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Communications and Marketing

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Bledsoe ’20 Caps Morris Career with COPLAC Presentation

The graduating senior combined her passions for French, political science, and African and Black American studies.

French, political science, and African and Black American studies (ABAS) alumna Maya Bledsoe ’20 ended her undergraduate career on a high note. Bledsoe presented her research at the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) Midwest/West Regional Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity Conference just weeks before graduating from the University of Minnesota Morris.

Bledsoe presented "The Power of Forces on the Initiation Voyage in Soundjata, ou l'épopée Mandingue by D.T. Niane." In it, she examines the life of Soundjata Keïta and blends her undergraduate majors and interests in Francophone culture and traditional African beliefs.

“I analyze the initiation voyage that Soundjata embarks on, and I argue that he would not have been able to achieve his greatness without the internal and external forces that pushed him towards his destiny, which was to be the greatest ruler Mali had ever seen,” Bledsoe says. “I have a passion for learning about francophone cultures and the traditional African beliefs that functioned throughout history and still exist and affect the culture today.”

Bledsoe became interested in this topic after taking francophone-focused courses. She says the experience not only served as her French capstone project, but also allowed her to become the first UMN Morris student to complete an area of concentration in ABAS. Bledsoe also had the chance to share her knowledge and develop valuable presentation skills.

“This experience helped me gain skills of presenting my research to an audience outside of my discipline and opens up more doors for me to pursue other opportunities that can help me find a career or pursue further schooling to create a balanced mix for all of my majors,” she says.

Undergraduate Research at UMN Morris

Students at COPLAC institutions, including UMN Morris, are able to present their undergraduate research at regional conferences like the one at which Bledsoe presented. Projects encompass a variety of disciplines and enable students to engage with peers beyond the classroom. At UMN Morris, 50% of students participate in undergraduate research with a faculty member, compared to 35% nationally.

About COPLAC

The Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges advances the aims of its member institutions and drives awareness of the value of high-quality, public liberal arts education in a student-centered, residential environment. To learn more, visit coplac.org