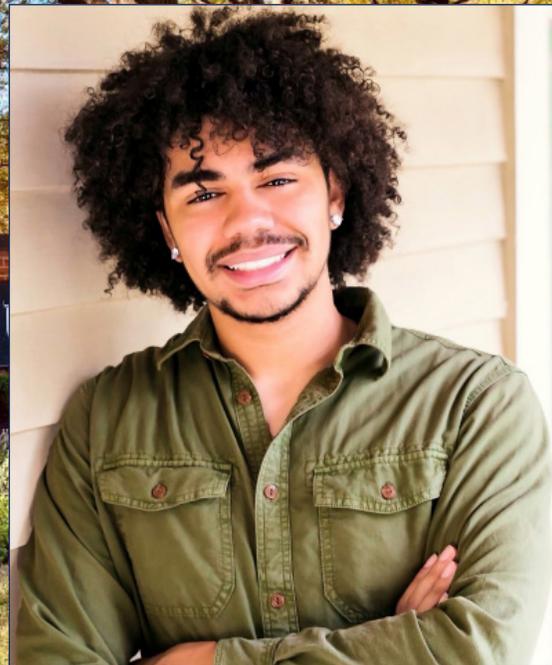


JAN 14, 2021



**OLD DOMINION**  
UNIVERSITY

Department of Communication and Theatre Arts

## ODU Film Student Scores \$20K in Film Contest by Sherry DiBari

When the congratulatory message showed up on Adrian Woodard II's cell phone, he couldn't tell anyone. He was in the middle of filming his father's church sermon. His mother was posting sermon points live on the computer. "My dad was preaching, so I couldn't stop and tell them," he said.

So, he waited patiently.

Once the sermon was done, Woodard relayed the news - he had won the grand prize in the Faith Counts' Film Your Faith video competition. "Everyone was excited for me," he said. "I just felt so blessed that God had given me that gift to do that."

Woodard's two-minute film, *Keeping Faith*, was selected from over 900 entries.

Woodard, 20, an Old Dominion University sophomore majoring in communication with an emphasis in film, received more than praise for his win. He also took home \$20,000.

Faith Counts, a nonprofit, non-denominational organization aimed at promoting the value of faith, asked participants to show - in two minutes or less - how "faith changes lives, relationships and communities for the better."

Woodard's film chronicles the internal struggles many individuals face during the COVID-19 pandemic. He was inspired by his own challenges of adjusting to loneliness and new social norms.

The film features Woodard as the main character and narrator.

He credits the success of *Keeping Faith* to his "dream team," which included immediate family members, volunteers from his family's church and friends.

"We were really meticulous about social distancing," Woodard said. "I did it with a lot of family members - the people I was already quarantined with, and close friends that I knew were practicing good social distancing."

Woodard calls Lawrence Pettaway, his godbrother and also an ODU student, and sister Alek, "trouper" for their help with the film. For one scene, they began filming at 5 a.m. In another, they were immersed in a pool with freezing water.

Terry Butler, a family friend, composed the original music.

Most of the scenes were filmed around Hampton Roads. Sites included an alley near The Main hotel in downtown

Norfolk, in and around the Tide light rail, Woodard's grandmother's pool in Chesapeake, James Baptist Church in Richmond and a Portsmouth graveyard.

Woodard has long ties to Hampton Roads. His grandfather was the late Harrison B. Wilson Jr., former president of Norfolk State University. His grandmother, Lucy Wilson, served as ODU's associate vice president of the Office of Student Services.

Woodard's interest in filmmaking started early. He was a middle-schooler in Newark, New Jersey, when the class took a field trip to watch director Spike Lee filming a movie in the neighborhood.

"I just remember seeing him working and thinking, 'That's what I want to do,'" Woodard said.

Woodard plans to invest his winnings into his film company Korrosive Films, along with stocks and a donation to his church.

Woodard's goal with *Keeping Faith* was to inspire people. "I wanted them to know that they're not alone, that other people are struggling as well," he said. "I wanted them to know that faith is a struggle, and keeping faith is a struggle."

[Read the original article here. 12/23/20](#)

# 'Doomscrolling' and the role of social media during major news events



***13News Now consults a social media expert at ODU following Wednesday's chaos at the Capitol.***

NORFOLK, Va. — It's an overwhelming experience, and it's been that way for a while.

For all its flaws, social media plays a major part in keeping people informed during a major news event.

Such was the case Wednesday, when millions watched chaos unfold at the Nation's Capitol from the palm of their hands.

"Which is something that's challenging," said Myles McNutt, assistant professor of communication and theater arts at Old Dominion University.

"Processing information is not something we do naturally. On a day like yesterday it may as well have been an impossible task," he said.

McNutt teaches courses on digital media and offered insight into the role social media plays in keeping us informed.

He weighed in on the phenomenon of "doomscrolling" - people glued to social media, refreshing for constant updates, even when the news is overwhelming.

"I think the principal of 'doomscrolling' is that we keep filtering through our feed and letting it wash over you," said McNutt. "Hoping that consuming it or exposing yourself to it will help make it better, help you understand it or rationalize what's going on."

But that can be mentally destructive, right? At the same time, turning away feels like we're turning our backs on our civic duty to stay informed.

"If there's any sort of advice to people on social media, is that you have control of your feed and how you use it," he said. "Use that control to provide the best experience that balances the information you want and how you live your life, and ultimately how you can balance your mental health and day-to-day existence."

[View the interview here. 01/07/21](#)



# Kent Sandstrom Stepping Down as College of Arts and Letters Dean

by Amy Matzke-Fawcett



After 3½ years leading the College of Arts and Letters at Old Dominion University, Dean Kent Sandstrom announced he will be stepping down, effective Jan. 24, to focus on his health and return to a faculty role. He

will continue to teach and conduct research in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice.

Sandstrom came to the University in July 2017 from North Dakota State University, where he served as Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for six years. A sociologist with degrees from the University of Minnesota, Sandstrom has conducted extensive research on how people living with HIV negotiate and manage identities, emotions and relationships. He also has written books on social psychology and social theory, most recently “Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality” (Oxford University Press, 2013) and “Inside Social Life” (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Throughout Sandstrom’s tenure at Old Dominion, the College of Arts and Letters has grown its enrollments by 10% when many comparable colleges were experiencing notable declines. Faculty have also increased their scholarly productivity, especially as in terms of publications, fellowships and grants. Additionally, faculty, staff and students have won more than 100 distinguished awards since early 2018. Academic opportunities have also risen across the College with the founding of the Diehn School of Music, and the new majors in cybercrime and game studies and design, in response to the growth and job opportunities in those fields.

Other notable accomplishments include:

- Sustaining a high level of scholarly productivity, as reflected in annual averages of more than 300 publications, 240 paper presentations, and 210 concerts, performances and artistic exhibitions.

- Implementing and extending a collaborative agreement with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra that benefits ODU music majors by offering them opportunities to perform in side-by-side concerts with top professional musicians and to partner with them in educational outreach to area schools.

- Expanding the visibility and impact of Arts@ODU programs and initiatives.

- Co-sponsoring and implementing a variety of initiatives to enhance diversity and celebrate the contributions of communities of color.

Sandstrom said that he is grateful to have led the College during a time of change and growth.

“I feel especially proud of the depth of connection and community that has emerged in the College over the past few years, especially among departmental and program leaders,” Sandstrom said. “In many ways, I think that sense of community may be the College’s greatest achievement, and I trust that it will continue in the future.”

And just this week, the college received a \$300,000 gift from alumnus Will Giandoni to further programs and opportunities in the Department of History.

“I am grateful to Dean Sandstrom for his dedication and commitment to excellence,” Provost Austin Agho said. “He did an excellent job in supporting and championing ODU’s commitment to student success and diversity and inclusion.”

Janet Katz, associate dean of the College of Arts and Letters, said it has been “a joy” to work with Sandstrom.

“Kent is the sixth dean I have worked for, and I feel that I can confidently state that he has led the College with integrity and wisdom and kindness,” Katz said. “He values openness, accessibility and diversity, and seeks out the opinions of others.”

Dale Miller, associate dean of graduate studies and research in the college, said it’s hard to put into words what Sandstrom has meant to him personally, and to the College.

“For me, he has been both an unfailingly supportive and encouraging mentor and model, a role in which I hope that he will continue. And for the College, he has been a consummate leader: a strong advocate, an insightful strategist and a compassionate guardian,” Miller said. “No one in the College who met him ever had any doubt about how much he cared for our well-being, individually and collectively. He positively radiates kindness and concern.”

Sheri Reynolds, professor and chair of the Department of English, called Sandstrom one of the greatest teachers of her lifetime.

“I’ve learned more about leadership from him than anyone else I know,” she said. “No matter what problem he deals with, Kent sees the goodness in people first, recognizing and appreciating the nuances in every situation. He has created a climate of support in the College, and by that, I mean connections between faculty, staff, administrators and students.”

She noted that when he announced he would step down in a recent chairs and directors meeting, the news was met with sadness and even tears. “He provided such steadiness and kindness, all while bringing out the best in so many programs,” she said.

Mona Danner, professor and chair of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, where Sandstrom will continue to teach, expressed gratitude for his leadership skills and compassion.

“Kent has been an extraordinary dean because he really cares about the College and all of its people, really listened to our concerns, and worked to make things better,” Danner said. “His collaborative spirit helped form the chairs into a cohesive and supportive community. We will miss his kindness, compassion, transparency and advocacy for the College.” An interim dean will be announced in January.

*[Read the original article here. 12/22/20](#)*

# Omiyemi Green to Explore Pathways for Black Theatre in Anti-Racism Speaker Series



Omiyemi (Artisia) Green, Associate Professor of Theatre and Africana Studies and a W. Taylor Reveley, III Interdisciplinary Faculty Fellow at William & Mary, will be the next featured speaker in our year-long series focused on anti-racism. Green's presentation, **Ògún Yè Mo Yè!: Paradigms and pathways for the institutionalization and success of Black Theater**

**faculty, pedagogy, and production at historically white universities**, will take place on Thursday, February 11th at 6:00 PM via Zoom.

In her talk, African American Theatre Historian and Program Director for Africana Studies Omiyemi (Artisia) Green will discuss the mechanisms of support necessary for building and maintaining a thriving Black Theater program at a historically white university.

Green is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Africana Studies and a W. Taylor Reveley, III Interdisciplinary Faculty Fellow at William & Mary. A director, dramaturg, and interdisciplinary scholar with a focus on African-American Theatre/Black Theatre, Omiyemi is an executive board member of the August Wilson Society, a member-at-large on the Black Theatre Association Executive Board (ATHE), an associate editor of *Continuum: The Journal of African Diaspora Drama, Theatre and Performance* and the *August Wilson Journal*, and a former president of the Black Theatre Network. Omiyemi is published in *Continuum*, *the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society Journal* *Peer Review Section*, *the August Wilson Journal*, *August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle: Critical Perspectives on the Plays* (McFarland), and *African American Culture: An Encyclopedia of People, Traditions, and Customs* (Greenwood). She holds a BA in Psychology from William & Mary and an MFA in Theatre Education (Directing) from Virginia Commonwealth University. Omiyemi is also a resident dramaturg and the project director for *Sitelines BLM* with Cadence Theatre Company.

This presentation is free and open to the public and ODU campus, but registration is required. **Register by February 9, 2021** at <http://odu.imodules.com/oye21>. The Zoom link will be sent one day prior to the event. A Q&A session will follow Professor Green's presentation.

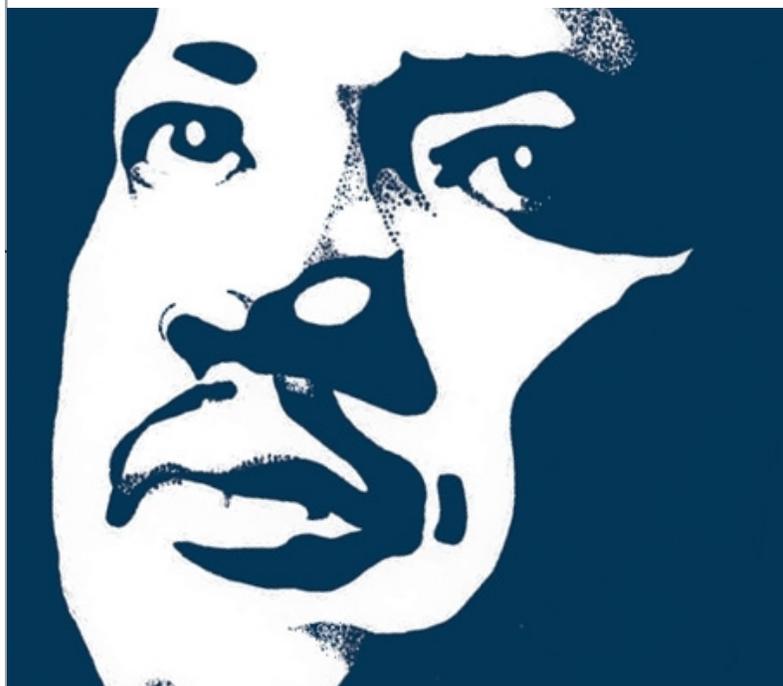
## JAN/FEB

1/19.  
Spring 2021 classes begin.

1/21.  
36th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Observance. 6pm.  
[RSVP Link.](#)

1/22.  
Department Meeting. 2-4pm  
[Zoom Link.](#)

2/11.  
Anti-Racism Speaker Series: Omiyemi (Artisia) Green. 6pm. [RSVP Link.](#)



**ODU will host our 36th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Observance, "A Legacy Honored, A Future of Change" on Jan. 21 at 6pm.**

Norfolk Mayor Kenneth C. Alexander will be the keynote speaker. The Norfolk 17, a group of African American students who desegregated the city's public schools on 959, will be presented with the Hugo Owens Martin Luther King Jr. Award.

The event will be held virtually. **[RSVP by Jan. 20.](#)**

# KUDOS!

Congrats to our Theatre professors **Steve Earle** and **Ricardo Melendez**, winners of the Broadway World 2020 Regional Awards for Central Virginia.

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Alumni **Lamar Giles** (ODU - BA in Comm '01 and MFA '17) is a founding member of *We Need Diverse Books* and writes award-winning novels and short stories for teens and adults with an aim towards character diversity such as the 2016 Edgar® Award Nominee *Endangered*, and *Overtuned* from Scholastic Press. His work *Fake ID*, a 2015 Edgar® Award Nominee, was recently optioned by Sony Pictures. <https://www.lamargiles.com>

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**Symptomatic: IRL** received four nominations in the Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival:

**Autumn Ibanez & Nola Payton:**  
Student Performance (Irene Ryan Scholarship)  
**Tracy Harmer:**  
Student Stage Management  
**Brittney S. Harris:**  
Faculty Director

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**Ted Gournelos** was recently interviewed by FOX 35 Orlando about the role social media plays in freedom of speech. [Check out the interview here.](#)

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**Annemarie Navar-Gill** served as a panelist on the recent Faculty Forum focused on the Capitol Insurrection. Navar-Gill spoke to topics on Social Media and Insurrection. The Forum was sponsored by ODU's Center for Faculty Development and the Office of Faculty Diversity and Retention.

**SHARE YOUR RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS [HERE!](#)**

# UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCEMENT ON SPRING 2021 OPENING

Due to the rising number of coronavirus cases in Hampton Roads and across the nation, and in accordance with our reopening blueprint, Old Dominion University will start at least the first two weeks of the spring 2021 semester, from Jan. 19 to Feb. 1, with remote instruction. This means nearly all classes will be delivered online, with the exception of a limited number of courses and labs that require in-person hours. Faculty will reach out to students in these programs. Prevailing conditions will determine if further modifications will be needed.

The decision to delay students' arrival on campus and face-to-face instruction, which was made by the University's Executive Policy Team, will help protect the health and well-being of Monarchs and the Hampton Roads community at a time when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Virginia Department of Health project COVID-19 cases will peak. Students facing extenuating circumstances or who need additional support are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office at [oducare@odu.edu](mailto:oducare@odu.edu) or 757-683-3442.

As a community, we will continue to promote Monarchs' safety while providing the same high-quality education and minimizing disruptions. ODU offices will reopen, as scheduled, on Jan. 4 to ensure the continuity of student support services as well as our academic and research enterprise. Telework and staggered on-site shifts are still encouraged wherever possible.

We are committed to providing classes in-person — when it is safe to do so — online and in a hybrid mode this spring. The Executive Policy Team will continue monitoring the latest developments and will provide updates every Monday of what lies ahead.

In the meantime, ODU's CLIA-certified COVID-19 clinical diagnostics lab in Innovation Research Park is expanding its on-demand and surveillance testing program. More details will follow.

Please continue to #ReignResponsibly and follow recommended precautions to stay healthy. We will keep you informed of the latest information via email and on ODU's official social media channels.