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## Happy Winter Break!

On behalf of the UMBC Student Government Association, we wish you a safe and restful holiday break! See you back on virtual campus on January 26th, 2021!

## 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. Plus, check out this newsletter to see if it answers any of your questions!

## 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.



# Spring COVID-19 Semester Information

## Housing

UMBC Residence Life will be continuing at limited capacity this Spring. Students who have applied for housing already will receive information during early January, with move-in taking place over a staggered period from January 22nd-25th. There is still space to apply for housing if you are interested; please contact [reslife@umbc.edu](mailto:reslife@umbc.edu) for more information.



## Health & Responsibility

Students and faculty are expected to wear masks at all times while on campus, for which authorization to be on campus must be possessed. All community members must uphold the recommended COVID-19 rules and regulations of the current time. Students may be tested at UMBC'S testing center.

## Counseling

The Counseling Center has been hard at work to create programs that adapt to students' specific needs. This Spring, a number of virtual group therapy with a focus on developing connections through vulnerability will be available -- more information to come.

## Facilities

This semester, the library will be closed, with limited outdoor seating possibly becoming available to students sometime during the first half of the semester. Most activities will remain virtual, with a very small amount of approved, socially distanced outdoor events occurring as a possibility.

## Community Building

With our community being physically far apart, UMBC understands that this is a time where connection is needed more than ever before. Many virtual events will be taking place with neighboring Arbutus businesses such as OCA Mocha. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life has worked with other campus departments to refine and deepen their community-building programs for this semester.





## Student Spotlight: Anjali Dassarma

by Maheera Chaudhry

Anjali Dassarma, a media and communications studies major and journalism minor, is the Editor in Chief of our very own newspaper: the Retriever. However, her experience doesn't just stop there! She was a communications intern at the newseum, a media intern at the United States Holocaust memorial museum, and most recently a intern at the Baltimore Sun. Although Anjali has been a part of the Retriever for two years, she has had a love for writing and journalism since her childhood. Anjali mentioned that she wrote a book in middle school, which she describes as a "dorky little fiction book," but this really showcases her love and devotion to writing: one that has continued to this day. In her freshman year of high school, Anjali had the opportunity to take a journalism class, which was the gateway to her future passion and prospective career. The power of journalism coupled with her great urge to help those around her has served as the perfect motivation for her work and writing. When she received the Editor in Chief position, Anjali had tons of grand ideas, wanting to change the culture of the paper while also building strong relationships with the other members. After the virus hit, much of her plans were set aside. Taking over the paper in one of the hardest times is no easy ordeal, but Anjali managed to do so in such a smooth and dedicated manner.

After spending her summer working hard on both her internship and the Retriever, Anjali has been able to guide a great group of writers to help inform students of campus news.

Interested in systemic changes in her industry, Anjali finds herself applying to graduate school with one goal in mind: "to shake up the journalism industry." Anjali wants more diverse representation in news reporting and wants to educate others on how to better serve the community. Although it may seem impossible to accomplish what Anjali has done in such a short period of time, she leaves us with a few pieces of advice. As a student, she was always on the lookout for opportunities and urged students to go ahead and reach out to different programs, mentors, and even organizations via simple platforms such as Twitter or Instagram. Even though rejection may be hard, Anjali says, "you have to have thick skin" because these risks are what prepare you for opportunities.



# Retriever Reflections: How did you feel about this semester? As we look ahead, are there things you would like to see change in the Spring?

In an effort to make sure your voice is heard, we asked you, the student body, to anonymously let us know how you felt about this semester and what things you would like to see change next semester. These are your responses:

““This semester (my first!!) was very stressful but also very productive! I felt as if I learned a lot about how college works and how to navigate online schooling. I am looking forward to making friends next semester and joining clubs! Hopefully next semester will be more of a transition into regular college!! ”

“The semester was a lot more difficult than I expected coming in as a freshman. Next semester I’ll appreciate it if the library was open for on campus students”

“This semester was really difficult to navigate, but I’m happy that I got through it (and my grades weren’t too bad). Next semester, I definitely want to be more focused on classes, and I would like to see professors be more understanding and lenient when it comes to assignments. Everybody’s struggling!”

“I felt very isolated living at home, but I don’t think UMBC could have helped as online “socials” usually aren’t super helpful. I would like to see more mental health resources to help with coping”

““This semester was beyond crazy, but it was a learning experience to say the least. Next semester I want to give myself more grace, and allow myself the time to do things that are benefiting myself and not just others. At the same time I need to spend more time focusing on my classes. I really struggled with paying attention in class and seeking help when things weren’t going well, which ultimately led to me not doing so well. My ultimate goal is to learn from my mistakes of the fall semester to have a better spring semester.”

“This semester was overall very well. Academically it was challenging yet manageable, and I earned the grades I wanted. Socially it was tough, and I didn’t manage to make many new friends, but I’m glad that I was able to meet other students with similar interests through extracurricular activities. As for next semester, I hope to see more opportunities that all freshmen, of varying interests, can attend. ”

“This semester was somehow was challenging but we made it through it. It was a wonderful and amazing semester where we had chance to do be safe with my family and friends.”

“It was JAM-PACKED! I felt like professors were slightly more comfortable with the online format and because of that they assigned numerous assignments and it got to be overwhelming. But! I also felt that professors were even more understanding and willing to help. I think keeping that empathy for the next semester will help to lessen the loss that comes with not being able to interact in person! It’s nice to know that there is a person behind the screen that’s open to understand everyone. I do think next semester should have a pass/fail option, just because I know many students who suffered and stressed more this semester and either failed or received incompletes because of it. ”

”“Next semester, people who are vaccinated and have proof should be able to be go about Res Life normally. Also, people from other dorms should be able to go into other dorms with each other. It doesn’t make sense that people can eat together, be with each other outside and inside, but then not go into a building”

“Overall I would say UMBC did a good job of accommodating to mostly online classes. I think most of my teachers were understanding and wanted us to succeed. The only recommendation would be that some teachers need more training on how to work the online resources like blackboard because there were multiple times when class was stalled because a teacher didn’t know how to work something.”

“I felt fairly stressed this semester. I was really disappointed that we couldn’t choose Pass/Fail for some of our classes. I personally wouldn’t’ve been able to benefit from it, but I’m sure my fellow students would have. I also appreciate the abundance of online social spaces created by UMBC, like the zoom calls arranged by the Counseling Center. In terms of social justice, I feel like UMBC could have done more to show support for their BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students through emails, allotment of funds, and other such initiatives. I also want to see more support from UMBC for professors in terms of gaging technology and other challenges which come with online learning.”

“I hope to see more student groups outside of commons again! It was always so fun to see people!!”

“This semester was stressful as I had challenging classes that gave a lot of work. It was also difficult not being around my friends to hang out and have fun together and to make new friends. I hope that next semester professors can be more understanding about the difficulties of an online format and better organize their exams to show all the questions at once so we can review our answers. They should also be more lenient when it comes to final grades and give more extra credit.”

“This semester went really well and it was difficult in the beginning when all the classes were online but later it got better and easy to understand the course being online.”

“It was hard :( I would probably ask for less assignments or more extensions. ”



# Mental Health & Wellness: The Counseling Center

by Mokeira Nyakoe

*The Counseling Center is currently closed and will re-open on 1/4/21. If you have concerns while they are closed and wish to speak with someone from UMBC's After-Hours Support Line, call 410-455-3230. Also note that due to applicable mental health licensure laws, the UMBC Counseling Center can only provide ongoing counseling services to students who are physically located in the state of Maryland at the time of service. If you are outside of Maryland, please contact the Counseling Center to discuss other options you may have available to you based on your location.*



This semester has been a struggle for many students. Balancing virtual academics, the lack of social interaction, and the loss of loved ones due to COVID-19, are a few struggles amongst many different circumstances. In the midst of everything this year has thrown at the world, students should continue to remember to prioritize taking care of their mental health. UMBC has and continues to offer students resources to ensure they are keeping up with their mental health. UMBC's Counseling Center offers many different resources for all varieties of students, including Individual Counseling, Couples Counseling, and Group Counseling. COVID - 19 has forced the counseling center to work diligently to readjust many of its resources to fit the virtual environment while continuing to offer all students confidentiality. Making an appointment with the Counseling Center is very simple! Just give their front desk staff a call at 410-455-2472. During your first consultation, you will have the opportunity to talk to a counselor about what concerns are bringing you to counseling as well as any goals you have. During this consultation, the student and counselor will decide what the best option will be for a student based on their circumstances and needs; including individual counseling, group counseling, workshops, or a referral to an off-campus provider. For students interested in Group Counseling, some of the groups offered in the Spring include Connecting While Apart: Undergraduate Support Group, UMBC Self-Help Book Club, Women of Color Support Group, Trans\* Support Group, and You've Got This Group. In order to get connected with any of these groups, please contact the front desk. They will be able to set up a meeting with the group leader to determine if that group is right for you. As well as counseling sessions, the Counseling Center also holds a variety of workshops. Most recently, this month, they did a December De-Stress 2020 Series in which students had an opportunity to showcase their pets, plants and projects, taking a moment to de-stress from chaos that the end of a semester typically brings. The Counseling Center also offers a variety of drop-in sessions including Let's Meditate @ UMBC series. As we look to the Spring semester, it is important to continually give yourself grace when it comes to your mental health, whether it is a simple thing, such as taking the night to yourself, or a five minute meditation session. No matter how you choose to keep up with your mental health, the Counseling Center and its resources are always available. To keep updated with the Counseling Center, follow them on myUMBC and their Instagram at @umbccounseling.