ODU
IDEA FUSION
The Graduate School

GRADUATE NEWS

DECEMBER 2016

Student Spotlight: Michelle Pizzo

In 5th grade, Michelle Pizzo's interest in the solar system was such that she found herself at space camp. She has desired to work for NASA ever since, and her curriculum vitae (CV) is a reflection of an impressive storyline that led her to where she is today. Pizzo is currently a Ph.D. student in the Computational and Applied Mathematics program and works for NASA at Langley Research Center.

Pizzo earned her B.S. in aerospace engineering from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University with a minor in mathematics and a concentration in astronautics. As a sophomore she worked for Lockheed Martin in its software engineering group. There she tested air traffic control systems. In her junior year she obtained a co-op with United Space Alliance at Kennedy Space Center. There she worked on the Space Shuttle solid rocket boosters, primarily authoring and validating technical documents. While at Kennedy Space Center, Pizzo had the opportunity to witness many space shuttle launches, which to date are some of her most treasured memories. During this time, she also earned her single-engine private pilot's license.

She immediately continued into her M.S. in mechanical engineering at the same university. Her thesis, entitled "Facility Implementation, Production, and the Use of Biodiesel on a University Campus," followed a project she led in which she made biodiesel for the university. She and two other students received $10,000 in funding from the University Vice President and the Dean of Mechanical Engineering. She also worked for Lockheed Martin again while pursuing her master's degree, this time focusing on missiles and fire control.

Michelle always had a love for mathematics in high-school, but at that time, it seemed pursuing the subject in college would not align with her goals of working in the field of aviation. While working on her master's, she rediscovered her love of mathematics and began to see the subject from a different perspective. She quickly decided to pursue her Ph.D. studying computational mathematics. She met with Dr. Raymond Cheng of ethe ODU Department of Mathematics and Statistics in March 2013 and became a Monarch five months later.

She started an internship at NASA Langley in Spring 2014, and worked on solving inverse heat conduction problems in support of hypersonic flight research (speeds of Mach 5 and above). Michelle presented her research at several conferences and technical meetings both within the states and abroad. At a conference in Cologne, Germany she was even honored with the most outstanding student poster. In Spring 2016, she received the Philip R. Wohl Scholarship and was honored as the most outstanding graduate student within her department.

As of January 2017, she will have published two papers as a first-author. Michelle is now working on high performance parallel computing at NASA Langley. She will be helping lead an effort in which industry leaders from around the country will come together to work on parallelizing processing power.

For graduate students, she recommends to stay focused and not to give up when the days get hard. There are ebbs and flows but if one can keep their goals in mind, the reward will undoubtedly be worth those hard times in the end. Michelle is currently studying computational aeroacoustics under the advisement of Dr. Fang Hu. He anticipates Michelle's pre-dissertation defense will be in Fall 2017.

Dates and Deadlines

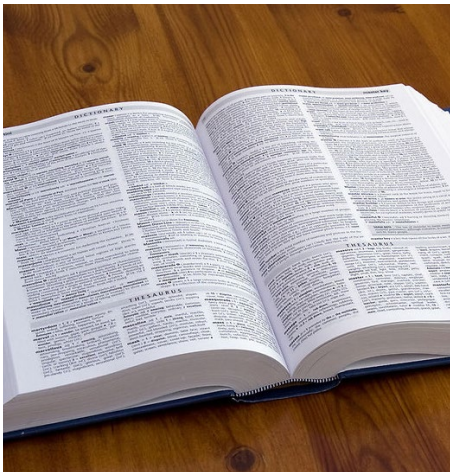
Graduate & International Student Orientation
January 3, 2017
2:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
North Cafe, Webb University Center

GTAI Institute Day 1
January 5, 2017
7:45 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Room 1002, Constant Hall

GTAI Institute Day 2
January 6, 2017
8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Lobby, Constant Hall

GSO Social
January 6, 2017
5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
La Herradura

Student Spotlight: Julia Morris



Julia Morris is working towards changing the way our youth values literacy. She is currently a student in the doctoral program in curriculum and instruction program. Her cognate is literacy, helping students read, write, and communicate. She believes many students are not taking advantage of the opportunities provided by literacy.

Morris earned her master's in English from the University of North Carolina (UNC). Her thesis was on African American males and literacy strategies. The student group she focused on was student athletes, mainly men's basketball and football. In her research, she drew comparisons between the student athletes she worked with and everyone's favorite student athlete, Harry Potter. Julia found that student athletes are regular students, but with a different set of problems. They are part of the population that does not choose a college purely for the educational benefits, but instead for coaches or facilities or playtime. The main student she built her thesis around, a football player at UNC, was a perfect example. This particular student had a passion for special education, but class times conflicted with football practice. As a result, he had to study something else. Julia identifies this situation as a being a problem with the system. He was not properly accomodated and as a result, did not have the opportunity to pursue his athletic ambitions and earn a degree in something he is passionate about. Julia wishes to be a part of this system and help mitigate these situations.

Currently, Julia is working part-time at Churchland High-School in Portsmouth. She teaches composition rhetoric, a college level course in English, to a class that is 75% African American. In prior research, she found that African American males are the student group least likely to graduate from college, even less likely than students who become pregnant or students with families. She believes part of this problem starts with misconceptions about English and literacy in the years leading up to college. She highlighted a student from her class that has lived a troubled life thus far. With several arrests and an appearance on A&E's Beyond Scared Straight, this particular student earned a warning label from other faculty members. Despite this, Morris provided this student with opportunities and motivated him to put effort into his work. Now he writes the best papers in the class. Unfortunately, even with his skills in English, it is unlikely he will use these skills outside of the classroom. In his world, physical prowess is a more valuable currency. Consequently, he hides his intelligence from his peers. He is a prime example of a student that will inevitably "fall through the cracks."

Julia is also the Norris Fellowship Graduate Assistant on our campus. She is involved in two projects with Dr. Thomas Bean. In the first, she works with a literacy fellowship at a low income school in Norfolk. In the second project starting in January, they will work with incarcerated youths in Virginia Beach. They will introduce these youths to urban literature as an outlet for their experiences. In both projects, the goal is to endow them with a life skill crucial for communicating themselves and achieving success.

Going forward, Julia aims to become a tenured faculty member at a research institution to work with specialized student populations towards improving literacy.

Graduate Research Achievement Day

The sixth annual Graduate Research Achievement Day (G.R.A.D.) will be held in the Webb University Center on March 23, 2017. Sponsored by the Graduate School and the Graduate Student Organization, this event serves as an opportunity for graduate students to share their research with the university community. Students can submit a proposal to do an oral or poster presentation. Proposals for participation are due Wednesday, February 15, 2017. For more information, please e-mail Eric White at emwhite@odu.edu.

Find GRADUATE NEWS online at **www.odu.edu/graduateschool/news**.
ODU graduate student Eric White compiled and edited this newsletter with help from Dr. Robert Wojtowicz, Dr. Bryan Porter, and Ms. Missy Barber in the Graduate School.
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