

## MEET THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE ARTS



**Cullen Strawn, Ph.D.**

As a graduate student at Old Dominion University, you may not be aware of the many beneficial arts opportunities around campus. The new *executive director for the arts* wants to change that. Cullen Strawn, Ph.D., believes the arts open your eyes to a different way of thinking. They may provide an especially rewarding experience for graduate students. At this level, there is a deep immersion into scholarship and special projects requiring intellectual rigor. As a result, when you experience the arts, you are more likely to interpret them in a way that is unique and profound.

Strawn was born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina. He has been involved with the arts all his life, having grown into music and experiencing dance and theatre with friends. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Shortly after, he found himself fascinated by West African culture. He won a Fulbright IIE and went to Mali to study ethnographic musicology. His focus was hunter music from Southern Mali. He describes the experience as one that knocked him out musically. Having grown up in the South, he had much exposure to music infused with elements from this region, but this was something much grander. "It was like Blues, Funk, Jazz and Soul... but thousands of years older." Strawn noted that their way of speaking had a poetic tone to it as well: a bicycle was called "the iron horse." Additionally, the artists of this region are all-around artists. There may be some who have extraordinary sculpting or singing skills, but to be an artist in Southern Mali is to sing and dance and act and paint or simply put, to express him or herself in whatever means suitable.

That incredible experience led him to graduate school. Having already completed substantial conservatory training as an undergraduate, he decided to pursue ethnomusicology and folklore. Studying the "anthropology of music" would allow him to better understand music, the world, and all the how's and why's. It would serve to round out of his education.

Strawn considers himself a life-long learner. He plays a number of musical instruments.

Among the most interesting was West Africa's Donso Ngoni, which is a 6-string harp played for hunters. He also plays plucked string instruments (banjo, guitar, mandolin), many different percussion instruments (including those of West Africa) and woodwinds (clarinet, saxophone, flute). He plans to expand into the piano and brass instruments in the future. He has also composed, performed, and produced music. With such experiences, he has met a myriad of interesting performers. He remembers chatting with Alice Cooper bassist, Dennis Dunaway about the mockumentary *Spinal Tap*. There is a scene in which the camera is on the band in their preparation room and one can hear the crowd yelling in anticipation. The band, however, cannot seem to find their way to the stage and all the while the crowd is still screaming. Dunaway looked at Strawn deeply and laughed: "You have NO idea how often that happens."

Strawn's background as a curator and his unique experiences abroad led him to his current position as the Executive Director for the Arts at ODU. He enjoys being a steward of resources that help people from many walks of life experience the arts in meaningful ways. ODU's strategic plan includes internationalization, which aligns with these interests. To Strawn, the arts provide a great way to begin to understand cross-cultural issues. He urges graduate students to attend the campus's many artistic events as they allow for shared human experience in a way unattainable in solo study.

To find out more, visit [odu.edu/arts](http://odu.edu/arts) and [Arts@ODU](mailto:Arts@ODU) (link: <http://goo.gl/WdUYqC>).

## VERSATILE PH.D.

Today many graduate students are contemplating careers outside of academia. One resource that may be of use in exploring "alt-ac" career paths is the Versatile Ph.D. website, <https://versatilephd.com/>. With a free membership on this site one can see descriptions of possible non-academic careers for someone with a Ph.D. in your discipline, participate in a discussion forum for people pursuing alt-ac careers, see job listings, and network with Ph.D.s who are working outside of universities. (Much of the material on the site will also be relevant to someone who has a master's degree rather than a Ph.D.).

There is some additional material on the site that is only available to individuals at universities who have purchased a subscription. At this point, ODU does not subscribe to the site. Requests for the university to become a subscriber to the site can be sent to the Provost's Fellow for Faculty Development, Dr. Dale Miller ([demiller@odu.edu](mailto:demiller@odu.edu)).

## DATES AND DEADLINES

**February 11, 2016**  
Graduate Student Organization Social  
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
James River Room, Webb University Center

**February 26, 2016**  
PFF: Managing Your Digital Identity  
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM  
Learning Commons 1310-1311

**February 28, 2016**  
August 2016 Graduation  
Application Deadline

**March 7, 2016**  
GRAD Day Proposals Due

**April 8, 2016**  
PFF: Effective Job Talk  
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM  
Learning Commons 1310-1311

**April 14, 2016**  
GRAD Day  
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
North Mall, Webb University Center

# RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: ODU LIBRARIES



by **Lucinda Rush,**  
**Education Reference Librarian**

Serving our graduate students is a top priority for ODU Libraries, whether you are on-campus or a distance student. We are always looking for opportunities to engage with graduate students and learn more about how to best meet your needs, so please don't hesitate to contact us if you need our assistance.

For individual research help, you can schedule virtual or in-person appointments with our subject-expert librarians. For your research, we provide online access to over 400 databases that include research articles, streaming video, digital archives, eBooks, industry reports, and more. We offer in-person and online workshops on topics ranging from reference managers,

subject-specific research, using specific databases to data management planning, scholarly metrics searching, and more. Through the Libraries, you have access to EndNote software for organizing and managing your references and we offer workshops and one-on-one assistance with getting started.

One of our newer initiatives is our Digital Commons, which is a digital space where our students and faculty can post their research, dissertations, data, grant reports, projects and more, making it more discoverable on an international level both in Google-Scholar and across all university digital repositories.

If you are a graduate teaching assistant working with classes that have research assignments, we can assist you by providing online teaching tools and in-person library instruction. As a graduate student, you have the same library privileges as faculty and can check out books for an entire semester and have documents such as book chapters and journal articles scanned and delivered to you. You also have access to materials at other area libraries through the Virginia Tidewater Consortium and our Interlibrary Loan services.

Visit our website, [www.odu.edu/library](http://www.odu.edu/library) or contact us for more information about support for graduate students provided by ODU Libraries.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Office of Graduate Studies is hosting Graduate Research Achievement Day on April 14, 2016. We invite you to share your research via poster or oral presentation. Please submit your proposal no later than March 7, 2016 via this form: <http://goo.gl/bTvzdX>.

For more information, please e-mail:  
Eric White  
([emwhite@odu.edu](mailto:emwhite@odu.edu)).

## THINKING OF SUMMER SCHOOL?

Registering early ensures that you will get the classes you need. Check with your graduate program director about offerings.

Don't Delay!

## ARE YOU INTERESTED?

The Office of Graduate Studies is accepting articles for future editions of the newsletter.

If you have something you would like to share with graduate students, please e-mail:  
Eric White  
([emwhite@odu.edu](mailto:emwhite@odu.edu)).



*Dr. Robert Wojtowicz briefing new students at Graduate Student Orientation.*



*Missy Barber with a teaching assistant panel answering questions at GTAI Institute Day 1.*

Find GRADUATE NEWS online at [www.odu.edu/graduatestudies](http://www.odu.edu/graduatestudies).

ODU graduate student Eric White compiled and edited this newsletter with help from Dr. Robert Wojtowicz and Missy Barber in the Office of Graduate Studies.

You can contact Eric at: [emwhite@odu.edu](mailto:emwhite@odu.edu).

Office of Graduate Studies