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# MVSU REMEMBERS VP OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS DR. CONSTANCE BLAND



"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."—William Ward

Dr. Constance Bland was an inspiration for students and those fortunate enough to know and work with her at Mississippi Valley State University and beyond.

In 1991, Bland joined the faculty at Mississippi Valley State University as an energetic instructor, eager to nurture her students into competent and capable professionals.

Her passion and love for teaching were evident as she worked her way up to become an assistant professor in 1995 and department chair soon after in 1999.

In 2014, when she was promoted again as the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Bland never lost focus on what was important—her students.

She served as the University's chief academic officer with diligence and candor until the very end.

Bland passed away Tuesday, Oct. 9, 2018. She was 60-years-old.

MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr. expressed profound sympathy to Bland's family and friends in a letter to the university community following her untimely death.

"As the chief academic officer, Dr. Bland has played a critical role in creating a culture of academic excellence at the university. Her unwavering dedication has truly helped to keep Valley in Motion. She will be missed dearly by her MVSU family," Briggs said.

An avid researcher and writer, Bland was the author of several scholarly publications and helped to secure more than \$2 million in external funding for the University. She was the mastermind behind the University's annual Women in Science and Technology (WIST) conference, which has, since 1991, inspired hundreds of young girls to pursue STEM careers and majors.

Dr. Latonya Garner, chair of MVSU's MCIS department, credits Bland for her career and educational success.

"Dr. Constance Bland was an exemplary leader. After receiving my Ph.D., Dr. Bland took a chance on me," said Garner.

"From day one, she has been my role model. When I first began working at Mississippi Valley State University, Dr. Bland did her best to mold me into a better educator. I can truly say that the impact that Dr. Bland has made on my life will forever be remembered, and I'm eternally grateful that I had the opportunity to know her in addition to working under her tutelage," Garner added.

Currently a computer technician for the Desoto County School District, MVSU alumnus Bradford Fair of Clarksdale said it was Bland who influenced him to receive a bachelor's degree in Computer Science.

"It was the best decision I ever made in regard to my career path. Dr. Bland was one of a kind. She was, in my opinion, brilliant, professional, and, most of all, compassionate and caring for her students," said Fair.

# EVANS NAMED MVSU'S INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



Mississippi Valley State University President Dr. Jerryl Briggs has announced Dr. Elizabeth Evans as the Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs.

In this role, Evans will serve as the institution's chief academic officer, overseeing the Office of Academic Affairs. As a member of the institution's Executive and Extended Cabinets, she will also play an integral role in the overall management of the institution.

"Dr. Evans has had a remarkable career, both in the United States Air Force and here at Mississippi Valley State University," said Briggs. "She is extremely committed to our students and university's success, and I look forward to her continuing to move our academic mission forward."

Evans, who most recently served as the associate vice president of academic affairs, said she is humbled by the opportunity to serve. "My experience in the military and the field of education have converged to prepare me for this executive administrative position. I embrace the opportunity and welcome supportive ideas," she said.

A 1975 graduate of Gentry High School in Indianola, Miss., Evans earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from Mississippi Valley State University, where she was commissioned as a Distinguished Graduate of the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) program (1979).

She also earned a Master of Arts Degree in Public Management from the University of Houston-Clear Lake, Texas in 1986, and a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Public Policy and Administration from Mississippi State University in 2012.

She is a 24-year veteran of the United States Air Force, where she spent the first 20 years of that time in the "Space Operations" career field working with satellites and their role in the defense of the United States of America. The remaining four years were spent recruiting, educating, training, motivating, and selecting college students for military service.

Her years of active military service and specialized training are foundational pillars for her experience in leading various technical, operational and research/study groups, leading various groups and projects, managing organizational budgets, and developing and implementing organizational policies. She retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in November 2003

Evans joined the Mississippi Valley State University faculty in the fall of 2003, serving in the Social Sciences Department. Her service included teaching as well as membership in and leadership of various university and departmental committees, academic program coordinator, program internship coordinator, membership in and leadership of the MVSU Faculty Senate, and acting department chair.

See "Interim" page 14

## HEATHER MCTEER-TONEY KEYNOTES ANNUAL AUGUSTA C. WHITE SCHOLARSHIP



The Mississippi Valley State University community, alumni and supporters gathered for a good cause during the Annual Augusta C. White Scholarship Luncheon Thursday, Oct. 18.

Formerly the First Lady's Scholarship Luncheon, the annual event has become a preeminent MVSU Homecoming event, purposed to raise scholarship funds for well deserving, academically sound students who attend MVSU.

This year's event was dedicated to the University's second first lady, Mrs. Beverly Boykins, who attended the luncheon with her two daughters—Karen Cooper and Rhea Allen.

Hosted at the Historic Elks Lodge in Downtown Greenwood, the classy event included an opulent meal and live music from MVSU music majors Courtney Greer and Karl Carter. The keynote address was delivered by Heather McTeer-Toney, president of The Resolutions Firm. Elected at the age of 27, Toney was the first African American, first female and youngest to serve as mayor of Greenville from 2004-2012.

A graduate of Spelman College and Tulane University School of Law, Toney said MVSU is her adopted family and that she will always cherishes the time she spent working and serving at the institution.

"Valley has adopted me, and I have adopted Valley. I have my Valley alumni gear at home, and I wear it frequently," she said.

Toney told those in attendance that when she grows up, she aspires to be a church mother, whom she compared MVSU's inaugural first lady, Mrs. Augusta C. White.

See "Luncheon" page 14

# MVSU EARNS 4<sup>TH</sup> CONSECUTIVE SOUL BOWL BLOOD DRIVE WIN



Mississippi Valley State University is once again the winners of the Annual Mississippi Blood Services Soul Bowl Blood Drive. The annual competition is sponsored by MVSU's Zeta Phi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. This year, the \$1,500 scholarship winner was student Tyrese Kirkwood of Crenshaw. Pictured, from left, are Zeta Phi members Justin Baymon, Nick Berkes, Brandon McCall, Teco Peavy and Jordan Freeman, Dr. Jacquline Gibson-Preastley, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dawn Woods, MBS Delta marketing representative, MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs Sr.; Olivia Draine, Regions Bank representative; Kirkwood; Zeta Phi members De'Kendrick Clark and Marderius Mann; (back, left) Antonio Brownlow, Zeta Phi advisor; and Kim Riley Regions Bank representative.

Last month, Mississippi Valley State University faced-off against Jackson State University and Alcorn State University in the Annual Soul Bowl Blood Drive, a friendly competition to see which university can get the most blood donations over three days.

This year, MVSU has once again come out on top.

Organized each year by the Zeta Phi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. on MVSU's campus, the announcement marks the fourth consecutive year that The Valley has earned the Soul Bowl Trophy.

In addition to the trophy and bragging rights, the winner of a \$1,500 scholarship was also selected. Emily Austin, Mississippi Blood Services (MBS) marketing & communications manager, pulled this year's lucky winner—Tyrese Kirkwood of Crenshaw, MS.

During the competition, MVSU Alphas managed to register a total of 111 people, producing 85 units of blood.



## MISSISSIPPI BLOOD SERVICES

"When someone donates one unit/pint of blood, that donation helps to save up to three individuals' lives. Just think, 85-units of blood were donated at Mississippi Valley State during the Soul Bowl, so the lives of 255 fellow Mississippians who desperately needed it most were saved," said MBS Delta Representative Dawn Woods.

Jordan Freeman, president of the Zeta Phi Chapter, expressed his gratitude for those who supported the blood drive.

"We are thankful to everyone for their support during this event. Encouraging people to donate blood is an important mission for us, and it would not have been possible without the help of the campus community," Freeman said.

According to Freeman, the best part about hosting the blood drive is that its impact extends beyond the competition.

"The blood drive is important to us because we become a part of the effort to save several lives with the blood donations we collect," he said. "It's also an opportunity for us to inform others about how helpful their donation can be. It's a great feeling being able to help those in need and to extend our knowledge to others."

During this year's Soul Bowl Blood Drive competition, Alcorn totaled 34 units of blood and Jackson State totaled 29 units of blood.

## HIGHER PURPOSE CO. HOSTS ANNUAL WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT AT MVSU







The Clarksdale-based nonprofit, social impact agency Higher Purpose Co. teamed up with MVSU on Oct. 4 to host its 3rd Annual Money Purpose Success Women's Empowerment Summit. About 100 students and community members attended the summit, designed to help women entrepreneurs launch or elevate

their business. Session topics included: "Legal Advice: Selecting your Business Entity"; "Real Estate Investing 101: Building Generational Wealth"; "Financial Literacy: Know Debt"; "Building a Successful Tech Company"; and "Entrepreneurship 101: Starting Your Own Business."

Higher Purpose Co. was co-founded by MVSU alumnus Timothy Lampkin ('08), and its mission includes building community wealth in low-income areas of Mississippi by supporting the ownership of businesses, land, and culture.

## MVSU, CIEE ENCOURAGES STUDENTS' INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WITH FREE PASSPORTS

More than 100 Mississippi Valley State University students will now be able to travel the world thanks to a partnership with MVSU and the nation's oldest and largest study abroad organization.

MVSU Office of International Programs teamed up with the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) to host a Passport Caravan event Thursday, Oct. 11, giving 117 pre-registered MVSU students the opportunity to complete the process to receive a passport at no cost.

Valued at \$145, the passports are good for ten years and will provide students the opportunity to travel, study or work in a foreign country.

While CIEE picked up the costs for the first 50 MVSU students who signed up and had the proper documentation, organizer Dr. Kathie Golden said that MVSU faculty, staff and community members sponsored passports for an additional 67 students.

"I am humbled by MVSU's and the community at-large's response to our request to match the 50 passports sponsored by CIEE," said Golden "MVSU faculty and staff, local alumni and friends of the Office of International Programs made it possible for us to exceed the match. Because of this response, we were able to provide passports to all of the students who signed-up to participate in the Passport Caravan."











Kighlights

GOSPEL CONCERT & SGA CARNIVAL

















#### HOMECOMING Kighlights • PARADE (ITTA BENA)























#### HOME**COMING** \* HONORING THE ROYAL COURT • BREAST CANCER WALK

































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#### HOMECOMING Highlights • COMEDY SHOW • CAMPUS PARADE































### HOMECOMING Kighlights • STEP SHOW





















#### HOME**COMING Kighlights** • AUGUSTA C. WHITE SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON





















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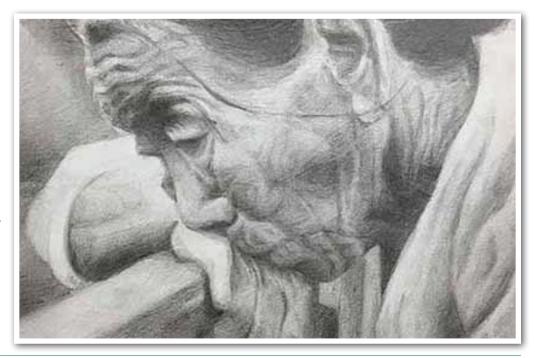
# MVSU PROFESSOR'S WORK SELECTED FOR DISPLAY IN JURIED EXHIBITION

Sodam Lee, an assistant professor in Mississippi Valley State University's Department of Fine Art, artwork "My Inspiration I" was recently selected for the juried exhibition "Activating Apparatus Vol.2", hosted from Oct. 13-20 in Atlanta, GA.

Activating Apparatus Vol.2 is a juried exhibition to illuminate unseen perspectives in Atlanta's art scene and to celebrate the multifaceted women residing in the southeast areas.

The artwork featured and elderly women whose life was severely suffered in the aftermath of Korean War during 1950's in South Korea. Lee attempts to reflect human dignity and persistence through the woman who survived the devastating wartime hardship.

To learn more about the exhibit, visit www. strangematteratl.com



#### Interim continued from page 2

Faculty Senate, and acting department chair.

She began serving as the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in Feb. 2017. Her tenure included developing and implementing policies, procedures and practices designed to ensure effective delivery of academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Among her responsibilities were planning and supervising the improvement of academic programs and faculty development, collaborating with department chairs and faculty to implement the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), communicating and advancing the mission and core values of the University by ensuring that Academic Affairs has positioned the University's academic programs to carry out such, and collaborating with senior leadership in the periodic review of academic programs to monitor the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) program productivity.

Evans' primary interest is in student achievement. She believes that teaching is more than the giving of information; it is working to ensure learning takes place.

Evans is the mother of two children, Constance Caesar and Lawrence Caesar, and one granddaughter, Caitlyn Caesar.

#### Luncheon continued from page 2



"I want to be a church mother because of the level of influence that they have, and that's the level of influence Mother White had. Parents sent their babies to MVSU knowing that 'Mama White' would take care of them."

Toney continued her speech, entitled, 'Moving from Outstanding to Standing Out" by highlighting the uniqueness and cultural richness of the Mississippi Delta.

"We have to realize the power that we have as a people and community to make change," she said. "We as a community cannot fail it's not an option."

She also encouraged the Delta community to work together.

"We have to come from a place where we think we're on an island. It is us working together as one unit that makes us successful," she said.

Toney closed by stating that we all have a charge to help raise the next generation as Mrs. Augusta White did.

"I think of Augusta White as being the ultimate 'Queen Mother," said Toney. "She's the person responsible for raising the next generation of kings and queens. Her power was her ability to influence the next generation. She assured that what she put into them was put into others.

Title sponsors for this year's scholarship luncheon included The City of Greenwood and Margaret W. Clark.

#### Bland continued from cover

One of Fair's fondest memories of Dr. Bland was how she pushed him to do something that he did not understand the importance of at the time.

"There was a J.C. Watts Foundation competition going on, and it required individuals to design a webpage. No one in the department participated, and Dr. Bland came in the room furious and expressed her level of disappointment that we hadn't submitted anything into the competition," Fair recalled.

"I remember she said, 'We are not doing anything today, and it's mandatory that you go and submit a web page by the deadline today at 5 p.m.' So, I did just what was asked of me. During our final exams, students had to do a one-on-one in Dr. Bland's office. While I was taking my exam, her phone rang, and it was one of the deans. Dr. Bland hung up the phone and said, 'I can't believe it! You won the J.C. Watts web page design contest. You will receive the maximum award which is \$10,000.' She was so excited that until this day I'm not sure if I even finished my final exam," Fair said with a chuckle.

Dr. Elizabeth Evans, associate vice president for Academic Affairs, recalled how Bland's love for teaching went far beyond the classroom.

"She touched so many people with her graceful way of sharing the things she knew and had experience with," said Evans. "She had a heart for teaching and taught those around her—whether in the classroom, meetings, conversations, writing, research or even in times of her quiet resolve. She modeled the expectations bestowed on others."

Evans, who worked side-by-side with Bland for many years, said Bland was an exemplary leader.

"As a leader, she was strategic in devising policies, processes, and plans for future organizational growth and sustainment. She encouraged others to push themselves and soar to accomplish their dreams. Her magnetic personality made others comfortable and secure in their abilities. Let us not forget her smile which was her persuasion; it melted away contention and anxiety," she said.

Despite the enormity of her responsibilities, Bland served with humility and grace.

"Her walk with God was evident as she gave true humble service in her many roles throughout the University; culminating with huge and demanding responsibilities as the chief academic officer," Evans said. "To say she will be missed doesn't begin to describe the loss felt at Mississippi Valley State University, the surrounding communities (especially Dog Bog, Mississippi), the state and many places across the nation."



### **WELCOME ABOARD**



Demarius Bush Recruiter/Counselor Admissions



Lemarrick Green Sr.
Counselor/
Support Services Coordinator
HEP\*



Accaiya Evans
Asst. Men's/Womens Track Coach
Athletics



Byron Keys Academic Advisor Student Support Services

\*High School Equivalency Program



#### **Portia Collins**

Special Events Manager

#### Tell us a little about yourself and your background.

I am a native of Grenada, MS, but Greenwood has been my home for several years now. I graduated from MVSU in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. In 2014 I earned a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in Nonprofit Organizational Management from Pennsylvania State University. I am presently the Special Events Manager here at MVSU and I am also the Principal of my own nonprofit consultancy, Constat Consulting and Services, LLC. I am married to the best husband, Mikhail Collins, and we have an active 10-month old daughter, Emerie Mikhaela.

#### How do you approach providing service?

I believe that service is rooted in humility, love, and sacrifice. If you truly care about people and impacting them in a way that yields life-long results, then you'll make every effort to serve them in the best way possible. Everyday we are provided with

opportunities to serve people on our jobs, in our communities, and especially at home. The measure of our lives isn't found in how much "stuff" we acquire in life, nor is it found in the accolades we receive. It is found in how we love others and express that love through the way that we serve them.

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

You can find me enjoying a few of my favorite things: cooking/dining, reading, writing/blogging or playing video games on PS4.

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

I am a Christian Bible teacher, writer/blogger, and podcast host. I adore God and I enjoy studying and teaching Scripture. In 2016, I started "She Shall Be Called" (SSBC) – a Christian women's organization that focuses on Bible literacy. To learn more, you can check out our website: www.sheshallbecalled.com.



## **COMMUNIQUÉ**

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Dr. Jerryl Briggs President



ON VICUALITY

@MVSUDEVILS

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.