

The U-Can! Man and Mandie Gossage Book about www.johntheucanman.com

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(Sneak Preview: Below Is The U-Can! Man Dedication)

Dedication

“If I have been able to see further, it is only because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” – Sir Isaac Newton

This famous quote is one that describes how the U-Can! Man went from a 2.07 high school GPA (1978-1982) to a 3.7 college GPA (2009-2013). I dedicate this book to all the teachers who conducted themselves as giants, and I am glad to say that describes all the teachers I encountered during my five-year college journey. They all let me know that they saw greatness in me, even though I saw only a high school GPA of 2.07 followed by over 20 years of running from college. I was stuck in the past, haunted by my prior academic failures, until I realized that the South Georgia College Entry Level Program (on the Valdosta State University campus) and Valdosta State itself had giants in place, ready to provide me with an awesome atmosphere for learning. Eventually I saw that I had nothing to fear. I earned a 4.0 GPA in the SGC Entry Level Program, and Myrna Ballard, president of the five-star Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce, proclaimed, “Thank you, John. The U-Can! Man has become the U-Did-It Man.” I want to thank my advisors Dr. Glenn Maul (freshman year), Dr. Beverly Blake (sophomore year), and Dr. Kathleen Lowney (junior and senior year) for always reminding me, “U-Can do this!”

Those Who Inspired Me at South Georgia College

I received these quotes from the magnificent team at SGC, and I want to remember them, apply them, and share them with future college students. I hope these powerful quotes spoken to the U-Can! Man during my freshman year can help other students achieve and believe with a U-CAN! attitude. Thank you, President Carson, for having such an A+ team here in Valdosta, GA. I am better for it, and I shall always enjoy the Roaring Tiger spirit in my life, now and forever.

- 1) "Study hard." –President Virginia Carson, South Georgia College President (Later on, when I won the Who's Who Award at VSU, President Carson told me, "John, way to go! I am so very proud of your continued educational success and feel privileged to have met you on life's path. All best wishes.")
- 2) "We are here for you." –Ms. Valerie Webster, Director of Entry Programs
- 3) "You can't lose with the stuff we use." –Mr. Charles Ward, Instructor of Mathematics
- 4) "Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body." –Mr. Michael Talbott, Instructor of English
- 5) "If you want to do a good job of critical thinking, it requires time, thought, and you being focused." –Dr. Glen Warren Maul, Associate Professor of Psychology and my first-ever college advisor
- 6) "Don't ever come into a test knowing you don't know something." –Ms. Jessica Leigh Crowe, Assistant Professor of Biology
- 7) "When you have to turn in an essay or assignment, you should always remember it's your time to shine." –Mr. Jeremy Petrella, Instructor of History
- 8) "If you stay focused in every class, you will do just fine. Never forget your reason for being here: to get an education." –Ms. Kacie Hutchison, Financial Aid Advisor
- 9) "Apply yourself and know that with God all things are possible. You leave SGC with a good solid foundation. The team here is the best." –Ms. Lea Johnson, Administrative Assistant
- 10) "Always have a three-ring binder for each class, starting here in remedial courses and throughout your college career. If you take what you learned here and apply it, your chances of excelling will be greatly increased. –Ms. Bettye E. McClendon, Instructor, Developmental Reading 99
- 11) "When you transfer to Valdosta State University, they will expect you to put into practice what you have learned at SGC. So focus and get all you can while you can; you will need it." –Ms. Jennifer D. Betts, Instructor, English 0099
- 12) "I hope you learned enough about our government and political system to understand how our country works. Also remember it is important to know where to find our information. Read the American Constitution, no matter what your major will be." –Mr. Charles Hozworth, Instructor, American Government
- 13) "Make sure you take care of your health during your college career. It is important before and during college and after you graduate." –Dr. Jeri Stelzer, Contemporary Health Issues
- 14) "You have had two semesters of remedial algebra. Mr. Ward has taught you. I will offer you some fine-tuning tips. But you must believe you can. It is not 'I have to take the Compass test' but 'I get to take it.' You can do it. Now GO attack that test." –Ms. Wyonne S. Templin, Instructor of Mathematics (provided two hours of tutoring before my algebra exit Compass test)
- 15) "You can do it." –The Valdosta Building Service Team (said hundreds of times)
- 16) "You can do it. SGC is a super college. What you get here can help you make it at any college. We have a good team." –Visitors from the SGC Douglas main campus
- 17) Last but not least, "WE CAN." –Fellow SGC students.

Those Who Inspired Me at Valdosta State University

After I moved on to Valdosta State University, I met even more people who inspired, supported, pushed, and encouraged me behind what I ever could have imagined. Here is a list of those people I would like to acknowledge, along with some of the awesome things they said and did. In many cases, the quotes listed are just memorable statements made on the first day of class that made me understand the class's purpose and get fired up for what was to come.

1) Dr. Patrick J. Schloss, President of VSU

"Well done! I am proud you are a Blazer. I have come to appreciate that you reap as you sow. You are a magnet for fine people and great efforts. Keep up the great work."

2) Dr. Louis H. Levy, Interim President

Dr. Levy took about 10 minutes of his (very valuable) time to share the following with me:

- He had served his country as an Army Medic a few years ago, and he thanked me for my 25-plus years of service.
- When I asked him what keeps him going, he said, "I like helping people."
- He boasted about the excellence of the VSU Student Success Center.
- He stressed to me the importance of being on a path in life every day.
- He encouraged me to excel as I followed my path as a VSU Blazer.
- He shared an attitude about VSU that has inspired me to PUSH even harder.

3) Michael F. Adams, President, University of Georgia

After my son Joshua Isom (who currently has a 3.77 GPA) made a smooth transition from VSU to the University of Georgia, Mr. Adams said, "Thank you, Mr. Isom, for sharing your story. I am pleased, but not surprised. If we can ever help with your son, please let me know. Also, thanks for your service to our country."

4) William J. McKinney, VSU's 9th President

"You are living through your fallen classmate Sidney Bivins Jr.'s legacy. You're doing and finishing what he can't do, graduating college. Now finish strong fall semester 2013 and add to your classmate's legacy. When you graduate in December 2013, never forget, YOU ARE LIVING THROUGH IT."

5) Dr. Robin Feeney, ANTH 1102 – Introduction to Anthropology

"John, during your college career and beyond, remember that you will always be developing yourself."

"John, make sure that in all your college classes, your goal is to GET IT (GI). Be a GI Student."

"John, U-Can!"

6) Dr. Michael Eaves, COMM 1100 – Human Communication

"John, make sure you realize your communication skills will be a force in your life once you better understand the different fundamentals taught this semester."

7) Mr. Joel Harper, ENGL 2130 – World Literature

"Civility means that students are expected not only to be civil but to maintain behavior appropriate for a professional environment."

8) Dr. Mark Groszos, GEOG 1110 – Our Hazardous Environment

“This semester you will learn a lot about the world’s hazardous environment. We have a huge class, and I expect you to be fully engaged. The syllabus is your best friend, so make sure you study it, and be ready to learn as we explore our world.”

9) Dr. Shirley Hardin, Director of African American Studies and Professor of English

Dr. Hardin has been mentoring and inspiring students for 35 years. She challenged me to consider African American Studies as a minor. Her appeal was so moving that I quickly decided to.

10) Ms. Melva Morfau, AFAM 3600 – U.S. Civil Rights Movement

“John, remember that no one knows it all, so come to class with your mind set to learn. You may be shocked at what you hear in this class. However, it is important that you learn as much as you can about your past. Then you can go forward making differences and helping out in the areas you choose.”

11) Ms. Ellen Stevens, ECON 1500 – Survey of Economics

“Our economy consists of many moving parts. This class will help expose you to some of our economy’s parts, such as the stock market and other areas that may spark your interest.”

12) Dr. Edward Chatelain, GEOL 1122K – Principles of Historical Geology

“You decide to do Standard, Outstanding, Magnificent, or Excellent (SOME) work.”

13) Dr. James A. Muncy, PERS 2710 – Exploring Success

“Success is having fun finding and fulfilling your purpose in life.”

14) Dr. Ari Santas, PHIL 2010 – Fundamentals of Philosophy

“You have to read a first time and then reread, always reading carefully.”

15) Mrs. Lizbeth Heath, SPAN 1001 – Beginning Spanish/Intro to Hispanic Culture I

“You are here to learn a new skill—Spanish. I’m here to help you learn this skill.”

16) Mr. Kendrick Dyer, AFAM 3600 – Black Families

“It is very important that you know where you come from and where you are going. Your family history can help you with this process. This class will be dealing with the black family and its many diverse parts. Come to class every day ready to learn.”

17) Dr. Kerry Hinkle, PSYC 2500 – Fundamentals of Psychology

“Always remember there are many ways to learn.”

18) Dr. Mike Meacham, SOCI 4810 – Intro to Human Services

“John, you are going to do great things in your college journey. Learn all you can, and then go and be a difference maker.”

19) Mr. Charles Ward, Instructor of Mathematics and my college mentor spring semester 2011

“John, I am proud of you, and remember to change. You are learning how to learn, and that is the greatest strategy of all—as you learn, you move from one peak to a higher peak for a better view of the whole situation! Keep the faith, my brother—you have only just begun to experience a little of the lot that God has in store for you!”

“Success takes perseverance, ambition, passion, courage, heart, humor, and talent. You have proven you have what it takes to meet challenges, overcome obstacles, and pursue excellence to fulfill a dream. Congratulations on your well-deserved success.”

20) Mrs. Caterina M. Orr, AFAM 3000 – Intro to African American Studies

“Make sure your assignments are done on time. Your assignments reflect you, and you should want them to reflect you in a correct manner. This is not an easy A class, but it is a class in which you can earn an A if you do the work and make sure the work is done correctly. The key is doing what the syllabus says and giving your best effort. Then, whether your grade is an A, a B, or a C, you will know you did your best.

21) Dr. Carl Hand, SOCI 3500 – Sociological Theory, SOCI 3800 – Social Stratification, SOCI 4800 – Population Problems, SOCI 3000 – Sociological Analysis/Statistics
Sociology and Anthropology Major Outcomes:

- To familiarize students with sub-disciplines, theories, methods, and core concepts of the discipline they elect to study in the department.
- To develop in students the ability to apply and utilize the basic quantitative and/or qualitative research and analytical techniques they will need in their professional careers.
- To teach students the literature and database review skills needed to assess and synthesize the state of knowledge available to apply the study of selected issues.
- To support students in the development of the skills required to communicate effectively with people and organizations representing diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This skills include writing, speaking, and computing.

22) Dr. Amy I. Aronson-Friedman, SPAN 2001 – Intermediate Spanish Language/Hispanic Culture I

“You are expected to be speaking Spanish in class every day. This class is building on your previous two Spanish classes. You will not master the Spanish language, but you will be further along. This is a journey.”

23) Dr. Chet Ballard, SOCI 3650 – Sociology of Sports, SOCI 4990 – Senior Capstone

“Make sure you come to class with all your assignments completed. We will be having open discussion throughout this semester. Your active participation in class will be based on your preparation before class. Preparation is one of the many keys to success in class and in life. Get in the habit of being prepared.”

“You have learned a lot, and your challenge with your sociology degree is to go out and be a ‘do gooder.’ If you can create a one-size-fits-all product, you will be able to help solve problems around the world.”

Dr. Ballard’s advice led me to create a one-size-fits-all product that could explain what I have been doing since 2009, using U-CAN! as a model. My website, www.johntheucanman.com, serves as footage of me performing U-CAN! in college, and I desire to teach others to do the same!

U- You

C- Capture your message, moments, memories

A- Attack every syllabus with your best effort

N- Never be defeated

Performing U-CAN! is my proven recipe for success. Thanks, Dr. Ballard, for once again demonstrating Valdosta State University's outstanding push to apply what is being taught.

24) Dr. Calvin Walker, AFAM 4700 – African American Studies Seminar

"My philosophy of teaching is to teach the class in the way that I want to be taught. I believe in respecting each student as an individual. I try to help students to empower themselves. I believe that it is my purpose to help a student gain a sense of who he or she is in order to help the student move forward in life."

25) Dr. Suzanne Slusser, SOCI 3200 – Applied Sociology (shared with Dr. Williams)

"The definition of critical thinking is the ability to evaluate, reason, and question ideas and information while demonstrating awareness of broader social and cultural context."

26) Dr. Thomas R. Hochschild Jr., SOCI 3510 – Research Methods, SOCI 3090 – Mass Media/Popular Culture

"John, thank you for the nice compliment! Your enthusiasm is contagious. I want to help you in any way I can. Keep it up. If John-can, U-can too!"

"John, thanks for the shout out! It's been a pleasure to see you apply the things we talked about in class to 'real life' phenomena. Your enthusiasm is contagious! Often, it is difficult seeing students 'go through the motions' without realizing the important of the material. Having talked with other faculty about you, I can tell you that your passion and energy are GREATLY appreciated at VSU. You serve as a role model for students and faculty. Let me know if I can help you fulfill your journey in any way."

27) Dr. Dave Nelson, PERS 2399 – Perspectives on Social Media

"Social media is a tool you can use in so many ways. Make sure you are aware of the different types of ways to effectively use this means to communicate your message."

28) Mrs. Holly Wright, SOCI 3190 – Clinical Sociology

Wow—our textbook for this class revealed why I give hope! "I expect people have enormous capacity for change."

29) Mr. Antwan Herron, AFAM 3220 – Studies in African American Literature

"During this semester, I would like for you to be a critical thinker, creative thinker, and innovative thinker as you read your assigned readings. Dig into what you are reading by asking questions of the text. Write down any and all questions before class and add them to our class discussions. This class will be interactive."

30) Dr. Ginger Macheski, SOCI 4540 – Internship in Sociology

This community-based learning experience is designed to provide:

- An opportunity to apply sociological knowledge and skills in a work setting
- An opportunity to develop work-related knowledge and skills
- Facilitation of exploration of career opportunities
- Encouragement of personal development and self-assessment

31) Dr. Chere L. Peguesse, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Student Success Center

"Thank you, John, for being such a great support and model for what any student can achieve. I'm forwarding your letter to the tutors you've named; although I'm sure lots of

students are appreciative, we don't often get that appreciation in writing, and it's a huge morale booster—thanks again!”

32) Ms. Selenesia Holmes and Mr. Derrick Carter

Ms. Holmes and Mr. Carter are both staff members at VSU who achieved their Bachelors degrees during my five-year journey. They were my inspiration. I saw both of them work while going to school. During my senior year, they both completed their degrees. I could see the results, and I said to myself over and over again, “One day that will be me.”

33) Dr. Maggie J. Viverette, Director of the Office of Social Equity

Dr. Viverette gave me the following charge during my internship interview:

“John, you've come a long way, from your 2.07 high school GPA to a current GPA of 3.68. You've used our office from day one, back in August 2009. Your website is amazing and innovative in the way that you've captured your higher learning journey. John, you will be in high demand, with people across the country inquiring why, when, how, who, and what made you take on this challenge.

“You've been telling me for years that you've heard and witnessed the obvious problem of African American males not enrolling in or graduating from college. You often spoke with me about how you wanted to be part of the solution to this problem. You now have actions to back up your words, and your story is simply amazing.

“You may want to do research and see how the 36 universities in the Georgia Board of Regents are dealing with this issue. Some have created programs to assist. My suggestion is that you consider creating a program or tool VSU can use to attract and retain African American male students. The goal would be for your example, starting and finishing college, to be standard rather than an exception. Your challenge is to create some kind of way for the program or tool to be used after you graduate in December. I think you may be surprised at the outcome of packaging the story contained on your website to inspire other African American males. This is not a command, but it's something you may want to consider for your fall semester internship.”

Benjamin Franklin stated the famous words, “Well done is better than well said.” To all the faculty and Staff on this list, you always exemplified both.