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Spring 2016

### Illuminated Magazine

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ETSU SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

SPRING 2016

# ILLUMINATED

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH MAGAZINE

MAGAZINE



VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2



# ARTICLES

- 04 **FROM THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**
- 06 **GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS SPECIALIST**  
Ivy Buerkle  
Graduate Student Success Specialist
- 08 **WHERE ARE THEY NOW**  
Monique Richard  
Clinical Nutrition, M.S., 2013
- 09 **WHERE ARE THEY NOW**  
David Mazure  
Art, M.F.A., 2009
- 10 **CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKING**  
Art, M.F.A.  
Graduate Student: Marissa Angel
- 12 **WHERE ARE THEY NOW**  
Veronica Limeberry  
Liberal Studies, M.A.L.S., Gender and Diversity Studies, 2014
- 13 **WHERE ARE THEY NOW**  
Wilhelmina Van Dijk  
Early Childhood Special Education, M.Ed., 2014
- 14 **DEFYING BLACK HYPER-MASCULINITY**  
New Media Studio, M.A.  
Graduate Student: Benjamin Moten
- 16 **ACCESSIBLE LITERATURE FOR ALL**  
Special Education, M.Ed.  
Graduate Student: Andrew Baxter
- 18 **WHERE ARE THEY NOW**  
Adria McLaughlin  
Sociology, M.A., 2015
- 19 **WHERE ARE THEY NOW**  
Dr. Harry Williams  
Educational Leadership, Ed.D. , 2002
- 20 **MORE THAN STORYTELLING**  
Reading, M.A.  
Graduate Student: Wenny Elrod



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## FROM THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The East Tennessee State University School of Graduate Studies is proud to present ILLUMINATED, a magazine that showcases the excellent work of our graduate students and their faculty advisors. There are over 2200 students enrolled in graduate programs at ETSU. Illuminated presents some of our students' research and creative works that make meaningful contributions to various disciplines, and contribute to our strong graduate programs. Illuminated features research and creative projects that are currently happening on campus, and provides updates on alumni of ETSU graduate programs.

Enjoy!

Celia McIntosh, Ph.D.  
Dean

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Associate Dean

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Assistant Dean

## GRADUATE STUDENTS & ADVISORS

**ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH AND WOULD LIKE TO SHARE YOUR HYPOTHESIS OR FINDINGS? YOU MIGHT BE A PERFECT FIT FOR ILLUMINATED. THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO GET INVOLVED.**

### FOR CURRENT GRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR ADVISORS:

Are you or one of your graduate students working on a culminating experience (e.g., thesis, dissertation, capstone)? Your research could receive additional exposure through Illuminated Magazine and help educate the rest of the campus about your department and program. This is a unique opportunity to get your work recognized!

### FOR CURRENT GRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR ADVISORS:

Did you or one of your students get accepted into an excellent doctoral program or receive an excellent career opportunity? We want to hear about it! Share your story in the "Where Are They Going?" section.

### FOR FORMER GRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR ADVISORS:

Do you know an outstanding student who graduated from ETSU more than a year ago? We want to hear from them! The "Where Are They Now?" section features former ETSU graduate students who are now professionals in positions across the country.

**FORM AVAILABLE:** [http://www.etsu.edu/gradstud/documents/illuminated\\_nomination\\_form.pdf](http://www.etsu.edu/gradstud/documents/illuminated_nomination_form.pdf)

*For more information on nominating students or getting featured in Illuminated, please contact: Dr. Karin Bartoszuk, bartoszu@etsu.edu*



# GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS SPECIALIST



Ivy Buerkle outside of her office in the Sherrod Library.

WRITTEN BY SARA HOWARD - PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN MOTEN

The roles of the Graduate Student Success Specialist (GSSS) are vital for the success of many graduate students. Ivy Buerkle is a Master of Social Work candidate who is currently filling the role as a part of her internship. The GSSS provides services to graduate students in a variety of different ways:

- **ASSISTING GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE UNEXPECTED LIFE EVENTS.**
- **SETTING REALISTIC PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GOALS.**
- **IDENTIFYING LIFE-WORK BALANCE ISSUES.**



Each session with the GSSS is confidential\*, and graduate students are able to discuss private matters without embarrassment. Together, the GSSS and the student are able to formulate a path for moving forward. Many graduate students struggle to balance the academic workload, a professional job, and family responsibilities, which is not an easy task for anyone. Created as an initiative of the Social Work Department and supported by the School of Graduate Studies, the GSSS boasts an 80 percent success rate for students to continue their education and/or reach graduation.

Part of the Graduate Student Success Specialist's position is to connect students to resources both at ETSU and in the surrounding communities. On campus, one of the resources available for student support is Bucky's Food Pantry. It was founded in 2012, because food insecurity was identified as a major issue on campus. Bucky's Food Pantry aids students and staff who are experiencing food insecurity by providing supplies twice a month. Bucky's Food Pantry not only provides food, but also personal hygiene items such as deodorant, toothbrushes, and soap. Baby supplies such as diapers or formula are available as donations permit. Donations from ETSU faculty, staff, students, and community members fund the food pantry. Donations can be made to Bucky's Food Pantry by placing items in the blue bins around campus. A full list of donation locations and acceptable items can be found at <http://www.etsu.edu/foodpantry/default.aspx>. The application to receive services from Bucky's Food Pantry can be found through the same link.

In addition to reducing the strain of food insecurity,

the GSSS also connects students to other support services. For students who are worried about academic performance, the GSSS can provide a multitude of support options. For aid with research projects, the graduate student librarians are an excellent resource for help with databases and citation managers. For students seeking academic help, the GSSS connects students with the Center for Academic Achievement. It provides tutoring services in a variety of subjects, including sessions for graduate-level writing. The Counseling Center is one resource to help students with mental health issues. The GSSS facilitates appointments to the Counseling Center. Also, the GSSS maintains strong community ties to provide resources by maintaining contacts with local charitable associations that can provide assistance to graduate students when available.

The role of the GSSS extends beyond just linking graduate students to support services. A periodic newsletter that highlights topics of interest for graduate students is another aspect of the offered services. Previous issues include topics such as how to de-stress during the holiday break or how to manage anxiety. The GSSS also speaks at orientations and department meetings to make students and professors alike aware of her availability and services.

Graduate students who are interested in the services described should schedule an appointment. Contact information can be found at <http://www.etsu.edu/gradstud/successservice.aspx>. The office is located on the fourth floor of the Sherrod Library in room 462. Office hours are posted on the door as well as on the link listed above. ■

\*Unless students pose a threat to themselves or anyone else.





## MONIQUE RICHARD

*Clinical Nutrition, M.S., 2013*

### WHAT DEGREE DID YOU EARN AT ETSU?

I earned an M.S. in Clinical Nutrition in 2013.

### WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION, AND WHAT DOES THE POSITION ENTAIL?

I am the owner of Nutrition-In-Sight, ([www.eatrightx.com](http://www.eatrightx.com)) and I specialize in counseling, consulting, and nutrition communication services. I counsel clients using integrative and functional medical nutrition therapy (IFMNT) for eating disorders, diabetes, plant-based nutrition, sports nutrition, and weight management. I also create meal plans, recommend recipes, recommend dietary supplements, lead presentations, speak at engagements, conduct cooking demonstrations, promote nutrition through the media, and work with corporate wellness programs.

I also am an integrative clinical dietitian at State of Franklin Healthcare Associates in Johnson City, Tennessee. I provide counseling and consultation for patients regarding nutritional and dietary needs to improve overall health outcomes such as weight loss and A1C levels. I educate and provide medical nutrition therapy (MNT) and IFMNT for a variety of health conditions as well as coordinate care with physicians, nurse practitioners, and other providers.

In addition, I am also a yoga instructor, writer for a monthly column in the *Tri-Cities Health and Wellness Magazine*, and involved in many professional organizations. Currently I am the Chair of the Dietitians in Integrative and Functional Medicine (4100+ members) within the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

### WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF YOUR POSITION?

Since I have my own practice and work in clinics, I see a variety of different people with a range of nutritional needs and questions. Nutrition is such a popular topic that is directly related to one's health. Yet, the amount of knowledge and misleading information available can be staggering and quite dangerous. I am always interested to hear stories or questions from patients and clients who are just looking for some basic insight (hence part of my business name) from

a reliable source that they can easily apply to their own lives. My patients keep it interesting. Although my cases can be challenging, my patients also keep me intrigued. One patient told me today, "I came out in the cold just to see you, to tell you that you are making a difference (in my life)." These moments make me want to be even better, so I can continue to help others.

### HOW DID YOUR EDUCATION AT ETSU IMPACT YOUR LIFE AND CURRENT POSITION?

The coordinated program and faculty support was so beneficial to me as a graduate student. I was able to really gain additional critical thinking skills relevant to my profession and was challenged. Yet, I was nurtured by an outstanding group of faculty. Each and every one of the faculty in the nutrition department, dental hygiene department, clinical and community preceptors, and my mentors truly hold a special place in my heart and have played an important part in many of my accomplishments. The instructors also provided me the freedom to develop a deeper passion to apply dietetics to many areas of my life by allowing me to attend both domestic and international conferences. This encouraged me to serve in leadership roles and investigate the possibilities for learning in additional educational and professional programs. I am grateful and appreciative for my experience at ETSU.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE GRADUATE STUDENTS?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. I am an inquirer. At times, this character trait can make one feel awkward or annoying, but if questions are not asked, answers will never be given. Learning really begins with a question. Also, questions can lead to opportunities. Your interest will most likely be overlooked or handed over to someone else if you are not willing to ask for the opportunity. Get involved. Be patient. Be kind. Be respectful. Remember the more you put in to an experience, the more you will get out of that experience. Anything is possible wherever you are. ■



## DAVID MAZURE

*Art, M.F.A., 2009*

### WHAT DEGREE DID YOU EARN AT ETSU?

I received my Master of Fine Arts in 2009. My area of study was printmaking.

### WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION, AND WHAT DOES THE POSITION ENTAIL?

I am currently an associate professor of Art and Design at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania. My job entails teaching three studio courses per semester. These courses include: Illustration, Drawing 2 (Figure Drawing), Basic Drawing, 2D Design, Letterforms, Design for Communication, Infographics & Data Visualization, Graphic Design 1, and Graphic Design 2. I am also one of two faculty mentors in our newly created, student-run design agency called New Mind Design. I am an academic advisor for students in our Art and Design program as well. I also serve on several university committees.

### WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF YOUR POSITION?

I find everything about my position interesting. Everything except for grading, that is.

Some of the best parts of my position include the following:

- Though I am constantly working, being a professor never feels like a job, because I enjoy every second of it.
- I am always presented with new challenges and am never bored.
- I enjoy meeting and getting to know new people every semester.
- I love seeing students develop and seeing the product of my hard work when students succeed.
- I enjoy working alongside other faculty and staff members who have the same vision, goals, and ideals.

### HOW DID YOUR EDUCATION AT ETSU IMPACT YOUR LIFE AND CURRENT POSITION?

I can honestly say that getting my M.F.A. at ETSU was a life-changing experience. Before attending graduate school, I was working as a fashion designer in New York City. I had just recently been promoted to Senior Designer and was well on my way to becoming Creative Director when the truths inherent in the fashion industry hit me. I was using my talents and efforts to make tons of money for people that already had tons of money. By participating in the fashion industry, I was supporting unacceptable working conditions for my moral standards. Upon

returning from a business trip overseas, one of the salespeople from the company I worked for showed me images of the factory conditions in one of our overseas factories. After seeing those images, I decided to seek a new direction for myself and be an advocate for positive change in the world. Teaching was the most impactful way of pursuing this life goal. I decided to attend graduate school, not only because I wished to pursue a teaching career, but also I wanted to complement my graphic design and illustration experience by learning fine arts practices, specifically in the area of traditional printmaking, to make me more versatile as an art and design instructor.

When I decided to apply to ETSU and move to Asheville, North Carolina, my future wife and I decided to take a tour of the campus and learn about the M.F.A. program. Professor of Sculpture Catherine Murray took us on a tour of the campus and answered all of our questions. She asked me when I was planning on applying to graduate school. I responded, "Well, for this coming fall semester, of course." To which, she replied that I had missed the deadline by a month. Not a great start to my graduate school career, however, Catherine made an exception to allow me to apply late. For this, I am eternally grateful.

Though these comments might sound obligatory, they are absolutely true. I learned invaluable lessons from the professors with whom I closely worked. These lessons I continue to apply to my artwork and in my classroom. I would like to thank Catherine Murray, Travis Graves, Scott Koterbay, David Dixon, and Ralph Slatton for all of their efforts and support on my behalf through the years. Without their guidance, I would not be the artist or teacher that I am today. I have only fond memories of my graduate school experience at ETSU.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE GRADUATE STUDENTS?

Never underestimate any life experience. Never underestimate anyone. You can learn a great deal from both. Put in your best effort in absolutely everything. No one ever blamed failure on a hard work ethic. ■





Marissa Angel

# CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKING

WRITTEN BY SARA HOWARD - PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN MOTEN

For Marissa Angel, art and art making have always been a part of her life. Her parents, particularly her artist mother, encouraged Marissa to explore her creative abilities. As an undergraduate student, she discovered a passion for experimenting with different artistic techniques. For her, pursuing an M.F.A. was the logical progression of her academic and artistic journey. She chose ETSU from a plethora of programs for a multitude of reasons. For example, the intriguing work of the professors in the program as well as the mountains of Johnson City reminding her of her hometown in North Carolina served as determining factors.

Throughout her career, most of Marissa's artwork has focused on the natural environment. Her parents instilled an appreciation and respect for the natural world in her, which has become the emphasis and motivation of her art. Marissa's early work focused on sustainability and repurposing materials. For example, one of her early creations was a sculpture made out of Starbucks cup sleeves. Repurposing materials also allows Marissa to use materials that are not traditionally combined in a piece of art. She enjoys creating a traditional print. However, she continues her work by painting with

clay over the already finished print. This creates a three-dimensional effect that Marissa hopes will make her art more interactive. For many of her pieces, Professor Ralph Slatton has acted as a sounding board for her nontraditional ideas such as painting with clay on prints or combining unusual materials in her prints. For Marissa, Mr. Slatton provides guidance as to what materials may or may not work without stifling her creative and experimental prowess. He states, "If you pin art down to a science, then it ceases to be art." Under his tutelage, Marissa has flourished to become a contemporary, nontraditional printmaker.

Her appreciation for the natural world coupled with her experimental flare led Marissa to create her thesis project. Entitled "Remembrance: Drink While the Water is Clean", her thesis focuses on the beauty of nature, particularly scenery with water. Her original inspiration for the collection came from a coal ash spill in a beloved river near her hometown in North Carolina. Marissa channeled her reaction to the spill into her thesis. The focal point of her collection is a 32-foot-long piece entitled "Finding Crooked Creek," which represents her personal connection to a creek in North Carolina and the devastation caused by environmental



"Finding Crooked Creek" on display during Marissa's M.F.A. show in the Tipton Gallery.



Ralph Slatton (Left) and Marissa Angel (Right)

pollutants. The entire collection carries the motif of environmental responsibility.

Inspiration alone was not enough to carry her thesis collection to fruition. The thesis work required Marissa to reexamine her creative process. Marissa readily admits that she likes to be in control of her creations. However, she learned to listen to her art. Mr. Slatton states, "Successful artists listen to the art, and the art does speak back. If an artist pushes too hard, the art stops speaking." In her thesis collection, Marissa used techniques that required her to listen. A drip technique she used in a series of paintings called "Veiled Memories" truly taught her to listen to the art. Once a drip is made on the print, the artist has no control over how the paint runs down the canvas. Some drips go completely

as planned. Others, however, demand the artist to reevaluate the direction of the piece. Marissa learned that being open to changing the plan for pieces is essential, and produced some of her favorite work.

With each piece, Marissa hopes that her art will provoke a reaction in the viewer. However, she also wants her work to reflect her own thoughts on the environment. She hopes that others will feel a connection to the natural environment after viewing her work. Marissa also hopes to create a feeling of responsibility with her art. She says, "What you take into nature, you take out when you leave." Marissa hopes that her art will inspire accountability in others regarding pollution.

With graduation quickly approaching, Marissa expressed her appreciation for such a wonderful graduate school experience. The MFA program promotes a culture where students and professors alike are passionate about art and creating art. Early in her career, Marissa found herself caught up in the excitement of constantly trying to create new pieces. Now, she has learned to savor each piece she creates. Marissa channels the creative energy into creating quality pieces. Looking to the future, Marissa hopes to teach at the collegiate level while still creating her own art. ■





## VERONICA LIMEBERRY

Liberal Studies, M.A.L.S., Gender and Diversity Studies, 2014

### WHAT DEGREE DID YOU EARN AT ETSU?

I received both my undergraduate and graduate degrees at ETSU. I received a dual Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies and Political Science in 2010. Then, I received a Master in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Gender & Diversity Studies and a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in Planning and Development in 2014.

### WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION, AND WHAT DOES THE POSITION ENTAIL?

I am currently a Research Fellow with the Fulbright Program through the United States-India Education Foundation (USIEF). I am living in India for nine months and working with Dr. Vandana Shiva's organization, Navdanya. Navdanya examines nutritional security through women's work in sustainable farming. I spend most days either on-site on the 50-acre organic farm outside of Dehradun in the foothills of the Himalayas, or visiting women's food sovereignty groups around the country. I have also travelled to far-east India in Meghalaya to volunteer with an international Indigenous Terra Madre gathering and to the Western Ghats region of South India to live with women participating in sustainable agroforestry initiatives. I interview female farmers across the socioeconomic spectrum and volunteer on their farms. On the farms, I learn an incredible array of knowledge concerning seed saving, environmental regeneration, and strategies for locally empowering women.

### WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF YOUR POSITION?

The most interesting aspect of my position is the incredible opportunity to live as a resident in a nation like India. I have met so many amazing people and shared in many indescribable experiences. As I

participate in the survival of everyday life in rural villages in India, I am inspired and challenged by the connection I have with these beautiful communities. From riding through tea plantations on the back of a motorbike to hearing the incredible stories of the last of the elderly women seed-savers in remote villages, my work here has been a truly life-altering experience.

### HOW DID YOUR EDUCATION AT ETSU IMPACT YOUR LIFE AND CURRENT POSITION?

I am forever thankful that I made the decision to pursue my education at ETSU. The university is remarkable in that it offers diverse programs and the unique opportunity to directly connect with professors in each field due to small class sizes and the rural atmosphere. This network of connections inspired not only a deeper critical engagement with my work, but also helped me build the confidence to continue pursuing my academic goals. The diversity of interdisciplinary fields available at ETSU and the amazing faculty truly fostered my own engagement with academics and the world. Thanks to ETSU and the support of my faculty, I have had the opportunity to volunteer at the United Nations, attend national and international conferences, and ultimately end up with the prestigious Fulbright Program.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE GRADUATE STUDENTS?

My advice to graduate students is to mindfully choose their work. Education, especially higher education, is not just a means to a job. Rather, it is an experience that will connect you with people and critical thinking in new and life-changing ways. Embrace the work you pursue, develop relationships with your peers and faculty, and deeply engage yourself in your studies. Truly being involved in what you learn will open up so many opportunities, relationships, and journeys that will impact you for the rest of your life. ■



## WILHELMINIA VAN DIJK

Early Childhood Special Education, M.Ed., 2014

### WHAT DEGREE DID YOU EARN AT ETSU?

I earned a Master in Education in Special Education with a concentration in Early Childhood Special Education in 2014.

### WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION, AND WHAT DOES THE POSITION ENTAIL?

I am currently a doctoral fellow at the University of Florida. This is my first year as a doctoral student in the Special Education Program. I am also pursuing a double minor in linguistics and research evaluation methodology. I am focusing on literacy instruction for children with learning disabilities.

As a fellow, I work for the University of Florida Literacy Initiative (UFLI). UFLI provides professional development, teacher education, and tutoring programs geared to improve literacy education for struggling readers. This semester, I am tutoring a struggling first grader following the UFLI model. Each session is video-taped and used in pre-service teacher training for juniors and seniors in early childhood and elementary education programs. Besides tutoring, I am helping in course development of an online graduate certificate in reading intervention and dyslexia.

### WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF YOUR POSITION?

I love that I am able to work with learners from all ages. I still have contact with young children, but I

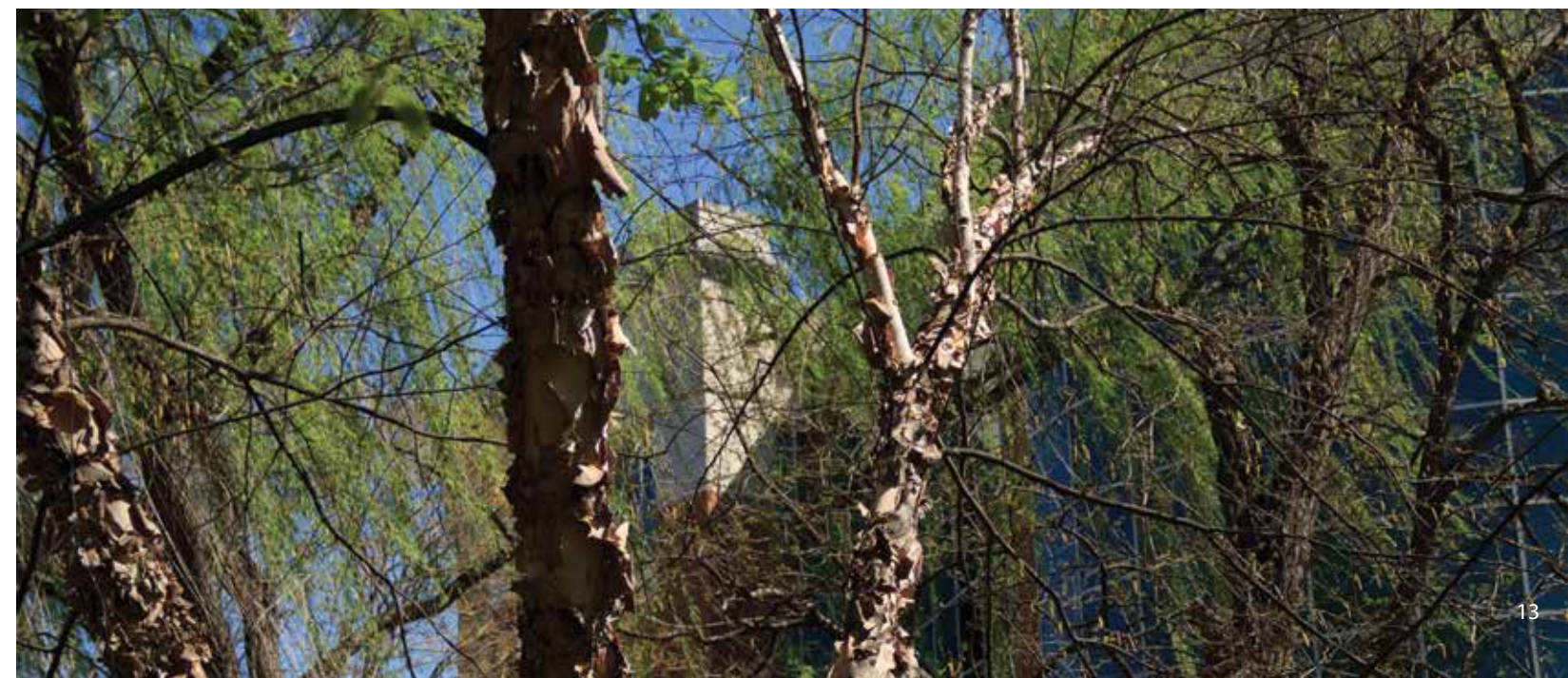
am also training undergraduate students to become effective tutors. In that way, I am helping so much more than just one student at a time! The variety of the work also allows me to develop a comprehensive skill-set, which will hopefully help me develop my career in higher education.

### HOW DID YOUR EDUCATION AT ETSU IMPACT YOUR LIFE AND CURRENT POSITION?

I have received so much support from my professors and the Department of Teaching and Learning to be able to develop the skills needed to be successful in a doctoral program. I am grateful they saw the potential and pushed me to perform to the best of my abilities. I was fortunate enough to be able to teach an undergraduate course for three semesters and work as a graduate assistant for three different professors during my time at ETSU. My professors also introduced me to many of their friends at other universities, which helped me tremendously in finding the best place to continue my studies.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE GRADUATE STUDENTS?

Networking is vital! I also think it is very important to match what you want to do with a program or job and not just settle for what is convenient or close. A student's background and connections can really influence his or her later opportunities. ■







Benjamin Moten and Faculty Advisor Jonathan Hounshell at his Capstone Exhibit Reception.

## DEFYING HYPER-MASCULINITY

WRITTEN BY SARA HOWARD - PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN MOTEN

**B**enjamin Moten knew he wanted to pursue a graduate degree since he entered the field of graphic design. He spent two years working full time for American Greetings, a greeting card company based out of Cleveland, Ohio. However, Ben was looking to enhance his career trajectory by attending graduate school. During a conversation with a coworker, he learned about ETSU. After researching ETSU and the M.A. in New Media Studio, Ben decided to apply. He worked with Graduate Studies and the New Media Studio faculty to navigate his move to Johnson City. Ben had never visited ETSU or Johnson City until he relocated.

Once in the program, Ben explored media from a more artistic side while enhancing his professional skills. His capstone project advisor, Jonathan Hounshell, said, "This program allows students to combine artistic ideas and professional skills." For Ben, his capstone project is the culmination of both his artistic and professional skills. Drawing his inspiration from a fashion photo collection

showcasing carefree black men, Ben created a collection of photographs showcasing black male masculinity in nontraditional roles. Stereotypically, black male masculinity is often defined by rigid ideals of highly sexualized and hyper-masculine identity. For example, males are rarely depicted as caretakers, emotional, or insecure, whereas common stereotypes indicate that black men are aggressive, rigid, and emotionless. Ben wants to create a dialog with his collection to debunk these stereotypical notions. In addition to the photographs, Ben created a video to be played at the exhibition that explains the intent behind his work. Ben says, ". . . art without interpretation is reckless. The video helps to provide that interpretation."

The process of creating his capstone project was complex and highly involved. Ben began planning his project over the summer of 2015 with Mr. Hounshell. Not only was Ben creating a photo collection, but he was also creating videos to supplement the portraits. Undertaking a project



Benjamin Moten (Left) and Professor Hounshell (Right)

of this magnitude requires extensive planning to keep the project moving forward. Ben states, "Mr. Hounshell is the voice in the back of my head that keeps me on track." For the photo shoot, Ben needed to find a venue, plan the hair and make-up styling for the models, find models, and hire a videographer. He also needed people to assist with many of the behind-the-scene activities like keeping the outfits of the models in order and positioning lighting equipment. Ben also needed to conduct focus groups on black male masculinity to incorporate more views than just his own in the photographs. He spent two evenings with two different focus groups discussing their views on black male masculinity. His next task was selecting the models. For this project, photographing regular people, not professional fashion models, was paramount. Professional models have a specific beautified appearance, almost an inauthentic type of beauty. This type of beauty is more of an aspiration than a daily norm.

By using regular people as models, Ben hopes to emphasize the contrasts between the restrictive black male stereotypes and the reality of the traits black men truly possess. Ben also interviewed the models to get their perspective on black masculinity as well.

Each model discussed what anti-stereotype he was portraying in the photographs and the impact the stereotype has on him. Ben hopes his work will spark a conversation on change for these stereotypes.

On the day of the photo shoot, Ben acted as both photographer and art director. He oversaw every detail to ensure not only the quality of each photo, but also that the interpretation of each photo portrayed the message he intended. For Ben, this

was the first time he was responsible for an entire photo shoot. Prior to this project, he worked only as the photographer. He did not realize how labor intensive and hectic managing a photo shoot is, especially in a project in which he was personally invested. The photo shoot required a full day of work. Ben stated that the entire behind-the-scenes help was critical to the project's success. On set, Ben had a team of assistants who helped him with various tasks: a videographer, an assistant videographer, and six models. Each played a vital role in the creation of the project.

For Ben, the most challenging aspect of the project was the video portion. He relied on the guidance and suggestions of James Livingston during the editing stages of the video. As an assistant professor, Mr. Livingston specializes in video and motion graphics. He helped to guide Ben through the challenges of directing and editing a video project. During the first editing session of the interviews, Ben and Mr. Hounshell noticed that he needed to communicate with confidence. If not for the observations made by Mr. Hounshell, Ben would have missed an opportunity to improve his project. Also, Ben learned how to mask unflattering facial expressions in interviews by utilizing B-roll footage. B-roll footage is alternate video that is used to supplement the primary video. For the finished video product of five minutes, the process of editing footage took Ben about two weeks.

After graduation, Ben would like to work as a designer in university branding. Even though his capstone project does not necessarily reflect his future goals, Ben was happy to undertake such an expansive project, because the subject matter is important. He also gained valuable skills that he can integrate into his work in the future. ■





Andrew Baxter showcasing the GoBook App.

## ACCESSIBLE LITERATURE FOR ALL

WRITTEN BY SARA HOWARD - PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN MOTEN

Andrew Baxter took a non-traditional route to ETSU. After completing his B.A. degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Philosophy, Andrew began working as a substitute teacher in the Johnson City School System. In 2010, he returned to Milligan College to receive his M.Ed. in Education and then taught fifth grade mathematics and science. During this time period, he developed an interest in special education. He chose ETSU to pursue his M.Ed. in Special Education because of the exceptional reputation of the Education Department as well as his familiarity with the area. Once on campus, Andrew began working under the advisement of Dr. Pamela Mims on her work to integrate technology into special education classrooms in a middle school setting. Andrew's thesis focuses on adapting age-appropriate literature into interactive technology for high school students with significant disabilities. Students classified with significant disabilities generally are classified by an IQ of 75 or below, which is known as an intellectual disability. Also, students with autism spectrum disorder are considered to have significant disabilities. Andrew worked with students with IQs of 55 or less. The concept behind both Andrew's thesis project and the work of Dr. Mims is that all students should have access to quality age-appropriate literature. Dr. Mims states, ". . . just because a student is considered a nonreader that does not mean that he or she cannot understand the literature." Dr. Mims was an instrumental resource for Andrew throughout the project. With her experience

in adapting books for middle school special education classrooms, Dr. Mims helped Andrew conceptualize the process for adapting literature for high school special education classrooms.

For his project, Andrew is adapting literature into an interactive app for students to learn the material. He chose Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* for the project. The process of creating a literature app is quite complex and time consuming. He began by rereading *To Kill a Mockingbird* (which is one of his favorite books) and paraphrasing each section into shorter sentences. The shorter sentences, along with decreasing the vocabulary level, allowed Andrew to adapt the novel to a third grade reading level. One of his most significant challenges in the process was preserving the integrity of the text while summarizing each chapter. Andrew and Dr. Mims consulted with a content expert to ensure the essential elements were not accidentally omitted. Once the text was developed, Andrew, with the support of Dr. Mims, created questions to determine the level of comprehension of each student. The questions were created using Bloom's Taxonomy for evaluating higher-level thinking. The questions were either sequential questions or analytical questions. Sequential questions ask students to identify the timeline of the story. Analytical questions evaluate the student's ability to think critically about the content of the text.

After Andrew completed paraphrasing the chapters and developing the comprehension questions, the



Andrew Baxter and Dr. Mims.

materials were loaded into the app. Andrew chose to use GoBook, which is an interactive reading app. Each lesson on GoBook asks students to make predictions about the storyline for that day's required reading after reviewing a brief preview of the text. The app reads the text aloud to the students while following the words in the app. Each chapter is supplemented with picture references for vocabulary to help with comprehension. The students then evaluate their predictions and answer questions on the text. If a student is unsure or misses a question, the app is designed to provide hints to prompt the correct answer. If a student misses a question, the app directs the student to reread the passage where the answer is located. If the question is answered incorrectly again, the specific page where the answer is located is shown to the student. If the correct answer is not identified from the page, the student and Andrew would read the paragraph that contains the correct answer line by line. Additionally, the questions are rotated or asked in a different manner to prevent memorization.

For his thesis, Andrew implemented the app in a special education classroom in a Johnson City area school. He worked with three high school students who were considered to have difficulty with verbal communication and had been identified as having an intellectual disability. At baseline, the highest percentage of questions answered correctly by any student was 40 percent. Throughout the intervention, Andrew saw marked improvements in the abilities of the students to answer the questions correctly. By the end of the project, the students were consistently answering 70 to 100 percent of questions correctly. With many special education students, retaining information over time is a major concern. However, Andrew found that the students were able to maintain the high percentage of correct questions even after a

two-week break. In addition to the increased ratio of questions answered correctly, Andrew noticed that the students were following the text with their eyes even though they were considered nonreaders.

Andrew was ecstatic with the results of the project. He projected that each student's ability to understand the text would increase. However, he did not anticipate such vast improvement. For Andrew, though, the most rewarding part of the experience was seeing the change in the students' attitudes over time. As the program progressed, the engagement level of the students increased, and Andrew noted that the students seemed to enjoy the learning process.

The results of Andrew's thesis project also revealed that the students were able to understand the more complex motifs in *To Kill a Mockingbird* such as racism and bullying. Often parents and teachers try to protect special education students from topics associated with discrimination and prejudice to which general education students are exposed. They believe that special education students are incapable of understanding such challenging concepts. However, Andrew found that special education students seem to be chronically underestimated. The students were able to grasp the concepts when presented in a manner from which they could learn.

In the future, Andrew hopes that his work will influence the perception of special education students. He hopes that his work will contribute to increasing our understanding of the abilities of special education students. For his future, Andrew desires to continue working with students with learning disabilities as a full-time educator. He says, "I hope to have a direct impact on a child's life as a teacher." ■





## ADRIA MCLAUGHLIN

*Sociology, M.A., 2015*

### WHAT DEGREE DID YOU EARN AT ETSU?

I received a Master of Art in Sociology in December of 2015, but I also completed my undergraduate degree at ETSU in Sociology and Anthropology.

### WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION, AND WHAT DOES THE POSITION ENTAIL?

I am currently an adjunct instructor at both ETSU and Northeast State Community College. I teach a variety of sociology classes between the two institutions.

### WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF YOUR POSITION?

I planned on being an adjunct through most of my schooling, as I really love teaching. I enjoy watching my students learn new concepts, especially when they are examining things in a sociological way. For most, this is new to them and often affects their preexisting worldview.

### HOW DID YOUR EDUCATION AT ETSU IMPACT YOUR LIFE AND CURRENT POSITION?

I really enjoyed all the time I spent at ETSU. I found, and still find, all the faculty to be extremely helpful. As an adjunct now, they are always willing to help me with my class content, which I find invaluable as a new instructor. I feel like the Sociology and Anthropology Department members work well together to help everyone succeed, and all of my instructors went above and beyond to help me.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE GRADUATE STUDENTS?

I believe that there is a learning curve for new students in graduate school, and acclimation takes about a semester. Time management is crucial to success as is creating a community with your cohort. I think when a cohort works together to help each other it makes everything smoother and more fun! ■



## DR. HARRY WILLIAMS

*Educational Leadership, Ed.D.*

*Post-Secondary & Private Sector Leadership, 2002*

### WHAT DEGREE DID YOU EARN AT ETSU?

I earned my Ed.D. in Educational Leadership (Post-Secondary and Private Sector Leadership). Without this degree, I would not have achieved what I have in my lifetime for the past 15 years.

### WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION, AND WHAT DOES THE POSITION ENTAIL?

I am currently the 10<sup>th</sup> President of Delaware State University (DSU) in Dover, Delaware. DSU was founded in 1890 with a land grant provided by the federal government to support the education of the African American community. The university has grown to an enrollment of around 5,000 students with a diverse and robust campus. African American students still make up the greatest percentage of the student population at 75 percent. However, the Caucasian and Hispanic populations are growing at 15 percent and 9 percent respectively. DSU is also committed to growing our international program particularly in China. In the six years since I have been president, DSU has partnered with a university in China to create a four-year degree program. The program has grown to include 500 Chinese students currently pursuing their degrees.

### WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF YOUR POSITION?

The majority of DSU students are first generation college students; we are literally changing lives. The undergraduate degree is still the ticket to the middle class in the United States. At DSU, we are taking students from a lower socioeconomic status and helping them breakout to a higher level. We are helping the current generation of Americans as well as helping generations of students to come since we are breaking the cycle of lower socioeconomic status.

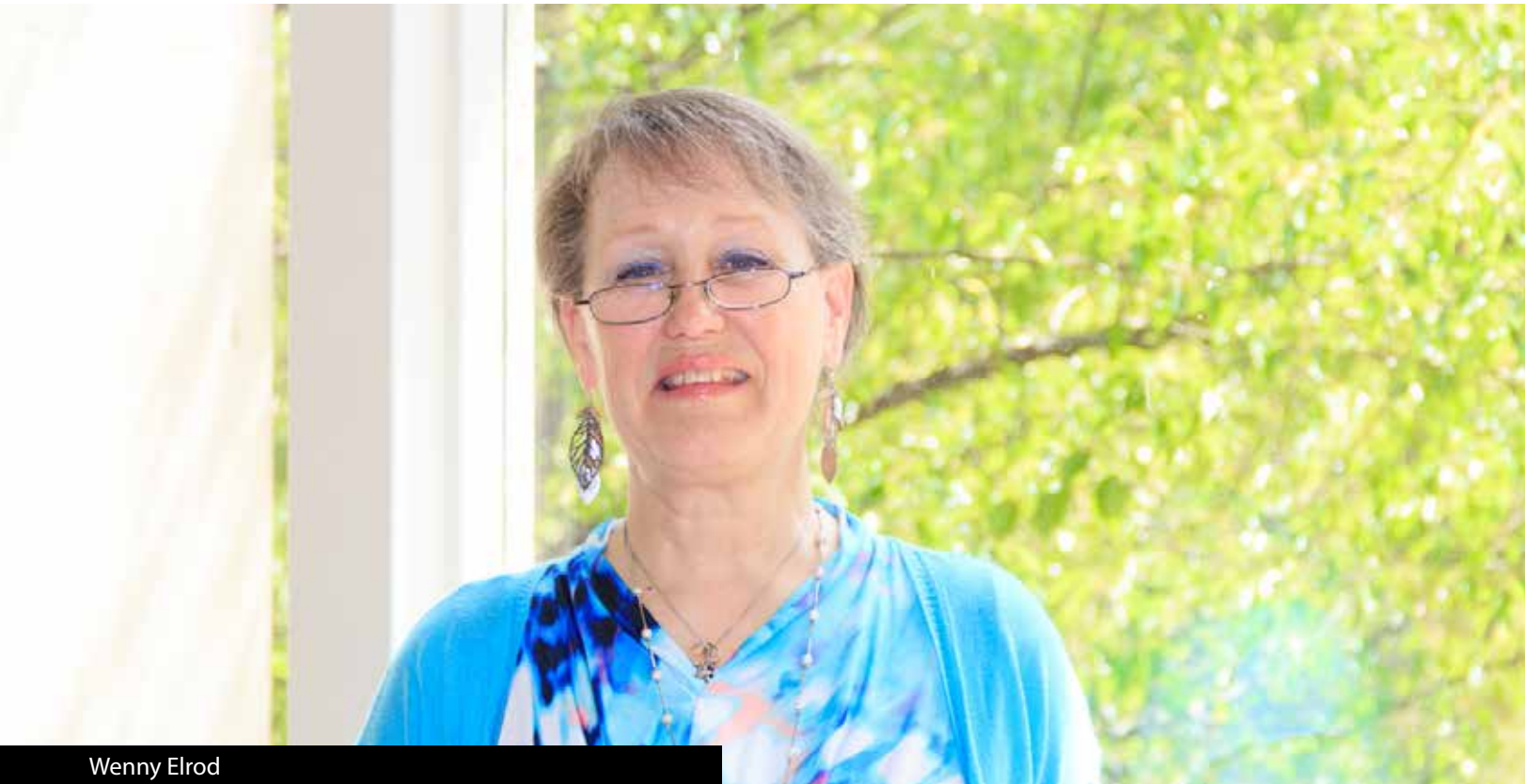
### HOW DID YOUR EDUCATION AT ETSU IMPACT YOUR LIFE AND CURRENT POSITION?

Without my degree, I would not be the president of DSU. When I started my degree at ETSU, my primary focus was to become a college president. The faculty and staff in the Department of Education were remarkable in their knowledge and willingness to help students. Now, my career is the practical application of my degree. Completing my degree at ETSU was the best choice I could have made for my career.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE GRADUATE STUDENTS?

The sky is the limit as far as what students can achieve. However, success comes down to each individual. Students must be willing to go and get the job they want. Be willing to work hard and to change locations, if necessary, for the job you want. Your career goals are tied to your educational goals, and this program aligns the two. ■





Wenny Elrod

## MORE THAN STORYTELLING

WRITTEN BY SARA HOWARD - PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN MOTEN

For Wenny Elrod, the path to ETSU is anything but ordinary. Her interest in the M.A. in Reading (Storytelling Concentration) began with her position in the Johnson City's Parks and Recreation Department in 2008. Wenny was tasked with designing a program to improve health literacy in the area. At this time, Tennessee had one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the country. While she was creating the program, students from the ETSU Storytelling program contacted Wenny about using their skills. During the program implementation phase, she began to realize the impact of literacy on adults as well as the children. Initially, the adults who arrived to pick up the children would listen to the stories in the doorway without entering the room. As the program progressed, the adults would listen at the back of the room. By the end of the program, adults were participating by having the children retell or read stories to them at the encouragement of Wenny and the other storytellers. This, along with the suggestion of one of her supervisors, provided the final prod that sent her back to school. She stated, "...so what if I'm going to be a grandmother? I can go back to school."

Wenny's thesis is inspired by her project with Johnson City's Parks and Recreation Department. For her thesis, she is working with ETSU Tale Tellers and an organization called Mountain Empire Literacy Outreach, which she co-founded. This organization offers multigenerational outreach literacy programs aimed at three main areas of literacy: (1) listening/speaking literacy, reading/writing literacy, (2) health literacy, and (3) art literacy. The two main components of Mountain Empire Literacy Outreach that Wenny works with are the Storybook Fair and the Storytelling Outreach Program. The Storybook Fair is an annual community event that includes storybooks, which are six feet tall.

The giant storybooks are created and decorated by students and community members. The pieces of art depict scenes or characters from various story genres. During the Storybook Fair, the community members are encouraged to enjoy the life-sized book maze of stories, listen to professional storytellers, visit with authors, create art, and learn about health. Therefore, her thesis project focuses primarily on designing, implementing, and



Dr. Reed (Left) and Wenny Elrod (Right)



A giant book displayed at the Storybook Fair.

evaluating literacy through storytelling programs. Mountain Empire Literacy Outreach partners with a variety of local organizations, elementary schools, libraries, and senior centers. She conducted a needs assessment to ascertain the best program design for each location. For one location, a storyteller would present, and the audience was given time to create art, based on their interpretation of the story. Then, the audience members created their own stories based on their artwork.

Nevertheless most of her thesis work includes a sample from a local community organization. A more narrow focus emerged because of the encouragement of Dr. Delanna Reed, her advisor. Dr. Reed provided the structure and advice that Wenny needed for completion. She states, "Dr. Reed knows exactly what I need, where I need to focus, and how to accomplish it."

One of the programs implemented by Wenny was targeted at elementary grade participants who were lagging behind in reading. In each session, storytellers performed for the participants. Then, they would break into small groups to practice retelling the story and refining their methods. At first, the participants hesitated retelling the story to each other. However, Wenny noticed that at the six-week mark in the program, they were no longer hesitant, but were enthusiastically retelling the story and refining their methods. After retelling the story, the participants created their own stories inspired by the original. Wenny was impressed by the metamorphosis of their writing and spelling. At the beginning, they spelled unknown words

phonetically. Once one individual asked how to spell a specific word correctly, generally the correct spelling of the word would be seen in her writings and the writings of her friends. For example, a popular word for them to write was 'fairy.' At the start of the program, the participants did not know how to spell 'fairy' correctly, so they guessed at the spelling based on the sound of the word. However, once a person asked about the correct spelling, the correct form of 'fairy' would disperse through the peer group.

As for evaluation of the programs, Wenny designed a list of questions to assess the impact of storytelling on the elementary grade students' reading habits. She developed a survey of questions for both the students and the parents. The questions evaluated the students' enthusiasm for reading, the amount of time spent reading outside of the program, how often parents and students read together, and the amount of conversations the students initiated with their parents concerning the program. This allowed Wenny to gauge the improvements made by the students in their attitude toward reading.

In the future, Wenny plans to successfully defend her thesis and perform her *Finest Hour*. Her *Finest Hour* will be a culminating storytelling performance for students in their final semester in the storytelling program. Also, she would like to continue growing literacy programs in the area. Eventually, Wenny would like to be a part of the creation of a regional literacy council for the East Tennessee region. ■





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The Add-on Fellowship I received from the School of Graduate Studies became an instrument for me to begin my journey at ETSU with a great advantage. With this award, I was able to purchase a state-of-the-art desktop computer and a 3-in-1 printer, which were invaluable for me to proceed and complete my doctorate degree in a quality and timely manner. I am thankful that ETSU has different measures to assist and empower its students to reach their dreams. With great academic programs, student support services, faculty, a community of learners, and scholarship opportunities, pursuing an advanced degree in a totally foreign place and with diverse individuals was a very pleasant experience for me.



**Ruth Facun-Granadozo, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Professor, Birth to Kindergarten  
Education  
Winston-Salem State University*



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