

# UNIVERSITY NEWS

UMKC's Independent Student Newspaper

## It's that time of year



Graduation at UMKC on May 16-18 will see 1,749 students receive their diplomas. Of the graduates, 145 will be international students. Most of the University's schools will hold their ceremonies in Swinney Recreation Center.

PHOTO // University Communications

alumnus profile

# Rajiv Chilakapudi



## School of Computing and Engineering alumnus started multi-million dollar animation company from scratch

Sai Srikar Kadiyam Staff Writer

After graduating from the UMKC School of Computing and Engineering in 1997, Rajiv Chilakapudi spent three successful years with Cerner and Telcordia Technologies.

But during his stay in the U.S., Chilakapudi realized his dreams were taking him in a different direction.

After a fair amount of research and contemplation, he decided to leave his job as a software engineer to start an animation company in his native India. In 2001, he started Green Gold Animation with four employees.

Today the company has more than 250 employees in various departments of animation. Green Gold is the No. 1 Indian animation company, valued at more than \$50 million.

The company has also produced six different television series on various children's channels. "Chhota Bheem" is the most popular of the shows, with 34 million viewers. It first aired on Pogo in 2008.

Chilakapudi returned to UMKC last month as a guest speaker. He has been awarded the SCE Alumni Achievement Award for 2013.

Chilakapudi was not reluctant to share how his company struggled at first.

"At least 20 times the company was on the verge of shutting down," Chilakapudi said. "It took me eight years to build it and be successful. The fortunate thing is that I didn't give up. It is not about success or failure but it is the passion to carry it out. Everyone has ideas, but you have to know how to implement them."

Chilakapudi encountered mixed reactions from his parents when he struck out to do animation on his own.

"My mother supported me in the early stages, but my father said that it's not a great thing to do," he said. "He didn't like the idea of me leaving such a good job and starting a company in animation. The Indian market condition was different back in 2000, [but when] I gave him a business plan, he liked it."

Creating "Chhota Bheem" was a trial-and-error experiment. Pogo rejected the concept for three consecutive years.

Finally in 2008, his show was aired on the channel despite a fire in Chilakapudi's studio that destroyed much of the company's property. The show's popularity has translated well into commercial success, and Green Gold Animation now produces children's "Chhota Bheem" merchandise, such as beverages, food products and clothing.

"Chhota Bheem is like the Indian version of Mickey Mouse," Chilakapudi said. "I want to make Chhota Bheem similar to the way Mickey Mouse is today."

After that show's success, his company developed a business plan to market other products. "I believe that the most

important part of my job is to make the kids smile and dream," Chilakapudi said. "All the great achievers in the world are dreamers. If we inspire kids to dream, they will automatically become achievers."

Chilakapudi supports programs to expose young people to his craft. He has enrolled 30 underprivileged teenagers in a free training program, and eventually hired 20 of them.

He also established 10 animation scholarships to support students with financial need in India.

"UMKC played a very, very important role in my life," he said. "I learned to see things from different perspectives. In addition to technical skills, I learned the importance of networking and also developed my leadership skills to a great extent."

But the vision for his ambitious undertaking seemed to come almost naturally for Chilakapudi.

"Vision for me was not a problem, the vision was already there," he said.

"Executing the ideas of the vision is the toughest part. It's fantastic to have a vision, but implementing the vision and facing the challenges [are difficult,] especially with Indian markets, which have completely diverse business ethics and execution methods compared to the U.S. It took me two years to get used to Indian business methods."

For Chilakapudi, venturing into animation was a lonely journey at first.

"I did a lot of research before stepping out into business," he said. "I didn't have friends who were interested, I was the only man out. Most of them were software engineers. But I had unique choices of my career; I felt animation had a bright future not only in the world but also in India, because the Indian television market was in a boom at that time, with the introduction of new channels. You would always win if you start a something for kids."

But before Chilakapudi could succeed, he needed to avoid going broke.

"I really struggled with finances," he said. "Paying salaries on time was a nightmare. Financially it was a tough ride. Until 2008, we were not financially stable. Only after we had a successful product, everything changed for us."

"When we started, we had to convince people that there is a market out there. Today we don't have to convince, we just need to convince that the idea is good. It was completely different. The people's skills are available now. If I look for 25 people, I find 200 people. Back then, it was so difficult. If I looked for 25 people, I used to find one person. Now animation is a career."

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“At least 20 times the company was on the verge of shutting down. It took me eight years to build it and be successful. The fortunate thing is that I didn't give up. It is not about success or failure but it is the passion to carry it. Everyone has ideas, but you have to know how to implement them.”

-Rajiv Chilakapudi

## Police Blotter

April 26

**2:12 p.m.** *Larceny*  
The victim left her iPod unattended in the Student Success Center and noticed it missing.

**4:35 p.m.** *Suspicious Activity*  
Officers were called to Herman and Dorothy Johnson Residence Hall because someone was smoking marijuana.

April 29

**9:24 p.m.** *Burglary*  
The victims returned to their residence at 53rd and Charlotte Street to find the door kicked in and noticed a laptop, camera and iPod charger missing.

May 1

**1:50 p.m.** *Assault*  
The suspect slapped and punched the victim, a student, in the Student Union.

**2:55 p.m.** *Burglary*  
A faculty member at the Health Sciences Building saw a party take his cell phone and retrieved it.

**10:33 p.m.** *Burglary*  
A student returned to the Oak Street Residence Hall to find that his Xbox, games and Macbook were missing.



Ben Campero celebrates his victory in the Student Government Association elections.

PHOTO // Allyson Price

# 'Roo Serve'

## Ben Campero discusses his plans as next year's SGA president

Andreina Byrne

Staff Writer

Junior Ben Campero, who led the Roo Serve slate, has been elected president of the Student Government Association for 2013-2014.

Competing parties included UMKC

Alliance, Imprinting Diversity and the Gold Slate. Campaigning officially began April 15, and elections were held April 22-26.

Campero, who is majoring in business administration, will be accompanied by Parker Webb as executive vice president, Kate Corwin, as administrative vice president, and

Makayla Maslanka, as comptroller. Webb and Maslanka were Roo Serve candidates while Corwin was on the UMKC Alliance slate.

"Ben knows first-hand that leaders lead by serving," Campero wrote in his candidate's statement, "and in order to be a true leader one must first serve and give to others."

"Caleb Files...our campaign manager, [also helped me win]," Campero said. "And every student that believed in Roo Serve."

According to Campero, around 1,300 students voted.

"The election was not just a matter of votes," campaign manager Caleb-Michael Files said. "It was a choice for a new, fresh and alternative vision that includes participatory democracy where every student is represented."

Campero added, "We hope to bring a positive campus climate that is safe, inclusive, robust and comfortable for all students. We hope to foster a community of inclusion that supports all of our student organizations, bring transparency and formality to SGA and SAFC, and make sure every student voice at UMKC is well represented."

Transparency has been a major theme for Roo Serve.

"We believe that transparency at all levels will help to ensure the integrity and accountability of our student government," Campero said. "We intend to foster inclusive

practices by hosting Town Hall meetings.

"Additionally, we will meet individually with each senator periodically to make sure that everyone feels his or her voice is being heard."

Maslanka's statement promised that an online scheduling system will be instituted in order for students to schedule 15-minute meetings to discuss any concerns or shortfalls with the executive staff. Also, she said that video footage of all SAFC, senate and town hall meetings would be publicly available.

Campero reiterated his slate's plan to reshape the culture on campus.

"We think that there are many avenues that have not been tried to bring together our campus and produce a broader campus community," he said.

Campero gained experience in promoting various aspects of culture through his years of involvement in the Association of Latin American Students. Campero currently serves as ALAS president emeritus.

Campero also serves as an international student ambassador as well as a student assistant at the International Student Affairs office.

UMKC Alliance, Imprinting Diversity and the Gold Slate ran on platforms that addressed, respectively, bridging the gap between undergraduates and graduate programs; promoting student success, and instilling campus change and innovation.



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“ We hope to bring a positive campus climate that is safe, inclusive, robust and comfortable for all students. We hope to foster a community of inclusion that supports all of our student organizations, bring transparency and formality to SGA and SAFC, and make sure every student voice at UMKC is well represented.

-Ben Campero ”



Eggs Benedict.

PHOTO // Andreina Byrne

Food: ★★★★★  
 Drinks: ★★★★★  
 Price: ★★★★★  
 Service: ★★★★★  
 Ambiance: ★★★★★

## 'Simply Breakfast' is exactly that

Andreina Byrne

Staff Writer

With a self-explanatory title, Simply Breakfast on at 4120 Pennsylvania lives up to its name.

The brightly colored walls and open-floor layout create an inviting atmosphere, as well as the cordial attitude of the staff.

Looking over the menu, I felt slightly stifled at the small amount of meal choices, yet of course there is always the possibility of adjusting to fit the food-mood of the day. I decided to avoid the order-exactly-what-I-want approach and go straight for the Eggs Benedict.

The prices were decent; Eggs Benedict was \$6.99, and nothing else was over \$9. There were many drink choices, from smoothies to

specialty espresso-based drinks, yet I decided to stick with some good ole' coffee

The ordering process was somewhat confusing. After arriving and stepping up to the counter, I ordered and was given a table number. The staff member kind of just left it at that; I wasn't sure if I was supposed to go to a specific table or wait for him to bring napkins and silverware.

Eventually, after about five awkward seconds, I realized that all the necessary table fixings were to the right of the register, near the drinks. The coffee was something that I too was supposed to grab at my own leisure. Though awkward at first, I realized that this was the way I prefer it; to collect what I want and be on my way.

After finding a table close to the big airy

windows, I sat down and examined the original photos of local spots positioned on the nearby wall. Finally getting my artistic fill of these photos, I then chose the window to look out of as I waited for the meal to appear. This was probably a mistake, because the windows were not exactly pristine. But before I let my mind wonder too much to wondering about the condition of the kitchen, the food arrived.

The Eggs Benedict came with a side of hash browns, which unfortunately, were not completely cooked in some sections, and burnt in others. So, I suppose I could say that they were slightly crispy - in some sections. The meal, in all, was average. Nothing too special. However, the coffee was tasty and hot, so I tried not to let the entirety of the

early afternoon be wrecked by the food.

Simply Breakfast is open Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and on weekends from midnight to 4 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Perhaps these issues arose because I arrived about 45 minutes before closing, but as I was clearly still eating, the staff member who took my order came up and asked if I wanted my plate taken. Obviously, I was not finished. But I'm sure he had had a long morning, so I let it slide.

Before walking out, I thanked the staff, which kindly responded. Simply Breakfast was somewhere I would go again. However, I may save it for more of a 2 a.m. destination.

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### student profile

## Up close and personal

Joey Hill

Staff Writer

The talents of UMKC's students are never limited to their majors. One of the most defining examples of this is Erica Freiert, also known as Erica Joy, having most recently opened for souls singer ZZ Ward at her Tuesday concert.

Her opening act performance was not Joy's first time on stage, though it was incredibly exciting for her when she found out ZZ Ward chose her among the various applicants.

"I've played coffee shops and other random places but it was the first time in that kind of a setting," she said. "I went to North Carolina this summer and hung out with some pirates, like at a pirate festival, so I was a pirate for a weekend, and I got to play my guitar with them for the show and I would randomly just burst out with songs because I also love writing on the spot."

She started learning the guitar only four years ago by learning to play chords by watching YouTube tutorials in her dorm room.

"I came to UMKC on a cross country scholarship and so I said 'I'll just take 12 credits,' but that wasn't enough credits for what I was doing, so I had a lot of down time in the dorms and my parents got me this guitar and I never picked it up and I had a lot of time on my hands and just needed something to do," she said.

It was from these early dorm-room practice sessions that Joy would later write "Come On Home" a beautiful piece consisting of merely two chords. When writing lyrics, Joy builds her work from an equally tranquil place.

"Honestly the first song I did was when I was giving a Facebook message to one of my friends and the words just kind of came out of me," she said. "A lot of times that's what will happen. I'll be playing two or three chords and I'll get a chorus licked that's catchy and that makes sense to me and that expresses what I'm feeling, and then I'll try to build verses and a story around that."

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PHOTO // Joey Hill



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## Students discuss healthy dining options on campus

Patricia Sebastian

Staff Writer

With so many choices on campus, it may get confusing for a student trying to eat healthy. Many wind up eating fast food, even though there are plenty of nutritious choices on and off campus.

Binging on an 810-calorie sandwich, law student Jeff Luther said, "Being a student at UMKC, I usually make it over to Sahara for lunch at least a couple times a month. The convenience is unbeatable and the food is always great.

I always order the same thing: the falafel sandwich with lentil soup."

Sahara is located at 320 E. 50th St. and tops our list of healthiest dining options on or around campus.

"Sahara doesn't stuff their sandwiches with fries but gives you the option of them on the side," said health science student Susan Nicolette. "You can then stuff your sandwich yourself. I usually add a lot of veggies which keeps my diet under control."

Ingredients in a Sahara falafel include a moderate amount of sodium. Other ingredients and their percentage of a normal daily requirement: vitamin A, almost 190 percent; vitamin C, 60 percent; vitamin E, 40 percent; calcium, 35 percent, and iron, 40 percent.

However, Mary Chung an accounting major, says that authentic Chinese food is very healthy and low fat, as it is mostly steamed or stir fried and little is used.

She says, "If you're hungry for a little of Beijing and beyond — northern Chinese dumplings, buns and hand-pulled noodles or maybe even seafood vegetable soup in the style of Xinjiang's food stalls, Kin Lin has the best Chinese food in UMKC."

Kin Lin is located at 314 E. 51st St.

Morgan Voorshes, a health sciences student, likes to grab a bite at Einstein Bros. Bagels in Royall Hall. She said, "After volleyball practice and class, I like to have the tasty turkey and coffee blender."

Michael McKinsey, an MBA major, was digging into a 570-calorie chicken sandwich at Chick-fil-A. Including waffle fries, his meal had a sodium content of 3,290



Sahara, 320 E. 50th Street, offers many healthy dining options for students.

PHOTO // Sai Srikar Kadiyam

mg and 63 mg of fat.

"I try and work out as much as possible," McKinsey said. "In fact, I work out a little extra when I eat out."

Min Kim, an ESL student, was enjoying the Caramel Delight and a muffin at the Jazzman's café and bakery in the Student Union.

"One meal is not going to define whether I eat healthy or not," he said. "Indulging in a milkshake and fries every once in a while is not going to ruin my diet or my health. I look at my daily habits and see where I need to make small changes."

Reshma Reddy, a computer science student, said, "You can really cut calories by watching what you drink. Every can of soda has the equivalence of about 10 teaspoons of sugar. Even specialty sweet teas can be full of sugar and empty calories. I choose sugar-free drinks, unsweetened teas and coffee, or bottled water with meals to decrease my sugar intake."

Dr. Sylvia Stump, a registered dietician,

offers the following advice: "Starting a meal with a salad or soup is a great way to increase your vegetable intake and can help you control your portion size of other items. Sauces, desserts, full-fat salad dressings and sides such as French fries are the usual culprits for calorie overload. Enjoy sauces and dressings on the side and try dipping your fork in the dressing instead of pouring it over your meal."

Erica Martin, a sociology student, said, "I try to have at least one serving of fruit or vegetable at every meal. The Einstein Bros. Bagels and Chick - fil - A on campus offer fresh fruit in their combos, which is great. I also carry some fruit in my backpack to snack after class."

Eating healthy does not mean "all or nothing." A combination of healthy options with something you enjoy, or eating smaller portions of your favorite foods, can help keep you healthy. Sharing a treat with a friend is a great way to cut back.

Even not-so-healthy foods can be enjoyed

every once in a while, and sometimes the most satisfying meals are the ones where you allow yourself something just because it tastes good.

Eating healthy means more than just looking at the calories and fat in a meal. More attention should be paid to foods that may be good sources of calcium and iron. An increase in the intake of fruits and vegetables helps boost the antioxidant intake. Being too restrictive with eating can be dangerous. It can lead to disordered eating patterns that are hard to break.

If you have nutrition questions or would like additional guidance in choosing balanced meals, you can meet with a student health dietitian; call Student Health and Wellness at 816-235-6133 or visit [www.umkc.edu/studenthealth](http://www.umkc.edu/studenthealth).

To check calorie intake and nutrition fact data, visit [balancemindbodiesoul.com/balance/campus.asp](http://balancemindbodiesoul.com/balance/campus.asp)

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## Softball finishes season with tournament championship split

U-News Staff

The 'Roos women's softball team clinched their third straight Summit League tournament berth by splitting a Sunday doubleheader at home against league rival South Dakota State. UMKC lost the opener 11-7 but took the second game 5-4.

The split leaves the 'Roos with a league record of 6-7, good enough for the fourth seed in the tournament Thursday through Saturday at Fargo, N.D. They will open up against North Dakota State, the host and top seed.

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## 'Roos take four track and field titles at Saluki Open

U-News Staff

Dan Mann finished the 1,500-meter run in 3:51.47, the fourth fastest time in school history, and was among four UMKC champions at the Saluki Open in Carbondale, Ill., last Saturday.

The women's team took the other titles. Stephany Johnson finished first in the triple jump with 12.21 meters, Jylian Jaloma won the 1,500 meter run in 4:45.28, and Angel Gannon took the 800-meter run in 2:16.44.

In the 800-meter run, a pair of 'Roos achieved personal bests with Luke Abouhalkah finishing second in 1:59.88, and Florence Osei finishing third for the women in 2:24.32.

Rich McCoy finished second in the long jump with a leap of 7.23 meters while Jason Martin was fourth with a personal best of 6.89 meters.

Taylor Wardall capped a 1-2 sweep in the 1,500-meter run, finishing behind Mann with 3:57.76. For the women, Siara Stahl was third in 4:53.57.

The Kangaroos will next head to Muncie, Ind., on the campus of Ball State, for the Summit League Championships from Thursday through Saturday.

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# 2013

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# Respect the professional relationship

**Bradley Hoffman** Staff Writer

Up until about the age of 16, or when we find our first job, two kinds of relationships exist for us: completely familiar, like friends and family, and wholly unfamiliar, like a passing stranger on the street.

Friends and family relationships share a nearly identical dynamic, at least for most of us. There are things we tell our friends that we would never mention to our parents, but we hardly modify our behavior from one set to the other.

To familiarity's extreme opposite, we have the stranger relationship. This relationship is most noticeably marked by its complete lack of interaction. We might awkwardly lock eyes for a split-second or offer a faint, unanswered, "How are you?" but the relationship lasts only as long as five or six footsteps.

Then, there is the professional relationship. Though it doesn't fully exist at this point, we're getting a taste of it during our interactions with such people as teachers, pastors and, doctors. But its limitations on what is, and

is not, appropriate do not become truly prevalent until your time spent in these relationships replaces all the time previously spent out of it -- when you get a job.

This gray field of what's socially acceptable behavior is as complex and stifling as a hundred pages of fine print. Managing a professional relationship day by day is not a terribly difficult thing to do, but over time the blandness of the whole thing gets...boring.

At first, you make little compromises. Like saying "very" to intensify an adjective instead of "damn," like you're used to. Everyone says, "That was a very good idea" now. "Very... damn." Who cares? Just let me have the job.

Then, you have to start anticipating how others might interpret your words. This is a bit more invasive of a compromise when you realize how insane some people are. Huge leaps in judgment can be made based on the least opinionated statement.

You soon discover there are whole aspects of your personality not deemed acceptable in the workplace, and you have to mask a lot of what you believe. Navigating the

complexities of workplace norms makes you more obedient the better you get at it.

I once worked in a large office building for a large corporation and whenever higher-ups from the company would visit from HQ or wherever, we would have to dress up extra nice by wearing a tie and jacket. The whole effect was like church -- be presentable in the presence of the lord. And what killed me the most was that I never saw these higher-ups. The whole week they were there, their visit constraining my throat with a necktie, I never met them or even saw them. But they controlled the way I was dressing.

I'm not saying, "Don't work in an office," but I do want people to think for themselves. If the environment you're in makes you uncomfortable and you hate it, it doesn't mean you need to try harder.

I'm sure I sound paranoid to some, worrying about neckties and not being able to curse during the work day. These are small compromises that, alone, amount to nothing more than an effort to not offend co-workers.

But, to me, these little compromises



Bradley Hoffman

represent a greater culture of consent that eases its way into our work life and can lead to a very passive outlook on life overall. If you witness something at work you would normally object to outside of work, but then reason to yourself, "What am I thinking, this is work time, I can't say 'No' to that," then that's what I'm afraid of.

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# Why celebrate Cinco de Mayo?

**Dan Moreno** Staff Writer

Ever since I moved to this beautiful country almost two years ago, I have noticed how big this day, Cinco de Mayo, is, at least for Americans. But do you even know what you are celebrating?

In Mexico, where I am from, May the 5th is not even a holiday. In fact, lots of people don't even know there was a miniature war back in 1862.

So yes, you are celebrating a battle that took place 151 years ago in a little town called Puebla, two hours east of Mexico City between the French and the Mexicans. The Mexicans defeated Charles de Lorencez and

his 6,500 soldiers.

Just to make sure you all know, Mexico's independence from the Spaniards took place on September 15-16, 1810, and it is celebrated all around the country with parades, parties, food, drinks and lots of fireworks, just as the 4th of July is celebrated.

Now that I've given you a little history lesson, which was not my main purpose, I will move on by telling you that this does not bother me, or any other Mexican living in America at all. On the contrary, I'm proud that you all celebrate with us the magnificence of being Mexican at least once a year.

Just like St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo works as an excuse for people to get

drunk and do stupid stuff, except that this time you'll drink tequila, eat tacos and wear annoying Mexican sombreros. Something came to my mind though: how come so many people claim they have Irish roots, or at least an Irish relative, when it comes to St. Patty's but not one person says: "Yo soy Mexicano" on Cinco? That's when I come in and say, "Viva Mexico."

So I hope you had fun Sunday night, and if not, don't worry. There is always the real Mexican holiday in September, and you are all invited to hang out with me and party like a real Mexican.

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Dan Moreno

# What it means to graduate from college

**Peter Makori** Staff Writer

While hundreds of thousands of students graduate every year from American universities, millions of other students around the world do not have the privilege making it through high school, much less getting into a college like UMKC.

Growing up in rural Kenya, I saw highly talented girls and boys, including myself, whose academic success went into the drain, because of grinding poverty and no room for upward mobility.

We walked to school barefoot and with torn clothes, worked hard to make the best out of our efforts. But in the end, our fates were sealed at eighth grade irrespective of how promising one was. That is still the scenario that you'd find in most rural communities in Africa.

Africa is no doubt a very rich continent endowed with rich minerals, oil, wildlife and arable soils for agriculture. But avaricious politicians have driven the people into abject squalor by pillaging these national resources.

No one chooses to be born in poverty. But my unpleasant background was a blessing in disguise because it made me appreciate the virtues of never taking anything for granted, the virtues of hard-work and a love of the unprivileged.

On May 17, I'll join a group of 60 students at UMKC to graduate with a B.A in Communication Studies, Journalism and Mass Communication. This will be a lifetime dream that I fought so hard to realize. I can hardly believe how far I have come.

The government policy in America that guarantees public education from kindergarten through high school makes learning a fundamental human right. That is only a pipe dream among children from poverty-stricken families in developing societies.

My life has been a tale of tragedies blessings. They have combined to make me the person I am today.

Growing up in the mountainous rugged village Kisii County in western Kenya, I was always concerned about my future. I knew from the beginning that I was not expected to go beyond grade school.

My older brothers had dropped at eighth grade, one after the other and I I probably the next. To break out this cycle of semi-literacy, which was responsible for the family's crushing poverty and hopelessness, I had to do something.

One older brother was academically talented. He was ahead of me by four classes and every evening, he could come home and

recite everything he had learned in class. At the end of every semester, he was among the top three in his class.

When I enrolled in "standard one" in the early 1980s, I kept an impressive performance, remaining at the top of my class up to eighth grade.

Yet, we sometimes slept hungry and no single day I can remember taking breakfast before going to school. There was nothing for lunch. We lived only on a single meal a day, if at all we had some.

Despite my impressive performance, I knew that I could not make it beyond grade school. My oldest brother, an exceptionally talented artist, had to drop in fifth grade, due to the harsh living conditions. My next-oldest brother dropped at seventh grade in 1978.

Two more brothers fell by the wayside. Although we slept hungry almost every day, the hopelessness and despair in the family did not dampen my resolve and conviction that one day I'd go to high school. However, I just had no idea how to achieve that dream.

There are fewer than 15 from my village of about 10,000 who started high school. While I was in grade school, only three from my village had made it to a university. One went through the support of a Lutheran church while the other two had parents who were prosperous from growing tea leaves. Most who started high school dropped out in 10th grade and came home without jobs.

After completing eighth grade, I was accepted at two provincial high schools. But I had no money to pay for tuition. So I wandered aimlessly, hoping to somehow find help to pay for my high school education.

Instead of attending ninth grade, I slept in the cold, without food, or in train stations hundreds of miles away from home. Sometimes, I returned home, staying with neighbors. I connected with a few of my friends from well-to-do-families who had made it to high school and borrowed their notes to enable me study independently. So if I could get in school, I would not be far off in catching up with my classmates.

One day I approached a one-time member of Kenya's parliament and told him I needed help to pursue my high school education.

He agreed to pay for my tuition but not my room and board. To ensure I did not lose this chance, I told him I was determined to walk from my rural home -- 8.4 miles each way -- to and from school. After doing this for two semesters, my sponsor said he could no longer help me.

I found myself back where I started. I tried to seek scholarships but none was available. I approached the principal of the only low-cost high school in the area, and convinced him to allow me take classes because I was expecting some government aid. I showed him a letter from the local district commissioner who was appealing for school fees on my behalf.

At first, the principal was surprised by my audacity. He allowed me to take classes for a few weeks. In a constituency of close to 50,000 people, only three high schools served the large number of students from local primary schools.

After about three weeks, I was sent away from school because no fees of about \$25 a year, had been paid yet. I sought help from the local administrator whose letters to the school allowed me in class in the first place. But no aid was forthcoming.

After spending a month in this school without paying any fees, I was one day summoned to the principal's office and given a thorough beating. The principal accused me of making his life hard by asking government officials to pressure him to admit me in his school without paying fees.

I went home crestfallen. But I went back to school and sneaked into class. This time, the principal attacked me with blows and kicks until I fell. He then whipped me many times and told me never to come back to that school, even if I had the money for fees. Yet, this experience did not dampen my resolve to get an education.

My friends agreed to bring me their lecture notes each week. Every Friday evening, I could get the notes covering, history, geography, business studies, Social education, ethics, CRE, biology, chemistry, physics and agriculture. I would spend sleepless weekends copying those notes so I could return them to my friends by Monday at 6 a.m. This is how I learned the course work for 10th, 11th and 12th grades.

I did not officially get admitted into high school until my final semester. Meanwhile, I had started writing for one of Kenya's oldest newspapers, *The Standard*.

My first story, 'Pluralism Explosive -- Onger' was prominently published on page



Peter Makori

three with my full byline as I was waiting to take my 12th grade exams. The headline quoted a cabinet minister in Kenya's then-dictatorial regime warning citizens against embracing multi-party democracy which was gaining ground across Africa.

People were puzzled. They did not understand how a youngster had bounced in and out of school could be writing for a national newspaper. The second story, "Cash Embezzled, Claims Minister," was published as I was waiting for my national examination results.

I then applied and was accepted to two prestigious journalism colleges in Africa -- Nyegezi Social Institute in Tanzania and African Literature Center in Zambia. I went to Nyegezi but after failing to pay the required fees, I was, once again, sent home.

If someone asked my mother how I got my education, she would reply, "I have no idea. Ask him."

My fellow graduates and I should give ourselves a hand for taking advantage of our opportunities. But we should never take those opportunities for granted. I know that I haven't.

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faculty perspectives

# Why writing still matters

Jonathan Rand

U-News faculty adviser

Sometimes I worry that I am being too blunt with my Reporting students about the problems of the newspaper business. I worry they might get the impression that writing is obsolete, useful for nothing more than text messaging, tweets or Facebook posts. Or grocery lists.

That impression is dead wrong. The platforms on which writing is presented may be changing dramatically, but the essential skill, and its importance, will always be the same.

Writing is as much a means of expressing ourselves as is speech. You may talk a great game in your first big job interview after graduating from UMKC. But glibness won't mean much if your cover letter and resume are scrawls of poor grammar, bad spelling and run-on sentences.

In some respects, writing actually is more important than ever in the workplace. From the bottom to the top of businesses, employees long frustrated by playing telephone tag use the phones less and emails more. Just one

clumsily nuanced phrase in an email can send the wrong message. A student, explaining a late paper, once emailed me: "I apologize for any incontinence this may have caused you."

Terms papers, essays and theses are not going away in our lifetimes. There's a good reason UMKC maintains a writing proficiency test and writing-intensive courses. There's a good reason UMKC maintains The Writing Studio to help students improve their writing skills, and I wish faculty members could require struggling writers to go there.

Sending graduates out in the world without those skills would be like sending a firefighter out to a blaze without a hose.

Strong, clear writing should be stressed from the primary grades up. There's a good reason writing comprises an important piece of the standardized testing that helps rate the quality of our school districts and their levels of accreditation.

I must admit, though, that neither my wife nor I, who have devoted professional lifetimes to journalism, have encouraged our youngest son, Steven, to follow our footsteps. We were delighted, in fact, when he added computer science to his English major. A member of

the technology industry later told my wife, Barb, that a combination of computer science and good writing would serve our son well.

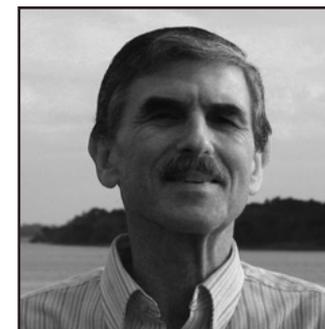
We would soon find out how right he was.

We never thought Steven stood much of a chance when he applied for a summer job at a fast-growing tech firm in Palo Alto, Calif., in the heart of Silicon Valley. The firm could fill its entire summer roster just by holding one job fair at neighboring Stanford. Steven's former roommate, far more advanced than he in computer science, had failed to get hired a year ago by the same firm, despite reaching the in-person interview stage.

I figured the initial phone interviews would amount to little more than good experience for Steven. Then, he started getting past one phase after another of an exhaustive interview process and he, too, was flown out for an interview.

He was applying to become a technical writer, who can translate computer codes into understandable English. He was hired, it seems, because he can write at a professional level among peers who as a group are at the top of mountain in computer skills, but do not place a priority on polishing their writing.

As the Internet explodes with blogs



Jon Rand

and websites, the writers who distinguish themselves in this highly competitive landscape are those who write clearly, cleanly and analytically. Streams of consciousness or hysterical rants are a dime a dozen.

Perhaps newspapers may even make a comeback some day, and revive the job market for talented news writers. But even if newspapers fulfill the saddest, most dire predictions for their future, somebody is going to have to stick around to write their obituary.

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To provide relevant, timely coverage of the UMKC community by seeking truth, fairness and accuracy in reporting while preserving the integrity of *U-News* as an independent student-run publication.

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We publish 4,000 copies each week, and distribute to the Volker and Hospital Hill campuses and surrounding neighborhood businesses.

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