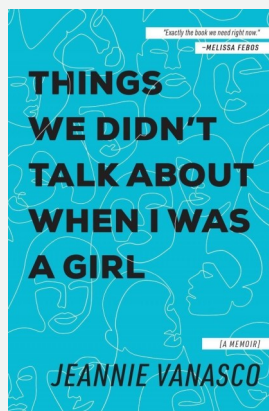


WORD!

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PRWR student Greg Lewis recently won more than \$50,000 in grants for the Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park. (*Patrick Gillespie / Flickr*)

Professional Writing students win grants for local nonprofits

By Clara Jeske

Through his work with Dr. Zosha Stuckey's program G.I.V.E., PRWR student Greg Lewis won \$57,000 in grants last fall to benefit Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park.

Lewis, now in his second year on the technical writing track, won a \$50,000 grant from Maryland Heritage Areas for a mobile center with multilingual displays and a built-in classroom—all “to better serve the visitor population, 30% of whom are Latinx,” he says. He also won another grant of \$7,000 to purchase mountain bikes as part of the park rangers' safety program.

“Working with G.I.V.E. was an amazing experience,” Lewis says.

Dr. Zosha Stuckey began G.I.V.E. (Grantwriting in Valued Environments) as a grassroots, volunteer organization in 2012. Since 2017, G.I.V.E. has been partnered with Baltimore-Towson United, a Towson University initiative that funds relationships between university programs and community organizations.

“I like to think of it,” Stuckey says of G.I.V.E., “as infrastructure building and capacity building for nonprofits.” The program's main focus is bringing resources to community partners —often grassroots non-profits—that (continued)

PRWR students win grants (cont.)

don't have paid grant writers. But there are other roles G.I.V.E. can fill. For example, it has helped facilitate community creative writing courses in Baltimore.

There are three PRWR courses in which working with G.I.V.E. is embedded into the syllabus—Technical Writing, Communication in the Profit/Nonprofit Sectors, and a special topics course to be offered by Dr. Carrie Grant next fall.

In Dr. Halycon Lawrence's Technical Writing class, students learn to manage internal documentation in nonprofits partnered with G.I.V.E. In Grant's topics course, they will learn how to organize their communication and create their social media content.

In Stuckey's course—PRWR 619—students research calls for grants, meet with nonprofit organizations to learn what they need, and write grant applications in time to submit them at the end of the semester.

These classes, Stuckey says, are the best way to get hands-on experience with G.I.V.E. Students can also apply for internships to work with the administrative side of the program.

"If I hadn't taken Dr Stuckey's course," says Thea Robertson, a G.I.V.E. graduate-student intern, "I don't think I would have thought about gaining experience in this field." Robertson, now in her second year of the technical writing track, is one of four paid G.I.V.E. interns who work on proposals, research, and administration for the program.

Lewis has already found a job working as a proposal and technical writer for FEi systems, a Columbia-based healthcare company; he says



The 2020 G.I.V.E. team, from left to right: PRWR students Thea Robertson and Chrissy Yates, Professors Carrie Grant and Zosha Stuckey, and undergraduate students Uche Anyanwu and Sharon Akuokoh. (Photo courtesy of Zosha Stuckey.)

it's thanks to his work with both PRWR and G.I.V.E. He still has three courses left to go before graduation, but is already "super thankful for my experience at TU."

"The PRWR program is career-oriented with a strong focus on real-world scenarios," Lewis said, "and it has been a huge help in my career."

Meg Davis, a PRWR graduate, was able to use her experience writing grants with G.I.V.E. to find a full-time job after graduation. She now works for the Maryland Food Bank as a grants manager, raising over \$4 million a year, according to Stuckey.

Stuckey intends for G.I.V.E. to keep growing within the TU community. "Service is huge for me," she says, "When I come to Towson, I know my profession and my career are all about that, and that's so rewarding to be able to pass that on to people."

Her hope is that students will take Grant's course in the fall and hers in the spring as complementary



A rendering of the vans that will serve as mobile park centers. ([fpvsp.org](http://pvsp.org))

courses, providing a full year of understanding about how writing and communication work in nonprofit settings. PRWR students have a chance now to have two semesters of hands-on work with nonprofit community engagement, and to carry that experience into success beyond the classroom.



Jeannie Vanasco on the set of the *Tamron Hall* show, where she talked about her book. Photo courtesy of Summerdale Productions.

Jeannie Vanasco reflects on the press tour for *Things We Didn't Talk About When I Was a Girl*

By Rebecca Ritter

On the press tour for her second memoir, Professor Jeannie Vanasco has learned to fit interviews in between her office hours.

"There were times when I went straight from BWI to class," she said.

Things We Didn't Talk About When I Was a Girl was published by Tin House in Fall 2019. It has since been named a *Kirkus* Best Book of the Year and topped must-read lists from publications like *TIME* magazine and *The New York Times*.

Press for the book has been intense. Vanasco estimates that, while teaching, she has done close to 20 interviews and given talks at more than 20 bookstores, universities, and events. She has appeared on

podcasts, *NPR*, and live television; major publications have asked to profile her or for her opinion on Harvey Weinstein.

In the book, Vanasco interviews and confronts her childhood-friend-turned-rapist, a man she gives the pseudonym "Mark." The book is an intimate reckoning of a painful time from Vanasco's past, and at the same time an outward-facing interrogation of what the consequences of sexual violence look like for both victim and perpetrator.

Vanasco said that doing press for this book has been particularly difficult. "People inadvertently asked very rude questions," she said. On the press tour, some interviewers even went so far as to ask

questions like, "Why do you think you got assaulted as much as you did?"

But Vanasco said the tour has also brought some "great and very meaningful" experiences. At events, survivors of rape have told her how much her book has meant to them.

And press stops can be generative for writers: Vanasco said she got the idea for this project after being asked a question on a press stop for her first book, *The Glass Eye*.

"Part of the reason I was interested in the project was because it gave me control over the narrative," Vanasco said. In writing about her assault, Vanasco had authority not only over her side of the story but also her rapist's. She got to decide how to (continued)

Vanasco reflects on book tour (cont.)

portray him in her book and what she allowed him to say.

Vanasco said there was irony in wanting control and then having to do live interviews to promote the book. Doing live radio interviews or even television—as when Vanasco appeared on the *Tamron Hall* show in September—can be difficult for writers who want time to consider their words.

Another frustration Vanasco said she found on the press tour was in returning to the same subject over and over. “It’s draining,” she said.

Because of the publishing process, Vanasco finished the book nearly a year before it came out. By the time she needed to promote it, she felt that she had already said all she could.

In fact, she said, that’s one of the ways she knows that a project is complete—when she feels there is absolutely nothing more she can say.

The majority of the book’s press was handled by a publicist employed by Tin House, but Vanasco still needed to learn how to protect her time. She said that’s one of the most important pieces of advice she can offer a writer.

“You can’t say yes to everything,” she said.

Another thing that Vanasco emphasizes is that it is “so important to have an editor you trust.” Vanasco had already worked with Tin House on her first book, so she felt comfortable working with the same editor again for *Things We Didn’t Talk About When I Was a*

Girl.

Vanasco said that in many ways the publishing process for her memoir was not the industry norm. She negotiated the deal on her own, separate from her agent. Also, the contract was purchased based on a proposal before the manuscript was finished.

All of this was only possible because of the close relationship Vanasco has with her editor. The two have shared a connection ever since Vanasco’s agent first introduced her to Tin House when shopping around *The Glass Eye’s* manuscript.

The saddest part of the writing process, Vanasco said, is when it ends; you suddenly need something else to consume your time. She’s looking forward to moving on to that next thing.

Important dates for PRWR students

Feb. 29: Towson University Graduate Studies Open House.

March 7: College English Association Middle Atlantic Group (CEA-MAG) conference, at the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore.

April 1: Spring portfolio due date for students who have completed between 12–18 credits. Send three examples of your writing from your PRWR classes in a .pdf or Word file to prwr@towson.edu.

April 8: PRWR professor Zosha Stuckey delivers her sabbatical talk, “On Civil Rights, Re-enactments & Speechwriting as Historical Fiction” at 6:30 p.m. in the CLA.

April 13: First day of graduate student registration for Fall 2020 classes.

Introducing Roundtree and Grant



Dr. Sherita Roundtree

By Rebecca Ritter
For Dr. Sherita Roundtree, joining the PRWR faculty at Towson University made for something of a homecoming.

Roundtree grew up in Maryland, graduating from Salisbury University. But for the past seven

years she has made the Midwest her home, receiving her master's from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and her doctorate from The Ohio State University.

Roundtree said that moving back to Maryland was strange at first because it felt like just another visit home. "It felt like I was going to pack up and leave any minute," she said.

But the Towson community has been "incredibly supportive," said Roundtree, and her students have been helpful in the transition. Her undergraduate students have come to class prepared and eager to discuss writing at a high level, she said. "I was blown away," said Roundtree, who started teaching English classes in Fall 2019.

Roundtree would like to be a resource for any PRWR student working on a research thesis.

For PRWR, Roundtree will teach a variety of rhetoric courses and is currently teaching "Teaching College Composition." She returns to the classroom after a year spent finishing her dissertation at Ohio State. Her work focused on the experiences of black women who work as graduate teaching assistants. Her (continued)

By Clara Jeske

Dr. Carrie Grant considers herself a new bridge between the Technical and Public/Private writing tracks in the PRWR program.

As a professor, she wants to bring both together for students.

Grant is teaching Dr. Carrie Grant grant writing for undergraduate students this spring. In the fall, she will offer a brand-new special topics course in Writing and Managing Content for Social Change. That course will be affiliated with G.I.V.E. (Grantwriting in Valued Environments). G.I.V.E., a Towson University nonprofit initiative, brings grant writers and administrators to community organizations in need.



Grant considers herself a bridge between the Technical and Public/Private writing tracks.

The course will look broadly at the theory of content management. Grant envisions her students writing content proposals and managing social media for local nonprofit organizations.

The class, she says, will also examine current theories about global advocacy work and critiques of nonprofit structures. "I want to have that framework," she says, "for PRWR students to decide where they might fit in with that kind of work."

Dr. Carrie Grant earned her PhD in August 2019 from Purdue University. Her dissertation focused on technical (continued)

Roundtree (cont.)

participants were from colleges around the country, carefully enlisted by Roundtree using various listservs, professional connections, and social media blasts.

Roundtree said that she would like to be a resource for any PRWR student working on a research thesis, especially those feeling daunted by recruiting participants. She said she knows from experience “just how hard that can be.”

Roundtree’s dissertation, which she successfully defended in 2019, is titled “Pedagogies of Noise: Black Women’s Teaching Efficacy and Pedagogical Approaches in Composition Classrooms.”

“Noise” refers to the concept put forward by hip-hop scholar Tricia Rose and other intersectional academics to describe how black voices and cultural codes are seen as “noisy” or disruptive. In her work, Roundtree applied this concept to academic spaces.

Roundtree said that her dissertation was about reclaiming

that concept of noise and analyzing the so-called “disruptive” nature that black women graduate teaching assistants bring to the classroom.

In November 2019, Roundtree received the Presidents Dissertation Award from the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition (CFSHRC). The award is presented to dissertation authors who have made “an outstanding contribution to our understanding of feminist histories, theories, and pedagogies of rhetoric and composition,” according to the CFSHRC website.

As a result of her dissertation, Roundtree said that she is more mindful of the lack of support for students, especially teaching assistants. She wants to make resources more available and to be a resource for students herself.

Roundtree’s focus on access in the classroom extends beyond race and gender. Her classes on pedagogy, including “Teaching

College Composition,” incorporate elements of universal design.

This theory of teaching looks at ways to better include students with disabilities and students who need alternative methods of teaching, while also universally improving the quality of the classroom, something “beneficial for everybody,” said Roundtree.

A professor implementing universal design might, for example, provide written transcripts or presentation slides from that day’s lecture. This would be beneficial to students with auditory processing problems, but also for any student who learns better from written information.

Roundtree incorporates these methods into her own teaching, not only to benefit her class, but to model this theory of access and inclusion for students who may themselves be future teachers.

Roundtree said that her return to Maryland has gone smoothly, all in all. “All of my family is here,” she said. This has been a huge support for her while she transitions to living and working in Maryland again. Only a 45-minute drive away from her mother, Roundtree said she is “spoiled and loving it.”



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Professor Carrie Grant (cont.)

communication in STEM summer camps for girls—she's interested in how instructors build trust with their students and how that trust shapes their success.

"Studies show that for girls to pursue their interest in technology," she says, "it's their confidence that predicts their likelihood to pursue that topic way more than their skill level." Working with summer camp teachers, she studied how they nurtured confidence-building relationships with young women by sharing their own stories and making personal connections with them.

"When they're little," Grant says, "girls are traditionally told 'you're so smart' rather than

having a growth mentality for learning. Boys are expected to try and fail and then learn from it, but girls tend to get the message that they're either innately good or innately bad at something. We're trying to reframe that for them."

As an advocate for nonprofit work, Grant works with G.I.V.E., and she says "that's what brought me to Towson." Last semester, she helped write program grants for S.A.F.E. (the Safe Alternative Foundation for Education), an after-school program that offers mentoring for middle school youth in West Baltimore. Her undergraduate students wrote proposals for funding a new literacy program—a group of Towson students regularly visits

the S.A.F.E. house for poetry workshops, she says, and she wanted to expand the reading and writing resources available to the children.

This semester, Grant and her undergraduate students will be working with Family Survivor Network, an organization dedicated to supporting the families of murder victims in Baltimore. "They're really amazing and just starting up," Grant says, "and G.I.V.E. has a great structure to help them grow."

In her free time, Grant enjoys modern dance, listens to "far too many Bachelor podcasts," and considers herself an armchair critic of the Oscars.



Fulton Avenue Family House, "a sanctuary for survivors and the base of operations" for Family Survivor Network, an organization Dr. Grant is working with through G.I.V.E. (fsnwork.org)

Professor Lena Ampadu retires after 43 years of teaching

By Clara Jeske

This spring, PRWR says a fond farewell to Dr. Lena Ampadu, who has retired after 43 years of teaching both graduates and undergraduates at Towson University.

Ampadu joined Towson University's English Department in 1976; she earned her B.A. in English at Howard University and her PhD from the University of Maryland in 1999. She taught undergraduate courses in African-American literature and in 2012 began teaching rhetorical grammar to PRWR students

"These graduate students were curious and always courteous," Ampadu says. "I really enjoyed the teaching and learning exchange from students with such an array of educational and employment experiences."

Throughout her career, Ampadu's scholarship has dealt largely with the literature of African-American woman—particularly in regard to oral tradition and dialect. Just this past January, Ampadu presented a paper at the Modern Language Association convention in Seattle. MLA is the largest yearly gathering for the humanities in America, where members have the opportunity to present their research and scholarship.

Ampadu's paper was part of what she calls a "just-in-time panel," which focused on the

works of novelist Paule Marshall, who died last August, shortly after the MLA deadline for accepting papers. Ampadu says that Marshall's "death was overshadowed by the more renowned Toni Morrison," and thus she and three other panelists wanted to spotlight her work.

Ampadu's paper, titled "The Changing Notions of Motherhood Among Immigrant Women in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*," focuses on Marshall's debut novel, which was published in 1959. Hers was one of four presentations about community and Pan-African identity in Marshall's works.

This paper is just one of Ampadu's many contributions to the study of African-American literature and rhetoric throughout her career. In 2004, she was awarded a Paul Cuffe Memorial Fellowship to study the rhetoric of Frederick Douglass. She has published papers on a wide range of topics, including teacher and journalist Maria Stewart, poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, African spirituality, and teaching composition.

"My friend Lena is the living definition of collegiality," says Clarinda Harriss, professor emerita of English at Towson. "When I think of her, I think of how hard she worked for the department—as assistant chair, as curator of the Gissendanner



Lectures, as a leader of African-American Studies, and as a teacher beloved by countless students." Harriss taught from 1971 to 2011 and during the ten years she served as department chair, Ampadu served as assistant chair.

"Overall," Ampadu says, "teaching at Towson gave me the opportunity to meet colleagues and students from different cultural backgrounds and afforded me the opportunity to shape and enlarge my ways of seeing and being in the world. I hope that the exchange was mutual—that others learned to see the world differently after taking my classes."

"Dr. Lena Ampadu was an essential member of Towson's English department since long before I arrived," says Geoffrey Becker, former director of the PRWR program. "I'm happy for her to be getting more time in her life for research and writing and family, but to say we'll miss her is an understatement."

Student Spotlight

Internships that led to jobs

By Rebecca Ritter

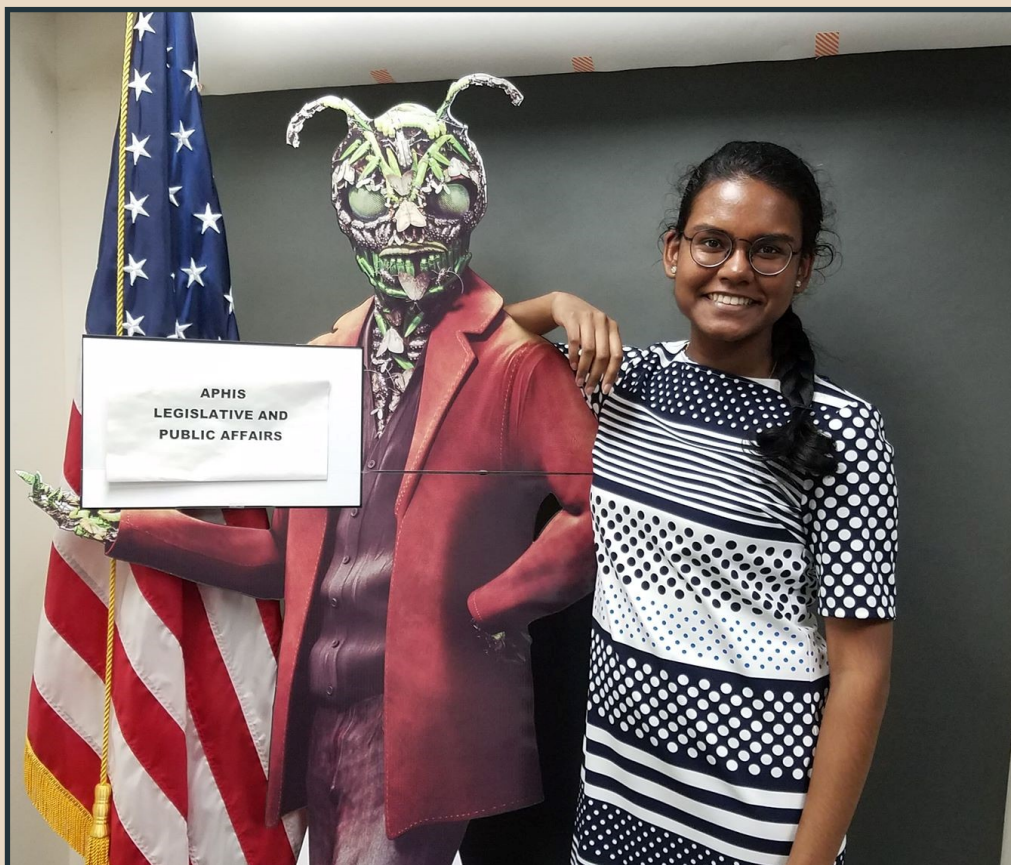
Professional Writing students complete an internship as part of their studies. In some cases, those internships lead to job offers. This was true for four PRWR students in Fall 2019, including recent graduates Amy Anand and Rachel Buchanan, and current students Amy Myers and Hailey Jowanowitch.

After graduating at the end of Fall 2019, Anand was hired as a writer-editor for the United States Department of Agriculture. Her duties vary daily, she wrote in an email.

"Some days it's full of research on various animal diseases or trade policies," she said, "or talking to sources for a response to an industry stakeholder or member of Congress. Other days, I might be designing flyers and promotional materials."

Myers also sees a lot of variety as an assigning editor for *Recreation News*, a mid-Atlantic travel magazine that publishes a print edition and online.

"Because our publication is printed monthly," Myers said by email, "my daily tasks vary depending on what is needed for the current issue. Some days I am calling writers asking if they're interested in taking assignments; other days I'm tracking down photos and



PRWR alum Amy Anand with "Vin Vasive," mascot for the USDA'S "Hungry Pests" campaign. (Photo courtesy of Amy Anand.)

writing cutlines."

Both Anand and Myers connected with their employers as interns for the PRWR program. "I found the internship on USAjobs.com," said Anand. The USDA was offering a paid internship for a student trainee. "Throughout my internship," she said, "my supervisors let me know that they liked my work and hoped I'd stay on."

Myers found that her internship was a learn-on-the-

job experience. "There wasn't a lot of hand-holding or practice runs when I started," she said. "When you work in [journalism], you just have to hit the ground running and learn as you go."

Myers still felt supported, however, both as an intern and later when she was offered a job. "I have a really great support team on staff," she said, "ready to help and willing to pitch in if I'm in a scramble."

While at Towson, (continued)

Student Spotlight (cont.)

Anand was on the Technical Writing and Information Design track; Myers is set to graduate with a concentration in Writing for the Public and Private Sectors. But while Myers and Anand have landed in different writing fields, the two say they benefited from some of the same courses. Both especially highlighted the freelance writing course.

"I am so, so thankful I took the freelance class before I started my internship," said Myers. She said Professor Michael Downs gave students "a clear understanding of what freelancers should expect from editors and publishers." She added, "I had no idea I would be using that information from the editor's perspective instead of the [writer's!]"

Anand said the class was also one of her favorites. "It was really difficult," she said, "but very necessary for me to grasp a variety of writing styles. We learned how to interview

people, which I use every day at work talking to scientists and analysts."

Anand said she also benefited from classes in technical writing. Even her lessons from creative writing classes "come in handy," she said, when she writes feature stories at the USDA.

Myers and Anand both cite the lessons they learned in the PRWR program as helpful in their new positions. "The PRWR program was so beneficial for

my growth as a writer," said Anand.

"The PRWR program was so beneficial for my growth as a writer," said Anand.

Myers has learned that, in journalism, "you just have to hit the ground running and learn as you go."



Image courtesy of *Recreation News*, where PRWR student Amy Myers works as an assignment editor.