

# ACADEMIC SUCCESS INITIATIVES

One Goal. Many By Your Side.

November 2024

Welcome to the Academic Success Initiatives (ASI) quarterly newsletter. We hope this communication will help spread the word about our work to support students and faculty. There are many of us in ASI, but our goal is the same – successful student outcomes.



## WHAT'S NEW?

ACADEMIC SUCCESS INITIATIVES

### ODU EPORTFOLIO COMPETITION

**SHARE YOUR EPORTFOLIO!**

Have a compelling ePortfolio that showcases your work effectively? We're looking for strong examples of professional, internship, project or course, and program ePortfolios!

**WIN PRIZES OR A CASH AWARD!**

Each category's winner earns prizes such as a portable digital projector, Rocket Book, and swag. The overall winner earns a \$300 award!

**WANT EPORTFOLIO HELP?**

Optional Information & Support Sessions will take place in the ePortfolio Studio and virtually on December 2 (12:00 - 1:00 PM) and December 5

### EPORTFOLIO COMPETITION: WHO WILL WIN NEXT?

The **ePortfolio Studio** is promoting its ePortfolio Competition! The ePortfolio Competition "recognizes the diverse ways students use ePortfolios, whether highlighting a single project or reflecting on their entire academic experience." The competition is divided into categories, including Professional, Internship, Project/Course, and Program portfolios. Winners earn cash or prize awards, as well as the opportunity for their portfolios to be posted in the [ePortfolio Studio's Gallery!](#)

To learn more about the ePortfolio competition, see past winners, and other ePortfolio Studio information, click [here](#).



### REGISTRATION TAKES ODU BY STORM!

Throughout November, ODU offices have teamed up to encourage **Spring 2025 registration!** The campus-wide effort has shown through eye-catching yard signs, educational fliers, and fun registration events. In one highlight, unregistered students were invited to enjoy "Coffee, Cocoa, & Cookies" as they received individual assistance signing up for classes.

All of the energy and hard work poured into this campaign demonstrates how committed ODU faculty and staff are to students and ODU's overall community!



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# OFFICE OF STUDY ABROAD

*The Office of Study Abroad is dedicated to offering and supporting quality, academically rigorous, and diverse education abroad programs and services for ODU students.*

## STUDY ABROAD SPOTLIGHT

### Dyvina's Program to Sevilla, Spain

#### Why Study Abroad?

"Studying abroad provided me with an opportunity to learn. It provided me with a chance to travel. It gave me new perspectives on life. Connections and networks, I would never have if I never went abroad."

#### What did you get out of it?

"One of my biggest goals is to travel as much as I can in this lifetime. In three months, I was able to go to two continents, seven countries, and 22 cities. To be able to see that much of the world in a short period of time was something I had always dreamed of and studying abroad made my goal a reality."

#### What was learned through the experience?

"There was so much to learn every day. By studying abroad, you completely change everything you know. You no longer know the fastest way to get to class or how to read street signs. You must adapt, change, and learn fast! It's like moving to a new city on steroids.

You are completely out of your comfort zone. Just going for a walk, and finding ways to get around is a learning experience. So, on a day-to-day basis learning a language, where your new favorite restaurant is, and new favorite food that you never tried before hit you fast. While overseas you continue to try new things, meet new people, and push yourself to the extreme. You are getting out and meeting new people, and trying to speak their language is challenging. But being able to learn about a new culture/ country and just embracing every aspect of it; It's something you can't get in the comfort of your own zip code. And no matter how many times you do it, you will learn something new every day."



**Dyvina B., Political Science Major**

**To read more testimonies about Study Abroad, visit their [website](#).**



#### MONARCH PAUSE

Reason #6 to Study Abroad: **Become More Independent.** Studying abroad removes you from the support network you're accustomed to. While it may seem daunting, this is a great chance to gain some independence! See more reasons [here](#).



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# MONARCH INTERNSHIP AND CO-OP OFFICE



## THE MONARCH INTERN INSIDER: NEW EDITION!

**The Monarch Internship and Co-op Office** is celebrating its first anniversary by creating its newsletter, **The Monarch Intern Insider**. The newsletter aims to connect ODU students, faculty, and employers through sharing office highlights, intern spotlights, tips for success, upcoming events, and more.

To start off their first edition, the Executive Director, **Dr. Barbara Blake**, wrote a note welcoming all readers. Dr. Blake emphasized the MICO mission of helping “every student get an internship or work-based learning experience.” She also shared the rising initiatives created during their first year for all ODU students, faculty, and staff to participate in.

In addition to office developments, the Fall 2024 release included a section appealing to students and getting involved in internships early on in their college careers. It is titled, “Understanding the Internship Cycle: Start Early”. The article includes career development tips such as creating a LinkedIn profile, considering a micro-internship, and staying up to date with deadlines.

**To see more exciting initiatives and information about MICO, read their first newsletter [here](#).**

## LOOKING AHEAD: YEAR TWO AND BEYOND

“As we enter our second year of operations, we are more committed than ever to helping ODU students secure life-changing internships. Our focus remains on expanding our support services, forging new employer partnerships, and increasing the number of students who participate in internships. This Fall, we will be announcing initiatives to distribute a \$100,000 data collection grant to make sure every student intern receives internship recognition on their academic transcript through our no cost-zero credit courses, UNIV 68 and GRAD 668 as well as support Blue Table Talk, an engaging student professional development series. We are excited about the future and the positive impact we will continue to have on the lives of our students. Thank you to our partners, supporters, and the ODU community for your ongoing dedication to student success. Together, we are shaping the future, one internship at a time!”

# ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

## Learning Communities

**Impact Learning Communities (ILCs)** aid undergraduate students in the transition to college by allowing them to create an instant community with their peers.

**Participating in an ILC also offers the opportunity to...**

- ✓ Develop a deeper knowledge of potential careers within a major
- ✓ Connect to the university and other students through enrichment experiences
- ✓ Apply content knowledge across multiple settings



## Virginia Museum Exploration: ILC's Visit Richmond

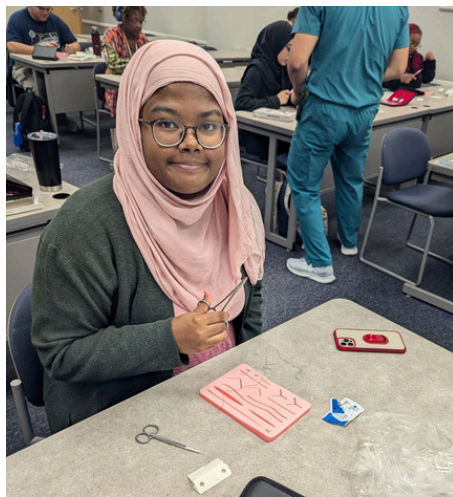
Most recently, an Impact Learning Community visited Richmond on a trip to the **Virginia Museum of History and Culture**. Students were very engaged throughout the trip, asking thoughtful questions, participating enthusiastically in discussions, and seeming genuinely inspired by the visit.

Assistant Directors of the Monarch Humanities Internship Academy **Oge Nwandu-Vincent** and **Michael Thompson** led the successful trip. Dr. Nwandu-Vincent states, "Their energy and curiosity reminded me of the profound impact experiential learning opportunities like this can have."

**For more information about the Monarch Humanities Internship Academy, visit their [website](#).**

## Pre-Med ILC Students Stitching Ahead

Medical school students from the **Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences** at Old Dominion University Medical School (EVMS) were invited to host a suturing workshop for Pre-Med Impact Learning Community Students.



Director of College of Sciences Advising **Reneldo Randall**, Director of Academic Initiatives **LaShay McQueen**, and Coordinator of Academic Enrichment Programs **Tara Hillman** collaborated to put together the workshop.

The event was a “resounding success” according to Randall. He notes, “Most participants had never sutured before, so they were thrilled to gain hands-on experience in this essential medical skill.” In addition to building their knowledge and technique, Randall shared that the workshop “fostered meaningful interactions between our students and the medical school attendees, promoting a collaborative learning environment.”

**To learn more about Impact Learning Communities and their upcoming events, visit their [website here](#).**



### MONARCH PAUSE

**Did you know?** Learning communities students earned higher first semester GPAs than their non-LC counterparts. And more students who participated in a Learning Community developed a good relationship with a faculty member than their non-LC peers. – First Year Experiences Survey, 22-23

# Annual Campus Theme (ACT)

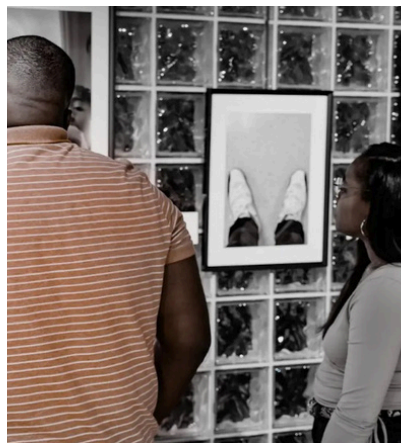
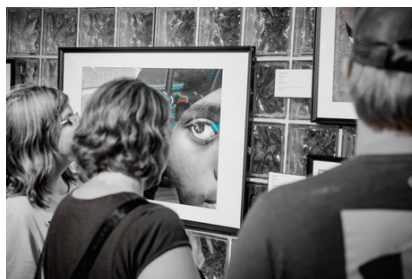
## Radical Jewelry Makeover (RJM) Project

**Emily Culver**, Assistant Professor of Art, is leading students through a Radical Jewelry Makeover project in her ARTS 495 course as part of the Annual Campus Theme, **Transitions**. The course collaborated with students from Virginia Commonwealth University and Longwood University to collect donations of unwanted, unused, or broken jewelry from the surrounding community. The donations were then turned into new artworks to be exhibited and available for purchase.



Guest lecturers, **Curtis Arima** and **Kathleen Kennedy**, were also invited to campus to share their expertise on design strategies and metalsmithing. Throughout the course, students have received instruction on the ethical and sustainable practices alongside traditional jewelry and metalsmithing techniques. Students will have an exhibition along with the participating professional jewelers/metalsmiths from the area. The campus community is encouraged to stop by to view the upcoming display.

**To learn more about the ACT courses and events, visit [odu.edu/themed-year](https://odu.edu/themed-year).**



## Through Their Lenses: A Photographic Exhibition by Youth in Foster and Kinship Care

**Alexia Hargrove**, Director of First Star ODU Academy, who alongside faculty from the College of Education, hosted an art exhibit titled "Through Their Lenses" at the Gordon Art Galleries.

The exhibition features the work of First Star Scholars, who have visually represented their journey as youth impacted by foster and kinship care. The exhibit was displayed for two weeks, with over 70 friends, families, and community partner visitors.

Scholars were asked to demonstrate their experiences of education, family, recreation, friendship, and community – all connecting to the Annual Campus Theme (ACT), **Transitions: Our Experiences, Development, and Adaptation.**

# COLLABORATIONS



Pachia Martin, Larry Whitaker Jr., and Sebastian Oehninger waiting for students to arrive.



ODU students and Whitehurst residents participating in academic success fun!

## MONARCH MODE: PRIORITIZING STUDENT SUCCESS

On October 3rd, the **Office of First and Second Year Student Success** partnered with **Housing and Residence Life** to host the very first "**Monarch Mode**" table. Students stopped by for tips, reminders, and motivation to help them succeed at ODU!

Students were able to "spin-the-wheel", win prizes, and answer questions about finding tutoring, what's to offer in the Student Success Center, Pre-Registration Dates, how to take a leave of absence, and more.

*"It was great getting to know and interacting with the first-year students in Whitehurst Hall."*

**- Larry Whitaker Jr., Coordinator of First Year Student Success**

*"Doing outreach at Whitehurst was very important to create supportive, strong connections with first year students."*

**- Sebastian Oehninger, Assistant Director of Peer Mentoring & Outreach**

To stay updated on upcoming events, resources, and information about Academic Success, check out their Instagram [@oduacademicsuccess](https://www.instagram.com/oduacademicsuccess)



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# FIRST AND SECOND YEAR SUCCESS INITIATIVES

## PEER ACADEMIC SUCCESS MENTORING

**Peer Academic Success Mentors** are available to meet with students to identify unique learning strengths, develop individual plans for academic support, and promote self-confidence and independence in areas such as study skills, time management, test-taking strategies, and more.

### A Mentor's Impact on Student Retention

Peer mentors can be a crucial pillar in supporting student retention. Peer mentors help students feel more connected to campus, develop academic success plans, and transition to and through college (especially during their first two years).

In Fall 2023, students who met with peer mentors were retained to Spring 2024 at 93%, and were retained to Fall 2024 at 80%. For the next few weeks, peer mentors will be scattered across campus at various tabling events to chat with students about finishing the semester strong!

*To learn more and see all of the resources peer mentors provide, visit their webpage [here](#).*



### ICLCA Conference: New Connections

In September, Assistant Director, Instructional Support Programs **Diana Hernandez**, and Assistant Director, Peer Mentoring & Outreach **Sebastian Oehninger** had the opportunity to attend the annual International College Learning Center Association Conference.

Oehninger expresses, "I was able to learn how big and small universities run their peer mentoring programs, and how I could apply some of those ideas here at ODU." He continues, "The best part of the conference was networking with peers who were there to learn and grow from our shared experience."

Diana Hernandez shares similar insights about learning from other institutions, stating, "The conference offered a chance to connect with practitioners and hear their stories, including successes and challenges." Dr. Hernandez also emphasized the need for adapting ODU's "approaches and methods" to best meet students' changing needs.

# TUTORING CENTRAL

ODU has over 12 different tutoring centers across campus supporting hundreds of undergraduate courses and employing dozens of undergraduate peer tutors.

Academic Success Initiatives collaborates with all tutoring centers to discuss, coordinate, and evaluate efforts related to formalized tutoring services for students at Old Dominion University with the common goals of supporting student learning in the classroom, improving students' academic performance in challenging courses, and increasing student retention.

For a complete listing of centers and supported courses, please visit [odu.edu/success/academic/tutoring](https://odu.edu/success/academic/tutoring).

## TUTOR.COM

**Tutor.Com** is a free and flexible online tutoring service that allows students to meet with tutors 24/7. Tutor.Com supports over 50+ courses across several subject disciplines including Business, Math, Science, Languages, and much more. It is supported by the **Office of Academic Innovation and Learning Support**. To learn more about Tutor.com and get connected with an online tutor, visit their website [here](https://www.tutor.com).

### WHO ARE THE TUTOR.COM TUTORS?



Tutor.com Tutors go through a rigorous vetting process, with requiring at least a bachelor's degree and passing a multi-step qualification process. Once hired, tutors are evaluated informally by their mentors on a monthly basis and formally every 90 days.

## TOP 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TUTOR.COM

From [Tutor.Com FAQ](#)



Tutor.Com is individualized and on-demand. Students are able to connect with qualified tutors at any hour, with one-on-one, focused sessions. Tutor.Com also offers their most popular supported courses in different languages!



Tutor.Com is completely free and accessible from any computer or mobile device with internet access. Students can also utilize Tutor.Com through Canvas and the mobile app, **Tutor.com To Go**.



Supported courses were chosen based on previous tutoring usage, student need, and faculty requests. If you don't see a course you need tutoring for, reach out to the Office of Academic Innovation and Learning Support.



If you liked working with one tutor in a session, you can add them to your Favorites List on Tutor.Com to schedule a future time to work together!



Tutor.Com is not used for quick answers to problems. Tutors are dedicated to guide students through a learning process to develop independent problem-solving skills for future assignments.



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# ADVISING AVENUE

**Stephanie Fahey**, Interim Director, Engineering Student Success, attended the annual NACADA conference with fellow ODU advisors. Here is a quick look at her experience:

"Alongside my colleague, Dr. Nettie Freshour from West Virginia University, I presented a session entitled *Utilizing BRIGHT to Support Academic Advisors and Enhance Advising Training*. In the session, we discussed the integral role of advisors, the factors that lead to advisor burnout, and the steps to mitigate these factors utilizing our research-supported BRIGHT framework. We enjoyed great audience engagement and discussion surrounding best practices for supporting advisors so they can in turn support students.

The NACADA annual conference hosted over 3,000 attendees from around the world. I greatly benefitted from connecting with advising personnel from the global community to learn about the integral student support work they are engaged in at their home institutions. One notable session I attended was about preparing STEM students to become more effective learners. I brought back resources and strategies from that session that we can use to directly assist our students with their studies and promote student success in the College of Engineering."



## (RE)IMAGINE GENERAL EDUCATION AT ODU

### GENERAL EDUCATION REFORM DISCUSSIONS BEGIN

Under the leadership of the **General Education Executive Committee**, ODU aims to engage the campus community in a comprehensive general education review and reform process to envision and implement a general education program that prepares ODU graduates for academic, professional, and civic life.

Many across campus participated in one or more of three Open Forums this fall to discuss general education topics, learn more about progress and next steps, ask questions, and share ideas. Next steps include:

- Convening and charging a General Education Steering Committee
- Developing a reform timeline and progress check-in points
- Devising a plan to continue to engage campus community in the process



For more information about what's planned for spring, visit the General Education Reform website [here](#).

# STUDENT WORKER SPOTLIGHT



**JAH-IRE URTARTE**

Peer Academic Success Mentor  
Office of Academic Innovation and  
Learning Support

Jah-Ire Urtarte is a junior at ODU, double majoring in Psychology and Human Services. Jah-Ire is the most recent addition to the Peer Academic Success Mentors team, bringing his bright and welcoming personality to the Student Success Center.

Since he is pursuing a future career in counseling, Jah-Ire saw the opportunity as a way to gain experience and connect with the students on campus. Throughout his time, peer mentoring fellow Monarchs has impacted his own perspective, seeing other students' challenges with a new and empathetic lens.

With the time and outlook peer mentoring has given him, Jah-Ire hopes to work toward a career in child-adolescent therapy, changing counseling in schools to be more responsive and proactive.

*"Seeing the people I mentor succeed, grows my passion to help more people."*  
– Jah-Ire Urtarte

## FACULTY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



**ORLANDO AYALA**

Professor and ODU Director of  
Undergraduate Research  
Department of Engineering Technology

**Orlando Ayala** serves as the endowed Ray Ferrari Professor in the Mechanical Engineering Technology Program at Old Dominion University (ODU) in Norfolk, VA, where he has been a faculty member since 2013. Dr. Ayala teaches a variety of undergraduate courses, including Fluid Mechanics, Heat Transfer, Thermodynamics, Multiphase Flows, and Mechanical Engineering Labs. He brings valuable industry experience, having collaborated with engineering consulting firms on projects in the petroleum, natural gas, brewing, and newspaper sectors. His research expertise lies in multiphase flow simulation, high-performance parallel computing, and scientific computation, areas in which he has engaged undergraduate students in collaborative work.

Dr. Ayala has advised undergraduate student organizations such as the BAJA Society of Automotive Engineers, Engineers Without Borders, and the Monarch Engineering and Innovation Lab. Through these roles and his involvement in senior design projects, he has strengthened connections between undergraduate students, ODU units, and industry partners both within the Hampton Roads area and beyond. His dedication to undergraduate student mentorship recently led to his appointment as the Director of Undergraduate Research at ODU, where he aims to expand his network and collaborations to help our ODU students engage in research.

Dr. Ayala graduated Cum Laude with a BS in Mechanical Engineering from Universidad de Oriente (Venezuela) in 1995, followed by an MS in Mechanical Engineering in 2001 and a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering in 2005, both from the University of Delaware (USA).

# FEATURED PROGRAM

## First Star ODU Academy

First Star is the first national long-term college prep program for high school foster youth.

Led by **Alexia Hargrove**, the **Director of First Star ODU Academy**, the program provides high school youth in foster care with the opportunity, tools, and support to successfully transition to self-sufficiency through higher education or other viable pathways.

### First Star offers...

- **Summer Academy:** an intensive 2-4 week residential enrichment program on a university campus.
- **Virtual Engagement:** Weekly mentoring and tutoring sessions and an open environment to connect and build community through virtual hangouts.
- **Monthly Academies:** Monthly programming over 4 years for First Star Scholars to promote academic and life skills while still in high school.
- **Alumni Program:** Maintaining and connecting the national First Star community beyond the scholars' high school graduation.

And much more specialized programming that addresses the academics, life skills, and adult supports unique to students in foster care.

To learn more about joining, upcoming events, or general information about First Star, please visit their website <https://www.odu.edu/ails/first-star-academy>.

IN 2024...

100%

OF ODU FIRST STAR  
SCHOLARS  
GRADUATED ON TIME

81%

OF FIRST STAR'S  
2024 CLASS JOINED  
THE NATIONAL  
ALUMNI PROGRAM

100%

SCHOLARS RECEIVED  
LIFE SKILLS ASSESSMENT  
& CASE MANAGEMENT  
SUPPORT



ALEXIA HARGROVE

Director, First Star ODU Academy  
Office of Academic Innovation &  
Learning Support

## OUR MISSION

*Housed inside the Student Success Center, Academic Success Initiatives (ASI) empowers learners to thrive academically, personally, and professionally. Academic Success Initiatives provides an inclusive environment dedicated to building authentic relationships and community, fostering meaningful learning experiences, and collaborating with learners as they pursue their passion and purpose.*

*In keeping with the mission of the University, Academic Success Initiatives advocates for all Monarchs and actively supports their pursuit of excellence at ODU and beyond.*



MARISSA A. JIMENEZ

Executive Director for the Office  
of Academic Innovation &  
Learning Support and the  
Operations Coordinator for  
Academic Success Initiatives

To learn more about Academic Success Initiatives or have ideas for future collaborations, please contact Marissa at [mjimenez@odu.edu](mailto:mjimenez@odu.edu)



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