



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

Department of African American Studies
1201 W. Nevada St., MC-143
Urbana, IL 61801

Dear Students, Colleagues, and Friends:

May 14, 2022

As the campus bristles with annual 2022 Commencement festivities, I wanted to send a note of congratulations and thanks for your hard work and achievements against the odds. Professor Jenkins informs us that AFRO has eight students marching and celebrating today with family and friends:

Graduating AFRO majors:

Verdis Brown
Kamara Davis** (also graduating **with distinction**)
Queen Reese (pending completion of language course)
Kayla Stewart**

Graduating AFRO minors:

Zaria Brim**
Angelica Heaney
Grace Johnson**
Erin Smith**

**student has earned Ida B. Wells AFRO/GWS Certificate!!

In addition, we have several graduate students who have been advised by AFRO faculty receiving PhDs. One is Cassandra Osei who has completed her PhD in History, advised by Faye Harrison, who has enough credits for a graduate minor; she is on her way to a tenure track position at Bucknell. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THESE STUDENTS, and to others who will appear on our updated list. [Colleagues, let us know of students we have missed, including majors and minors who have other notable achievements!] We will be in touch soon with your certificates and other gestures of our congratulations! Next year, AFRO will host a luncheon or reception for graduating students and their families! We also hosted Dr. Lonnie Bunch, the Smithsonian Museums director, who was awarded a 2020 honorary degree, nominated by African American Studies the Humanities Institute.

This has been a remarkable semester, a remarkable year, and a remarkable 2+ years since March 2020! AFRO has had several bouts of Covid-19 among our faculty, and sometimes more than one! The other difficulties faced by our students, faculty, and staff are too numerous to list. But, overall, we continue to achieve against the odds. In addition to students awards, additional accomplishments are highlighted below and appear on AFRO's homepage <https://afro.illinois.edu/>

- Irvin Hunt was awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor in English & AFRO.
- Esther Ngumbi was chosen as the 2021-2022 LAS James Scholar Faculty Mentor of the Year.
- Leonard McKinnis was invited as the speaker for the 2021-22 SLCL convocation, 5/14/22.
- Kemal Nance will accept an award for his mentor, the late dance scholar Dr. Kariamum Welsh, at Duke University during the American Dance Festival (ADF) on June 19th–Juneteenth.
- Faye Harrison was awarded the prestigious Bronislaw Malinowski Award by the US-based Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA).
- Desiree McMillion was selected as one of the winners of the Ebony Excellence Award.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!!

Ron Bailey, Head