

Student Spotlight: Deon Atkins

Allison Roman, Assistant Director



Deon Atkins said he believes that “in order to see a difference in our generation to come, I must lead by example.” And he is doing just that!

A Benton Harbor, Michigan, native and a

graduate of Benton Harbor High School, Atkins said he chose Grand Valley State University because it has one of the best police academies in Michigan. He also was attracted to GVSU because of its beautiful recreational center and basketball courts.

As a junior pursuing a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a minor in juvenile justice, Atkins aspires to become a federal agent or work with troubled youth. He said he chose this field because he is passionate about creating change within communities.

A very active student at Grand Valley, Atkins is involved with the Oliver Wilson Freshman Academy program, Multicultural Cohort Program, Grand Valley Police Department, Rev@ Campus ministry, Black Male Scholar Initiative, and the Criminal Justice Student Association.

Last spring, Atkins received the Multicultural Cohort Program Rising Star Award; this summer he interned with the Grand Haven Department of Public Safety and was later hired by the department as a police cadet.

The youngest of eight children, Atkins enjoys playing percussion, playing football, learning about God, driving fancy cars, and establishing friendships with new people.

Meet Our Grad: Kayla “KJ” Jones

Allison Roman, Assistant Director

Our newest addition to the Office of Multicultural Affairs team is, Kayla “KJ” Jones, graduate assistant.

Born in Long Beach, California, Jones moved around quite a bit due to her father serving in four branches of the military. She has lived in different cities along the California coast, South Carolina and Michigan.

During her time as an undergraduate, Jones was a very involved student. Jones transferred to Grand Valley during her junior year and felt she had to make up for lost time. She joined four student organizations and was a member of two Greek letter organizations. She still remains involved. Jones also enjoys being civically involved in the Grand Rapids and Detroit communities.

Jones graduated from Grand Valley in May with a bachelor's degree in public and nonprofit and health administration, her focus was community development and planning.

She is now pursuing her graduate degree in college student affairs leadership, in the College of Education. She will be mainly assisting with the Wade H. McCree Jr. Program, the Multicultural Cohort Program, and anywhere else that she can learn. She is very excited to continue her education at Grand Valley, and to work with first-generation college students.

Aside from being a full-time student and a graduate assistant, Jones stays pretty busy with three start-up businesses. When she has some downtime, she enjoys watching movies from Netflix and spending time with her dog, Bailey.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs is excited to have Jones as part of our team and looks forward to the rich contributions she will make to the Grand Valley community.



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MI GEAR UP Summer Camp Reflections

I stayed at Grand Valley State University for four days. We did multiple activities to get to know each other. We learned how to use a bank account and I learned that I really have saved money. We visited Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan. I learned that I really need to get my life together because some other people don't have the advantages I do. I also found out that I can get a scholarship for being a twin and multiracial. Most importantly I learned stuff about myself that I didn't know before and now I can't wait to go to COLLEGE!
—Trisha Villarreal

I had a fun time at this GEAR UP Camp! I learned about college, how to pay for college and how many colleges are open to me. We saw so many amazing things at Grand Valley. We played games, saw the dorms and college classes, and met many college students. We traveled to Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan. I liked those college tours and exploring the new colleges but I'm a future Laker! I'm going to Grand Valley. I have loved this college ever since I got introduced through GEAR UP at Gerald R. Ford Middle School. I had a bunch of fun. This was a great experience. Thank you so much, Mr. Bobby Springer.
—Mackenzie Johnson

I learned how to calculate money for checking and saving accounts. I learned what college and the dorms are like. GVSU has a good size pool and a great gym (decent size campus). The food in the cafeteria is good; the chef did an amazing job for us. I really liked the campus visits to Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan. At U-M we learned a lot about engineering. They have to wear full body suits when working with something called nano. They have won many competitions racing solar powered cars, human-powered boats and off road go-carts. All three colleges were amazing but I really want to come to GVSU. I know the campus and I know the people. GEAR UP has given me an amazing opportunity and I will be forever thankful!
—Caitlin Robach



2013 MI GEAR UP Summer Camp

Reflections from a MI GEAR UP Partner

Rodney D. Brown, Building Principal at Alger Middle School/Grand Rapids Public Schools



As a GEAR UP partner, it has been a true honor to work with Bobby Jo Springer and Steve Chappell from Grand

Valley State University in our college exploration and preparation activities and with the Get Your Diploma/Get Your Dream Initiative from WGVU Public Media.

As a first-year principal at Alger Middle School with the Grand Rapids Public Schools, I had the opportunity to participate in a number of activities with the GEAR UP graduating class of 2017 (Alger's 2012–2013 eighth graders), including attending the 23rd Annual Equity within the Classroom Conference at Wayne State University in April and the National GEAR UP Conference in July in San Francisco, California. I am extremely grateful to Mr. Springer and the state leadership of GEAR UP for allowing me to participate in these conferences as we continue to build and strengthen our partnership to help expose and prepare our students for college.

The National GEAR UP Conference was fantastic. There was great enthusiasm from the Michigan GEAR UP attendees and the more than 1,700 participants from around the country. At the opening session we heard from U.S. Rep. Chaka Fatah (Pennsylvania), who shared why he and Congress support GEAR UP. Fatah told other anecdotes about the importance of

reading and how students may struggle to find a way to attend college.

There were workshops on parental involvement, building partnerships, data use, student leadership, and so many more. At one workshop, I thought it was great to hear that other communities are also looking to more broadly define “parental involvement” to include whole “families” and approach this under the auspices of family engagement.

One of the best sessions I attended was led by Mr. Arel Moodie, a dynamic young presenter who spoke about the importance of communication with students. He stressed that “little moments can make a big difference.” Educators can make or break a student's desires and confidences based on how we communicate. This resonated with me and reminded me that every interaction we have with students must be valuable even if we may not be spending a lot of time, being supportive and available for students is important. Our ability to connect with students will determine whether or not they will even allow us to help them.

At the Michigan GEAR UP team meeting, it was great to hear from all of the different schools, like Ferris State University, Western Michigan, Saginaw Valley, Wayne State, Central Michigan, University of Michigan and University of Michigan-Flint. There was a roll call of “what are we learning” and we shared all of the impactful things from the conference. I look forward to continuing our work with GEAR UP and to help support our objectives of 100 percent graduation rate for the class of 2017 and to help them move on to college.

Multicultural Cohort Program: Highlighting Student Success

Kristie Scanlon, Assistant Director

The Multicultural Cohort Program (MCP) has seen steady growth over the past few years and continues to provide students with mentorship, leadership, academic support and new experiences. Membership in MCP provides students with 1:1 mentorship with professional staff members who provide support and guidance during their time at GVSU. In addition, MCP offers students leadership opportunities within the program including leadership positions and committee responsibilities.

Student Success

MCP members strive to achieve academic success, with 35 members making the Dean's List during the 2012–2013 academic year. Some MCP members have received competitive scholarships, including the Herman Miller and Mark A. and Elizabeth C. Murray Study Abroad scholarships.

Student Support

During the 2012–2013 academic year, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and MCP helped to send nine students on study abroad experiences. Students traveled to a variety of places including Belize, Ireland, Italy and London. MCP supports students who seek these opportunities, as study abroad is an intense and unique learning experience that can significantly impact a student's time at GVSU.

MCP supports students in continuing their academic pursuits through a textbook support program. Students must complete all necessary requirements including attending meetings and meeting with academic advisors and MCP coordinators. During the 2012–2013 academic year, 33 students received textbook support.

Student Leaders

MCP students are encouraged to take on leadership roles within the organization, or with other student groups. MCP has five student executive board members who work together to coordinate the weekly meetings and events. In addition, all members serve on planning committees so that each member can develop and enhance his or her leadership skills. Finally, MCP members are also serving the Grand Valley community through leadership roles such as resident assistants, orientation leaders, student employees and volunteers.

All students are invited to join the Multicultural Cohort Program. For more information about this program, contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs at 616-331-2177.

Multicultural Cohort Program: Study Abroad Reflections

Peter Chhum, Senior
London, England

Whenever I need to know what time it is, I just listen for Big Ben to ding!



Selena Soto, Sophomore
San Ignacio, Belize

Sometimes we may think that study abroad is more about going places we've never been before, doing things we've never done, and taking awesome adventures. But my experience of jumping from waterfalls, swimming into caves and climbing Mayan ruins wouldn't have happened, if it weren't for the people who encouraged me and made me feel as if I could do anything. Sometimes we learn more from the experiences by the friendships gained.

Lisa Wilson, Senior
Rome, Italy

My favorite parts about my study abroad experience is learning how to interact in a different culture, and meeting all the wonderful people that have the same love for traveling as I do!



Preparing for the Future: Wade H. McCree Jr. Summer Program

Allison Roman, Assistant Director and
Wade McCree Program Coordinator

In June, roughly 20 rising seniors attended the Wade H. McCree Jr. Summer Program.

Students who participated in the overnight camp not only received helpful tools, they also had a fun and unique experience. Over the span of two days, students heard presentations from the Padnos International Center, Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Office of Student Life.

They attended two intensive workshops to assist them with their college application process. One workshop provided them with tips on finding the best college fit and also gave advice on how to write admissions essays. Some students had written their first draft of their essay by the end of the workshop. Students also participated in a scholarship search workshop, which gave them time to search for various community and national scholarships.

After various workshops, students enjoyed other Grand Valley amenities, like rock climbing at the Climbing Center. Students also participated in student-led workshops such as Zumba and dance. After a long day, they were able to relax in their living center rooms for the night.

Students said they left the camp with advice, resources and a revived excitement for the next chapter of their lives.

Fall 2013 Schedule of Events



Thursday, September 12	<i>Intercultural Student Reception</i> 4–6 p.m. 2250 Kirkhof Center, Allendale
Monday, September 16	<i>Café Con Leche - Networking Reception</i> 4–6 p.m. 2204 Kirkhof Center, Allendale
Tuesday, September 17	<i>Guatemala's Civil War & The Trial of Rios Montt</i> Presenter: Andrew J. Schlewitz, Assistant Professor of Latin American Studies 12–1 p.m. 2204 Kirkhof Center, Allendale
Monday, September 23 – Friday September 27	<i>Spotlight Productions Presents: La Mission</i> Showtimes (11 a.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m., 9 p.m.) Kirkhof Theater, Allendale
Wednesday, October 2	<i>Professionals of Color Lecture Series Presents: A Conversation with Peter Bratt</i> 6:30–8 p.m. 2250 Kirkhof Center, Allendale
Wednesday, October 9	<i>Diversity Brown Bag Series: A Dream Deferred</i> Noon–1:00 p.m. 1240 Kirkhof Center, Allendale
Monday, October 14	<i>Rethinking Columbus</i> 6–8 p.m. Cook DeWitt, Allendale Campus
Wednesday, October 16	<i>The Distance Between Us: Domestic Violence within Immigrant Populations</i> 7–8 p.m. Loosemore Auditorium, DeVos Campus
Saturday, November 2	<i>NASA Day of Service</i> 10 a.m.–Noon
Wednesday, November 6	<i>Professional of Color Lecture Series Presents: An Evening with Joy Harjo</i> 4–5:30 p.m. 2204 Kirkhof Center, Allendale
Thursday, November 7	<i>Indian Schools: The Survivor's Story</i> 4–6 p.m. Cook DeWitt Center, Allendale
Friday, November 15	<i>Native American Cultural Showcase</i> Noon–2 p.m. 1240 Kirkhof Center, Allendale
Tuesday, November 19	<i>Our Fires Still Burn</i> 4–5:30 p.m. Loosemore Auditorium, DeVos Campus

Visit www.gvsu.edu/oma or call 616.331-2177 for details.

Office of Multicultural Affairs Staff

Connie Dang, Director
Bobby J. Springer, Associate Director
Allison Roman, Assistant Director
Kristie Scanlon, Assistant Director
Oliver Aguilera, Multicultural Assistant
Linda Ray, Office Coordinator
Kayla Jones, Graduate Assistant

For the latest news and events, check us out online at www.gvsu.edu/oma
Archived copies of OMAs newsletters can be accessed via the above website.

About Us

The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) fosters a respect for and an appreciation of the history, tradition and culture of different ethnic groups and empowers all students to be active participants in Grand Valley's community through programs that promote academic, social and cultural development for students.

OMA's vision is to promote acceptance and appreciation of an inclusive campus community that values the diversity of people, backgrounds and perspectives of each individual.

Guiding Principles:

- Fosters a campus climate that respects and appreciates the history, culture, and traditions of various ethnic groups.
- Empowers students to be active participants in the Grand Valley community.
- Stimulates and encourages intercultural awareness and dialogue among university members.
- Takes an active role in promoting academic, social, cultural, leadership and professional development for students.

The OMA staff serves as a resource for students, faculty and staff members on issues of inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism and interculturalism.

Our Contact Information

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