

February 2012

# University of Maryland Eastern Shore Creates Collaborative Spaces for Student Study Groups

Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum

*HBCU Library Alliance*, [sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org](mailto:sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Brooks-Tatum, Shanesha R. F. (2012) "University of Maryland Eastern Shore Creates Collaborative Spaces for Student Study Groups," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article 11.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6081>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

# University of Maryland Eastern Shore Creates Collaborative Spaces for Student Study Groups

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <[sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org](mailto:sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org)>

In 2011, the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)** celebrated its 125th anniversary. The land grant, historically black college is part of the University System of Maryland. Like many **HBCUs**, **UMES** began as a secondary institution for African Americans after the Civil War. Today, the campus serves 4500 students. The **Frederick Douglass Library** is centralized on the 745-acre campus.

**Dr. Ellis Beteck**, Dean of the **Frederick Douglass Library**, came to the campus in January 2011 from **Howard University**, where he was Interim Director of the Health Sciences Library. He believes that libraries should ensure that students are well-versed in ways to identify and verify information. He said, "It is a lifelong learning process, even after students graduate from the University." Starting in the 2000-2001 academic year, all freshmen students at **UMES** were required to take a one-credit course at the library as part of the information literacy requirement. "The library's goal is to provide a quality learning experience, which will upon completion have prepared **UMES** students with the skills they need to acquire, evaluate, and use information effectively," he added.

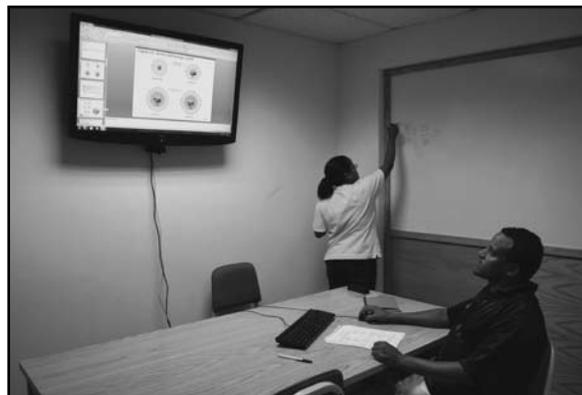
"Librarians are even more important today than they used to be," **Beteck** stated. Still, lack of funding and limited staff force many librarians, especially those in smaller libraries, to justify their libraries' continual operation. **Beteck** stressed that libraries should draw attention to the continuous instruction in information literacy that library staff provide to staff and students as well as to faculty.

"Encourage faculty to accompany students to the classes that are held at the library. This is what we do at **UMES**," **Beteck** explained. "Faculty call back and say that they have learned something even while they were accompanying the students." In this way, librarians at **UMES** enhance and foster col-

laboration between the library and other units. "We want to be out there. Liaisons should go out, and find the needs, and meet the needs of the faculty. Librarians can do their teaching everywhere. Collaboration is something that we believe in and encourage very strongly."

After he arrived, **Beteck** discovered that library staff were receiving numerous complaints about noise levels in the library. When **Beteck** investigated the underlying problem, he realized that the noise came from students crowding around a laptop working on a project. "Students didn't have a space in the library to do their group work," **Beteck** explained. Therefore, **Beteck** and his staff set about creating collaborative and flexible meeting spaces in the library.

**Beteck** sold the creation of these rooms



to the faculty through the University Deans' Council as a sure way to bring patrons to the library. However, before faculty were sold on collaborative spaces, the idea was proposed to the library staff. **Beteck** reflected: "My vision was to seek ways for bringing in patrons. The library still remains a place, and this is the place where students of different disciplines can gather." For **Beteck**, the library is the primary place where students depart from their disciplines while remaining engaged academically.

The idea for collaborative spaces came from **Beteck's** initial exposure to them at the **University of Maryland Health Sciences and Human Services Library**, which he became familiar with while he was Interim Director



of the Health Sciences Library at **Howard University**. However, at the time, there was no funding at **Howard** to create collaborative study spaces. At **UMES**, library staff began converting existing rooms into collaborative study spaces in Spring 2011.

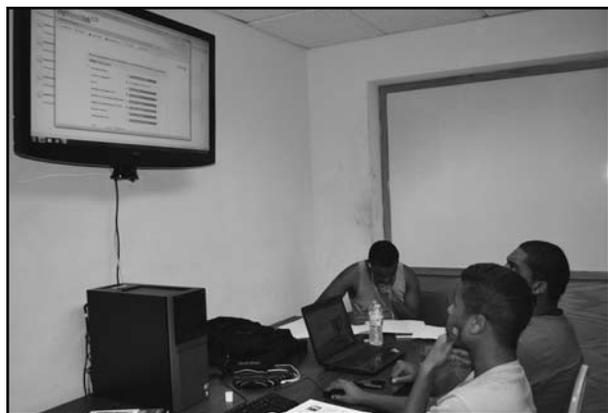
The rooms are in high demand, especially during midterm and final exam periods. Each of the five collaborative study spaces is equipped with a 42-inch flat-screen TV, computer, dry-erase board, and table with several chairs. Students must sign up to use them.

Part of the success in publicizing the collaborative spaces came from creating a Library Facebook page. "Students pay attention to information on Facebook more than their campus email inboxes, so this was the ideal way for us to get the word out, and we've seen a wonderful response," said **Beteck**.

Students continue to express their appreciation for the collaborative study rooms to Library staff and have suggested other enhancements, such as a kiosk in the library that sells USB drives and other materials. Library staff submitted a proposal for this project, and it has been approved. "Since the campus bookstore closes at 4:30 p.m., and we stay open until past midnight, this is an additional way that we can ensure students have the tools that they need to work and collaborate effectively," **Beteck** explained.

**Beteck** reflects on the larger mission of libraries: "We are here for the users and we need to pay attention to their needs. There is no library that gets everything, but [libraries should] listen to patrons and meet them halfway."

To learn more about the **UMES Library**, visit <http://www.umes.edu/fdl>. 



All photos included with this article are courtesy of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.