A Mississippi Valley State University student experienced the opportunity of a lifetime when she was selected as one of 50 students from more than 500 applicants for a competitive tech program.

MVSU freshman Roseline Shapi was recently extended the opportunity to attend Bank of America's Ignite with Tech Program in North Carolina.

The Zimbabwe native joined other first-year and sophomore students for the one and a half day program targeted to Black, African American, Hispanic, Latino, and Alaskan Native and American Indian students interested in the Bank of America technology business.

The event provided a unique opportunity for students to meet business professionals first hand, learn about the financial services industry, and start preparing for the application process.

"I was excited that I was among the applicants that were selected from a large pool of students," said Shapi. "When I first arrived, I was a little intimidated seeing students from Ivy League schools and other well-known universities... But I quickly realized that I knew as much as they did."

As a participant, Shapi learned about the unique culture and vast history at Bank of America, while taking part in networking receptions, "Day in the Life of" panels, sessions with recruiters, interactive simulations, special presentations and diversity and inclusion conversations with members of Bank of America's employee network.



"My two-days were spent networking with people who work at Bank of America and other students. I came to view the company as a tech company that is into banking," Shapi said.

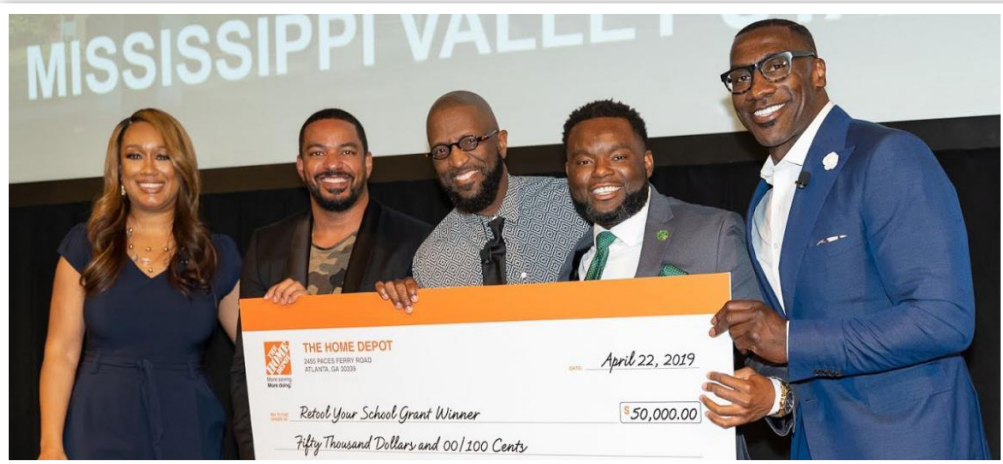
"We did some mock interviews, and that helped me learn how best I can market myself with authenticity. It was such a wonderful experience," she added.

As an international student, Shapi said being a student at MVSU has helped her to adjust to life in America as well as prepare for opportunities

like the Bank of America program.

"I like MVSU because the classes are small; I am not just a number. My professors are awesome and treat me like a partner," Shapi said. "They want me to excel and are willing to do anything in their capabilities to make that happen including scheduling time for me where I can ask any questions and get help. I love how close-knit the community is, which has played a big role in making my experience at MVSU a wonderful one."

MVSU WINS RETOOL YOUR SCHOOL GRANT



MVSU Director of Development Kendall Tanner, second from left, accepted a \$50,000 grant on behalf of the Home Depot's "Retool Your School" program on April 22. Tanner is pictured along with (from left) Home Depot Senior Marketing Manager Melissa Brown; actor Laz Alonso; comedian Ricky Smiley; and NFL Hall of Famer and sports analyst Shannon Sharpe. Photo cred: Nigel DeGraff.

OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS HOSTS GRANT RECOGNITION AWARDS DAY

Mississippi Valley State University's Office of Sponsored Programs and Title III recently honored faculty and staff during its Grant Recognition Awards Day.

Hosted April 16 in Dining Room IV of the H.M. Ivy Cafeteria, the annual event was designated to show appreciation to faculty and staff members who have competed for funding from government agencies, private foundations and other non-profits.

According to MVSU Director of Sponsored Programs Samuel Melton, the university received 23 awards totaling more than \$7.4 million in external funding during FY 2017-18 and more than \$37.2 million over the past five fiscal years through government agencies, foundations, and collaborations with other universities and organizations.

Despite a national trend of decreased federal funding for research and higher education, particularly at Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), Melton encouraged MVSU faculty and staff members to continue taking advantage of external funding opportunities.

"I want to encourage faculty and staff today to continue embracing innovative and forward-thinking approaches to the University's mission to provide outstanding educational opportunities to our students. One way to find the resources needed to achieve this is to secure grant funding," Melton said.



Following lunch, Melton presented awards to several faculty and staff members who either submitted proposals, had proposals funded or successfully implemented and managed projects and Title III activities.

Melton also extended his appreciation to all of the departments that work directly and indirectly with the Office of Sponsored Programs and Title III.

Those receiving new grant award(s) included: Dr. Timothy Holston, Christopher Lanolos, Dr. Alphonso Sanders, Dr. RoShaun Bailey, Dr. Abigail Newsome, Dr. Earlean Anderson, Dr. Candace Carter-Stevens, Dr. Latonya Garner, Dr. Manju Pande, Dr. Hattie Spencer, La Shon Brooks, Terrance Hurssey, Sonji Foster, Dr. John Zheng, Dr. Emmanuel Amadi, Marcus Golden, Dr. Raymond Williams, Dr. Swatantra Kethireddy, Dr. Kathryn Green, and Dr. Julius Ikenga.

Those receiving certificate(s) for maintaining funding sources include: Dr. Abigail Newsome, Derrick Jones, Dr. Raymond Williams, Martha Smith, Dr. Tara Self, Dr. Elizabeth Evans, Dr. Earlean Anderson, Dr. Timothy Holston, Lee Redmond, Dr. Daniel Trent, and Dr. Chukwuma Ahanonu.

Those receiving certificate(s) for proposal submissions included: Dr. Timothy Holston, Dr. Chukwuma Ahanonu, Dr. Julius Ikenga, Dr. Swatantra Kethireddy, Christopher Lanolos, Mantra Henderson, Dr. Manju Pande, and Dr. Mark Dugo.

Title III Activity Director recognized were: Darwin Cannon, Dr. Elizabeth Evans, Torrey Moore, Dr. Johnny Jones, Essie Bryant, Michael Taylor, Brandon Ford, Martin Davis, Elizabeth Hurssey, Dr. Yolanda Jones, Dameon Shaw, and Dr. Sharon Freeman.

MVSU ALUMS SPEAK AT NSEH JOINT SEMINAR



MVSU alums Ward, Pamela and Jaimyal Lindsey stopped by campus recently to speak at the Natural Sciences and Environmental Health (NSEH) joint seminar. The event was held in the Mary Crump Auditorium of the Science and Technology Building. The family offered encouragement, insight as well as career opportunities in the environmental health field to students in attendance.

HUNTER JOINS MVSU AS HEAD MBB COACH

Lindsey Hunter spent 17 years as a player in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and two more as a coach in different capacities.

Now, he is bringing his talent and love for the game to Mississippi Valley State University.

On April 30, Director of Athletics Dianthia Ford-Kee introduced Hunter as the 11th head men's basketball coach to the MVSU community.

"I am elated to welcome Coach Lindsey Hunter and his family back to the 'Oasis of the Mississippi Delta' and the SWAC (Southwestern Athletic Conference)," said Ford-Kee. "I am excited about his energy, vision, and most importantly the impact he will have on our program."

Hunter expressed his gratitude for receiving the opportunity to instill his love of the game into members of the Delta Devils basketball team.

"It has been a dream of mine to run my own program," Hunter said.

"I have had opportunities to go other places and work for other people, but at a certain point and time in your life, you have to do the things that you want to do and start your own journey. I have prepared for this," he added.

Most recently Hunter served as the assistant men's basketball coach at the University of Buffalo and in his only season on the UB coaching staff, the team finished 17-15 while earning the number three seed in the Mid-American Conference Tournament.

"We are going to work, recruit, and with everyone's help, we will welcome all of the new



recruits to our program...there will not be a time where we are not grinding and out here trying to make this better," Hunter said. "That's our job, that's my job. I love basketball—this is my life. In between these lines is where I am most comfortable."

Hunter was the 10th overall pick in the 1993 NBA Draft by the Detroit Pistons after concluding his college career at Jackson State University. Hunter played for Detroit from 1993-2000 before spending a year with the Milwaukee Bucks and the Los Angeles Lakers.

He won his first NBA Title playing for the Lakers in 2001-02.

A native of Utica, Miss., Hunter lettered three years at Jackson State University where he averaged 26.7 points per game as a senior and was named the Southwestern Athletic Conference Player of the Year. He led Jackson State to an upset of UConn in the 1993 Postseason NIT. Hunter spent his freshman season at Alcorn State University where he was named the 1989 SWAC Freshman of the Year.

MVSU CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WEEK



Pictured, from left, Zukhra Tazbiddinova of Almaty, Kazakhstan performs a dance. MVSU International students represent their countries during the Parade of Flags. International Week is an annual celebration designed to highlight the international diversity of the campus and educate the community on those cultures.

HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS



Mississippi Valley State University's Iota Kappa Chapter of Delta Mu Delta International Honor Society in Business inducted 12 new members.

The induction ceremony, hosted April 9 in MVSU's Business Education Building, was conducted by the current chapter officers. Chapter officers for the 2018-2019 school term were Lashundra Holston, president; Jamiya Edwards, vice president; LaDarrius Ross, secretary; Jeremy Lockhart, treasurer; and Dr. Mary L. Shepherd, faculty advisor.

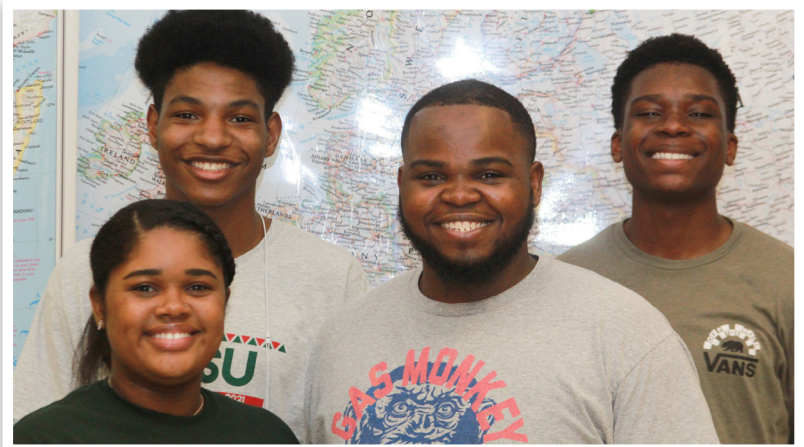
Pictured above (front row, from left) are Krystale Keatonn of Cleveland, Miss.; Sammittra Harrell of Crenshaw, Miss.; Shoneka Collins of Cleveland, Miss.; Rhodeisha Dumas of Clarksdale, Miss.; Dr. Curressia Brown, acting chair of MVSU Business Department Chair; (second row) Dr. Mary Shepherd, assistant professor of management; Raven Pitchford of Tchula, Miss.; Jamiya Edwards of Itta Bena, Miss.; Jacquelyn Banks of Pearl, Miss.; April Hendricks of Moorhead, Miss.; (third row) William Goff of Grenada, Miss.; Andrea Moore

of Greenwood, Miss.; Estelle Simms, Business instructor; Jeremy Lockhart of Moorhead, Miss.; LaDarrius Ross of Itta Bena, Miss.; Wendell Banks, Sr. of Pearl, Miss.; (fourth row) Dr. Jimmie Warren, assistant professor of Management; Mr. Naraseeyappa Rajanikanth, OMP coordinator/assistant professor; and Ladd Sims, Accounting instructor. Inductees who are not pictured include Kelly Buck of Greenwood, Miss.; Victoria Trotter of Clarksdale, Miss.; and Charles Sanders, Accounting instructor.

HISTORY PROGRAM AWARDS 5 STUDENTS

Mississippi Valley State University's History program recently awarded five history majors during the 2019 Ayer's scholarship competition. Those students awarded were: (back row, from left) Marshun Street and Caleb J. Wafer; (front row, from left), Shalae P. Ryan, Tony T. Holland and Jalen C. Dunn (not pictured). They were selected following a competition that included an application essay.

MVSU History faculty members include Professors Kathryn Green, Micah Rueber and Cassie Turnipseed.





MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

TWENTYNINETEEN

FOUNDER'S WEEK

APRIL 8-13

ONE VALLEY:
TRANSCENDING THE NOW AND
MOVING GLOBALLY TOWARD THE FUTURE





50th
GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY
REUNION
Class of 1969






The 67th Commencement



they had to teach me one lesson, ‘Boy, you’re a miracle,’ he said.

“They never let me forget the fact that I was born of a father who supported me, I was being raised by two women who adored me, and I was the child of a woman who died to have me. They told me that with a history like that, with a history like yours, you should have nothing but great expectations because you will do great things.”

McTeer said that today’s occasion was one worth celebrating.

“This is the most wonderful day of every college,” he said. “This is the day that we get to see the product of everything that has been done. You are that product.”

He then shared with the Class of 2019 several key points to take away as they begin their new journey.

The first was to believe in yourself.

“Knowledge is about changing the world and making it a better place. You are here to make the world a better place—not just for yourself, but for your families and your communities,” he said.

McTeer said he found his life’s work in Freedom City, Mississippi, located just south of Greenville.

“There, black folks were being kicked-off of the plantation solely for the reason that they dared to register to vote...I learned from them and soon found out that these were some of the smartest people I had ever met in my life,” he said. “That is how I discovered I was a miracle; I had a passion, and I knew, for the first time in my life, what I wanted to do.”

He then encouraged graduates to find their own passion.

“You have to find out what your passion is. You have to discover what it is that you want to do, and then you have to go about doing everything necessary to train for that position, to work for that position and gain experience.”

McTeer also encouraged those in attendance to find a mentor.

“Mentors come in all shapes and sizes...find someone to help lead you along your path,” he said.

He closed by reminding graduates of the importance of giving back.

“Learn to give to the people that gave to you. That is an obligation that we hold to our family, to our communities. If you think about all the people that helped you down the path—which one of them will you become?” said McTeer. “Look at the children today praying and hoping

that they’ll one day be sitting in your chair. You owe them that obligation.”

During the ceremony, graduates Stormy Green of Southaven, MS, (B.S. in Health, Physical Education and Recreation) and Patrice Otero of Greenwood, MS, (Bachelor of Science in English Education) received special recognition for earning a 4.0 cumulative grade point average.

Also featured during the ceremony were 40 “Golden Graduates,” who commemorated 50 years since their graduation as the 17th graduating class of the then Mississippi Valley State College.

“This event really touches me because I know how special this is and I know what this means for you all as graduates, but I understand even more what this means for your families,” said MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs during closing remarks.

“You all are going to be world changers. In today’s world, that’s what we need, and we know that here at Mississippi Valley State University we change lives. I can’t thank you all enough for choosing us to get a higher education. This degree means a lot, but the education you’ve received is priceless.”

Simon *continued from cover*

“You have to make a lot of sacrifices as a band director anyway, and to be a female band director, the sacrifices you have to make are definitely tough,” she explained. “You have to watch out for two families—your family at home and your family in the classroom.”

Simon’s passion for music began in middle school.

“We had to take either band or choir. I’m a horrible singer, so they told me I should take band,” she chuckled.

Blossoming into a talented clarinet player, Simon’s high school band director encouraged her to seriously consider pursuing a career in music education.

“I am elated that I chose music,” she said. “In high school, I wanted to be a brain surgeon, but I’m so much happier with my choice.”

After high school, Simon attended MVSU, where she played in the “Mean Green Marching Machine” band under the direction of the legendary Leonard “Chief” Tramiel.

See “Simon” page 15



MVSU HOSTS 2019 RESEARCH DAY

MVSU hosted its 2019 Research Day on April 16. During the event, themed “Sustaining Research Momentum,” undergraduate and graduate students were given the opportunity to showcase their research and scholarly findings.



MVSU VISITS URBAN ACADEMY



Pictured (front row, from left) are Urban Prep's Eric Foster, Jonathan Highsmith, Marvin Ransom, Jylan Smit, and Javon Burley who have all been accepted to MVSU. They were pictured along with (standing, from left) MVSU Interim Vice President for University Advancement Dameon Shaw and Director of Alumni Affairs Kylon Alford Windfield.



Mississippi Valley State University Interim Vice President of University Advancement Dameon Shaw and Director of Alumni Affairs Kylon Alford-Windfield visited Chicago's Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men (Englewood Campus) on May 1 to recruit and congratulate several students on their acceptance into MVSU.

Located in the inner city of Chicago, Urban Prep is the nation's first all-male public charter high school. Targeting at-risk African males, the school has been celebrated for maintaining a 100% college acceptance rate.

Simon *continued from page 13*

“Mr. Tramiel did not play any games. He gave me the discipline and that solid foundation needed to succeed,” she said. “My time at MVSU definitely prepared me to be a band director.”

Simon said her goal has never been to serve at an affluent music school.

“I knew I was a good teacher and my plight has always been to bring good, comprehensive music education programs at schools that wouldn’t normally get it.”

Simon brings a strong background in music education. After graduating from MVSU in 1995, she received a Master of Education degree from Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

“I thought I wanted to be a music administrator so that I could go into the schools and help band directors be great. But then I realized that I would never teach again—I would be sitting behind a desk for the rest on my life, and I was like ‘No,’” she said.

She decided to continue her education at Tennessee State University, where she received a Master of Music Education degree while working for Memphis City Schools.

In 2013, she earned a Ph.D. in Music Education from Florida State University and subsequently served at Coahoma Community College from 2014 to 2017 as the assistant director of bands before joining MVSU.

“To come home has been the icing on the cake,” said Simon. “I always knew I wanted to be a college band director, but to be able to come and give back to the university that helped me to be successful has been great.”

Her goals include taking the Mean Green Marching Machine to a new level.

“I would like for us to be a force to be reckoned with. I’m built with a mindset for greatness, and I want that for Valley and the band,” she said.

As for breaking ceilings, for Simon, it’s just a part of the job.

“I don’t look at it like that. I just do what I do,” she said.

valuable resource for students.

“The MCIS faculty and staff encourage all of our students to seek internships starting their freshmen year,” said Garner. “Internships are a proven way to gain relevant knowledge, skills, and experience while establishing important connections in the field.

Garner said she’s expecting great things from Ibrahim and other MCIS students putting their skills to work with internships this summer.

“We are very proud of our students who obtain internships. They open up many doors of opportunities, and many of our students are even offered jobs from their internship site,” Dr. Garner added.

To learn more about MVSU’s MCIS program, call (662) 254-3422 or visit www.mvsu.edu.

WELCOME ABOARD

			
Khari Butler <i>HR Specialist</i> Human Resources	Byron Cartledge <i>Police Captain</i> University Police	Ramirez Lee <i>Bus Driver</i> Mass Transit	Melissa Martin <i>Accounts Payable Travel Clerk</i> Business & Finance
			
Matthew McCass <i>Director, Sports Information</i> Athletics	Falecia Moore <i>Security Officer</i> University Police	Latoya Parker <i>Security Officer</i> University Police	Augustus Robinson Jr. <i>Counselor</i> Financial Aid
			
Brandon Robinson <i>Programmer/Announcer</i> Mass Communication	Willie Totten <i>Asst. Football Coach</i> Athletics	Ezandra Washington <i>LRC Media Clerk</i> J.H. White Library	Danisha Williams <i>Director of Admissions</i> Admission and Recruitment

Two
Minutes
with...

Elizabeth Dixon

Advisor, Student Support Services

Tell us a little about yourself and your background.

I am a Greenwood native and a graduate of Mississippi Valley State University, where I received a Bachelor of Social Work degree. While attending Valley, I became a part of the Student Support Services (SSS) program, where I completed my social work internship and work-study under Ms. Sandra Brim. In June 2014, I was extended the opportunity by SSS Director Martha J. Smith to join the SSS team. Today, I am excited to be a part of the MVSU staff, particularly in my capacity at SSS, so that I can give back to the beautiful university that afforded me an opportunity.

How do you approach providing service?

I believe it is better to build a rapport with the person so that you can better serve the

needs of that individual. Once I collect and analyze the data, I then find a satisfactory solution that fits the needs of both the student and the department.

Where are we most likely to find you when you are not at work?

When I'm not working as an advisor, I can be found at home watching television.

What is something we would be surprised to learn about you?

I am the type of person who will do anything to help others. I love giving back and doing whatever I can to help take care of everyone. I will make sure others have, even if it means I have to go without having it for myself.



COMMUNIQUÉ

The Communiqué is published for faculty, staff, alumni and supporters of Mississippi Valley State University by the Office of Communications and Marketing

Editorial material should be sent to news@mvsu.edu or mailed to:

**OFFICE OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND MARKETING**
Mississippi Valley State University
MVSU 7233 • 14000 Hwy. 82 W.
Itta Bena, MS 38941-1400

For more information, call 662.254.3578
or email news@mvsu.edu

Dameon A. Shaw
*Interim Vice President for
University Advancement*

Brittany Davis-Green
Director

John McCall
Senior Graphic Designer

Joseph Cotton
Associate Graphic Designer

Donell Maxie
Communications Specialist

Shanae Curry
Project Coordinator



Dr. Jerryl Briggs
President



@Valley.State



@MVSUDEVILS



@mvsu1950



@mvsu1950

New Hashtag: #GOMVSU

Mississippi Valley State University complies with all applicable laws regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity in all its activities and programs and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or group affiliation, age, disability, handicap, or status as a veteran or disabled veteran.