



**Patrice Lightfoot**

***"Every class connects to real life."***

Working as a package handler for a global leader in transportation logistics in Austin, Texas, Patrice Lightfoot watched closely how the company's human resources professionals provided positive reinforcement to motivate workers.

"They were trying to get us to take pride in our job, feel accomplished, feel respected, feel a part of the whole team, and that we actually mattered," she said. This motivated her to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies at UMGC.

The benefits of her coursework became evident almost immediately on the job. With each class in human resources and communication, "I learned how to speak to someone, how to get them motivated and feel included," she said.

And she goes the extra mile to remove barriers to communication, learning sign language to help her in working with Deaf people.

When a job opened in human resources, she was ready to apply. "I knew what to expect and what to do, and I knew what I wanted to do" in the role, she said. Lightfoot got the job and now works for the company in an administrative human resources position.

**She cited in particular help she got from Adjunct Professor Steven Thompson, PhD. "His feedback pushed me to think critically and express ideas with clarity and confidence. He connected communication theories to real-world issues, helping me see how my words and actions can influence others."**

Lightfoot completed her studies while working a full-time package handling job and a part-time job as a personal trainer, and also serving in the Air Force Reserve. She said UMGC is designed for people like her.

"Don't be afraid to take it one step at a time and lean on your professors and classmates for support," she said, when asked what advice she would give to incoming UMGC students. "If you're mentally struggling, there is support for you from professors who care, classmates who understand, and people in your life who want to see you succeed."

"Every class connects to real life," she said. "You'll grow more than you expect. Stay organized, stay motivated, and remember your experience and perspective are your greatest strengths."