

CLAS News

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- **Three Theatre Alumni in Spotlight on Broadway**
- **In Memoriam—George Plitnik**
- **Students Compete at Programming Event**
- **ARC Grant to Fund Advanced Product Design and Manufacturing Center**
- **Social Work Welcomes Newly Accepted Students**
- **Chemistry Develops Pharmacy Partnership with UMES**
- **FSU Wins Geography Bowl**
- **Biology Student Receives Award for Poster**
- **Communication Programs Revamped**
- **CLAS Launches “Brains and Brews” Talks**
- **Faculty Awards—Visual Arts, English and Foreign Languages, and Music**
- **FSU Hosts Physics Teacher Meeting**
- **Chemistry Student Society Receives Awards**
- **Theatre Alumni Nominated for Emmy**

Three Theatre Alumni in Spotlight on Broadway

Broadway is back, and FSU Bobcats are taking center stage.

As New York Theatre reopens after a year-and-a-half pandemic-enforced shutdown, three graduates of the FSU Department of Theatre and Dance are stepping into the spotlight. FSU alums Keenan Scott II, Jessica Frances Dukes and Shahzeb Hussain are currently undertaking groundbreaking and unique roles in the New York theatre scene.

Playwright Scott is making headlines with his Broadway-debut play “Thoughts of a Colored Man” at the John Golden Theatre. Heralded by critics as “captivating and piercing” (Broadway News) and “the most important play of the 21st century” (Amsterdam News), Keenan wrote the first draft and workshopped the play while he was a student on the FSU campus. The story centers on a day in the lives of seven Black men and blends spoken word, slam poetry, rhythm and humor. The play is currently in a limited-engagement run through March, 2022.

Three blocks south at the American Airlines Theatre on 42nd Street, Dukes (Netflix’s “Ozark” and Marvel’s “Jessica Jones”) is starring as “Millie Davis” in a revival of Alice Childress’s play “Trouble in Mind.” First opened Off-Broadway in 1955, this acclaimed play follows a Black stage actress through rehearsals of a major Broadway production. No stranger to the stage, Dukes received an Obie Award for her performance in Playwrights Horizon’s “BootyCandy” and was nominated for a Drama League

Award and won an Audelco Award for playing the title character in “By the Way, Meet Vera Stark” at Signature Theatre in Arlington, Va. “Trouble in Mind” runs until Jan. 9, 2022.

Off-Broadway at the SoHo Playhouse, Hussain plays the roles of “Curry” and the “Assistant Stage Manager” in the immersive theatre experience “Tammany Hall.” The interactive show takes audiences back to election night of Nov. 5, 1929, giving a behind-the-scenes look at the political organization, Tammany Hall, which controlled the New York Democratic Party, and the scandalous night when the corrupt political machine came crashing down. Hussain previously starred in the Chesapeake Shakespeare Company’s presentation of “Romeo and Juliet.”

“It’s a wonderful feeling to watch FSU Theatre alums reach the potential we always knew they had,” said Nicole Mattis, Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance. “They are at the top of their games, and now we get to learn from them.”



FSU alum Keenan Scott II in the rehearsal room of “Thoughts of a Colored Man,” which is running at Broadway’s John Golden Theatre.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **CLAS Holiday Reception**
Tuesday, December 14th
2PM-4PM
Compton 2nd floor atrium
- **Commencement**
Saturday, December 18th
9:30AM and 2:00PM
(COVID make-up ceremony)
- **Center for Teaching Excellence regional conference—**
Thursday, January 20th

In Memoriam—Dr. George Plitnik

George Plitnik, long-time professor of Physics and Engineering, passed away on September 20 following a brief illness. George had amassed fifty years of faithful service to FSU, during the course of which he had in some measure attracted national attention with his "Physics of Harry Potter" course, complete with wizard costume - a telling sign of his eccentricity and sense of humor.

His professional research led to authoring a book and numerous published papers in the field of acoustics and establishing long-term collaborations with international applied physics institutes in France and Japan. He had been looking forward, after one more year of teaching, to a quiet retirement at his home in Mount Savage. His homestead was one that he had largely planned, built, furnished, and decorated, over a span of many years, in a manner architecturally sound, environmentally friendly, and strictly in accordance with his own whims and fancies regarding comfort, elegance, and taste. Alas, before he could begin his final year at the university, he was called from the 'School of Life' to his permanent retirement. In his free time, George was an aficionado of pipe organs, especially theatre organs, which he built, repaired, played, and had installed in his house. He was also a lover of travel, especially to far and foreign parts, and never failed to bring back souvenirs and mementos that fully decorate his home.

George will be greatly missed by his colleagues and former students. A Celebration of Life will be held First Presbyterian Church in Frostburg on January 8 at 3:00 p.m.

Computer Science Students Compete at Programming Event

Eight students from the Department of Computer Science and Information Technologies recently attended a programming contest sponsored by the Consortium for Computing Sciences in Colleges—Eastern (CCSCE) in Arlington, Virginia. These students made a trip to compete with a dozen other schools in difficult programming challenges and performed well, impressing others at the conferences, as well as their IBM sponsors. Congratulations to the following students:

- James Ritchie
- Jared Emerick
- James Robertson
- Andrew Moffett
- Ryan Tomasic
- Kaitlyn Custer
- Mincie Richardson
- Amber Brault



ARC Grant to Fund Advanced Product Design and Manufacturing Center

FSU was awarded \$1,480,979 by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for the Western Maryland Advanced Technology Center at FSU Innovation Park, which will help establish a Waste-to-Value (W2V) Center of Excellence, a Remote Work Center, the Renewable Energy Entrepreneur-in-Residence Program and the Center for Advanced Product Design and Manufacturing serving Western Maryland and the surrounding region.

The Center for Advanced Product Design and Manufacturing (CAPDM) will fall under the direction of the Department of Physics and Engineering. According to Department Chair, Jamil Abdo, "The idea is to develop an advanced design and manufacturing center that will support industrial innovation through

product design, prototyping, and manufacturing." The center will be developed in phases, with the first focused on additive manufacturing, or the ability to create structures using 3D printing and related techniques. Later phases will include the development of advanced mechanical design and manufacturing, material testing, electronics design and manufacturing, and dies and molds.

"The center will serve businesses of all sizes in Maryland and the surrounding tri-state region," said Abdo. Once open at full capacity, the center's services will include 3D modeling and new product development; engineering analysis and simulation; CAD service and consultation; 3D printing; and training workshops on use of



advanced software and equipment.

"This is a great opportunity for our engineering students to be engaged in real-world product design and manufacturing," said Abdo. The plan is to hire six to eight interns each year for three years, with all funding provided through the center.

Equipment purchases and setup of the space are slated to begin in the near future.

Social Work Welcomes Newly Accepted Students

The Department of Social Work is welcoming eight new students who were fully accepted into the program this fall: Kristen Baer, Keaira Illiano, Stephen Kraft, Shawna Layton, Brooke Liller, Brianna Mercer, Kaylyn Tinsley, and Tabatha Vassar. Congratulations to all!

Chemistry Department Develops Pharmacy Partnership with UMES

The University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Frostburg State University have formed a new academic partnership offering students an accelerated track to becoming pharmacists in six years.

The cooperative undergraduate/professional program agreement will allow students to complete their pharmacy degree seamlessly with the reduction of instruction time by as many as two years, and consequently save students the comparable cost of extra tuition.

Chemistry majors at FSU who meet the requirements and have strong academic credentials may gain preferential admission to UMES' professional degree program after just three years of undergraduate study.

"The faculty and staff in the FSU Chemistry Department are excited to be

a part of this collaboration," said Department Chair Matthew Crawford. "The new agreement will benefit our students by saving time and resources to earn not only their Bachelor of Science degree from FSU, but their advanced degree in Pharmacy from UMES. In addition, the agreement will help foster a strong partnership between both programs and we look forward to working with UMES."

FSU students who choose to pursue the UMES pharmacy track and successfully complete the "3 + 3" program will earn two degrees, one from each institution – a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from FSU and a Doctor of Pharmacy from UMES.

UMES's pharmacy program, one of 15 in the nation that offers year-round instruction, enables students to earn a

doctorate in three years instead of the traditional four. Upon completion, students are eligible to take the pharmacy licensing exam.

"This collaboration brings significant value to our students," said Dr. Kim Hixson, Dean of the FSU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. "We look forward to seeing them take advantage of the opportunities this partnership creates."

For more information, contact mjcrawford@frostburg.edu.

FSU Team Wins Geography Bowl

At the American Association of Geographers meeting held in April 2021, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Team, coordinated by FSU Geography Lecturer, Tracy Edwards, won the World Geography Bowl for the third straight year. Senior geography major, Cassie Conklin, represented FSU on the winning team. This was Conklin's second World Geography Bowl win.

Biology Student Receives Award for Poster

Biology major, Joshua Clem, was awarded Best Undergraduate Poster at the Mid-Atlantic Plant Molecular Biology Society (MAPMBS) meeting held last August. Josh's research was focused on Triticain- α as an enzymatic approach to managing celiac disease. Josh was mentored by David Puthoff (Biology) and Holly Currie (Chemistry).

Revised Communication Programs Create New Opportunities for Today's Digital World

FSU students have new options for communication programs that begin this fall. The Communication Studies major has been revised so that students now select a track in Strategic Social Media or Strategic Communication Leadership. These areas are currently seeing strong job market growth, which is expected for many years to come. In addition, any student—regardless of major—can now choose to minor in Social Media.

"We want to reflect the current media trends, and social media is crucial right now, so we created a brand new minor in Social Media, which is available to any student on campus, regardless of their major," said Annie Danzi, Interim Department Chair.

The new minor has 24-hours of required coursework in communication studies, marketing, and mass communication, providing students with a broad background for working in the field. "Employment opportunities for those with strategic social media skills is truly extensive," Danzi added.

The Mass Communication major was similarly restructured to accentuate the digital nature and other strengths of the course sequence. As digital communication via web and mobile devices continues to grow, and as new technologies emerge, employment opportunities will continue to expand.

"We were driven by two things when we revised the communication programs last year: 'student and workforce expectations,' and 'ensuring that undergraduates acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed,'" said Danzi.

CLAS Launches Brains and Brews Discussions

In an effort to provide more opportunities for faculty to interact and learn from one another in an informal setting, the CLAS Dean's Office has launched "Brains & Brews," a monthly event being held at The Deep End (formerly Dante's) on Main Street.

The series was created to allow faculty to share insights with colleagues across campus, as well as area residents. Each month, two faculty members will make 15-minute presentations of their research or creative works, followed by time for questions from the audience.

The inaugural session in October was well attended, with presentations by Frank Hughes (Biology) and Kara Rogers-Thomas (Sociology). On November 18, Greg Wood from the Department of History discussed Anti-Union Workers During the 1930s, and



Pictured above: Kara Rogers-Thomas from the Department of Sociology presents on Appalachian culture at the October "Brains and Brews" event.

Philosophy professor Shoshanna Brassfield talked about The Philosophy of Love. There was 30 minutes of light live music prior to the presentations.

If anyone is interested in presenting at future events, contact Keith Terry (ketterry@frostburg.edu).

Work by Visual Arts Faculty Member Chosen for Juried Exhibition

April Wright, Lecturer in the Department of Visual Arts, has been selected to show one of her works, "Another Time Once More," at the Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina for the "Coined in the South 2022" exhibition. Wright was one of the few artists chosen among hundreds of applications to show in this juried exhibition.

The Young Affiliates of the Mint, in collaboration with The Mint Museum, were seeking works of art produced by southeastern artists for the second installment of Coined in the South. This juried exhibition will be held from March 25, 2022 to July 3, 2022 at Mint Museum Uptown. Coined in the South is about bridging the gap

between the museum, the gallery, and the studio, to highlight the innovative and thought-provoking works produced by the creative innovators of the southeastern arts community. Prize money will be awarded. There will be a \$10,000 juror-awarded grand prize, a \$5,000 Young Affiliates of the Mint member-awarded prize, and a \$1,000 "People's Choice" prize awarded by the general public at the conclusion of the show.

Congratulations April! What an honor! Be sure to check the show out if you're in the area next spring or summer.



"Another Time Once More"
shredded clothing from the inside of a punching bag, cotton thread, wood and metal curtain hooks
71 x 18.25 x 4.5 in.

Two Faculty in English/Foreign Languages Receive Awards

Andy Duncan was named a co-winner of the Science Fiction Research Association's 2020 Mary Kay Bray Award for the best work published in the organization's journal, "SFRA Review." He was recognized for his book review of Alec Nevala-Lee's "Astounding: John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard and the Golden Age of Science Fiction."

The award was announced at the 2021 SFRA Conference, held virtually in June and hosted by Seneca College in Toronto. Duncan's

article can be found online at: <https://sfrareview.org/2020/09/04/50-2-rnf4duncan/>.

Jill Morris has won a national award for her work as faculty adviser of The Bottom Line. The Noel Ross Strader Memorial Award, named for a longtime University of Houston journalism professor, is presented by the College Media Association to advisers who "have exercised the principle of freedom of the press at some risk to personal or

professional welfare," according to the CMA website. The award is not made annually, but "only when meritorious candidates are brought forth."

Morris was recognized at the Fall National College Media Convention held October 14-17 in New Orleans. For information on CMA, visit <http://www.collegemedia.org>.

Music Faculty and Students Awarded High Honors from American Prize

The American Prize, a series of nonprofit, national competitions designed to recognize and reward the very best in the performing arts in the U.S., recently gave high honors to FSU faculty and students in three categories.

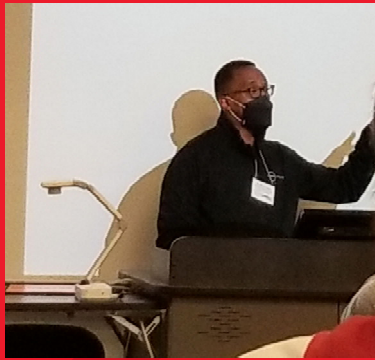
The University Chorale, a non-auditioned, mixed voice ensemble, was named a finalist for the American Prize for Choral Music Performance, Collegiate Division. The

Chamber Singers, an auditioned, mixed-voice choral ensemble, was named a finalist for The Ernst Bacon Memorial Award for the Performance of American Music.

Finally, Scott Rieker, Director of Choral Activities and Choral Music Education, was named a finalist for the American Prize in Composition, Choral Music—Large Works. This was for his 20-minute setting of U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser's poetry,

"Ted Kooser Suite." For all of these awards, Joseph Yungen, collaborative pianist, was integral in the ensemble members' learning and the exceptional final performance.

These award-winning ensembles are open to students of all majors, faculty, staff, and community members. For information, contact Rieker at serieker@frostburg.edu.



Damon Lester, President of the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers and owner of Nissan of Bowie, visited campus in October and spoke to students about the impact of electric cars on the future of the auto industry.

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Have any interesting news items about faculty, staff, or students in your department? Submit them to Linda Steele (lsteale@frostburg.edu) for the next issue.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



FSU Hosts Physics Teacher Meeting

The Physics and Engineering department hosted the annual fall meeting of the American Association of Physics Teachers Appalachian Section on Friday and Saturday, October 22-23 using a hybrid modality. The Friday evening activities were highlighted by a physics-themed tour of the Compton Science Center Natural History Museum, led by Dr. Bill Seddon from Biology. The Saturday program included contributed talks from both in-person and virtual presenters. Two invited presentations highlighted the meeting: Professor Emeritus Francis Tam paid tribute to Dr. George Plitnik; and Dr. Joe (E.F.) Redish gave a talk titled "Using math in



physics: What's the problem?" Dr. Redish is a globally recognized expert in physics education research and Professor Emeritus from the University of Maryland College Park (pictured above with FSU Physics and Engineering Professor Hang Deng-Luzader).

Chemistry Student Society Receives Awards

Student Members of the American Chemical Society (SMACS) were awarded "Most Engaging Crew" at the FSU Majors Fair held on November 3. The group received a cash prize for their efforts.

SMACS was also recognized by the American Chemical Society for the 2020-2021 year for their Student Chapter Report. The Frostburg

chapter received a Commendable national award for contributions made to the institution, local community, and to chemistry.

SMACS is advised by Katie Gares, Chemistry faculty member, and Blair Knouse, Lab Manager.

Theatre Alumni Nominated for Emmy Award

FSU alumni Sean Cercone and Jeff Keilholtz received an Emmy nomination for their original series *Broadway Master Class*, a part of Broadway on Demand. The nomination was in the category of Outstanding Arts and Popular Culture Programming.

Broadway On Demand, a division of Broadway Licensing, celebrates and encourages diversity and inclusion in the arts. In service of this mission, and amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, Broadway On Demand created a series of arts programming, featuring Broadway's finest and most diverse artists from various fields in the industry.

"Last year we saw a need for theatre lovers and theatre makers at all stages to continue feeling connected to Broadway during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Sean Cercone, President/CEO Broadway On Demand. "We set out to create a series that encourages diversity and inclusion and that would allow industry legends to share their insights, challenges and their craft directly with those audiences. It is a true honor to have the Emmy's recognize the importance of Broadway Master Class to our industry."