



SGA MONTHLY

Fun fact: Turkeys can blush!



november

Apply for Spring 2020 Housing!

There is still room to apply for housing for the spring semester! Just visit reslife.umbc.edu for more info!

Questions about Spring Semester?

Have any questions about UMBC's safety measures for the Spring 2020 semester? Reach out to us via myUMBC, WebEx teams, or all social media @umbcsga.

Senate Vacancies

Interested in being a part of UMBC's Student Government? There are currently two vacancies in Senate! Click [here](#) to access the application, due by January 15th.

Post Election Resources

Click [here](#) for a list of links to post-election resources, brought to you by the UMBC Center for Democracy and Civic Life.

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SGA Branch News

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The SGA is moving forward with a 50% reduction of the incoming Student Activity Fee for this Spring semester! We have student representation on UMBC's Spring 2021 COVID-19 Planning Committee, which also includes the Academic Planning Committee. If you want to get involved and make sure your voice is heard, please contact President Mehrshad Devin (m160@umbc.edu) or Vice President Zachary Kay (zkay1@umbc.edu).

In the past 3 weeks, the Arbutus Sustainable Community focus groups took place and we advocated for more UMBC involvement within the upcoming changes to the town.

Finally, we worked with the Finance Board and the administrators to establish our final budget for Spring 2021.

Department of Communications

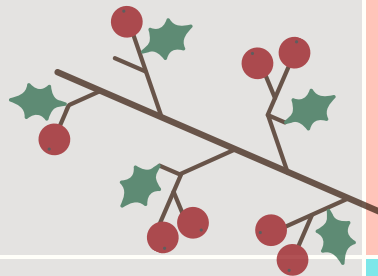
This November, the Department of Communications hosted a giveaway on our social media. We received a record number of participants and our social engagement numbers went up.

In collaboration with the Senate, we carried out social media initiatives to promote the proper disposal of temporary face masks, as well as promoted the use of reusable face masks to benefit the environment.

Department of Executive Initiatives

In the upcoming campus-wide email from the Student Government Association, there will be a form with which you may suggest a department initiative we can take on for the upcoming Spring semester. If you have suggestions, please fill it out!

Our department members have been hard at work this past month carrying out their initiatives surrounding mentorship and scholarships. We successfully pulled off Election Night Extravaganza, with a meaningful gathering amongst the student body.



Department of Extended Connections

This past month, as the Department of Extended Connections, we participated in the sessions of the Arbutus Sustainable Community project, voicing ideas for how Arbutus can include UMBC in its upcoming plans. We have also partnered with a number of businesses in Arbutus to work on future collaborative projects and encourage a college-town atmosphere in the area.

We are in the process of developing a mentorship system: two of the programs in this system will involve a long-term relationship between a student alumni that focuses on life after campus, and a relationship between two students that encourages community involvement, focusing on life on campus. We hosted an alumni panel for the SGA Senate that was very successful.

Lastly, our department is also collaborating with Executive Initiatives to create a new scholarship.

SGA Senate

This month, the Senate made significant strides in our work. We have been working with Residential Life to implement recycling bins in the dorms, as well as are collaborating with other members of SGA to create an in-depth Multicultural week to celebrate the diversity at UMBC.

A few of our Senators have been working on a program to bring free menstrual products -- more specifically, pads and tampons -- to campus! The pilot program for this will be launching in the Spring.

Lecture Hall 3 has been renovated, and classrooms in Sondheim have been approved for renovations in the Spring as well. Lastly, we have passed legislation for updated rules regarding facility use and roadway signage.

SGA Finance Board

In November, we took further steps to establish our plans for the student budget for the upcoming Spring semester. If you are a member of the executive board for a student organization, this information is specifically applicable to you. We will not be reviewing semesterly budgets this year; rather, we will continue evaluating SAHAS requests on a rolling basis. If you need funding for a virtual event this Spring, please apply for funding ASAP! We will be creating a SAHAS application audit in Survey Monkey for ease of communication between organizations and liaisons soon. Please reach out to your Finance Board liaison for any help you need regarding budgets or SAHAS. Find your liaison, their contact information, and their office hours by clicking [here](#).



Student Spotlight: Tirzah Khan

Interview by Milan Sulibhavi

Article by Sekinat Dosunmu

Tirzah Khan is a Senior Information Systems major and a Psychology minor, with a certificate in Web Development. With her activities rooted in her perception of the world around her, it's no surprise that one can see how passionate she is about everything she does. Tirzah, also an artist, says that the experiences in her life that have influenced her have mostly been being a person of color, Muslim, Desi, and an immigrant. It wasn't until attending STRIVE, however, where she found what major and path she was truly passionate about. Attending allowed her to meet a community of people that would make her strive for herself.

Tirzah is an intern with the Center for Democracy and Civic Life, as well as the President of TEDx UMBC. She was inspired to form TEDx after a friend of hers invited her to TEDx Johns Hopkins University. At the event, the speaker that caught her eye was Mohammed Khalid, the youngest person to be prosecuted for domestic terrorism offense in the U.S. He was also part of the UMBC McNair Scholars Program. She was surprised that UMBC had such a person as part of its undergraduate students, and she thought about all of the other students that no one had heard about.

These students would bring and share new knowledge to others. TEDx UMBC started because she believed that these students should have the chance to have their story told. One of her favorite TEDx speakers at UMBC was an alum of UMBC who graduated in 2013. He describes himself as a scholar artist educator who works in the theater community. He voiced how theater and art help us care for each other as a community, especially during a global pandemic. People think art isn't important at this time, but art is one of the most important things that we can do for each other right now; especially theater. These words especially resonated with Tirzah.

One thing that Tirzah wants people to know about her is that she is "obsessed!" with bubble tea. Her go-to order is passion fruit green tea with mango popping bubbles: "It will change your life," she quotes.

In the future, Tirzah's goal is to work with an organization that has to do with social change, and to be involved in their graphic design department.



Staff Spotlight: Gregory Simmons

by Maheera Chaudhry

Fun Fact: Mr. Simmons has a twin brother!

What do you miss about being a child? What moment or events during your childhood shaped you?

This month, I had the pleasure of talking with Gregory Simmons, the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at UMBC. Mr. Simmons' appreciation for his family and community really shined through our conversation. Take a moment to breathe, stop worrying about the future, and cherish your current relationships because as Mr. Simmons puts it, "Everything is going to be ok."

Mr. Simmons stressed how he misses the regularity of family visits, whether that be Sunday family dinners or birthdays from his childhood. Although he can see his family only about once a year, he is able to really enjoy and treasure those moments. Unfortunately, at the age of 12, Mr. Simmons lost his father, which really amplified his understanding of his mother and her unparalleled strength. He vividly remembers his mom going back to college and graduating the same year that he and his brother graduated high school. By witnessing his mother reinvent herself from a traditional housewife to a persevering and independent woman really crystallized what her accomplishments meant. Mr. Simmons explained that these moments showed him that regardless of age and gender, anyone can do amazing things.

Mr. Simmons was able to create another family: the community of UMBC. Having spent 28 years at this location, his group accomplishments put into perspective what the institution stood for and their unity.

Resonating with his mother's re-entrance into education, Mr. Simmons finds himself getting his PhD at UMBC. As Mr. Simmons was figuring out how to go back to school and completing assignments, his appreciation for students' struggles during this time became increasingly apparent. As we all know, online learning forces our school lives and home lives to collide, which can be difficult to understand for others. However, Mr. Simmons has great empathy since he is going through something similar.

For Mr. Simmons, celebrations like the 50th anniversary of UMBC, and the launch of their fundraising campaign represent great milestones that made him realize "this is possible and we can do this."

By being part of the detailed planning for events, he found himself enjoying and relishing the celebratory aspects even more. My time with Mr. Simmons really helped me put into perspective my relationships. The future may be uncertain, but I should take time to appreciate the time spent with my community. With Thanksgiving this month, we have the perfect opportunity to reflect on our current situations and find comfort.



Photo Credit: Maryland Business Roundtable for Education

Retriever Reflections: What is something kind someone has done for you this quarantine?

In an effort to help us connect with each other, even when we can't enjoy each other's company on campus, we asked you, the student body, to anonymously let us know what is something kind someone has done for you this quarantine. These were some of your responses:

"My best friend left birthday gifts for me at my doorstep!"

"Delivered me food."

"Took the time to talk to ask me about how I am doing. The conversation was refreshing and has helped me during this time. "

"Some of my friends have sent me e-gift cards to brighten my day."

"Two of my best friends (who I had not been able to see in months) showed up at my door on my birthday with balloons, presents, paintings, a pizza with my favorite toppings, and a card that they had taken to several of my other friends to fill with the sweetest messages!"

"A friend of mine has been really nice about always sending me a text every month checking up and asking how I am regardless of how busy she is."

"Friends and families helped me out by watching my daughter while I was at work or had to attend in-person/online class."

"Helped me with my CS project."

"My girlfriend kept me motivated even when times were rough."

"Brought me a donut :)."

"Cut some fruits for me."

"At my job, my manager brought me a sandwich on Black Friday as a thank you for working hard."

"Cooked food for me and left it on my doorstep while we were on lockdown."

"My big in my fraternity sent me face masks in the mail! "

"Sent me a handwritten note by mail."

"My friend surprised me on my birthday."

"My teacher from 10th grade sent me a letter to my future self which we wrote four years ago (I had completely forgotten writing it) she also attached a note catching me up on what she has been up to in the past couple of years."

"My uncle had a Zoom wedding."

"Played at my weekly virtual game nights!"

"Made me dinner and asked how I was doing."

"A girl I didn't know said she really liked my shoes!"

"Paid for my DoorDash."



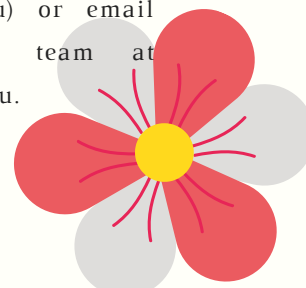
Mental Health & Wellness: Retriever Essentials



by Mokeira Nyakoe

Rebecca Ferguson, a UMBC SGA alum is the current AmeriCorp Volunteer working with Retriever Essentials. Rebecca and the Retriever Essentials Team are working remotely to keep open through the pandemic. Retriever Essentials started when a young lady saw a need for students to get groceries. Students would meet her in the parking lot behind the Public Policy building, where she would give them groceries bags from the trunk of her car. As more and more people got involved to support the needs of students who struggle with food insecurity, Retriever Essentials has grown to its current capacity. Food insecurity is quite high among college students, higher than many even realize. Many assume that if you are in college, your parents are helping you out, but that is not always the case. At a public institution like UMBC, the numbers show that with more transfer and/or self-supporting students, the food security needs of the campus are much higher than your average private institution. You can sign up for food bags through the website, by filling out [this form](#).

In the form, students can list any dietary restrictions or even specify foods that they don't like. Students can pick up their food from the campus police station at their convenience. All bags are labeled with the student's Campus ID number instead of their name to keep their anonymity. Students also have the option to pick up prepared generalized food bags from the police station. For those interested in donating, Retriever Essentials has a foundation account where secure credit card donations can be made. You can also make check donations. Food donations can be put in the gold bin located in the campus Police Station or at OCA Mocha. For contactless donations, Retriever Essentials also has an [Amazon Wish List](#) that you can donate through. Despite the pandemic, Retriever Essentials is still growing. [Towards Wholesome Eating](#) is an upcoming collaboration between OCA Mocha and Retriever Essentials which will introduce perishable items to supplement what is already in the pantry, from boxes of vegetables, to eggs, meat, and dairy products. There is a big stigma around food insecurity, but as a campus, we should continue to spread the word about Retriever Essentials and the free services it offers. To keep updated with Retriever Essentials, follow them on myUMBC and Instagram at @umbcretrieveressentials. For more information or any questions visit the Retriever Essentials website (retrieveressentials.umbc.edu) or email the Retriever Essentials team at retrieveressentials@umbc.edu.



Around Campus: Finders Keepers Thrift & Consignment Store

by Ekta Daryani

With the comeback of thrifting amongst fashion trends and awareness about environmental sustainability, the charm of thrift stores has spread to further and wider audiences than ever before. Clothes, books, art, and decorations -- a world full of objects with stories behind them exists here. Finders Keepers Thrift & Consignment Store is located on East Drive in Arbutus, owned and operated by wife-and-husband duo Sheena and Adam Herron. Having grown up in Arbutus, Sheena has seen the town sprout and blossom, through businesses opening, through businesses closing, through its sunrises and sunsets, and through people learning to call one another "friend."

Because of this, Sheena has always seen the potential in Arbutus for it to be a place where people want to go. Through this store, she has watched this very potential unfold. Sheena and Adam's daughter works at Finders Keepers sometimes as well, and customers have grown to know the entire family by their names. Some people that have come to the store have evolved to become some of Sheena and Adam's closest friends. Others have come to the store to find something once -- a jacket, perhaps -- and have ended up stumbling upon a universe of stories. Others yet have come to the store for conversation; to share narratives with one another, in the hopes that someone will be there to listen. And, whether it's to ask for help, an exchange about the triumphs and struggles of life, or simply a comment about the weather being unusually warm today, someone always is. Sheena warmly narrates a story from a couple of years ago. In this story, a single mother of three who had just lost her husband came into Finders Keepers around Christmas, asking if there was anything they could set aside for her. This interaction ended up evolving into a Christmas drive for the woman and her family; one that all of Finders Keepers' customer community contributed to; standing out because, to Sheena, this exemplified how tightly knit their customer base becomes to one another. Introducing Finders Keepers as a traditional "Mom and Pop shop," Sheena calls the place her "heart and soul." In a way, Arbutus is like a hub of communities, and each small business that makes it up is its own community center, dappled across a map of the town. In a world where people are continuously longing for connection, a love for the simplest goal of all -- creating community -- lies somewhere within the heart of most places here. As the world within this town continues to grow, the spools of thread that link us to one another unwind and lengthen, too. The universe at Finders Keepers Thrift and Consignment Store holds just one of those threads; as well as a part of Sheena's dream -- Arbutus' ability to be a town that is so much more than what people think it is -- that is slowly on its way to become a reality.

