

JAMES FARMER MULTICULTURAL CENTER ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 4 | May 2022

Senior Recognition Program honors Graduates

The Senior Recognition Program is an annual awards ceremony created to recognize seniors at UMW and their accomplishments in the promotion of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Members from the faculty, staff, administration and student body, as well as family and friends of the honorees attended this distinguished program.

Two of the students shared reflections of their experiences at UMW. Brianna “Breezy” Reaves, the first Black female President of the Student Government Association, gave a powerful message which she titled, “A Letter to Leaders.” She stated that “... peace has kept us whole... justice has kept our spirits fighting for the world and our community...” and these amazing leaders are “the trailblazers for change, the legacy of excellence...”

Lueden Sheikhnureldin reflected on her interactions and rapport with a professor who provided invaluable guidance and support to her. She shared that she “wanted to be a teacher that inspires students to do better...” She also gave a touching account of the relationships she was grateful to have with the staff of the JFMC, remarking that “their commitment to students is undeniable... and they appreciate them as students and as people.”

2022 Senior Recognition Program Honorees

Irene Andrade
Sterling Barbett
Anna Bedal
Mandy Byrd
Nena Garcia
Sophia Hobbs
Yash Kandula
Abigail Lasky
Quinn Lipetz
Desmoné Logan

Erin Maltese
Anoli Mehta
Dana Norwood
Josephine Ohene-Okae
Brianna Reaves
Lueden Sheikhnureldin
Thomas Skinner
Cai Tippet
Karishma Vahora
Lauren Westendorf



Upcoming Alumni Events

Reunion Weekend 2022

Thursday, June 2 | Various Times

Reconnect with your UMW Family during the annual Reunion Weekend events!

Register at alumni.umw.edu/events

Alumni Affinity Groups

The UMW Alumni Association has been hard at work cultivating connections among alumni. Alumni Affinity groups, a special interest group designed to connect alumni based on identity, student organization involvement, interests, or professional association. Current groups associated with the JFMC include:

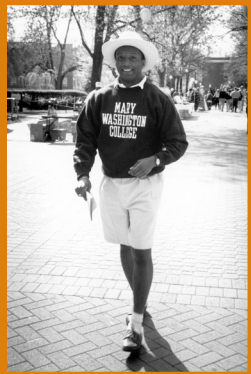
- Black Alumni Affinity Group
- Jewish Alumni Affinity Group (Shalom Eagles)
- LGBTQ Alumni Affinity Group
- Multicultural Alumni Affinity Group

Visit alumni.umw.edu/affinitygroups to find out more today!

For information about upcoming events and programs at the James Farmer Multicultural Center, visit our website at umw.edu/multicultural



Dean Cedric Rucker leaves behind a legacy at UMW



Dean Cedric Rucker walks down Campus walk at the Multicultural Fair in 1990

When Cedric Bernard Rucker enrolled at the University of Mary Washington in the fall of 1977, he thought he wanted to become an attorney or minister. His worldview of what was possible was shaped by what he experienced growing up in Richmond, Virginia. He stated he never knew one could have a profession in higher education. However, while taking different classes as a student, Rucker found his passion in Sociology because the discipline helped explain the world and how it impacts the human experience. Also, getting to know and working with different faculty helped him explore greater range of possibilities for his professional journey. He credits Dr. Bruce London, who was an amazing mentor and saving grace to him, for Rucker getting more clarity regarding his career path and post-undergraduate studies.

After getting his master's degree from the University of Virginia and working a few years as an Assistant Dean in their Admissions Office, Rucker returned to his alma mater to work as the Associate Dean of Student Activities. Through his 33 years of employment, he was promoted to Dean of Student Life and then ultimately as Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Student Life.

When asked about one of the most significant changes he has observed from his time as a student to now as an administrator, he stated it is the increase in diversity within the campus population. Rucker remembered when he first enrolled at UMW, he was the only Black male and there were only 35 – 37 African-American women at the college at that time. Today, the diversity enrollment is approximately 27% of the undergraduate population. In addition, when he was a student, there were only two multicultural clubs – now there are over 20 cultural and social justice clubs.

Rucker also talked about how diversity is now more celebrated and embraced at all levels. He referred to the recent Day of Silence event sponsored by PRISM in April where not only students, faculty, staff and administrators attended and wore shirts, but even members of the Board of Visitors for the institution. The JFMC wants to acknowledge one of Rucker's significant contributions to diversity at UMW. He was one of three co-founders of the annual Multicultural Fair, which is the institution's largest cultural event.

Furthermore, the curriculum is more diverse in its offerings. In addition to many classes that address some aspect of diversity, equity, and inclusion, there are now majors (e.g., Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies) and minors (e.g., African-American minor, Social Justice minor) that focus on diversity-related fields. Rucker shared that when he thinks of the individuals who have made sacrifices and opened the doors for these changes to happen, he feels that the future innovation in this area will continue. He reflected on how Dr. Farmer endorsed his teaching of the new "Ethnic Studies" course in the early 1990s. Rucker shared how humbling and empowering it was for him to have this civil rights icon believe in him and influence the decision that enabled him to teach the course. Rucker said there is still work to do in terms of more progress with DEI matters, but the institution has come a long way.

As he anticipates embarking on his journey to retirement, Rucker looks forward to working with the Peace Corps, doing volunteer work and continuing to travel. He stated that one can still learn a lot from the different communities that make up this world. The JFMC wishes Dean Rucker all our best, thanking him for his many years of service to the UMW community. He will be missed, but also celebrated for the legacy of contributions to the students, institution and community.



Dean Cedric Rucker receives recognition for his part in creating the Multicultural Fair from Dr. Marion Sanford, Director of the James Farmer Multicultural Center

Multicultural Fair: Back in Action

