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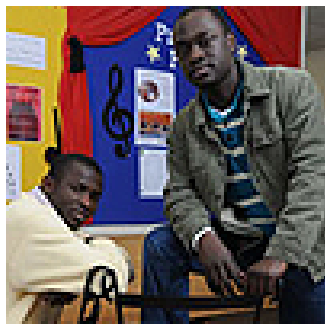
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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Chance Meeting a Dream Come True for Nigerian Students

**12.14.2009 | International, Students** Three Nigerian music students became University of Dayton students, in part because of a connection the University's music department chair forged 20 years ago with a fledgling Nigerian music school.

Sharon Gratto taught at the American International School in Lagos, Nigeria, in the 1980s while her husband was stationed there for foreign service. She also was on the founding board of the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON). When she returned to the U.S. in 1985, she left behind the still-developing MUSON School of Music.

Fast forward to 2008. Karen Patterson, a professional cellist from Yellow Springs, Ohio, who spends part of every year as a teacher at MUSON was looking for a place her students could transfer to earn four-year degrees after earning two-year degrees at the MUSON school. Familiar with the University of Dayton through previous performances with its music faculty, Patterson said the University's welcoming environment immediately came to mind.

"I know that music schools can be brutal; I didn't want that kind of experience for these students," Patterson said.

Patterson reached out to the University of Dayton's music department and asked for a meeting with Gratto, the newly named chair of the department.

Gratto said she had not heard about MUSON in two decades, although she knew the school had been built and was in operation. When Patterson walked into the meeting, she brought the school—and Gratto's past—with her.

"It was a rather emotional experience to see the school's prospectus and the photographs of the building and school board members, students and activities," Gratto said. "It's an incredible story of coincidence. It almost seems that things were meant to happen that way. I still shake my head about it and can't believe it actually happened."

For the three Nigerian students who arrived at the University in September, Gratto's coincidence is a dream come true.

Patterson told Anuli Ezeuko, Paul Ogunboye and Oluwafemi Ogebule that the University of Dayton would be the best school for them.

Ogebule said, "I have not been disappointed, it's a dream school for me."

Ogunboye agreed. "Have our expectations for the University of Dayton been met? Honestly, no doubt."

Many MUSON students, including Ogebule and Ogunboye, travel five hours round-trip on public transportation every day to attend their classes in Nigeria. This dedication isn't going unnoticed.

"What the students have accomplished at finishing the MUSON program as a day program to me is unbelievable," Gratto said.

Thirteen MUSON students have been accepted to the University of Dayton, but finances are a barrier. Ezeuko, Ogunboye and Ogebule received scholarships that enabled them to start this semester. The 10 other students are slated to arrive in January.

Ezeuko, Ogunboye and Ogebule, who had never traveled outside of Africa, are adjusting to life in the United States. When asked what the most surprising element of living in the U.S. is, Ogunboye and Ogebule immediately replied, "The weather. It's cold!" Luckily the students and staff at the University of Dayton have been welcoming. Ogunboye said, "One thing I have discovered here — people want us to actually succeed."

The MUSON students also were shocked by the connection between the University of Dayton and their music school in Nigeria through Sharon Gratto.

"Karen Patterson described it to me as beyond what she planned for us," Ogebule remembered.

Ogunboye also appreciated the coincidence. He said, "I was like, wow, this is the way God planned it. It wasn't accidental."

Gratto and Patterson are exploring how to bring all MUSON students to Dayton to finish their educations, and establishing an exchange program where University students visit Nigeria.

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