

ACADEMIC SUCCESS INITIATIVES

One Goal. Many By Your Side.



February 2025



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?

General Education Reform Efforts Continue

In Fall 2024, the General Education Executive Committee hosted campus-wide open forums and reading groups to reimagine ODU's General Education Program. Building on this feedback, the reform initiative is moving forward with next steps:

Establishment of the Spring Steering Committee

- 13 faculty and staff members have been invited to guide the research and reform proposals, building on the perspectives of the fall reading groups and forums.
- Hear more from **Provost Brian Payne** [here](#)!

Student Outreach and Involvement

- A student informational session was held to encourage interest and engagement in the reform.
- A student committee of 14 members was formed. Under the leadership of **Jenn Sloggie**, member of the Executive Committee, the student committee meets to discuss student experiences and solicit student input on the future program.

Upcoming Events

March 5th, 2025 : General Education Reform Open Forum

11 AM – 12 PM, North Cafe, Webb Center

For more information and resources about the General Education Reform Initiative, explore [here](#).



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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

Lauren's Program in Italy and Morocco

Why Study Abroad?

"Study Abroad allows students the opportunity to explore and engage the world in a way that has been previously inaccessible for students like me."

What was learned through the experience?

"Through Study Abroad, I developed an understanding of different perspectives. I learned the importance of understanding different perspectives in the societal telling of a group of people or culture. During my time in Morocco and Italy, I learned the link between culture and religion in the lives of ordinary people. I also learned the importance of language in how we see the world and communicate. As a result, I have become a more conscious communicator."

What did you get out of it?

"I gained a greater appreciation for the variety of cultures and lifestyles that exist throughout the world. I also gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of the factors that have led to my cultural identity as both a black woman and an American. I have lived in a reasonably homogeneous society and never felt a reason to develop a deeper understanding of my identity. Studying and living abroad forced me to analyze myself. After my time abroad, my curiosity and desire to experience and learn more partially led me to apply and enter the Peace Corps in 2018."



Lauren D.

International Studies Major

Read more testimonials about students Studying Abroad [here](#)!



MONARCH PAUSE

Reason #1 to Study Abroad: **Experience a Different Culture.** Studying Abroad offers the chance to participate in the day-to-day life of a new locale as a local! Gaining experience first-hand helps you grow an appreciation for a culture other than your own. **See more reasons [here](#).**

MONARCH INTERNSHIP & CO-OP OFFICE

WHAT DOES WBL LOOK LIKE AT ODU?

MICO's Open Forum for Work-Based Learning

The ODU Internship Administration Council, in collaboration with the **Monarch Internship and Co-Op Office (MICO)**, held a campus-wide open forum to refine the institutional definition of work-based learning (WBL).

ODU faculty, staff, and students were invited to share their expertise in shaping how WBL can be effectively communicated and implemented to support student success.

Work-Based Learning Importance

Work-based learning connects academic theory with practical application, preparing students for the workforce by helping them gain critical skills and professional insights.



During the forum, the ODU Internship Administration Council, facilitated by **Dr. Barbara Blake**, Executive Director of MICO, shared their 2025 goals and proposed WBL definition and standards.

After providing the foundations of understanding WBL at ODU, the conversation was transferred to the online and in-person attendees. Participants were asked to break into groups to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns, which will directly inform future WBL policies and practices.

Dr. Blake concluded the forum by discussing how the ODU Internship Administration Council will move forward in the future, guided by the voices of the ODU community.

Learn more about the Monarch Internship and Co-Op office and their future events [here](#).



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TRIO PROGRAMS

TRiO MCNAIR PROGRAM



Dr. Ronald E. McNair

Remembering Dr. McNair and His Legacy

"Ronald McNair was an American astronaut and physicist who is best known for his tragic death during the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986. He was a highly skilled physicist, earning a Ph.D. in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)."

In remembrance of Dr. McNair's significant contributions to science and knowledge, the ODU McNair's Scholars Program "empowers first-generation, income-eligible, and historically underrepresented students to prepare for research-based doctoral studies".

Read more about the McNair Program on the [TRiO McNair's website](#).

McNair Scholars Moments: Fall 2024 - Spring 2025

Most recently, seven McNair Scholars went on a transformative graduate school application boot camp and campus tours at North Carolina Central University and Duke University. Scholars engaged directly with research faculty, graduate students, and admissions deans while exploring state-of-the-art lab facilities and learning about competitive summer research opportunities. Go Scholars!

Additionally, five McNair Scholars proudly presented original and co-authored research at discipline-specific conferences across engineering and psychology, including prestigious events like the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies' annual conference and the American Society for Microbiology's conference (ABRCMS).

Presentations highlighted the program's success in preparing undergraduates for research dissemination and affirm ODU's mission of leveraging research as a tool for student retention, development, and achievement.



TRiO MCNAIR PROGRAM



Jayla Dahlberg



Dejaune Thompson

In this quarter's McNair Program newsletter, two seniors were recognized for their outstanding research and commitment to their fields. **Jayla Dahlberg** is graduating with a B.A. in Psychology, while **Dejaune Thompson** is pursuing a B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Human Services. Both have showcased their research at conferences across the east coast and beyond and continue to excel at Old Dominion. After they graduate, Dahlberg and Thompson plan to further their experience in their fields of study and share their important work.

Visit [TRiO McNair's Program website](#) to see more about the McNair team, available opportunities, and eligibility.

TRiO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Shoutout to Emily Harmon and Tina Sorial!

"I want to recognize **Emily** and **Tina** for their hard work! Every day, they are meeting back-to-back with students, exploring their academic success, hopes, challenges, and dreams. Their commitment to empowering and guiding our students does not go unnoticed! TRiO would not work without them, and I am beyond grateful for the heart, passion, and effort they put into supporting our students. **Thank you both for all that you do!**"

-Passion Studivant, Senior TRiO Officer & Director of TRiO SSS

See more about TRiO SSS and all of their dedicated work in our [Featured Program](#).



TRiO UPWARD BOUND

In 2024, TRiO Upward Bound served 72 out of 77 students, an impressive 93.5% progress towards meeting the program's student participation objective. Amazing work, UB Team!

In addition to the student success, Upward Bound celebrated UB Social Studies Teacher, Ms. Kimberly Johnson, who was honored as Teacher of the Year at I.C. Norcom High School for her outstanding dedication and impact on students.

Learn more about TRiO Upward Bound on their [website](#).



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ACADEMIC INNOVATION & LEARNING SUPPORT

ODU FIRST STAR ACADEMY

Shoutout to First Star!

ODU First Star Director, Alexia Hargrove, was appointed to the Foster Youth Advisory Council with Tidewater Friends of Foster Care. Congratulations, Alexia!

First Star's Upcoming Events

Saturday Academy Sessions: March 22nd, April 26th, May 17th, and Summer Academy: June 13-16th.



EPORTFOLIO & DIGITAL INITIATIVES

ePortfolio Winners for Fall 2024 Announced!

The [ePortfolio Studio](#) has recognized the most recent EP Competition winners! The competition called for students to submit their EP's into one or multiple categories for a chance to win prizes and a cash award. *Competition categories include: Internship, Program, Project or Course, and Professional.* In addition to the category winners, an overall winner was chosen. All participants received constructive, helpful feedback from a panel of professors, ePortfolio experts, educational professionals, and graduate students. **Congratulations to all of the winners and participants!**

ePortfolio Competition Winners



Overall Winner

Donnel Garner
Major: Cyber Operations
Click [Here](#) to See Donnel's ePortfolio.



Internship

Fatimah Akwari
Major: Accounting

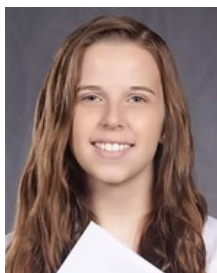
[FATIMAH'S EP](#)



Program

Viann Klaus
Major: Cybersecurity

[VIANN'S EP](#)



Project or Course

Bristen Broy
Major: Media Studies

[BRISTEN'S EP](#)



Professional

Dominique Dempsey
Major: International Relations

[DOMINIQUE'S EP](#)



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ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

ANNUAL CAMPUS THEME

Annual Campus Theme (ACT) is a multi-disciplinary campus initiative that aims to encourage discovery, growth, and engagement in today's national and global conversations. ACT combines academic courses, public lectures and exhibits, film showings, and other events to engage faculty, staff, students, and the community in a collective learning experience about a timely, relevant issue.

Transitions: Our Experiences, Development, and Adaptation

The Annual Campus Theme for 2024-2025 is Transitions: Our Experiences, Development, and Adaption.

Transitions explores the many shifts that occur through personal, professional, or social experiences. Considering events such as the ODU/EVMS integrations, the presidential election, and others, this theme will offer space for the campus community to engage, learn, and reflect during times of change. Transitions can be explored from various disciplines and perspectives – the arts, sciences, business, education, engineering, health, cyber, and more.



The Military Connection Center recognized Transitions by developing **Operation BLUE: Bridging Life and University Experience**, a yearlong active learning program where student veterans are guided through intentionally designed workshop and activities to gain practical experience, self-awareness, and transferable skills. Operation BLUE provides a thorough orientation to ODU, introduces campus resources and services, and promotes strategies for student veterans to develop physical and mental wellness.

Fall semester events included a veteran resume workshop, stress management activities, a Homecoming social, and more. Upcoming spring semester events include topics related to financial literacy, healthy cooking habits, and exploring careers. For more information about Operation BLUE, contact Sarah Cervantes, Veteran Student Success Coach, at scervant@odu.edu.

For more information about ACT and upcoming events, visit their website [here](#).



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COLLABORATIONS

Academic Recovery and Support in Action

Academic Recovery and Support has been diligently dedicated to student outreach and engagement! AR&S team members **Staci Kohen** and **Brita Tomassoni** regularly host tabling events in the Webb Center on Tuesdays to engage with students and promote academic support resources.

Starting February 17th, Peer Mentors from **First & Second-Year Student Success** joined Academic Recovery and Support to strengthen connections with students. Additionally, during the Suspension Appeal Process in January, 22 students were approved to return to ODU for the Spring 2025 semester. Go Monarchs and AR&S Team!



Join AR&S for Upcoming Workshops!

March 17th, 2025

Student Success Week: Learn how to calculate your mid-semester GPA.

March 24th, 2025

To Withdraw, or not to Withdraw...That is the question.

April 7th, 2025

How to complete a Suspension Appeal application and additional information.

Learn more about Academic Recovery and Support on their [main website](#).



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FIRST & SECOND YEAR SUCCESS INITIATIVES

First-Year Scholars Reception

The First-Year Scholars Reception celebrated the achievements of first-time, full-time freshmen who maintained a 3.5 GPA or higher. **Joe Ritchie, Director for First & Second-Year Success Initiatives**, kicked off the event by welcoming students, faculty, and staff, highlighting the importance of recognizing academic excellence early in their college careers.

Keynote speaker, **Dr. Amy Johnson, VP of Academic Success**, also congratulated the students on their dedication to their education and well-being, as well as the invaluable support of their advisors, faculty, and families. Each scholar was individually recognized on stage, receiving ODU swag and a certificate of achievement. The ceremony concluded with **Executive Director of Advising Lill Haber** and **Asst. Director of High Impact Learning Initiatives Josie Momberger** honoring outstanding advisors and faculty for their lasting impact on student success.



Get Involved on our Social Media! We're looking for students, faculty, and staff to participate in upcoming content. Reach out to academicsuccesscenter@odu.edu!



First Year Monarch Mode Success

Throughout the Spring semester, **First & Second Year Success** continued its collaboration with **Housing & Residence Life**, this time, including the **Center for Orientation, Retention, & Exploration (CORE)** to expand the outreach and impact of ODU resources for first-year students.

Students played trivia games, testing their campus resources and advising knowledge to win prizes.

*A special thank you to Assistant Director for Academic Initiatives & Assessment, **Pachia Martin**, and the **CORE staff** that made this collaboration so successful!*

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 the [ODU Tutoring website](#).

ODU Global Brainfuse

Brainfuse is a comprehensive online tutoring service available to all ODU Global students. The platform offers a wide range of academic guiding and supporting services designed to enhance student learning and success. Whether you need feedback, help with a challenging subject, or study aid, Brainfuse has you covered!

Learn more about ODU Global Brainfuse [here](#).



KEY FEATURES OF BRAINFUSE

From [ODU Global and Brainfuse](#)



Live Tutoring

Brainfuse allows students to connect with expert tutors in real-time for personalized assistance in various academic disciplines any time of the day.



SkillSurfer

Brainfuse is not only dedicated to tutoring but also skill building! SkillSurfer offers a wealth of study resources, practice tests, and skill building exercises to enhance students' self-confidence and independence.



Writing Lab

Similar to ODU's campus Writing Lab, Brainfuse provides space for students to submit writing pieces and receive detailed, constructive feedback.



Collaboration

Students can utilize Brainfuse to form study groups with fellow peers and work together in a virtual environment equipped with special online tools. A great connection resource for ODU Global students!



Test Preparation

Brainfuse offers helpful resources and tutoring sessions focused on preparing for standardized tests, such as the Accuplacer math exam, GRE, and more.

ADVISING AVENUE

Celebrating Engineering Mentoring

Roberta Heggie, academic advisor in the College of Engineering (left), and her advisee, **Erika Adu**, (right) participated in the Monarchs Leadership Conference for Students on Friday, February 14th.

Roberta mentored Erika as she developed a workshop entitled *Cultivating a Well-Balanced Student Life*. The workshop provided students with valuable tips and strategies for navigating student life at ODU including time management advice, how to connect with campus resources, and ways to maintain overall well-being.

Roberta enjoyed working with Erika on this project and continually looks for opportunities to mentor students.



MAP2E: Preparing Students for Success

Liz Hudy, transfer advisor in the College of Engineering, has served as a supplemental math instructor for the inaugural year of the **Monarch Accelerator Pathways to Engineering Program (MAP2E)**.

The MAP2E program serves intended Engineering students who are underprepared for the rigorous math and science courses typically taken in the first year at ODU in Engineering.

Liz provided supplemental instruction to students in Precalculus I in the Fall semester, and the majority of her students were able to progress to a higher Math course. This semester, Liz is providing instruction for students in Precalculus I and Precalculus II. While this is a new program, initial outcomes are positive, and Liz looks forward to continuing providing math support for beginning Engineering students.

See more information, resources, and programs on the [Engineering Student Success website](#).

TRANSFER INITIATIVES



**Tau Sigma Members
Decorating Valentine's Cards**



Transfer Tuesday Fun!



**"Paint Your Rock"
Transfer Event**

Transfer Student Shout-Out



LOREN ALBERGOTTIE

*Tau Sigma National Honor Society
Member*

ODU Transfer Student **Loren Albergottie** won a top scholarship (\$3,500) from Tau Sigma National Honor Society!

Congratulations, Loren!

Transfer Student Success: 2024 Recap!

- ✿ **16** events in the Transfer Center
- ✿ **Over 1000** Transfer student contacts in person, virtually, and by email!
- ✿ **Over 45** Transfer students participated in National Transfer Student Week
- ✿ **170+** Transfer students at the University-wide Fall Transfer Tuesday Event
- ✿ **308** Transfer students eligible to join Tau Sigma this spring after having completed 12 credit hours at ODU with a 3.5 or higher GPA!



MONARCH PAUSE

Tau Sigma National Honor Society specifically recognizes transfer students. Any transfer student with a 3.5 GPA or higher is eligible to join. Being in Tau Sigma opens up great opportunities, just like it did for Loren!

Learn more [here](#).

STUDENT WORKER SPOTLIGHT



AIDAN BLANCO

Front Desk Assistant
Student Success Center

Meet Aidan Blanco! Aidan is a senior at ODU, majoring in Computer Science. He has been working as an Administrative Assistant and Front Desk Worker at the Student Success Center for four years!

Throughout his time at the SSC, Aidan has strengthened his professional experience, communication skills, and customer service etiquette. Skills, he notes, he wouldn't have gained working a tech job. However, his technical experience has been an amazing asset to the center's computers and hardware. In addition to all of the valuable professional skills Aidan has developed, he also gained strong connections with faculty, staff, and students. Aidan's positive, down-to-earth personality will be greatly missed!

As Aidan is graduating this upcoming Spring, he is excited to apply for jobs related to his field of study, especially in data science/data analytics or software engineering.

Congratulations, Aidan!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



REMICA BINGHAM-RISHER

**Director of Quality Enhancement
Plan Initiatives & Lecturer**
Department of English

Remica Bingham-Risher, serves as the Director of Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Initiatives and a Lecturer in the English Department at Old Dominion University (ODU) where she has served as a faculty administrator for the last 13 years. She helms faculty workshops to help improve student critical reading and information fluency along with disciplinary writing and reflection by means of the QEP: *PURSUE TRUTH: Read Responsibly. Think Critically*. In addition, she teaches in ODU's English and Women's and Gender Studies programs. Prior to her time at ODU, she served as the Writing Competency Coordinator at Norfolk State University.

In addition, Mrs. Bingham-Risher is an accomplished poet and writer. She is a Cave Canem fellow and Afrilachian Poet. Her work has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Callaloo* and *Essence*. She is the author of *Conversion* (Lotus, 2006) winner of the Naomi Long Madgett Poetry Award, *What We Ask of Flesh* (Etruscan, 2013) shortlisted for the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award and adapted into an immersive dance and installation work by INSPIRIT Dance Company, and *Starlight & Error* (Diode, 2017) winner of the Diode Editions Book Award and finalist for the Library of Virginia Book Award. She is an in-demand speaker at festivals, libraries, bookstores, colleges and universities and has been a featured performer at the Kennedy Center, Dodge Poetry Festival, and numerous other venues. Her memoir, *Soul Culture: Black Poets, Books and Questions That Grew Me Up*, was published by Beacon Press (2022). Her newest book, *Room Swept Home*, is a work of poems, historical and family photographs from Wesleyan University Press (2024).

Mrs. Bingham-Risher is also an alum of ODU, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with a BA in English. She went on to earn her MFA in Writing and Literature from Bennington College.

FEATURED PROGRAM

TRiO Student Support Services

TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) is the oldest retention program at Old Dominion University funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

SSS is funded to provide individualized, free support services to students who are first in their families to attend college, from limited income families, and/or students with a disability.

TRiO SSS is a “one stop shop” for students! They provide...

- FAFSA Assistance
- Limited Grant Aid
- Financial & Economic Literacy
- Graduate School & Career Planning
- Academic Coaching
- Tutoring & Mentoring
- Scholarship & Financial Aid Information
- Academic, Financial, & Personal Advising



TRiO SSS also provides free resources for students to build their professional and academic skills. Students can take advantage of Seminars & Social Events, Writing & Study Skills Development, the Freshman Leadership Program, GRE Fee Reduction Codes, and so much more! **See more TRiO SSS resources [here](#).**

SSS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

93%

PERSISTENCE RATE

96%

MAINTAINED GOOD
ACADEMIC STANDING

71%

GRADUATION RATE

Stay up to date with TRiO SSS and other TRiO Programs by visiting their [website](#) or following them on **Instagram** @odusss , @odutriomcnair , @oduupwardbound.



PASSION STUDIVANT
Senior TRiO Officer &
Director of TRiO SSS
TRiO Programs



TINA SORIAL
TRiO SSS, Academic
Counselor
TRiO Programs



EMILY HARMON
TRiO SSS, Academic
Counselor
TRiO Programs

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



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