

# **When Life Throws You Overboard: UWA Transfer Student Maneuvers Through Madness**

By Shelby Ray Gandy

**LIVINGSTON, ALABAMA**—Thrust into a sink-or-swim situation when Judson College suddenly closed, Chelse Anderson was forced to navigate a new path she never expected.

Anderson spent the first half of her college career in Judson’s art program before news broke that the institution would close due to a poor financial outlook and declining enrollment.

The 183-year-old Baptist women’s college faced potential closure in December 2020, but after successful fundraising efforts, college officials announced Judson would remain open for the Spring 2021 term.

Hope was high for Judson students as they began the spring semester, so the May 2021 announcement of the institution’s closing left students stunned.

There was only one thing on Anderson’s mind when she first heard the news:

“This can’t be happening.”

Like a passenger aboard a sinking ship, Anderson spent the following weeks scrambling to plan a quick and easy escape route.

“Where will I go to school now?,” thought Anderson.

“Will my credits transfer?”

“What about my scholarships?”

Struggling to stay afloat in this sea of uncertainty, Anderson’s mind swam with questions that no one could answer.

That is, until a life raft rescued a drowning Anderson—that life raft was The University of West Alabama.

Through a special opportunity, UWA allowed Judson students to transfer seamlessly and earn academic and housing scholarships as they continued their studies at UWA in pursuit of bachelor’s degrees.

Immediately, Anderson knew UWA—with its similar size and setting to Judson—was the place for her. The schools are about 60 miles apart, both nestled in small towns that students say they quickly come to enjoy.

Determined to achieve her lifelong dream of working in animation at Walt Disneyland in Anaheim, California, Anderson began her first semester at UWA in August 2021—just three months after Judson’s closing announcement.

Within her first two semesters at UWA as an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) student, Anderson was inducted into The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and travelled with the IMC program to Orlando, Florida’s Walt Disney World. There, Anderson attended a professional Disney design training workshop reserved for only the highest-achieving UWA IMC students.

Now an IMC senior, Anderson says transferring to UWA was “most definitely” the right choice. With plans to move to Anaheim upon graduation in May 2023, Anderson’s dream career seems more attainable than ever since her transfer to UWA.

While the close of Judson College was unfortunate, Anderson’s unconventional journey to UWA was exactly what she needed.

The University of West Alabama encourages students to find their “Something”—and transfer student Chelse Anderson found hers in IMC.