



BY DR. DIONICIA MAHLER-ROGERS, ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP & CAREER PROGRAMS

FIRST-YEAR SUMMER INSTITUTE (FSI) : BUILDING MONARCH LEADERS

This summer, incoming Monarchs had the chance to kick off their ODU journey through the First-Year Summer Institute (FSI), a three-day intensive leadership experience that has been shaping student success for more than 20 years. Since its founding in 2002, FSI has welcomed an estimated 5,400 students; the program continues to make a lasting impact on the Monarch community.

FSI helps new students strengthen their leadership skills, connect with faculty, staff, and peers, and get a head start on finding their place at ODU. Each session offers a range of activities tailored to students' interests while introducing them to valuable resources for leadership development, research opportunities, and career exploration. This year, participants benefited from mentorship by 11 counselors representing various academic majors and engaged with more than 85 student leaders from diverse student organizations.

NEW THIS YEAR: Each FSI participant will be paired with a designated career coach to provide one-on-one leadership and career development coaching throughout their academic journey. FSI partnered with the College of Sciences to offer a unique science-based experience.



SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT: SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF EMMA ROUSSEAU

SHOUT OUT TO OUR CAMPUS PARTNERS FOR 2025:

- **Sarah Ware**- Assistant Director of Science Academic Support Services
- **Kyle Lambert** - Assistant Professor for the Department of Chemistry and Biology
- **Kayla Culbertson**- Lecturer for the Department of Biological Sciences

During the Science session, FSI participants stepped into the role of forensic investigators to solve the fictional case of a missing violinist. Students:

- Analyzed evidence through ink chromatography, fingerprinting, and blood typing.
- Reconstructed crime scenes using blood spatter analysis and shoe-print comparisons.
- Examined virtual anatomy with the Anatomage Table to assess injuries.
- Worked in rotating teams across Biology and Chemistry labs to uncover clues.

At the end of the activity, students reconvened to analyze findings, present conclusions, and debate theories about the case. The experience not only sharpened scientific reasoning but also built collaboration, problem-solving, and communication skills, all critical leadership traits.



PROGRAM DETAILS

WHEN: Three-day sessions (Day 1 check-in: 8:30 AM; Day 3 check-out: Noon)

COST: \$50 (includes room, board, meals, and materials)

ENROLLMENT: Students are placed in their first-choice session (based on availability). Confirmations and payment instructions are sent in mid-June.

WHY JOIN FSI?

Students who participate in FSI are more likely to graduate from ODU. They also gain early access to one-on-one career coaching and become connected with Monarchs LEAD, ODU's comprehensive leadership program.

BY THE END OF THE PROGRAM, PARTICIPANTS WILL:

- Establish academic, involvement, and career goals
- Increase self-awareness of personality and learning preferences
- Strengthen teamwork and collaboration skills
- Gain awareness of campus involvement, leadership opportunities, and resources
- Learn the Social Change Model of Leadership Development

FSI is more than an introduction to ODU, it's the start of thier leadership and career journey. Students leave empowered, connected, and ready to thrive as Monarch Leaders. More information and registration:

REGISTER HERE