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Renowned American Anthropologist, Author, Educator, Johnnetta B. Cole, to Kick Off Dean's Lecture Series

By Keith Pierce

American anthropologist and former director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Johnnetta B. Cole, Ph.D., will deliver a lecture at Old Dominion University on Nov. 16. The first in a series of lectures hosted by Stephanie Adams, dean of the Batten College of Engineering and Technology, Cole will speak on the STEM Professional's Role in Diversity and Inclusion. Co-sponsored by the Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity, the lecture will take place at 7 p.m. in Batten Arts & Letters Rm. 1012.

"I want to create an opportunity in the College of Engineering and Technology to introduce our community, and the larger campus, to smart, engaging and influential people to encourage thought-provoking conversations and ideas," said Adams.

An author and recipient of 70 honorary degrees, Cole is a pioneer of African-American and black women's studies. She made history as the first African-American female president of Spelman College, the oldest historically black women's college in the country.

Under her leadership, Spelman was named the number one liberal arts college of the South and raised $113.8 million for its capital campaign – the largest sum ever raised by an historically black college or university. She repeated a similar fundraising feat at Bennett College for Women, where she served as president from 2002 to 2007.

"In 2005, I had the opportunity to shadow Dr. Cole in her role as president of Bennett College for Women. I count it an honor to have been able to do so," said Adams. "Dr. C, as I affectionately call her, has gone from being an idol, to a mentor, a sounding board and a friend. I am thrilled she accepted my invitation to be the Batten College of Engineering and Technology's inaugural dean's lecture series speaker."

Born in Jacksonville, Florida in 1936, amid widespread racism of the segregated South, Cole grew up in a family of high achievers who were considered pillars of the black community. Her maternal great-grandfather was Florida's first black millionaire, having cofounded the state's first insurance firm in 1901. Cole entered Fisk University at age 15, before transferring to Oberlin where she graduated with a B.A. in anthropology. She went on to receive a masters and a Ph.D. in anthropology from Northwestern University.

Among other distinctions, Cole was the first woman elected to the board of Coca-Cola Enterprises, served as the chair of the Board of the United Way and was appointed to President Clinton's transition team for Education, Labor, the Arts and Humanities in 1992. In 2009, she was named director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American Art.

For more information on the event, email BCETDean@odu.edu or call (757) 683-4244.

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ODU Engineering Management Team Wins NATO Global Innovation Challenge

By Noell Saunders

A team of faculty and students from Old Dominion University's Department of Engineering Management and Systems Engineering recently won a total of $25,000 for their creative business model at the University's first NATO global innovation challenge.

The team won the $15,000 ODU Lion's Lair — Hillier Ignite prize , as well as a $10,000 service package for business model creation and validation through ODU's Center for Enterprise Innovation's TempO program.

Held in conjunction with ODU's "Lion's Lair" Competition this year, the theme of the competition was finding more effective ways to help NATO and other disaster response organizations, stabilize troubled areas and save lives following a major event.

The winning team, which included Engineering Management professors Mamadou Seck, Ghaith Rabadi and Jingwei Huang; and Ph.D. students, Hesamoddin Tahami, Chris Knight and Wael Khallouli, presented a project that used social media and big data algorithms to assign the best relief job to the right group of personnel and volunteers in the event of a disaster.

"We can look at examples like Hurricane Harvey or Hurricane Katrina where authorities were overwhelmed," said team leader, Mamadou Seck.

"People were calling 911 lines and were not able to get through. We see more people turning to social media to air their request for support.

"You also have multiple organizations, like the Red Cross, working in the same location, but without any coordination layered between, which is an inefficient use of resources," Seck said. "This project addresses situational awareness, so at every moment we know where help is needed."

Congratulations to the winning team from left to right: Jingwei Huang, associate professor; Mamadou Seck; assistant professor; Ghaith Rabadi, professor; Hesamoddin Tahami, Ph.D. student; Wael Khallouli, Ph.D. student; Chris Knight, Ph.D. student

"The team members truly did an outstanding job and credit goes to every one of them."

- Ghaith Rabadi, professor, Engineering Management and Systems Engineering.

Out of ten finalists from the U.S., United Kingdom and Belgium, the ODU team's project was selected Oct. 27 in front of a panel of judges inside the Darden College of Education's auditorium.

"This is a prototype of the kind of event and collaboration we are trying to foster. It helps the region, the institution and all of our partners," said Marty Kaszubowski, executive director, Center for Enterprise Innovation.

"We are thrilled to win this challenge and we look forward to developing our approach further and to conduct more research in the field of logistics modeling," said Ghaith Rabadi, professor, Engineering Management and Systems Engineering. "The team members truly did an outstanding job and credit goes to every one of them."

A team from the United Kingdom, called What3Words, took home the second prize in the NATO Innovation Challenge. They created a geocoding system that encodes geographic coordinates into three dictionary words instead of using long strings of letters or numbers like other location encoding systems. This particular project helps with communication during disasters as well as postal deliveries, navigation and asset management.

What3Words won a fully paid trip to the NATO's annual Transformation Conference, which takes place Dec. 12-14 in Norfolk.

Army Vet, 1958 Grad, Visits ODU for the First Time Since Graduation

By Keith Pierce

By all accounts, Rocco Lassiter was a born doer. In 1958, after graduating from ODU, which was then the "College of William and Mary, Norfolk," he was off and running even before he knew exactly where his engineering degree would take him.

"In those days, there was no slack; there was no period of saying 'I'll just hang out for a while,'" Lassiter said during a recent interview – his first visit to campus since graduating.

One day after graduating from ODU, the Virginia Beach native was on a troop train headed to Fort Knox, Kentucky. He went on to serve as a U.S. Army intelligence officer for 4 years.

Being drafted in the military was no surprise to Lassiter. As a freshman, he recalls attending classes and socializing with older students who had already served in the Korean War.

"Here I was, a freshman, and these guys had already been shot at, some of them wounded. It's a very sobering place to be. You're surrounded by people that have been through things that you haven't been through. It puts things into a perspective that somehow moves you to want to succeed," he says.

Though he admits having to start at the bottom as a drafter, Lassiter rose quickly as a construction designer, planner and developer and now owns and manages more than 1 billion in assets. He credits his ODU education and connections for his success.

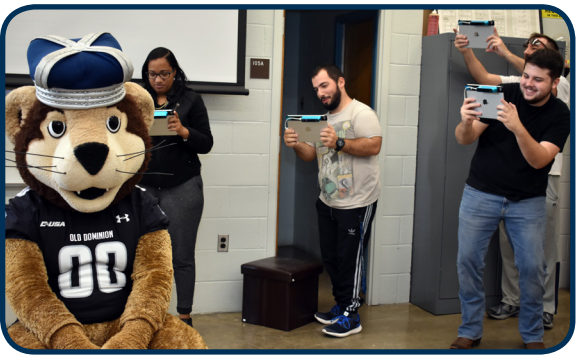
"Of course, a good portion of it are the courses you take, but networking is at least forty percent of your education," he explained. "It's those connections that allow you to use what you've learned to be successful at anything you want to do."

Hear more from Rocco Lassiter himself in this brief video:

Rocco Lassiter

Getting an Active Mascot to Sit Still

By Keith Pierce



Using a simple device attached to an iPad, students scan Big Blue from top to bottom.

A campus celebrity, not known for sitting still, recently paid a surprise visit to the College of Engineering. Engineering Technology professor, Vukica Jovanovic, surprised students in her Introduction to Mechatronics class, a senior elective in mechanical engineering technology, when Big Blue appeared to be scanned for a project that will help create a miniature version of the mascot. The process is called, reverse engineering, the reproduction of another manufacturer's product following detailed examination of its construction or composition.

"You can take an existing object or device, and just using video, scan it and put it in your computer to create a file for 3D printing," says Jeffery Larson, a Navy veteran and senior in mechanical engineering. "It's faster, more precise and much easier for the engineer."

This is the same technology used in "Creating the FleetMaker," an ODU-led Naval Research project designed to advance Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) education for active duty military personnel. A key component of the program is to engage active duty personnel in a "maker" environment that includes hands-on training and collaborative workshops.

"We're exposing active duty military to a maker environment to help increase their knowledge of additive manufacturing so they can explore how making can improve their jobs," explains Navy veteran, Tony Dean, assistant dean for research in the Batten College of Engineering and Technology.

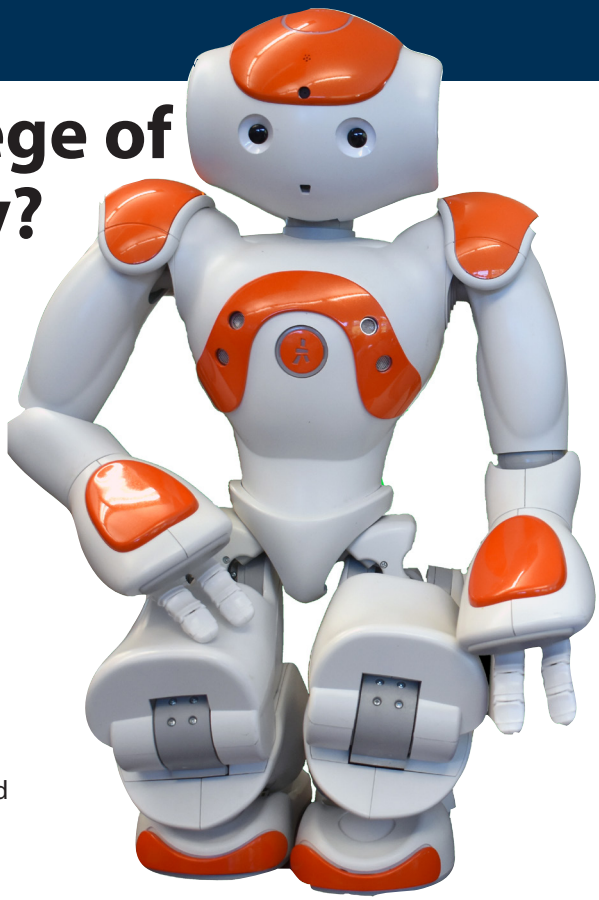
Tony Dean

Vukica Jovanovic

"We can then help Navy leaders decide how they can best implement additive manufacturing across the Navy, as well as in military institutions across the country."

See more in this brief video:

Why Give to the Batten College of Engineering and Technology?



By Sarah Martin Lampert

From energy to hunger; pollution to cancer; security to natural disaster, engineering holds the key to solving the world's greatest challenges. Great engineers are practical dreamers, methodical thinkers and imaginative problem-solvers with a vision of a better world. Our job as educators is to nurture the ideas and dreams of future engineers. By providing engineering students with access to advanced resources, new technology and research-based learning innovations, we help them face and solve society's greatest challenges with confidence. The Batten College of Engineering and Technology is well-equipped to meet this challenge, but we need your help to continue building on the momentum we've created.

Why support the Batten College of Engineering and Technology?

When you give to the Batten College of Engineering and Technology, you provide resources that advance adaptive technology to support children on the autism spectrum in the classroom.

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When you give, you provide resources that improve our environment by developing clean fuels and renewable energy sources, improving water and air quality and supplying innovative solutions to sea level rise.

When you give, you provide a lifeline to future engineers who will become the brightest and best researchers, inventors, teachers, innovators and entrepreneurs poised to change the world.

When you give to the Batten College of Engineering and Technology, you change lives and provide hope for a better world.

To learn more about how you can change lives at the Batten College of Engineering and Technology, contact Sarah Martin Lampert at 757.683.2414 or sfmartin@odu.edu

"My ultimate goal is to own my own laboratory and give back to minority communities."

- Kameron Adams
Graduate student, environmental engineering

Currently working on her Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering at Old Dominion University, Kameron Adams earned her M.S. in Geography and Environmental Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. She received her B.S. in Chemistry and a B.S. in Environmental Science and Policy from the College of William and Mary.

www.ODU.edu/eng

The ***illuminator*** is a publication of the Batten College of Engineering & Technology

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