

Besi Brilliant Muhonja, PhD

Associate Vice President for Research and Scholarship, James Madison University

[LinkedIn: Google Scholar](#)

EDUCATION

PhD, Philosophy, Interpretation and Culture (Interdisciplinary Studies), Binghamton University, New York, 2008

Graduate Certificate, Feminist Theory, Binghamton University, NY, 2008

MA, Theatre Arts, Binghamton University, New York, 2003

B.Ed., Egerton University, 1995

EXPERIENCE: HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Current Roles

Associate Vice President for Research and Scholarship, Division of Research, Economic Development, and Innovation, James Madison University (JMU)

Research Data Steward, JMU

JMU Representative, APLU Commission on International Initiatives (CII)

Current Direct Reports

Office of Sponsored Programs – Administrative Services (OSPAS) - led by Director

Office of Sponsored Programs – Financial Services (OSPFS) - led by Associate Director

OSPAS (pre-award) and finance (post-award) teams ensures seamless grant management throughout the research lifecycle.

Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) - led by Director

Previously ORI, ORIC is home to essential teams like research security and international compliance, vivarium and lab safety, human subject research coordination and support, and attending veterinarians. These teams help uphold integrity and ensure ethical standards and compliance in research. ORIC also has administrative oversight for presidentially owned institutional boards including the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and Financial Conflict of Interest Committee (FCIC). ORI supports university Radiation Safety Committee, Lab Safety Committee, and Research Misconduct Committees.

Office of Research Development (ORD) - led by Director

ORD strategically supports faculty, staff, students, and community members in their pursuit of external funding. The central office and college level teams foster innovation and facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations to drive impactful research initiatives. They help individuals and teams identify funding opportunities and support the proposal development process with the goal of increasing amounts and quality of external funding.

Office of International Research and Engagement Services (IRES) - led by Head

IRES facilitates essential services supporting international research and global partnerships, and international research compliance including export controls and research security.

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR) -led by Executive Director

CISR is a pan-university interdisciplinary center, which serves as a bridge between our institution and global partners, researchers, and communities.

Oversight (dotted lines)

*Center for Advancement Research in Education (JMU CARE™) *led by Exec. Director*

*AAAD Studies Research Center *led by Executive Director*

Significant developments and accomplishments

- supervise six large offices managing combined budgets exceeding 3.5 million dollars (\$3.5M), as well as incentive funds for faculty research development
- invited by the new president to serve as vision team leader in developing a plan for the university to increase research expenditures and graduate degrees (toward R1)
- overseeing research administration and guiding the university through navigating the challenges of the changing federal external funding landscape
- overseeing an increase in external funding applications even while dealing with challenges of the changing federal external funding landscape
- initiated and oversaw the establishment of the Research Security Program
- initiated and oversaw the establishment of the Subaward Monitoring Unit
- initiated and oversaw the establishment of the Contracts and Negotiations unit
- initiated and oversaw the establishment of Madison Research Club and research clusters
- initiated and overseeing the establishment of decentralized post award services
- established and then expanded ORD to a decentralized model with a robust central office team and decentralized research development support teams in every college
- in FY24, we experienced a remarkable 62% increase in requested funds, totaling over \$50 million (\$50M) in increased applications in one year
- oversaw a significant growth in submissions, processed awards, and managed awards
- oversaw audits and reorganizations to enhance the efficiency of both our OSPAS, OSPFS, and ORIC (previously OSP and ORI)
- expanded resources and teams in ORD, OSPAS, OSPFS, and ORIC
- expanded staff by close to 50%

- led development of personalized and team professional development systems and resources
- supervised budget, workload and salary surveys and reviews in OSPAS, OSPFS and ORIC
- supervised the strategic planning for ORIC, OSPAS, OSPFS, ORD, IRES, and CISR along with developing comprehensive policies and SOPs
- oversaw the implementation of a new electronic research administration (eRA) system for ORIC, OSPAS, and OSPFS
- incentivized over 20M annually in new grant applications

Past Higher Education Leadership Roles

Associate Vice Provost for Research and Scholarship, JMU, 2022-23

Oversight

- Office of Sponsored Programs * Office of Research Integrity * Office of Research Development * Office of International Research and Engagement Services * Center for International Stabilization and Recovery * Inclusive Excellence in Research, Economic Development, and Innovation * JMU X-Labs.

Significant developments and accomplishments:

- played a key role in establishing JMU's first two research centers
- initiated and oversaw the establishment of the International Research and Engagement Services unit
- supervised the comprehensive audit and oversaw the design, establishment, and curriculum re-engineering of X-Labs 2.0, a major pan-university innovation facility where interdisciplinary teams tackle complex problems
- supervised comprehensive audit of space and budgets, strategic revisioning, and hiring new leadership and staff for JMU X-Labs
- expanded resources with dedicated budgets for ORD, STAIR, JMU X-Labs
- my office incentivized the creation of convergence research and external funding teams across colleges and disciplines increasing applications of external funds by millions
- oversaw (at the president and provost's request) the creation of a model to ensure equitable award and reward processes at JMU
- oversaw the establishment of various global research partnerships
- expanded the Office of Student Awards, Initiatives, and Research (STAIR)
- created two student fellowship programs
- oversaw the establishment of CALIPER Center now MCCD

Associate Vice Provost, Scholarship and Research Development, 2021-22

Oversight

- Office of Research Development (ORD) * JMU X-Labs * Office of Student Awards, Initiatives, and Research * Office of Fellowships and Awards (OFA) * Student Research and Creative Activities (STAIR) * Inclusive Excellence in the Office of research and Scholarship

Significant developments and accomplishments:

- supervised five big offices at JMU
- supervised the establishment of Student Research and Creative Activities unit
- designed and established the Office of Research Development from scratch, hiring a dedicated team to support its mission
- led design of college-specific Research Development (RD) strategic plans & initiatives
- served as JMU rep to the APLU Committee on International Initiatives
- overhauled and expanded the team in the Office of Student Awards, Initiatives, and Research (STAIR)
- served on various presidential and provost taskforces
- partnered with the Provost's Office, Deans from all colleges, Academic Unit Heads, and faculty to design and deliver research development and scholarship support programs
- partnered with the Office of the Vice Provost for Strategic and Global Initiatives to establish the Inclusive Research and Pedagogies Seed Fund
- partnered with JMU Libraries to establish a fund to support open access publishing for faculty
- served as co-leader of the JMU Paradigm Project Task Force
- steered JMU initiatives in the university's partnerships on the African continent taskforce

Associate Vice Provost, Scholarship and Inclusive Excellence in Research, '21

Oversight

- Office of Student Awards, Initiatives, and Research (STAIR) * Office of Fellowships and Awards (OFA) * Student Research and Creative Activities * Inclusive Excellence in Research oversight for Office of Research and Scholarship

Significant developments and accomplishments:

- designed and supervised the establishment of the Student Research and Creative Activities Unit and the Office of Student Award, Initiatives, and Research (STAIR)
- created and supervised the establishment of the Inclusive Excellence in Research unit
- supervised the Office of Fellowships and Awards (OFA)
- supervised the expansion of staffing for STAIR and OFA
- establishing the budget for STAIR
- launched the Student Ambassadors program in STAIR
- oversaw the undergraduate and graduate student travel funds
- led a comprehensive inclusive excellence audit and strategic planning process across multiple offices including OSP, ORI, Office of Federal Relations, Office of Technology Innovation and Economic Development (TI&ED), Office of Research and Scholarship (R&S) Business Operations, R&S Communications, and the OFA

Inclusive Excellence Advisory Associate, Division of Academic Affairs/Provost's Office & Academic Council, JMU, 2020-22

Significant developments and accomplishments:

- served the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, as well as the Academic Council, as Faculty Advisory Associate and Inclusive Excellence advisor
- helped design the decentralized inclusive excellence model in the Division of Academic Affairs where every college established Inclusive excellence supports
- served on various president's and provost's taskforces and working groups

Director, AAAD Studies Center, JMU, 2019-21

Significant developments and accomplishments:

- led the application and chartering process for the AAAD Center
- led transformation of the center into a self-sustaining interdisciplinary center with over 90 faculty affiliates from every college
- successfully advocated for and negotiated an operating budget, location/space, and equipment for the center
- established a thriving foundation account
- successfully advocated for administrative support
- led the development of the center's strategic plan and programs
- established external and internal advisory boards
- participated (as funding priority area) in JMU's primary giving campaign
- oversaw over 90 faculty affiliates plus external and community partners
- the center oversaw more than ten study abroad programs
- co-director of the ASW, a research incubator
- oversaw establishment of the critically acclaimed interdisciplinary AAAD/CFI Critical Perspectives and Pedagogies Institute
- Oversaw AAAD Interdisciplinary Studies Program
- administered JMU's biggest research conference, which I started in 2009
- served on the board for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Other Higher Education Leadership Roles

Coordinator, AAAD Interdisciplinary Studies, 2017-21

Significant developments and accomplishments:

- oversaw the AAAD Studies program
- convened JMU's largest research conference, which I founded in 2009, and now in its 16th year, with participants from almost every continent
- coordinated over 80 affiliate faculty representing all colleges and many disciplines at JMU
- chaired Advisory Board

Awards & Recognitions

Distinguished Alumni Award, Binghamton University, 2024

Research Leader Fellowship, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Council on Research, 2022-2023

Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship, 2023

Woman of Distinction, James Madison University, 2021

Provost's Award for Excellence in Inclusivity, 2019

Edna T. Shaeffer Distinguished Humanist Award, 2019-2020

Provost Faculty Diversity Curriculum Award, 2018

Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship, 2018

All Together One teaching award, 2014

Inclusive Excellence Enhancement Award, James Madison University, 2012

Sheroes Award, Sisters to Hermana, Binghamton, New York, May 2007

EXPERIENCE & ACHIEVEMENTS: RESEARCH

Areas of Research Interest

Leadership studies; innovation and impact; environmental studies; Wangari Maathai; community-engaged scholarship; cultural studies; digital social sciences and humanities, women on boards

Grants, Fellowships, Research Awards

Applied for

Department of Education, FIPSE "Grants Compliance & Administration Workforce Initiative (GCAWI)," December 2025, **\$2,436,202**

NIH, "Biomedical Research Environment & Sponsored Programs Administration Development (BRE-SPAD) Program," February 2025, **\$3,797,205**

NSF Granted, "Building Research Infrastructure for Decentralized Growth and Economic Development (BRIDGED)," June 2025, **\$2,496,202.00**

John Templeton Foundation, "Ubuntu/Utu in Spiritual Science of Environmental Protection and Management: Indigenous Climate Knowledges and Technologies," August 2024, **\$1,035,972**.

Awarded

Eminent Researcher, Commonwealth Commercialization Fund, 2023, **\$69,604.00**, (with co-PIs Amanda Teye and Lili Peaslee).

Research Leader Fellow, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Council on Research, 2022-2023.

Carnegie African Diaspora Fellow, 2023, **\$23,000**.

Edna T. Shaeffer Distinguished Humanist Award, 2019-2020, **\$5,000**.

Provost Faculty Diversity Curriculum Grant (With Dr. Mollie Godfrey), **\$3,000**.

Carnegie African Diaspora Fellow, 2018, **\$19,000**.

Provost's Summer Research Award. 2018, **\$3,000**.

College of Arts and Letters Education Leave. Spring 2017.

Provost's Summer Research Grant, 2016, **\$5,100**.

IDEA Grant, James Madison University, 2015 (With Kristin Wylie, Daisy Breneman, Matt Ezell and Dawn Goode), **\$3,000**.

Project Global Officers Grant, Institute for International Education, ROTC Language & Culture Project. RENEWAL, August 2012– August 2013, **\$404,035**.

Project GO Grant, Institute for International Education and Department of Defense. RENEWAL. Co-Principal Investigator with Lee Sternberger, Giuliana Fazzion, Jennifer Coffman, and Bob Pettit. August 2011 – July 2012, **\$251,759**.

Feminist Scholarship Award, James Madison University, 2011.

Project GO Grant, Institute of International Education. Co-Principal Investigator with Lee Sternberger, Giuliana Fazzion, Rodney Lusher, and Jennifer Coffman. Funding for intensive Kiswahili programs, full scholarships for ROTC cadets for the Kenya Field School, speaker series, and cultural awareness and sensitivity training. August 2009 – July 2011, **\$493,458**.

Madison Teaching Fellow, September 2008 – 2009.

American Association of University Women (AAUW) Fellowship, 2004-2005, **\$20,000**.

Publications

Books

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. *Decolonizing Knowledges: Wangari Maathai and Philosophies and Theories of Self-Knowing*. Athens: Ohio University Press (Forthcoming, 2025).

M'Baye, B. and Muhonja, B.B. *Gender and Sexuality in Kenyan Societies: Centering the Human and the Humane in Critical Studies*. New Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. *Radical Utu: Ideas and Ideals of Wangari Maathai*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020.

M'Baye, B. and Muhonja, B.B. *Gender and Sexuality in Senegalese Societies: Critical Perspectives and Methods*. New Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. *Performing Girlhood and Womanhood: Rituals of Kenya's Twenty-First Century Middle Class*. New Lanham: Lexington Books (Rowman & Littlefield), 2018.

Muhonja Besi Brilliant and Wanda Thomas Bernard, Eds. *Mothers and Sons: Centering Mother Knowledge*. Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. *Turn Down the Volume on Silence*. New York: Africa Resource Press, forthcoming, 2022.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Issues Edited

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, Ed. “Chronicles of Mothering.” *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, 2013.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, and David Owusu-Ansah, Eds. “Africa at the Crossroads.” *West Africa Review*, vol. 1, no. 19, 2011.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, Ed. “Human Rights: Thirty Years After CEDAW.” *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, vol. 1, no. 15, 2009.

Articles and Book Chapters

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. “Utu and Taboo as an Institution for Self-Policing.” *Journal of African philosophy*, forthcoming, 2024.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. “Mother-Agency and the Currency of Names.” *Epistemic Value of African Personal Names and Naming Practices*, Eds. Oyèwùmí, O & Girma, H. Palgrave MacMillan, 2023.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. “Dimensions of Motherhood in an African World Sense: Ritual and Power among Avalogooli.” *Gender and Sexuality in Kenyan: Centering the Human and the Humane in Critical Studies*, Eds. Muhonja, B.B. and M’Baye, B. New Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. “Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement.” *Palgrave Handbook of Kenya and Its History*, Eds. Nasong’o, S and Amutabi, M. Palgrave MacMillan, 2023.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. “Introduction: Toward Humane Scholarship in Gender and Sexualities.” *Gender and Sexuality in Kenyan: Centering the Human and the Humane in Critical Studies*, Eds. Muhonja, B.B. and M’Baye, B. New Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. “On Identities and Identifying in Queer African Studies.” *Gender and Sexuality in Senegalese Societies*, Eds. M’Baye, B. and Muhonja, B.B. New Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. “Fundi Wa Maswali Na Majibu.” *A Giant Tree Has Fallen*, Eds. Seifudein Adem et al. by Salim Ahmed Salim, Grant Park, South Africa: African Perspectives Publishing, 2016, pp. 157–157.

Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. “Mothering at Intersections: Centering Mother Knowledge.” *Mothers and Sons: Centering Mother Knowledge*, Eds. Muhonja Besi Brilliant and Wanda Thomas Bernard. Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016.

- Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. "Our Sons." *Mothers and Sons: Centering Mother Knowledge*, Eds. Muhonja Besi Brilliant and Wanda Thomas Bernard. Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016.
- Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. "Gender, Archiving and Recognition: Naming and Erasing in Nairobi's Cityscape." *Kenya after Fifty: Reconfiguring Education, Gender, and Policy*, Eds. M. M. Kithinji, M. M. Koster and J. P. Rotich. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. "For My Children." *Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work*, Eds. Rebecca Bromwich and Monique Marie DeJong. Ontario: Demeter Press, 2015.
- Muhonja, Besi Brilliant, and Gillianne O. "Emotions, Displacement, and the New Kenyan." *Contentious Politics in Africa: Identity, Conflict, and Social Change*, Eds. Toyin Falola and Shadrack Nasong'o. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2015.
- Tushabe, wa Tushabe and Besi Brilliant Muhonja. "Mothers' Decision-Making Power: A New Vision for Working with Internally Displaced Persons." *Mothers Under Fire: Mothering in Conflict Areas*, Eds. Arlene Sgoutas and Tatjana Takševa. Ontario: Demeter Press, 2015.
- Muhonja, Besi Brilliant and Oby Obyerodhyambo. "If He Is a Man then What are We?" *Mandela: Tributes to a Global Icon*. Ed. Toyin Falola. Carolina Academic Press, 2014.
- Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. "Race and Social Islands in Kenya's Urban Spaces." *African Culture and Global Politics*. Ed. Toyin Falola and Danielle Sanchez. Taylor & Francis/Routledge, 2014.
- Muhonja, Besi Brilliant. "Teaching Moments and Negotiating Motherhood." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, 2013.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "Where is Motherhood Studies in Africana Studies." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, 2013.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and Gillianne Obaso. "Emotions, Displacement, and the New Kenyan." *Kenya Studies Review*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2012.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "Disneyfication and the Erasure of the African Princess." *Kenya Studies Review*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2011.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "Up and Down Purity." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, vol. 1, no. 18, 2011.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David Owusu-Ansah. "Editorial: Africa at the Crossroads." *West Africa Review*, vol. 1, no. 19, 2011.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "Editorial: Issues on CEDAW." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, vol. 1, no. 15, 2009.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "She Loved and She Ruled That Kitchen: Space and Autonomy in Kenyan Societies." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, vol. 1, no. 15, 2009.
- Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "Ogu Ndem: Aggressive Silence." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, vol. 1, no. 13, 2009.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "Notes Towards a Research in African Feminist Theater." *West Africa Review*, vol. 1, no. 12, 2008.

Conferences Convened

"REVOLUTION: Reclaiming Tradition, Redefining Change in Africa and the Diaspora." The 5th Annual James Madison University Africana Studies Interdisciplinary Conference, October 17-18, 2013.

"Greening the Diaspora: Dispersing Seeds, Growing Cultures." The 4th Annual James Madison University Africana Studies Interdisciplinary Conference, October 18-19, 2012.

"Folk Culture: Morphing the World's Cultural Face." The 3rd Annual James Madison University Africana Studies Interdisciplinary Conference, October 20-21, 2011.

"Shifting the Map of Innovation: Focus on the Africana World." Africana Studies Annual Interdisciplinary Conference, James Madison University, October 22, 2010.

"Africa at the Crossroads: Where Do We Go from Here?" Africana Studies Symposium, James Madison University, October 8, 2009.

Select Conference Presentations\Speaking Engagements

Featured speaker, "Rooted & Rising: Translating Omumu Power into Regenerative Education for the African Diaspora," October 17th, 2025.

Commencement Speaker, Binghamton University, May 11th, 2024.

Panelist, "Black Women's Rights: Leadership and the Circularities of Power." Miami, Florida, December 3rd, 2022.

Keynote Speaker, "Maathai's Womanism: A Decolonial Imagining of Eco-agential Personhood." University of South Africa, August 30th, 2022.

"Cultural Humility in Research Administration for Inclusive Excellence." Panelist, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Council on Research Annual Meeting. Portland, Oregon, June 23rd, 2022.

Keynote Speaker, "Wangari Maathai and Philosophies and Theories of Self-Knowing." African Studies Association-Africa Biennial Conference. Cape Town, South Africa, April 11th – 16th, 2022.

Featured Speaker, "Rituals of Elective Lone Parenting - New Matrilineal and Matriarchies." AMESALL, Rutgers University, April 8, 2022.

Scholar Public Lecture, "Dimensions of Motherhood in an African World Sense: Ritual and Power among Avaluogooli," Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs Middle Eastern Studies/Maxwell African Scholars Union. Syracuse University, February 25, 2022.

Scholar Public Lecture (Discussant), "Decolonizing Scholarship: Excavating Indigenous Sites of Knowledge Using Utu as Theoretical Framework," British Institute in East Africa Annual Lecture. Nairobi, February 17th, 2022.

“Decolonizing Knowledge: Maathai, and Philosophies and Theories of Self-knowing.” Edna T. Shaeffer Symposium, April 9, 2021.

Scholar Public Lecture, “Minds with Hearts: Micere Mugo’s Conceptualization of Mapinduzi Utu-centric Scholarship.” University of Virginia, March 24, 2021.

Scholar Roundtable, “Black Compass: Navigating New Directions in Black Studies.” 11th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference of African, African American & Diaspora Studies, James Madison University, February 17 – 20, 2021.

“Minds with Hearts: Micere Mugo’s Conceptualization of Utu-Centric Scholarship.” 11th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference of African, African American & Diaspora Studies, February 17 – 20, 2021.

Public Lecture, “Utu and Wangari Maathai’s Eco-agential Womanism.” University of Gainesville, Florida, September 20, 2019.

Prof. Besi Muhonja Seminar. “Gender Intelligent Leadership: Centering Us.” Women on Boards Network, Nairobi. July 1, 2019.

Featured Speaker. American Association of University Women Summer Leadership Meeting, Hotel Madison, Harrisonburg, July 27, 2019.

“Author Meets Critic: How to do Things with Popobawa with Author Katrina Daly Thompson.” 60th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Atlanta, November 29 – December 1, 2018.

Visiting Scholar Lecture. “Eco-agency and Unbowed Personhood: Maathai’s Decolonial Imagining of Equity.” University of Virginia. November 14, 2018.

Guest Speaker/Judge. “Performance and Improv.” Brookhouse Group of Schools, Nairobi, May 25, 2018.

Featured Speaker. “Working/Writing Within African Frameworks: Which Frameworks for Gender and Sexuality in Africa?” Roundtable. Dartmouth College. November 3-4, 2017.

“Wangari Maathai: A Legacy of Activism.” Sisters in Session: Black Women in Academia Conference, James Madison University. October 12-13, 2017.

Facilitator, JMU Center for Multicultural Student Services Summer Institute 2017.

Keynote Speaker. “Femvertising and the African Market.” Consumer Insight DAMA Annual Meeting. May 17, 2017.

“Motherhood and the Currency of Naming.” 58th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Washington, D.C., December 1 - 3, 2016.

Guest Speaker. “Significance of the Performing Arts.” Brookhouse. March 3, 2017.

“Motherhood and the Currency of Names and Naming: The Case of the Maragoli.” 59th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Washington DC, December 1 - 4, 2016.

Visiting Scholar Lecture. "Gender & Recognition: Toponymic Cleansing in Archiving & Memorializing in Cityscapes." Department of International Studies, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee. October 26, 2016.

"Maya Angelou's Love Affair with Africa." *Maya Angelou: Literature That Travels*. September 22, 2016.

Keynote Speech, Donning of the Kente Graduation Ceremony. "Showing Up!" East Mennonite University, April 20, 2016.

"Utu and Taboo: The Language of Self-Policing." International Society for Oral Literatures of Africa (ISOLA), University of Florida, Gainesville, March 25-28, 2016.

"*Usichana wa Ubabi*: Deconstructing Transnational Kenyan Girlhood." Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures Annual Conference, James Madison University, April 14-15, 2016.

Panelist, "Furious Flower III: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry" Furious Flower, February 11, 2016.

"Roundtable: Uhuru's Kenya: Back to Jomo?" 58th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, San Diego, November 19 - 22, 2015.

Panelist, "Sexual violence in films," SPIA Symposium on Sexual Violence, Thursday, October 29, 2015.

"Emerging Voices in African Women Studies." International Symposium of the Dakar Institute of African Studies on "Valorizing African Cultural Heritage and Thought in the 21st Century." Dakar, Senegal, July 3-4, 2015.

"Ubuntu and the Language of Self-Policing." Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures Annual Conference, James Madison University, April 8-9, 2015.

"Motherhood and the Currency of Names and Naming." International Journal of Arts and Sciences, University of Las Vegas, March 16-20, 2015.

"The Location of African Motherhood at the Frontier of Motherhood Studies and Praxis of New-Age Motherhood." International Academy of Linguistics, Behavioral, and Social Sciences, November 13-15, Orlando, Florida, April 8-9, 2014.

"Gender, Archiving and Recognition: Naming and Erasing in Nairobi's Cityscape." Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures Annual Conference, James Madison University, April 3-4, 2014.

Keynote Speech. American Association of University Women. Harrisonburg, VA, March 29, 2014.

"Kiswahili: Lugha, Utamaduni na Ufundishaji wa Lugha (Kiswahili: Language, Culture and Teaching)." 38th Annual Conference of New York African Studies Association at SUNY-Binghamton: "Global Africa, Triple Heritage and, Pax Africana: Looking Back and Looking Forward," Binghamton University, April 5-6, 2013.

"Africanizing Theatre in the Post-Colony: The Question of Gender." Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures Annual Conference, James Madison University, March 21-22, 2013.

“Gender in the Political and Editorial News and Images.” The 55th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association: “Research Frontiers in the Study of Africa”. Philadelphia, November 29-Dec 1, 2012.

“Gender, Debate, Images, and Symbols in Visual Statements.” International Academy of Linguistics, Behavioral, and Social Sciences Annual Conference, Washington, DC, November 15–18, 2012.

Keynote Speech. “Engaging an Uncertain Future for Kenya’s Youth.” 2012 Youth Conference, Utawala Center, Nairobi, Kenya, July 22, 2012.

“Recasting Perceptions of Gender in the Kenyan Folktale.” The annual International Interdisciplinary Conference was held at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya, June 26 -30, 2012.

“Single, Experiencing Motherhood and Redefining Family.” International Conference for Social Sciences. Paris, France, April 16-19, 2012.

“Recasting Perceptions of Gender in the Kenyan Folktale.” Social Sciences and Arts Conference. University of Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 13-16, 2012.

“Applying a Critical African Feminisms Approach to Interrogating Indigenous Narratives.” The 6th Annual Diversity Conference: “Diversity: Avenues for Engagement”. Festival Conference and Student Center James Madison University, March 19, 2012.

“Marriage and Other Attempted Contracts.” Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Annual Conference: “Diasporas Changing the World,” James Madison University, March 22-23, 2012.

Keynote Speech. “Break the Silence: Finding and Amplifying Your Voice.” The 3rd Annual Women of Color Meeting, James Madison University, February 26, 2012.

“Diminished, Deferred and Denied Motherhood.” The 54th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association: “50 Years of African Liberation”. Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC, November 17-19, 2011.

“Symbolism and Aesthetics in Visual Culture.” Annual James Madison University Africana Studies Interdisciplinary Conference, “Folk Culture: Morphing the World's Cultural Face.” October 20th – 21st, 2011 (Discussant).

Keynote Speech. “Applying Sage Wisdom to Life’s Challenges.” Donning of the Kente Ceremony, Center for Multicultural Student Services. Transitions, James Madison University, May 8, 2011.

“Performed Social Integration: The Islands of Kenya’s Urban Social Scene.” Association for Global Business / International Academy of Linguistics, Behavioral, and Social Sciences Annual Conference, New Orleans, November 11–13, 2010.

“Oceania Through Our Eyes: A Student Panel.” JMU, 28th September 2010 (Discussant).

Public Lecture. “Emotions, Displacement and the New Kenyan.” NENDA/ROTC Lecture Series, September 21, 2010.

“The Missing Africana Princess.” 8th Conference of the International Society for the Oral Literatures of Africa (ISOLA): “Indigenous Knowledges and Intellectual Property Rights in the Age of Globalization”, Mombasa, Kenya, 15 – 19 July 2010.

“From Bollywood to Riverwood: Female Characters in Emerging Film Industries.” 35th Annual Conference of New York African Studies Association at SUNY-Binghamton: “Global Africa, Global-Asia: Africa and Asia in the Age of Globalization,” Binghamton University - March 26-27, 2010.

“Gender and the Reproduction of Western World Stereotypes on East African Television.” Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Annual Conference: “East meets West,” James Madison University - March 25-26, 2010.

“Light on The Body: The Gendered Body in Kenyan Soap Operas.” Africa at a Crossroads, African Studies Association 2009 Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, November 19-22, 2009.

Public Lecture. “Lessons from My Mother: A Daughter’s Letter.” Women’s Studies Research Group Lecture. James Madison University, September 30, 2009.

Facilitator. “What Do You Want Your Students to Learn in Your Course,” CFI, James Madison University, Spring 2009.

“Lipi Jibu?” Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures Annual Conference: “Power and its Influences,” James Madison University, April 2-3, 2009.

Keynote Speech. “The Unmasking of Me.” Workshop “Unmask Yourself.” James Madison University. March 18, 2009.

“Reply to *Zenzele, A Letter for My Daughter*.” Women, Home and Nation: Private and Public Spaces, 17th Annual Conference, Binghamton University (SUNY), March 14-15, 2008.

Keynote Speech. “Lessons From My Mothers: Issues of Being Silent,” Binghamton University, October 26, 2007.

“Reclaiming the Identity of the “Traditional” African Kitchen.” 2007 Annual EGO Conference: As I Imagine: Fantasy, Identity, Politics, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, October 18-19, 2007.

“The Lacuna in African Political Theater: Re-discovering a Feminist Theater,” African and African American Popular Culture Conference, Plymouth State University, Plymouth, New Hampshire, October 5-6, 2007.

Moderator, “Protest Drama, Performance, and Feminist African / American Theater.” African and African American Popular Culture Conference, Plymouth State University, Plymouth, New Hampshire, October 5-6, 2007.

“All Cried Out.” Interdisciplinary Study Group on Africa, Binghamton University, April 23, 2007.

“With Our Eyes.” The Fifteenth Annual PIC Conference, Binghamton University, New York, April 22-23, 2005.

Interviews

Radio Interview. "The Short Listen: Maya Angelou's Africa." With Good Reason, A Program of Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

"Maya Angelou's Love Affair with Africa." *Maya Angelou: Literature That Travels*. September 22, 2016.

EXPERIENCE & ACHIEVEMENTS: UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Roles and Promotions

Interdisciplinary Studies, James Madison University
Professor, 2020 to date

Associate Professor, 2014 – 2020

Assistant Professor, 2008 – 2014

Areas of Graduate and Undergraduate Teaching

Leadership studies; innovation and impact; environmental studies; transnational feminisms and queer studies; Wangari Maathai; community-engaged scholarship; cultural studies; digital social sciences and humanities.

EXPERIENCE & ACHIEVEMENTS: SERVICE

Editorial & Professional Organizations Service

Series Editor, *Gender and Sexuality in Africa and the Diaspora*, Lexington (Rowman & Littlefield). Ongoing.

Rotating Editor, *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*.

Board, Ruth Simms Hamilton African Diaspora Series, Michigan State University Press. Ongoing.

Editorial Board, *Journal of Sustainability, Environment and Peace* (JSEP). Ongoing.

Editorial Board. *International Journal of Responsibility*. Ongoing.

Founding Member. A Literatures and Cultures Workshop. Ongoing.

Founding Member/Board. East and Central African Studies Association. Ongoing.

Reviewer, Various journals, and presses. Ongoing.

Grant Reviewer, American Association of University Women, 2017-2018.

Conference Organizing Committee Member. The 44th Annual Meeting of the African Literature Association, 2017- 2018.

Local Organizing Committee Member. The 44th Annual Meeting of the African Literature Association, 2017-2018.

Advisory Team, “The Future is Female!” Project, James Madison University, 2017-2018.

Founding Member/Board Member. Project for African Decolonial and Indigenous Knowledge (PADIK).

Program Committee, African Studies Association Annual Conference, 2011-2012.

Program Development, All I Can Be Foundation (AICB), 2007 – present.

Research Consultant, Advanced Analytics and Cultural Research Division, SAIC, 2010.

Policy Document Reviewer, Ministry of State for National Heritage and Culture, Government of Kenya, 2009.

Policy Document Writer, Nairobi City for Ministry of State for National Heritage and Culture, Government of Kenya, 2009.

Editorial board. *Kenya Studies Review* (KSR), for Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA). ISSN: 2150-5764.

University Service

Ongoing

Member, JMU Honorary Degree Committee

Member, JMU Safety Committee

Member, Council for Career Award for DEI and Excellence in Inclusivity

Champion, Making Faculty Awards Processes and Decisions Inclusive and Equitable

Leadership Council, President’s Taskforce on Racial Equity

Liaison, Instructional Faculty Professional Development Working Group – TFRE

Member, Online Teaching and Learning Committee

Advisory Board, Cohen Center for the Humanities

Search Committee, Executive Director, Center for Global Engagement

Chair, Kenya-Zambia Working Group, JMU Initiatives in Africa Taskforce

Advisory Team, The Future is Female

Coordinator, African, African American, and Diaspora Studies

Member, Provost Task Force on Gender and Sexuality

Co-founder/co-convener, The Africana Literatures and Cultures Workshop

Faculty Affiliate, The Ghandi Center

Member, Women’s, and Gender Studies Advisory Board

Member, World Literatures Minor Committee, English Department.

Member, AAAD Studies Curriculum Committee

Completed

Search Committee, Dean, College of Science and Math

Search Committee, Executive Director, Center for Global Engagement

Chair, Search Committee, Director AAAD Studies Center

Leadership Council, President's Taskforce on Racial Equity

Liaison, Instructional Faculty Professional Development Working Group - TFRE

Chair, Kenya-Zambia Working Group, JMU Initiatives in Africa Taskforce CSM Search

Judge, Showcase of Graduate Scholarship and Creative Activity, 2021

Advisory Team, The Future is Female

Member, Centennial Scholars Review Team

Member, Compass Awards Committee

Member, Honorary Degree Committee

Advisor, International Model African Union

Member, C&I Committee, English Department

Member, Search Committee, Director, School of Music, James Madison University, 2018-2019

Member, Search Committee, Dean, College of Arts and Letters, James Madison University, 2017-2018

Committee Member, Search for Curriculum Support and Design Specialist, Cross Disciplinary Studies and Diversity Engagement, James Madison University, 2017-2018

Member, Search Committee, Director, School of Theatre and Dance, James Madison University, 2016-2017

Member, Search Committee, Assistant Director, Furious Flower Poetry Center, James Madison University, 2015-2016

Internship Coordinator, Africana Studies, 2009-2017

Senator, Faculty Senate, 2015-2016

Steering Committee, ADVANCE Women in STEM Grant Development Team, 2015-2016

Member, Forbes Centre Non-European, Non-North America Season Committee, 2014-2016

Committee Member, Hillcrest Scholarship Selection Committee, Honors, James Madison University, 2013

Committee Member, James Madison University, Annual Diversity Conference, James Madison University, 2012-2013

Member, College of Arts and Letters, Diversity Committee, James Madison University, 2008-2015

African Languages and Cultures Section Curriculum Development, James Madison University, 2008-2016

Committee Member, Fulbright Scholarship Selection Committee, Honors, James Madison University, 2011

Kiswahili Resources Development, James Madison University, 2008-2016

Advisor, Women of Color Organization, James Madison University, 2009 – 2010

Search Committee, Africanist Art Historian tenure-track position in School of Art and Art History, James Madison University, 2009

Member, College of Arts and Letters, Faculty Assistance Committee, James Madison University, 2008 – 2009

Advisor, African Students Organization, 2008-present

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Micro-credentials: Basics of Research Administration, Society of Research Administrators International (SRAI), FY24
- Intensive Training: Principles of Research Leadership, SRAI, FY24
- Micro-credentials: Principles of Pre-award Research Administration, SRAI, FY24
- Intensive Training: Relationships, Roles, and Responsibilities in Research Administration, SRAI, FY24
- Intensive Training: Principles of Post-Award Non-Financial Research Administration, SRAI, FY24
- Intensive Training: Principles of Award Negotiation and Setup, SRAI, FY24
- Engaged Learning with Synchronicity (Immersive Program), Fall 2015.
- Digital Humanities and Social Sciences Institute. September – October 2014.
- JMU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): Incorporating Ethical Reasoning into Courses Institute. CFI May Symposium, May 6-7, 2013.
- Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) Refresher Program for Summer Online Course Development Institute. April 29, 2013.
- Black Board Collaborate Workshop. March 27, 2013.
- Adobe Captivate Training. April 3, 2013.
- Voices of Experience Workshop. Center for Faculty Innovation, JMU, Sept 7, 2011.
- Early Career Faculty Panel Workshop, Unit Heads Institute. Center for Faculty

- Innovation, JMU, May 14, 2010.
- Grant Development Workshop. Center for Faculty Innovation, JMU, May 11-13, 2010.
 - Student/Faculty Interaction Sessions - Take my Professor to Lunch. Center for Faculty Innovation, February 24, 2010.
 - Continuing Education Program. *What Do You Want Your Students to Learn in Your Course?* Center for Faculty Innovation, JMU, March 2009.
 - *Worlds of the Indian Ocean Seminar*. Aga Khan University, Nairobi, February 20-25, 2009.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Editor/Curator, Database

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, Ed. "Ngano (Folktales)," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2014.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, Ed. "Hadithi za Kale na Methali," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2014.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, Ed. "Hadithi na Ngano," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2013.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, Ed. and Cur. Elizabeth Godwin Mahenge's "Ruya ya Urubani Iliyofifizwa na Mwalimu," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2013.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi, Ed. and Cur. Elizabeth Godwin Mahenge's "Fungate Ughaibuni," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2012.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds. and Cur. "Mashairi Set III," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2012.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/136>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Mashairi na Hadithi," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2012.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/135>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Mashairi Set II," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2012.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Hadithi Set VI," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2011.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/current>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Mashairi Set I," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2011.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/70>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Hadithi Set IV," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2010.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/70>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Hadithi, Set III," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2010.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/62>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Vijana Wanena I: Kuzorota Kwa Amani Na Mazingira," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2010.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/60>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Hadithi Set II," *Kiswahili Story Database*. <http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/58>.

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi and David B. Otiende, Eds and Cur. "Hadithi, Set I." *Kiswahili Story Database*. <http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/48>.

Author, Database Issue

Muhonja, Brilliant Besi. "Methali Set I," *Kiswahili Story Database*, 2011.

<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/ksd/issue/view/62>.