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Attachments: [image007.png](#)
[image004.png](#)



The Teaching and Learning Center is pleased to present the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*. The series is dedicated to helping faculty to stay connected with one another while working remotely. Every week, a faculty member will have the opportunity to answer ten questions about themselves and about navigating the changes brought about by COVID-19. This week, we are pleased to feature Dr. Douglas Magomo, Professor of Mathematics.



Dr. Douglas Magomo
Professor of Mathematics

Where are you from?

I am originally from Africa, born in a rural environment of Zimbabwe.

Which college or university did you attend?

After completing my Master's Degree in Applied Mathematics, I was accepted into the PhD program at

Arizona State University but later completed my PhD at the University of Southern Mississippi, in Hattiesburg.

When did you begin teaching at FSW?

August 2011

What made you become interested in your academic discipline?

I was initially trained as a math teacher during my undergraduate studies. I continued to push to learn more in Mathematics to now becoming a happy math professor at FSW.

What is your favorite food?

My favorite food is fish and rice, especially salmon in lemon and brown rice. My favorite local restaurant is in Becky's Kitchen-my wife's kitchen. We just go out eating when we run out of time and would have spent the whole day working hard. At that point, I can eat anything, anywhere.

If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be and what would you ask them?

I would wish I had a chance to dine with former President George W Bush. He inspired me when he gave Liberian dictator Charles Taylor a 12-day ultimatum to leave office. I have no idea why that humanitarian bold move could not be applied to the so many dictators in Southern Africa who to this day, continue to loot and plunder their countries' resources through corruption and repression.

What new things have you learned or done as a result of COVID-19 & working remotely?

Teaching mathematics demands not only explaining, but showing. I have worried about what we would be teaching online against what exactly should be taught regardless of which modality. Proofs are a necessary approach to building students' belief systems. It's not the same viewing a video detailing the steps and explaining proofs after the fact. There are many professionally done videos online; Khan Academy videos as an example. But there is more to students' learning than presentation of material through videos and power point slides. Thinking through all this, I sought to find a way to present to my students an almost equivalent way to ground class teaching. I am grateful for the IT support through the expert leadership of Jason Dudley. I have a combination of Zoom, Kaltura Capture and OneNote technologies that provide students with screen viewing during which time I am teaching and writing as I always do. The only difference is that I have no control of student environment; I have no idea what else may be distracting them. I can only assume they take the virtual class process seriously. The outcome of this experience is documentation of class notes live to my students, students' ability to participate live during class as if it were a ground class, creation of video for the whole class. Students can review the video and relate to parts where their interjections or questions or clarifications were made. What is posted to them is a screen view of my writings, corrections, discussions, annotations, etc. while our voices, mostly mine, explain each step. I am convinced that this approach is the nearest to the way teaching was done before Covid-19.

COVID-19 has increased online learning, and as a result, the need for promoting inclusivity in virtual learning environments. What ideas can you share with your colleagues about how to ensure inclusivity in the virtual classroom?

Making students be co-hosts is something I have found to help students' engagement and ensured inclusivity. I rotate this responsibility, assign my co-host to be on the lookout for chats, and questions, be the one to interrupt me whenever necessary. I also do not mute my students, when a student wants to say something, they want to say that immediately regardless of how right or wrong. I just want to hear them engaged. But I encourage them to be in an environment which is not so noisy. I have tried calling students' names randomly each time I

ask an impromptu or impulsive question. I do this and then answer on their behalf- many times to avoid making them feel embarrassed. Calling students by name and waiting for their reply, sometimes helps them to scramble for pen and paper to then share their solutions. These are challenges and every day we struggle to make it right; to not offend, and to not create a boring class.

What are you doing (exercise, cooking, reading, etc.) to take care of your mental and physical health during social isolation?

The greatest casualty of covid-19 is my social life. Before I would go to help my friend grow some fruit

trees. We marveled when trees grew fruits. But he caught this virus and it has never been the same since.

Every time I leave my house I think about safety. People whom I would embrace and hug and feel at home with are no longer close. I no longer enjoy watching TV; the news is always depressing. But I have

one thing I do and feel good when done-mowing grass on my backyard. I thought of buying a tractor but

quickly brushed that off because with my push loan mower, I feel it's a deserving exercise every once in

a while. I sometimes cycle around. Unfortunately I do very little reading because I have encouraged my

students to text me or email me any time they need help. As a result, I am almost always on Zoom-OneNote, doing school.

What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes from COVID-19?

The only people in your life right now are the family members who live with you. Until this pandemic is

under control, I strongly advise that we remain within these boundaries and avoid social engagements that may jeopardize our health. Once you get this virus, you will always think that every little pain in your body is a resurgence of this disease. I like my little garden where I am growing some corn and vegetables. This helps distract from social isolation. Always find something to do but have time with your family. Spend some time in your prayer closet and be thankful for what you have. 2020 has been a serious challenge to human life.

If you would like to be featured in the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*, please contact Kelly Westfield, Coordinator of Marketing & Technology for the Teaching and Learning Center: kwestfield@fsw.edu



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