

PICTURETHIS



Interdisciplinary answers

JMU hosted its first Africana Studies Interdisciplinary Symposium on Oct. 9 hosting speakers from U.S. and African universities. The theme of the conference was “Africa at the crossroads: Where do we go from here? Keynote speaker Isidore Okpewho shared “The World of African Storytelling” with students, professors and guests in Godwin Hall. Okpewho is the State University of New York Distinguished Professor of Africana Studies, English and Comparative Literature at Binghamton University. Twenty speakers and six moderators talked about topical themes that included culture and identity, the environment, justice and governance, and education and development. JMU Professor of African Studies David Owusu-Ansah says, “This symposium was designed to showcase new scholarly work that directly addresses future changes in Africana studies with special focus on continental African societies. The event raised awareness of diversity issues in academia, and the symposium is a clear sign that the JMU Africana Studies program has come of age. This is part of the process of putting JMU on the map as an active Africa and diaspora studies program.” Besi Brilliant Muhonja who teaches Africana and women’s studies courses was a key organizer of the symposium, which was sponsored by JMU International Programs, Africana Studies, the JMU Office of Cross Disciplinary Studies and Planning, and the JMU Office of Diversity. ❧

(Above): JMU Professor of African Studies David Owusu-Ansah (left at podium) introduces the keynote speaker for JMU’s African Studies Interdisciplinary Symposium. (Inset, above left): Keynote speaker Isidore Okpewho shared “The World of African Storytelling” with students, professors and guests. Okpewho is a professor of Africana Studies, English and comparative literature at Binghamton University. (Above): Symposium panelists field questions from students and moderators on topics like African culture, environment and education.