

Monarch



Honoring a
HEROIC
Monarch



HEROES Among Us

On March 12, **Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07)**, pictured on the cover, protected his Old Dominion University Army ROTC cadets from a lone gunman who entered their classroom. For his bravery and heroism, he paid the ultimate sacrifice. Two cadets were also injured before multiple cadets subdued the assailant. Lt. Col. Shah's courage and quick response, along with that of his students, prevented further injuries.

In recognition of their bravery and sacrifice, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael R. Weimer and Daniel P. Driscoll, the 26th Secretary of the Army, awarded eight meritorious service medals and two Purple Hearts to Army ROTC cadets during a private ceremony on March 22. Lt. Col. Shah was also posthumously awarded the Legion of Merit and Purple Heart.

Read more Special Coverage on page 12.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Scan the QR code to watch a video of the cadets recalling their experience on that tragic day and memories of their beloved commander, Lt. Col. Shah.





PHOTO BY IAN IVES, GS, MEDIA RELATIONS CHIEF, U.S. ARMY CADET COMMAND

Spring 2026



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Old Dominion University is redefining what it means to be an innovative, future-ready university.

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Monarch Strong

Old Dominion University mourned the loss of Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah. Read more about how the Monarch community came together after tragedy struck campus on March 12.



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On the Cover:
 Dominion Rock became a place to honor **Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07)**, who is also pictured saluting at an officer commissioning ceremony in 2025.

PHOTOS BY MINDY AYALA-DIAZ, REED MORGAN (B.A. '21) AND CHUCK THOMAS (B.A. '90)



Monarch Strong: A Community United in Grief and Strength



Greetings, Fellow Monarchs.

At Old Dominion University, we often boldly and proudly showcase our worthwhile mission through our unwavering commitment to educating, innovating and leading. But our mission is more than a statement; it is a living reality seen in the character of our people. As we continue our collective journey of healing following the horrific tragedy of March 12, 2026, we are reminded that our most transformational work and lasting impact is the cultivation of the human spirit.

The brave students who were in the classroom that day have shown a poise and strength that are truly inspiring. These young men and women acted with a warrior spirit that saved lives, demonstrating the very confidence, integrity and leadership that **Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07)** strived to instill in every member of the Monarch Battalion, as well as the broader campus community. Lt. Col. Shah, an exemplary professor and mentor, was the embodiment of this spirit. In a moment of unimaginable darkness, he acted with a courage that shielded others. His selflessness serves as a permanent reminder of the sanctity of our classrooms and the profound impact of a life dedicated to service. While he is no longer with us, his service and spirit remain present in the heart and purpose of our community, in the lives of the countless students he shaped, in the grateful nation that he served and in the many lives that he saved.

The resilience we have seen from students gathered at the Dominion Rock to the faculty and staff at our Campus Care Stations illustrates the strength of the bonds that unify us. As we look toward the future, we do so with a reinforced commitment to our powerful mission. Through healing and unity, we are supporting one another as we navigate the weight of this tragedy and the emptiness of our loss. Through action and response, we are ensuring our campus remains a sanctuary where leaders, like our brave ROTC cadets, are forged. And, with unyielding purpose, we are honoring our storied history, current reality and promising future, while relentlessly pursuing the innovation, leadership and resolve that define our Commonwealth, our campus and our community.

We will face the challenges ahead with the same courage Lt. Col. Shah modeled for us. We remain sharply focused on the collective and overwhelming strength of a community that refuses to be defined by tragedy, but rather by our response to it. Throughout his life and now through his inspiring and notable legacy, Lt. Col. Shah embodied a mantra that now serves as a guiding light for our recovery. "Be bold. Be quick. Be gone." To our fallen Monarch, you may be gone, but you will never be forgotten by your Old Dominion University family. We pledge to always be bold and hold your family, friends and loved ones close to us in the months and years ahead—once a Monarch, always a Monarch!

Forever Monarch Strong,



Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
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CORRECTION

Dr. Hamid R. Okhravi's last name
was misspelled in the summer
2025 edition of Monarch Magazine
(page 29, "Science of a Better Life").



EDITOR'S LETTER

Moments That Reshape Us

A few months ago, I had a very different column planned for this space — one reflecting on growing up alongside new technology and the rise of the internet age. It was inspired by the digital transformation unfolding across campus, some of which we feature in this issue (starting on page 16).

But the events of March 12, and the loss of **Lt. Col. Brandon Shah (B.S. '07)**, changed everything — for his family and friends, for the cadets he mentored, and for our broader Old Dominion University community.

I didn't know Lt. Col. Shah except by his stellar reputation. In the weeks since the tragedy, I've come to understand more about the impact he had on this campus. As we pivoted our magazine coverage to reflect both his life and the Monarch Nation's response to this tragedy, I found myself reviewing archive photos, particularly those from officer commissioning ceremonies at which he spoke. His own words from the May 2025 ceremony inspired our Last Look (page 67).

What struck me about the images I saw of him posed with newly commissioned officers was the brilliant smile he flashed just over each cadet's shoulder. It reflected so clearly the care and the pride he had in "his kids" as many who knew him well have described.

On April 2, during the Monarch Battalion Unit Memorial at S.B. Ballard Stadium, Col. Jonathan Post talked about Lt. Col. Shah's enduring legacy, noting words written in chalk on the walls outside Constant Hall: "Monarch Strong, Shah Strong."

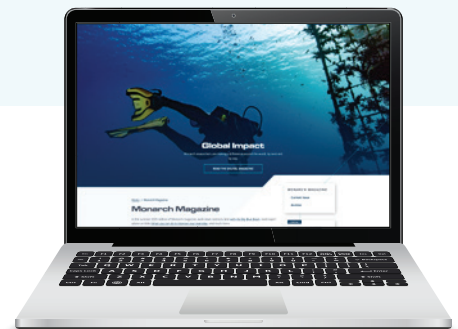
"I challenge us to not just remember him, but to live for him, live like him — to make 'Monarch Strong. Shah Strong' more than an inscription," said Col. Post, commander of the 4th Brigade Army ROTC. "Let's make that our mission, to commit to lives of purposeful faith in one another, of unguarded hope for our future and of the same unconditional, fearless love that defined the life of Brandon Shah. Let that be his legacy and let that be our promise."

That's a challenge I accept — and one I know the Monarch Nation will share.

Victoria Bourne
Editor, Monarch Magazine
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What Do You Think?

Please take our readership survey and tell us what you like about Monarch Magazine, what kinds of stories you want to see and where you think we can improve.



Get online content at
odu.edu/monarch-magazine

Campus News



SPORTSCENTER Comes to Campus



FOR MORE
Scan the QR code to watch video.

Old Dominion University welcomed ESPN's SportsCenter to Kaufman Mall last November. The live broadcast preceded a prime-time football game against Troy University that the Monarchs dominated, 33-0.

The show was hosted by veteran sportscaster Matt Barrie, who was surrounded by cheering University students, alumni and fans. In honor of Military Appreciation Night, the broadcast kicked off with a literal bang as Barrie pulled the trigger on the University's custom Army ROTC ceremonial cannon.

The event also featured the Spirit Squad, Big Blue and the Monarch Marching Band. Gameday highlights included a parachute jump and a halftime drone show.

It was the first time the University hosted SportsCenter on campus and the first time ESPN broadcast an Old Dominion University home game since 2012, said Eric Bohannon, senior associate athletic director for broadcasting and communications.

"This kind of exposure is tremendous for the University," Bohannon said, noting that Old Dominion University was on ESPN for nearly five hours that day. The TV viewing audience reached 509,000 for the game and 252,000 for the SportsCenter broadcast.

"It was a great opportunity for the Monarch Nation to show what we can do. We had a great turnout

and the team took care of business, culminating a great day," Bohannon said.

Alumnus and SportsCenter anchor **Jay Harris (B.A., '87, H.D. '22)** was also featured on SportsCenter live. He shared his appreciation for the University and how every member of the football team sent him a card to wish him well on his recovery from prostate cancer.

Above: Old Dominion University's football Head Coach Ricky Rahne, center left, and veteran sportscaster Matt Barrie, center right, surrounded by cheering Monarch fans.

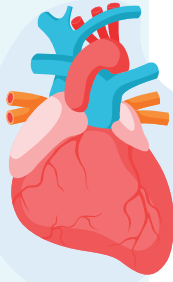
Below: The Monarch Marching Band plays for the ESPN SportsCenter crowd on Kaufman Mall.



The Future of Cardiovascular Care

Old Dominion University and Sentara Health recently announced a new cardiovascular disease fellowship at Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University.

Starting in July 2026, the three-year program will train two fellows annually within top-tier facilities such as Sentara Heart Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia, providing hands-on experience in advanced cardiovascular care. The fellowship addresses the growing local and national demand for skilled cardiologists while supporting research, mentorship and community health in Hampton Roads.



Nutrition Takes Center Stage

Old Dominion University announced the establishment of the Joan P. Brock Institute for Nutrition Science and Health, powered by a transformational \$15 million gift from philanthropist Joan P. Brock, in December 2025. The institute will integrate evidence-based nutrition and lifestyle medicine into medical and health professions education, research and community outreach.

“I am thrilled to be part of this because I’ve been practicing this for 15 years now,” said Brock, who credits nutrition and daily exercise with supporting her recovery from serious illnesses. “I hope the institute makes a difference in people’s lives.”

This is the second recent gift from Brock to advance the academic, health, wellness and research ecosystem in Hampton Roads and beyond, following the naming of Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University in 2024.

\$15M GIFT

“I hope the institute makes a difference in people’s lives.”

— Joan P. Brock



Glass Expansion

The Barry Art Museum at Old Dominion University will significantly expand its studio glass holdings thanks to a promised gift of nearly 200 modern and contemporary works from Drs. Myra and Harold Weiss.

The collection includes cast-glass sculptures by international artists Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová, as well as works by leading American artists such as Karen LaMonte.

The museum is undergoing a significant renovation, which is expected to be completed in early 2027. Once reopened, selections from the Weiss collection will debut in newly expanded galleries, joining the Barry and Waitzer collections to form one of the nation’s largest concentrations of modern and contemporary art glass.

This piece by Karen LaMonte is called “Kabuki.” It was made of cast glass in 2012 and is part of the Drs. Harold and Myra Weiss collection gifted to the Barry Art Museum at Old Dominion University.



PHOTO BY MARTIN POLAK



A Spicy Collab

Old Dominion University partnered with The Dirty Buffalo in 2025 to launch Red, White, & Big Blue, a military-themed spicy barbecue sauce. It was inspired by service members' long tradition of improving "Meals Ready-to-Eat" — aka MREs — with hot sauce and marked the third University-licensed product created by the Hampton Roads, Virginia-based eatery. The new recipe builds on the restaurant's Big Blue Q sauce with added cayenne heat.

The collaboration highlights the University's strong connection to the military community, where nearly 30% of students are military affiliated and veteran support services continue to expand. Proceeds from Red, White, & Big Blue will benefit the University's general scholarship fund, supporting Monarchs across the region. Find it online at thedirtybuffalo.com.



Welcome, Food Robots

The start of the fall semester saw the launch of food delivery services Grubhub and Starship Technologies on Old Dominion University's campus. White delivery robots about the size of a small cooler on wheels have been scooting across Monarch Way, Hampton Boulevard and Kaufman Mall ever since, delivering food from orders placed at several campus eateries through the Grubhub app.

At the time of the launch, the University was one of only three in Virginia to feature this amenity.



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for additional and up-to-date campus news.



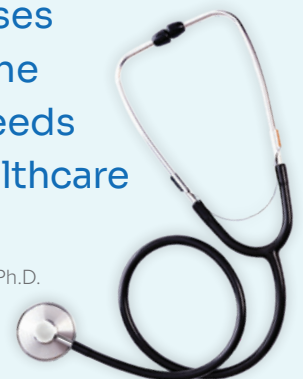
More Seats for Aspiring Nurses

To help meet the growing demand, Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Ellmer School of Nursing at Old Dominion University launched a spring admissions cycle for the nursing pre-licensure program (B.S.N.) — a move that will expand enrollment in the school by more than 50%. Classes for the spring cohort began in January.

“By expanding enrollment, we’re preparing more nurses to meet the critical needs of our healthcare system,” said Rene Love, Ph.D., dean of the Ellmer School of Nursing at ODU. “Our students are not only gaining the knowledge and experience to excel in their careers, but they’re also making a lasting difference in the health and well-being of the communities we serve.”

“By expanding enrollment, we’re preparing more nurses to meet the critical needs of our healthcare system.”

— Rene Love, Ph.D.



A P P O I N T M E N T S



Zaryab Iqbal, Ph.D.

Zaryab Iqbal, Ph.D., became the dean of Old Dominion University's Perry Honors College in July 2025. She joined the University from

Pennsylvania State University, where she served as associate dean of its Honors College and taught political science and Jewish studies.

A scholar of international conflict and security, Dr. Iqbal aims to expand interdisciplinary and experiential learning while strengthening partnerships that support honors students' success.



Marty Irvine Jr., Ph.D.

Marty Irvine Jr., Ph.D., became Old Dominion University's inaugural associate vice president for national security initiatives in June 2025. A

retired U.S. Navy leader with extensive experience in research, development and strategic defense programs, Dr. Irvine was previously the executive director of the Naval Surface and Undersea Warfare Centers.

He will lead the University's national security strategic research, promote interdisciplinary collaboration and develop educational programs to prepare future leaders in defense, cybersecurity and crisis management.



Marisol Perez, Ph.D.

Marisol Perez, Ph.D., became dean of Old Dominion University's Graduate School in July 2025. She joined the University from Arizona State

University, where she served as associate vice provost for graduate academic enrollment and associate dean of graduate initiatives for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

A psychologist and accomplished scholar, Dr. Perez aims to position the Graduate School as a national leader in accessibility, innovation and impactful graduate education that empowers its students to become thought leaders, researchers and professionals.

Internship Innovation Recognition

Old Dominion University's Monarch Internship & Co-Op Office recently received the 2025 Innovation Award



from the Hampton Roads Workforce Council for expanding high-quality, work-based learning opportunities across the region.

"The commitment that ODU has shown to its students' success and to the

continued growth of Hampton Roads will be felt for decades to

come," said Shawn Avery, the council's president and CEO.

Student interns are profiled in a recurring series called "Monarchs in the Field" on the University's News Center, odu.edu/news.

100% by 2027
STUDENT INTERNSHIPS



BEST HEALTH SCHOOLS

Nation's Best Ranking

Several graduate programs from Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University were recognized by peer institutions in U.S. News & World Report, including programs in the Ellmer School of Nursing, Ellmer College of Health Sciences, EVMS School of Health Professions and Joint School of Public Health, in partnership with Norfolk State University.

COLLEGES, SCHOOLS & PROGRAMS

Best Graduate List

U.S. News & World Report ranked four Old Dominion University colleges and schools as well as 33 graduate programs in its 2026 Best Graduate Schools rankings.

Your **FUTURE** Starts Now

Unlock Your Potential — Career Growth for Everyone

Why wait for tomorrow when opportunity is here today? At ODU Continuing Education, we believe that everyone deserves the chance to grow no matter where you start. Whether you're ready for a career change, pursuing a new certification or seeking to advance in your current role, we make it possible — on your terms.

Our programs are designed to help you upskill, reskill and excel on your schedule with:

- Flexible, industry aligned courses
- Online and in-person learning options
- Programs for career changers, certifications and corporate training.



Explore Our Programs



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Monarch Strong

BY UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

Following the March 12 tragedy that claimed the life of a beloved instructor, injured two students and disrupted life and learning on Old Dominion University's main campus, the Monarch Nation and broader community came together with love and care.

The journey toward healing began with the commendation of the brave cadets who faced an unspeakable threat and a ceremony honoring the life and legacy of **Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07)** that was attended by hundreds of mourners on March 22.

Support services and signs of care and compassion were visible across campus as students returned from Spring Break that week – from Campus Care Stations where faculty, staff and professional healthcare workers offered reassurance and counseling resources, to Monarch Strong ribbons, bracelets and T-shirts worn to the ever-growing memorial of flowers, messages and painted

rocks at the entrances of Constant Hall.

“One of the things I’ve always loved about ODU is that Monarchs support each other,” said Maggie Barber, Ed.D., associate dean for academic programs and assessment in the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies.

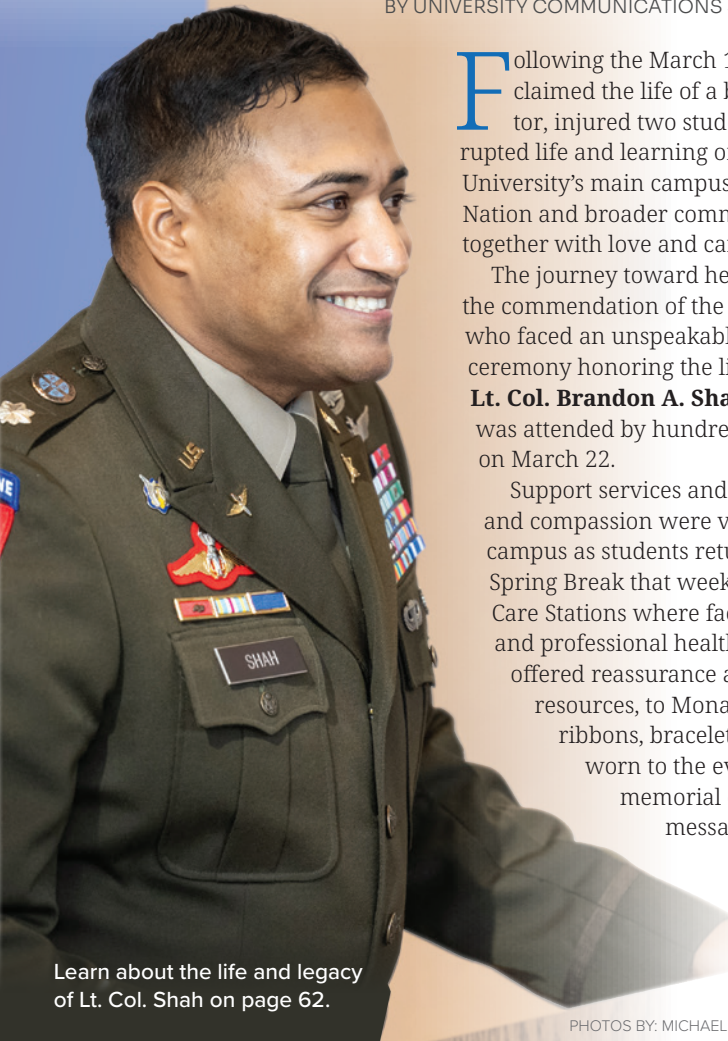
Joy Himmel, Psy.D., director of the Office of Counseling Services described the University led efforts as “psychological first aid.”

“It’s an approach that is trauma-informed, and it really helps students with just giving them space to identify how they’re thinking, what feelings they’re having and how they’re processing this information.”

Dr. Himmel coordinated with the Victims Crisis Assistance and Response Team (VCART), a part of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, which provided trauma-informed training to more than 200 faculty and staff. VCART staff were joined by mental health advocates and volunteers from across the state and the region. Kit Cummings, a counselor with VCART and a retired police officer, traveled from Roanoke, Virginia, to assist.

A collection of images featuring **Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07)**, left, members of the Army, students, faculty and staff as the University and greater community gathered to pay tribute and heal from the tragedy.

PHOTOS BY: MICHAEL DIBARI, AARON HODNETT (B.S. '13), REED MORGAN (B.A. '21), CETRE PEGUES AND CHUCK THOMAS (B.A. '90)



Learn about the life and legacy of Lt. Col. Shah on page 62.



SPECIAL COVERAGE

“They (the students) need to see faces,” he said at the Campus Care Station in the Batten Arts and Letters Building. “They need to know that it’s going to be OK.”

Volunteers came from higher education institutions across the Commonwealth of Virginia and North Carolina, as well as local public school systems. More than 20 pet therapy groups also visited campus throughout the week, and some continued to visit through the duration of the semester.

Kim Millering (B.S. '06) and her therapy black Labrador, Finn, drew new friends from every direction from their spot outside Webb Student Center. Millering said she was inspired to pursue therapy dog work based on her personal experience as a survivor of the 2019 Virginia Beach Municipal Center tragedy.

Dominion Rock near Webb Student Center became a place of reflection and remembrance, supported by the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) at Old Dominion University. American flags poked up from the ground and inspirational music played as students, faculty and staff left their painted handprints and memorial messages using supplies provided by the NCNW.

Support was also found at Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Ellmer School of Nursing at Old Dominion University in Virginia Beach where psychiatrist and alumnus **Justin Ray (B.S.N. '06)**


visited classrooms and offered opportunities for private conversations. “Community is especially important right now,” he told students. “Please take care of one another, talk, listen and offer support. It’s essential to lean on each other during challenging times.”

The Monarch Nation gathered en masse on April 2 to honor Lt. Col. Shah during the Monarch Battalion Unit Memorial at S.B. Ballard Stadium. Army ROTC cadets and other members of Lt. Col. Shah’s cadre shared their admiration and appreciation for his mentorship, leadership and military acumen.

The ceremony included a 21-gun salute by the U.S. Army, the highest military honor, and the firing of Lt. Col. Shah’s “pride and glory,” a refurbished cannon called “Big Blue.”

“It will always remain a crucial part of his long-lasting legacy to Old Dominion,” said Sgt. 1st Class Logan Howard, who served as an instructor under Lt. Col. Shah. “So, from now on, every time you hear Big Blue roar across the Elizabeth River, you can thank Lt. Col. Shah.”

Sgt. 1st Class Howard said Lt. Col. Shah’s life was more than a collection of stories — it carried real weight.

“He dedicated his entire life to his soldiers, cadets, family, friends and his country. And in the end, he gave his life so that others could live. That is the legacy he leaves.” 



Research

From the stars to the sea, this edition of Monarch Magazine highlights recent stories of research and innovation from across Old Dominion University.

Scientist Helps Trace Asteroid Blast

A team of geologists, including Rich Whittecar, Ph.D., professor emeritus in the Department of Ocean & Earth Sciences at Old Dominion University, has identified the first land-based evidence of the massive asteroid that struck off the Virginia coast 35 million years ago.

The impact created the 53-mile-wide Chesapeake Bay crater — the largest in the United States — generating a lateral blast that incinerated life for hundreds of miles and a tsunami that swept across the Southeast.

Previously, evidence of the collision had only been found underwater. The breakthrough came when unusual sediment layers were uncovered during pipeline construction in Moore County, North Carolina, 240 miles from the crater. Analysis revealed three distinct strata containing iridium-rich ejecta — material forcibly expelled — atmospheric ash and tsunami deposits, all consistent with a major impact. The team's findings were published in *Southeastern Geology* in 2025.



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for additional news content.

Digital Archives Grow

Old Dominion University's Digital Commons has expanded to include Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences, marking another significant milestone in the integration of Eastern Virginia Medical School into the University.

The growing digital repository of faculty research and scholarly work has long been a powerful tool for increasing the visibility and impact of academic publications. With the inclusion of Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University faculty publications, this resource is poised to play an even more central role in supporting research and collaboration around the University.

Professor Earns Top State Award

For more than three decades, Margaret Mulholland, Ph.D., has studied harmful algal blooms that deplete oxygen in marine ecosystems, creating dead zones with far-reaching consequences for coastal communities. The importance of the Old Dominion University professor's work was recognized in December 2025, when the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) named her a 2026 Outstanding Faculty Award recipient.

Located in the heart of Norfolk, Virginia, on a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, the University sits at the epicenter of coastal and maritime research. Through her Marine Nitrogen and Carbon Biogeochemistry Group, Dr. Mulholland leads efforts to document and quantify threats to regional waterways — work that directly affects the environmental and economic health of the commonwealth.

The Outstanding Faculty Awards are the highest honor for faculty at Virginia's public colleges and universities, recognizing excellence in teaching, research and public service.

Making Quantum Computing Accessible to First-Year Students

A new course at Old Dominion University gives undergraduate students the opportunity to explore quantum computing in physics, a field of study usually reserved for seniors.

Introduction to Quantum Science and Technology (Physics 137T), developed by Assistant Professor Matt Grau, Ph.D., examines how these new technologies work and relate to human society. Most students in colleges across the country can only take a course on quantum computing later in their academic career, and it is very technical with high-level prerequisites.

"It's a pretty unique class, and it's growing," Dr. Grau said. As quantum computing plays an expanding role as a powerful research tool, the course gives first-year students and non-physics majors an earlier entry

point into the field and its future possibilities.

Dr. Grau said the class is great for non-physics majors who want to know how the increasingly prevalent use of quantum computing can benefit them in their chosen fields.

Partnership Powers Next-Gen Maritime Research

Old Dominion University and the City of Norfolk, Virginia, in concert with industry partners, celebrated the beginning of a new era in uncrewed maritime systems with the ribbon cutting of the Maritime Autonomous Systems Test Site (MASTS) at Willoughby Boat Ramp in Norfolk, Virginia, in 2025.

The test site will provide hands-on experience for students and researchers to accelerate the development of future maritime autonomy technologies.

The Impact of Inactivity

Research from Leryn Reynolds, Ph.D., associate professor of exercise science at Old Dominion University, shows that cardiometabolic health begins declining after just three to five days without regular physical activity — much faster than previously understood.

Supported by a \$154,000 American Heart Association grant, Dr. Reynolds has studied how short-term alterations in physical activity or inactivity impact cardiometabolic health in older adults. In a recent study, active participants reduced their daily movement to about 5,000 steps. Regardless of age, all showed similar declines in vascular function and glucose control, underscoring that activity level, not age, drives these rapid physiological changes.

Reynolds emphasizes that even a small increase in activity level can spark improvement, and she encourages adults to follow established guidelines: aim for frequent, moderate activity rather than relying on "weekend warrior" bursts.





Matthew Schneider, Google's managing director of National, U.S. State, Local and Education at the MonarchSphere launch event.



Old Dominion University's Next Chapter in Innovation

BY UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

When Old Dominion University launched Teletechnet in the late 20th century — the pioneering distance-learning initiative that would become ODUGlobal — it was an early bet on technology's potential in higher education. The program aspired to address mounting pressures such as rising costs, an evolving enrollment landscape and the needs of nontraditional students.

“Old Dominion has solved problems other people have yet to see,” said the president of Olympic College in a 1998 *Virginian*-Pilot story highlighting the program's expansion into Washington state. “We couldn't find a better partner.”

Thousands of students earned their University degrees from over 60 remote sites in five states through satellite-enabled video connections before it gave way to a burgeoning technology called “the internet.”

New challenges loom in the 21st century, but today's student is still seeking a flexible education that delivers unparalleled value. In late 2021, Old Dominion University began a multi-year strategic planning process, sustained faculty involvement, and data-driven decision-making aligned with national best practices and student needs. The result of this collective University-wide initiative, once again calls upon the University's legacy of innovation and technology to develop a path forward.

Embracing artificial intelligence (AI) amid its increasing impact on learning, research, workforce development and the world at large is what's next.

“We are making the choice to be relentless in pursuing innovation and focusing on excellence,” Old Dominion University President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph. D., said in an interview with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* last September. “That's something that has served us well thus far, and I think it will serve us well into the future.”

Old Dominion University's AI journey began in earnest in September 2023 when President Hemphill hosted a symposium, “Striking the Balance: AI Automation and Human Interaction in Teaching and Learning.” The event featured Old Dominion University experts highlighting the University's commitment to utilizing AI to enhance education and operational efficiency.

Following the symposium, the University coined the years of work as the Forward-Focused Digital Transformation initiative, a bold future-defining repositioning of Old Dominion University to secure its place as a national leader in academic innovation. The initiative includes integrating AI applications across campus, upgrading classrooms, expanding research capabilities and modernizing operations.

“As artificial intelligence continues to develop,



Above: Chrysoula Malogianni, Ph.D. (Ph.D. '19), senior associate vice president for digital innovation at Old Dominion University. At right, from left: Aaron Tekle from Google, Dr. Malogianni, Managing Director Schneider, Old Dominion University President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., Nina Rodriguez Gonser, vice president for Digital Transformation and Technology, and alumnus Tony Orlando (B.S. '91, MBA '98), managing director of Partner Ecosystem and Specialty Sales Solutions for Google Public Sector.



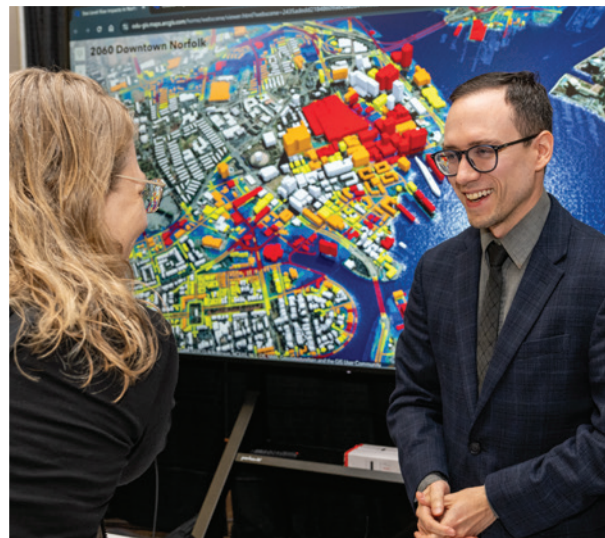
it will play an increasing role in the future of education,” President Hemphill said during an event held in February 2025, where he outlined the vision. “From smart tutoring systems that provide personalized learning paths to AI grading systems, technology will allow universities to tailor the educational experience to each student’s needs.”

Part of that effort included an AI Research Working Group to unite experts from across disciplines to develop AI-customized solutions to a variety of challenges, and an inaugural cohort of AI teaching fellows to integrate AI into the University’s curriculum to ensure students gain hands-on experience with AI applications like Gemini, Vertex and NotebookLM.

In addition, the University committed to hiring more than two dozen AI experts in areas across a wide range of disciplines. Many had come on board by late 2025.

Student-centric innovations

In the September 2025 interview with The Chronicle of Higher Education, President Hemphill addressed the headwinds facing higher education today —



The Google and Old Dominion University partnership launch attendees had an opportunity to learn more about the types of AI tools the University is incorporating into its digital transformation.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DIBARI AND CHUCK THOMAS (B.A. '90)

a demographic-driven enrollment cliff, a competitive credentialing landscape and perceived value of higher education, as well as changes to the funding model.

“For a long time, our industry has really focused solely on retention and graduation rates,” President Hemphill said. “While those are and will always be important factors, I think that we have to begin to pivot and look at how we’re preparing and upskilling our students to be successful in the workforce.”

Soon after his arrival at the University in 2021, President Hemphill focused his attention on how to future-proof the University. The University-wide effort developed and implemented a strategic plan that has guided progress.

The University is investing in innovative ways to provide an immersive environment in which students can learn, including a \$30 million investment over three years to upgrade 180 classrooms. One AI-enabled classroom in Albert Brooks Gornito Jr. Hall features large screens displaying live, AI-enabled closed-captioning to accompany lectures, an interactive high-definition digital projection screen and opportunities for students to provide real-time feedback on the lesson and pose questions through their phones.

President Hemphill likened advancing AI to the dawn of the internet age in the 1980s. “Think about how we’ve integrated the internet into our classrooms, into our laboratories, into our operations,” he said during The Chronicle of Higher Education interview.

MonarchMind

In February 2025, the University launched MonarchMind, a generative AI platform designed specifically for faculty and staff and integrating multiple large language models. Through a unified platform, users could generate text, analyze data and process images or files in a closed system without exposing data or information to public AI models.

“This platform empowers our faculty and staff with secure, cutting-edge AI tools that streamline workflows, enhance productivity and enrich the academic experience,” said Nina Rodriguez Gonser, vice president for Digital Transformation and Technology, when the University’s flagship AI initiative launched last year.

As of this publication, MonarchMind was evolving from a standalone AI tool into a broader, more scalable AI access portal, according to **Chrysoula Malogianni, Ph.D. (Ph.D. ’19)**, the University’s senior associate vice president of digital innovation and chief digital experience officer. “The original version served as an important foundation, but as enterprise capabilities have matured — particularly with tools like Google Gemini and NotebookLM — it has become clear that a more integrated and flexible approach is needed,” she said.

The updated MonarchMind will become a centralized, secure “front door” to AI, providing streamlined access to approved enterprise tools alongside University-developed applications. “This allows us to preserve the strong brand recognition and trust that MonarchMind

has built, while significantly expanding its capabilities and aligning it with our broader AI ecosystem,” Dr. Malogianni said.

The transition was underway as of April, with the refreshed MonarchMind portal expected to be fully in place by the end of the spring semester.

MonarchSphere

In late October 2025, the University took another big step with the debut of MonarchSphere, a first-of-its-kind AI incubator for higher education powered by Google Cloud. Through a centralized platform, collaborators across departments and colleges can access Google’s advanced AI tools such as Vertex AI, testing AI solutions for teaching, research and operations.

The incubator was the result of a yearlong effort to find a partner to develop a test bed for faculty, researchers and the University’s Digital Transformation and Technology teams. The incubator is part of the University’s partnership with Google Cloud — a partnership that has accelerated the University’s vision to become a hub for research innovation, workforce preparation and digital transformation.

“At its core, our digital transformation effort is about people — empowering our Monarch community with the resources and partnerships that allow ideas to grow, solutions to scale, and impact to reach far beyond our campus,” said Vice President Rodriguez Gonser at an October 2025 event announcing the partnership with Google.

Matthew Schneider, Google’s managing director of National, U.S. State, Local and Education, called the launch of MonarchSphere a defining moment in higher education. “The new standard we are launching today is a groundbreaking model — an intelligent university of the future,” he said.

The collaboration also introduces Google Career Certificates to the University’s degree and continuing education programs by expanding access to on-demand credentials, equipping students with both academic knowledge and career-ready skills that meet the evolving needs of Virginia’s workforce.

And while the development of the incubator was sparked by an internal need to provide researchers with access to advanced AI tools, it can also provide an entry point for outside collaborators to benefit from University expertise, according to Dr. Malogianni.

Dr. Malogianni said with the launch of MonarchSphere, the evolution of MonarchMind and the many other technological advancements occurring across campus, the University’s digital transformation is well underway.

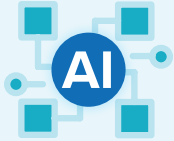
“Now the real work begins.” 

Turn to page 20 to learn more about how some Old Dominion University faculty are using artificial intelligence in their research and classrooms.



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code to watch a video of the launch of MonarchSphere.



A Guide to Understanding Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing at lightning speed. What seems new today can be surpassed tomorrow by the next breakthrough. Despite the rapid pace of innovation, some fundamentals remain.

With insights from Helen Crompton, Ph.D., executive director of the Research Institute for Digital Innovation in Learning (RIDIL) and professor of instructional technology at Old Dominion University, Monarch Magazine compiled a guide to help readers understand core ideas and how to use AI tools thoughtfully and effectively.

What is AI?

AI refers to technologies designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, perception and decision-making.

“Advancements have seen AI shift from simply retrieving information to reasoning,” Dr. Crompton said. “Reasoning means that the systems are thinking through and solving problems.”

Earlier systems worked like data libraries, retrieving information instantly but not reasoning with it. Today’s reasoning AI imitates some aspects of human logic, enabling it to make connections, interpret context and generate solutions rather than merely retrieve facts.

AI and the Human Brain

AI neural networks are modeled loosely on the brain’s structure but function in fundamentally different ways. Humans reason conceptually, learn from a few examples, and integrate emotion and context. AI detects statistical patterns across enormous datasets and adjusts numerical weights to optimize performance.

“AI recognizes, but it does not understand,” Dr. Crompton said. “Even agentic AI does not think like a human. It follows patterns that appear intelligent, but there is no comprehension behind them.”

Where AI Appears in Everyday Life

AI is now embedded across daily life, from the product suggestions on Amazon to route planning in Waze or playlists curated by Spotify.

“Artificial intelligence has been part of technology for decades,” Dr. Crompton said. “What has changed is that now the curtain has lifted. People are knowingly interacting with AI.”

MonarchMind is one of several innovative AI tools at Old Dominion University.

Tips for Writing Better Prompts

- **Be clear about your goal.** Know what you want the AI tool to produce and state it plainly.
- **Provide all relevant details.** Just like giving instructions to a real assistant, specify the audience, purpose and context.
- **Ask the AI tool what it still needs.** Use prompts like: “To complete this task, what else do you need to know that I haven’t told you?”
- **Assign the AI tool a role.** Framing prompts with directives such as “Act as an expert educator” or “Act as a technical writer” can produce more accurate, focused responses.

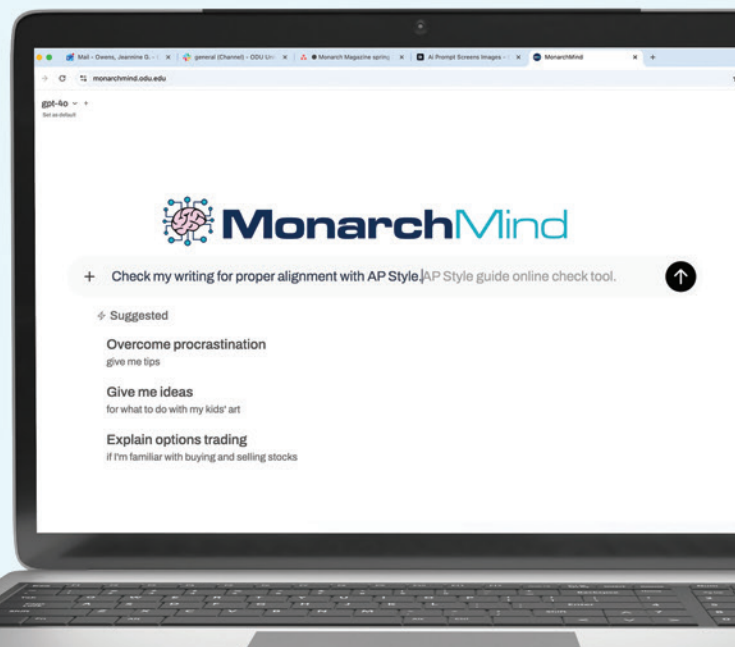
Becoming AI Literate

AI literacy is increasingly essential. Like digital literacy, it involves curiosity, discernment and awareness of potential misinformation.

Question the source. Why was this content created? What is it trying to make you feel or do? If a post or image provokes urgency or outrage, it may be manipulating attention or data.

“Learn how these tools work and explore them safely,” Dr. Crompton said. “Explore these tools to see what they can do while keeping in mind AI literacy skills.” Safe exploration means avoiding connections to personal or financial accounts, not sharing private data and disabling settings such as “improve the model for everyone.”

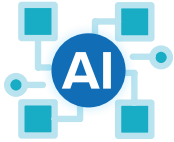
Experimentation builds both understanding and confidence. AI is not replacing human intelligence; it is expanding it, Dr. Crompton said. With informed curiosity and responsible practice, anyone can use these technologies to create, learn and innovate more effectively.





“ It might mean patients can avoid surgery and focus on improving their quality of life. ”

— Khan Iftekharuddin, Ph.D.



SEEING BEYOND THE SCAN

How AI Could Transform Glioblastoma Care

BY SHERRY DIBARI

In glioblastoma care, time matters. Tumor regrowth and damage from treatment look similar on MRI scans, and doctors often struggle to determine if cancer has returned. At Old Dominion University, Khan Iftekharruddin, Ph.D., is creating artificial intelligence (AI) models that could provide answers faster.

Glioblastoma, the most aggressive form of brain cancer, kills about 10,000 Americans annually. It spreads rapidly, and even after surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, the cancer recurs in 90% of patients within six to nine months. Determining whether the cancer has returned, or if imaging changes are treatment-related, is crucial for patients and their care teams.

That challenge is at the center of Dr. Iftekharruddin's work. An eminent scholar and professor of electrical and computer engineering, he directs the University's Data Science Institute in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and is the lead investigator on a \$2.3 million National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant awarded in September 2025. The project aims to develop AI models that distinguish true recurrence from treatment-related changes and assess the aggressiveness of glioblastoma subtypes.

Right now, because scarring and swelling caused by treatment can mimic tumor activity on an MRI, the only way to confirm recurrence is through an invasive brain tissue biopsy. Dr. Iftekharruddin hopes his work will offer a non-invasive alternative. "If we can detect this subtype with confidence, treatment protocols could be individualized for each patient," he said. "In some situations, it might mean patients can avoid surgery and focus on improving their quality of life."

That possibility resonates with **Marissa Galicia-Castillo, MD (B.S. '94, MD '97, M.S.Ed. '05)**, director of the Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology at Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University. She's an expert in palliative medicine and care, focusing on helping people with glioblastoma plan their lives after diagnosis.

"There is so much unknown in medicine," she said. "Understanding one's disease progression is so important in helping people prioritize what matters most to them. Living the best we can is the one thing we can control."

Dr. Iftekharruddin's interest in cancer research began more than two decades ago at the University of Memphis, where he collaborated with physicians and

neurosurgeons at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. He attended weekly "Tumor Clinic" meetings with the group to discuss the most challenging pediatric cancer cases. "That left a lasting impression on me and shaped my belief in the power of collaboration between engineers and clinicians," he said.

Since then, he has built a sustained record of federal support to develop automated methods for analyzing MRI data, classifying tumor types and predicting outcomes. His current NIH-funded effort includes national collaborators who help provide diverse datasets and clinical expertise.


Working with histopathology, genomic and molecular data alongside advanced MRI, Dr. Iftekharruddin and his team build computational models that radiologists, oncologists and other specialists evaluate for accuracy and reliability. The use of AI is essential.

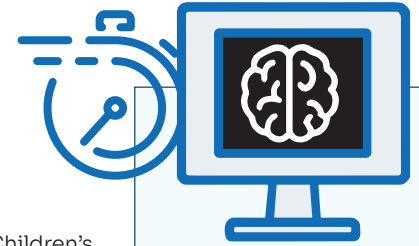
Dr. Iftekharruddin is one of about 30 researchers whose work was used to beta test Vertex AI, a unified platform supported by Google Cloud for building, deploying and managing machine learning models and a component of the University's recently debuted AI incubator, MonarchSphere.

In a pilot study involving a single patient, the research team more than doubled the speed of a key step in modeling brain tumor growth. This type of analysis typically requires processing hundreds of thousands of MRI images across large patient populations.

"The amount and complexity of the multimodality data is too much for humans to timely process at scale and make sense of without these tools," he said. "That's where I see the biggest opportunities."

Beyond glioblastoma, he has applied AI to Alzheimer's disease, autism spectrum disorder and brain networks affected by opioid use disorder, as well as tools that predict obesity using MRI data. Across these projects, he emphasizes the ethical responsibility that comes with developing medical AI.

"Every decision you make impacts a real human being," he said. "That's why it becomes a really critical piece in making any decision with data, algorithms or learning methods that you try to develop — because ultimately, it matters whether it's going to make a difference in someone's life or not." 

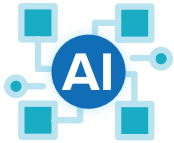


MRI SCANS
2.65× FASTER

“ AI can summarize a complex concept
for you, but cannot learn for you. ”

— Eva Maddox, Ph.D.





RETHINKING AI IN THE CLASSROOM

Curiosity, Skepticism and the Science of Knowing What to Trust

BY ERICA HOWELL

For Eva Maddox, Ph.D., artificial intelligence (AI) isn't a shortcut or a threat. It's a form of literacy. And she's teaching students how to use it with the same care they bring to the health careers they're preparing for.

"I tell my students that AI can summarize a complex concept for you," said Dr. Maddox, clinical assistant professor in the School of Exercise Science — part of Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Ellmer College of Health Sciences at Old Dominion University. "But it cannot learn for you."

As one of the University's inaugural AI teaching fellows, Dr. Maddox is helping future health professionals build fluency with a technology that's already reshaping their field.

"AI and neural networks have been a part of health for decades," she said. "But AI as we now know it — so generative AI — is a different and more nuanced beast. In the health sciences, new tools are coming out almost daily to assist in everything from mental health support to chart summaries for clinical visits."

Dr. Maddox's comfort with emerging tools comes from an uncommon path. "I was the first in my family to attend college," she said. "I worked in corporate America for one of the top software companies and accounting firms in the world, then joined the Army as a combat medic."

She said those experiences taught her to question the "this is how it's always been done" mentality — a perspective she carries into her teaching today.

In her courses, that awareness translates into practice. Students explore how tools like NotebookLM can turn a dense research paper into a digestible podcast or quiz. They test what's helpful, what's missing and where human judgment still matters most.

"The issue isn't more policy," Dr. Maddox said. "It's literacy."

That conviction led her to create what she calls the "Reliable Science" assignment. Students choose a scientific question that interests them and compare three answers: one from a YouTube source, one from an AI tool and one from a peer-reviewed article. The practice takes AI out of the abstract and lets students see for themselves where AI gets things right, and where it starts to drift from the facts.



The "Reliable Science" test asks students to compare answers to a scientific question from three sources: a peer-reviewed journal article, an AI tool and a YouTube video.

"They see that there are situations where AI is reliable and useful," Dr. Maddox said, "and situations where maybe you're going to get vague, unsupported responses."


Jack Speights (B.S. '25), who was a senior when he took Dr. Maddox's class but is a graduate student now, said the process helped him see both the promise and the limits of the technology.

"AI can give you an answer faster than reading research, but it leaves out the background details and limitations," he said. "You still have to do the work to confirm what's valid."

Another student, junior Samantha Cordon, said the experience helped her see the nuance. "AI is helpful for finding information, but you still need to verify it with other sources," she said. "Having a professor who talks openly about that balance makes a big difference."

For Dr. Maddox, those shifts in thinking are the real win. "A vast majority of people who should be learning AI tools are still AI-phobic," she said. "There's an expectation now that students will be AI-literate and capable of using AI to support their workflows."

The goal isn't to turn future clinicians into coders, she said. It's to make them thoughtful, adaptive professionals in a field that's evolving by the week. That mindset extends beyond technology. As a veteran and mentor, she sees curiosity as a form of service to her students, to her field and to the future of healthcare.

"Excitement and skepticism should be equally nurtured," Dr. Maddox said. "That's the balance. That's where real learning happens." 



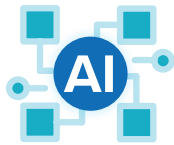
FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for more Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University content.

“ AI doesn't replace teaching, it augments it. ”

— Rhett Epler, Ph.D.





FROM SCRIPTS TO SALES

Professor Uses AI to Help Students Hone Sales Mastery

BY JORDAN-ASHLEY WALKER

Rhett Epler, Ph.D., assistant professor of marketing in the Strome College of Business at Old Dominion University, sits at his desk in Constant Hall on a cloudy Thursday morning in September 2025, chatting via video call with a prospective client.

The client, dressed in business attire, remarks on the gloomy weather in Norfolk, Virginia, saying the lack of sunshine must contribute to the coastal city's charm before getting down to business.

"Don't waste my time with fluff," she tells Dr. Epler.

The interaction may look, sound and flow like a real client meeting with a six-figure deal on the line, but the person on the screen isn't human at all. It's an artificial intelligence-powered avatar from Copient.AI, a cutting-edge software platform designed to simulate authentic sales conversations.

By integrating Copient.AI into Dr. Epler's professional selling courses, the Strome College of Business is equipping students with practical, real-world experience in a safe, controlled environment, he said. Students can test strategies, refine their delivery and build confidence — all before stepping into an actual sales pitch.

"It doesn't replace teaching," Dr. Epler said. "It augments it. We are taking the tension out of a sales interaction and allowing students to get comfortable with what it feels like."

The artificial intelligence (AI) client adjusts its responses based on the student's performance, allowing for a wide range of interactions that mimic real-world unpredictability. Instead of memorizing scripts, students must actively listen, think critically and adapt their responses on the spot.

Old Dominion University is one of the first 15 universities to implement the technology nationwide, according to Dr. Epler.


And with students significantly improving their scores in just six to seven AI sales interactions, the program is an efficient and effective alternative to more traditional role playing. The software helps Dr. Epler avoid what he calls "role-play bottleneck" — when time constraints can prevent him from longer, more involved sales scenarios with each student.



Maliyah Terry, a senior double majoring in business analytics and real estate, used Copient.AI to practice sales conversations in a low-stakes environment.

At the completion of the scenario, students are presented with a rubric scoring their sales interactions. They're graded on dozens of elements, from successfully building a rapport with the potential client to smoothly transitioning from introductions to discussions about the product — all done through the software's AI. For example, when Dr. Epler demonstrated the software, his score was docked because he didn't mention the name of the company for which he worked.

For students, the experience is eye-opening. Many enter the program feeling nervous about the high-pressure nature of sales, but Copient.AI provides a low-stakes environment to experiment and grow, Dr. Epler said.

Maliyah Terry, a senior double majoring in business analytics and real estate, used the AI tool in Dr. Epler's class. "It allowed us to freely practice real sales conversations without the need of someone else to play the customer," Maliyah said. "It is much more efficient, and it also allows us to practice with different difficulty levels of customers, simulating real-life scenarios." 



“ We were able to better understand what treatments — chemotherapy, radiation or a combination of both — worked best. ”

— Aditya Chakraborty, Ph.D.



UNLOCKING INSIGHTS THROUGH AI

A New Model for Pancreatic Cancer Care

BY ANGELA MILLS

Aditya Chakraborty, Ph.D., strives to translate data into hope for people with pancreatic cancer. Pancreatic cancer has the highest mortality rate of all major cancers, with a five-year relative survival rate of just 13%, according to the American Cancer Society. Early detection is difficult because symptoms usually appear only after the disease has advanced and when surgery is no longer an option.

Dr. Chakraborty is an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Environmental Health in the Joint School of Public Health at Old Dominion University, in partnership with Norfolk State University. He said a mentor, who had survived three different types of cancer, inspired him to pursue this research during graduate school.

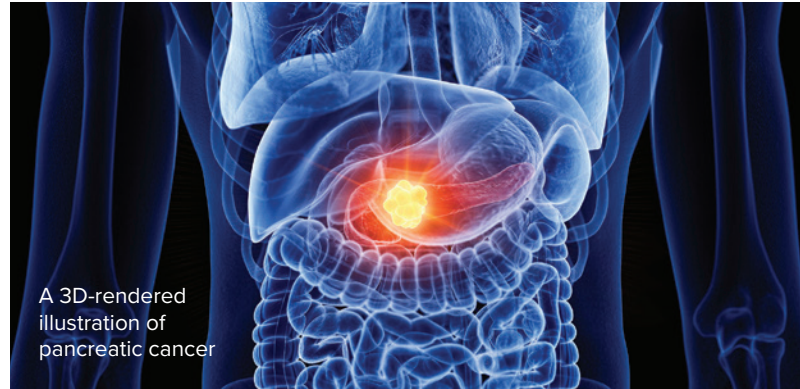
He and his team, which included researchers from the University of Florida, analyzed thousands of pancreatic cancer patient records to predict risk categories. Utilizing artificial intelligence (AI), they tested different machine learning models using anonymous patient data from the National Cancer Institute's database.

"When it comes to AI or advanced modeling, you need to be careful, because not all models give you the desired accuracy," Dr. Chakraborty said. The team refined the models by weighing the factors that most influenced risk and treatment. They then validated the models using a second patient dataset to ensure consistent results.

This work led to the creation of a Survival Indicator, or SI — a tool that predicts survival time from diagnosis and shows whether a patient's outlook is likely to improve based on treatment decisions and individual risk factors.

"We were able to better understand what treatments — chemotherapy, radiation or a combination of both — worked best," Dr. Chakraborty said.

The SI tool can also compare survival patterns across patient subgroups based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, cancer stage, treatment and other risk factors. It helps identify whether survival outcomes for a specific group are likely to improve, decline or remain stable over time. For example, it could be used to examine mortality outcomes related to hypertension, cancer or other chronic diseases for Black patients in Norfolk, Virginia, compared with other groups.



A 3D-rendered illustration of pancreatic cancer


IMAGE FROM ADOBE STOCK

Although the tool was developed using mortality data from cancer patients in a national dataset, the framework can be applied more broadly to other chronic conditions within a specific local setting. It's worth noting that the pancreatic cancer death rate in Norfolk is above the national average.

The next step is using the SI tool to address these disparities. Working with Julius O. Nyalwidhe, Ph.D., director of the George L. Wright Jr. Center for Biomedical Proteomics and professor of biomedical and translational sciences at Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University, Dr. Chakraborty and his team recently submitted a grant proposal to develop advanced, data-driven tools that identify and map cancer disparities across Hampton Roads.

"What I am most excited about is the ability to transform advanced data science into practical, community-based solutions," Dr. Nyalwidhe said. "I hope this work will give Hampton Roads the predictive tools, risk maps and partnerships needed to meaningfully reduce cancer disparities."

The project aims to integrate machine learning, biomarker analytics and community engagement to identify high-risk neighborhoods and support targeted cancer screening and prevention strategies.

"Machine learning is unlocking insights from thousands of patient cases that no single physician could see alone," Dr. Chakraborty said. "Our hope is that we will be able to detect pancreatic cancer earlier and treat it in a tailored and precise way — one patient at a time." 

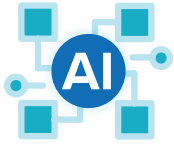
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“ There’s nothing artificial or intelligent about AI, it is algorithms and big data. ”

— Chrysoula Malogianni, Ph.D. (Ph.D. '19)



WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEETS EDUCATIONAL DESIGN

A Human-Centered Approach to AI Innovation

BY VICTORIA BOURNE

Chrysoula Malogianni, Ph.D. (Ph.D. '19), is fascinated by the human potential to evolve alongside rapidly advancing artificial intelligence (AI).

“There’s nothing artificial or intelligent about AI, it is algorithms and big data. The way it works is modeling and expanding human cognition,” she said. “With AI technology, we have the opportunity to expand our capacity.”

Dr. Malogianni is the senior associate vice president for digital innovation and chief digital experience officer at Old Dominion University. She and the Division of Digital Transformation and Technology team are supporting the University’s Forward-Focused Digital Transformation Initiative, which is revolutionizing student learning, research and operations.

Among other things, Dr. Malogianni and her colleagues are enabling the University’s transition to accelerated and flexible learning models, including 8-week online courses; modernizing classrooms and learning environments with AI-enabled, digital-forward capabilities; advancing research through secure, scalable research cloud and AI computing infrastructure; and providing institution-wide faculty and staff support and training aligned to Forward-Focused Digital Transformation priorities, including AI-supported teaching, learning design and research workflows.

Last fall, the University celebrated the debut of MonarchSphere, a first-of-its-kind AI incubator for higher education, which her team built and operates, and is powered by Google Cloud.

“We are shaping the future of AI innovation,” said Dr. Malogianni, who developed the idea of an AI incubator and helped frame its creation, including the partnership with Google, to boost the University’s research computing capabilities.

Her journey to become a digital innovator began in Thessaloniki, Greece, a city on the Aegean Sea. Her father was a truck driver. Her mother was a homemaker and seamstress. Neither had more than an elementary school education, she said. She was the first in her family — and the only one in her graduating class — to attend college.

“Education changed my life,” said Dr. Malogianni, who studied early childhood education with a concentration in curriculum and instruction pedagogy at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

After graduating, she taught K-12 but soon realized her interests extended beyond the classroom to systems and processes and how people interact with them. A move


into corporate training helped her see how learning design and technology could work together, prompting her to pursue a master’s in education technology at Michigan State University, where she studied the intersection of cognition and technology. In 2011, she became lead instructional designer at The Citadel, helping build its online programs and shape the institution’s digital learning ecosystem.

“When you do online, what people don’t understand is it’s not just the courses; it is the technology that you’re going to invest in. You have to transform the digital ecosystem so that a university can support a good digital experience for the online learners.”

She said a mentor at Michigan State connected her to Old Dominion University, where she began her doctoral studies online in 2013 while working and raising a young daughter. She was hired by the University in 2019 — the same year she earned her Ph.D.

The launch of MonarchSphere last fall marks another significant milestone in her career.

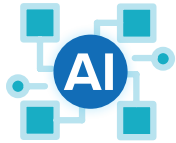
Reflecting on her path, Dr. Malogianni said her parents are proud of what she’s accomplished, even if they don’t fully understand the details of her work. She sees her journey — from Greece to leading digital transformation initiatives in higher education — as proof of how education can expand what people believe is possible.

“Now, my niece, my nephew, my cousin’s kids, my daughter — they have options” she said. “They have a point of reference that I didn’t have, and that makes me proud.” 

Forward-Focused Digital Transformation 2025 Accomplishments

- **20 Classrooms Modernized**
Part of the University’s \$30M investment
- **30+ Teams Use Cloud-based Research Environments**
Newly established cloud-based research environments
- **70% of Online Courses Transitioning to 8-Weeks**
600 courses complete or in progress
- **1,211 Faculty Participated in Training and Support**
AI Series, Course Design Series, Enhanced Classroom, Canvas and Accessibility, and Design Your Online Course training and support
- **Systems and Process Alignment**
Operations improvements for University business and learning

**Progress as of magazine publication*



ALUMNUS TONY ORLANDO

From ODU to Google — and Back

BY VICTORIA BOURNE

When **Tony Orlando (B.S. '91, MBA '98)** returned to his alma mater last fall, he said he almost didn't recognize the place. Modern buildings lined both sides of Hampton Boulevard, creating a more mature campus feel from what he recalled as a student.

"I'll be honest, I could not find Webb Center, and that used to be the center of campus," he said, adding it was rewarding to see how both Old Dominion University's campus and the community had evolved.

Orlando was one of several featured speakers at an October 30, 2025, celebration announcing the partnership between the University and Google, including the debut of MonarchSphere, a first-of-its-kind AI incubator for higher education powered by Google Cloud and part of the University's Forward-Focused Digital Transformation initiative.

As an alumnus and Google Public Sector representative, the moment resonated: He said his alma mater felt very different from the largely commuter campus he had attended.

"This was a full-blown university that had entered the modern era. And I was here to talk about MonarchSphere and AI innovation," he said.

Orlando has worked for Google Public Sector for three years. He serves as managing director of Partner Ecosystem and Specialty Sales Solutions, responsible for leading the comprehensive partner sales strategy and spearheading the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into public-sector and workplace solutions for government and education customers.

He especially values seeing the impact his role has on citizen services and helping to make the country safer from digital threats through work involving civilian and federal defense and national security.

Born in Iceland to a Navy family, Orlando lived in Ireland and Scotland before his father landed at Naval Station Norfolk where he retired after 20 years of service.

"He retired not because it was the end of his career," Orlando said. "He retired so my brother and I could finish high school without having to move."

Orlando graduated from Kempsville High School in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and was unsure what he wanted to do next, he said. His father encouraged college.

"I went to ODU because it was local — I didn't have to move," Orlando said. The decision proved pivotal when he discovered the University's career development services. Instead of surfing or working odd jobs as he expected, Orlando joined Virginia Power every other semester



PHOTO COURTESY GOOGLE PUBLIC SECTOR

through the University's cooperative education program.


"That was the tipping point because I got into the professional world at the end of my freshman year," he said. "I started working with people who were 20 and 30 years my senior, and I was doing the same work they were doing."

It was at Virginia Power — now Dominion Energy — that Orlando was introduced to management information systems and began exploring ways technology could solve business problems.

He earned his bachelor's in business administration in 1991 and returned a few years later for his MBA, completing it in 1998. The graduate program is where he "learned how to learn," he said — a trait that has shaped his career.

"My education really put me in a position to capitalize on every opportunity I was afforded professionally," said Orlando, who also served on the University's MBA Advisory Council. "I had to work for everything, but it was my foundation. I've become a lifelong learner."

Orlando said it was rewarding to help the University take a leap forward in the AI era.

"I had nothing but pride for being a Monarch, for being at ODU and for being from Hampton Roads." 



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Racing the Wind

Inside Old Dominion University's sailing team, shaped by elite coaching, demanding workouts and the Elizabeth River's choppy waters

BY LORRAINE EATON

On an October afternoon, under Monarch-blue skies, sailors wearing foul-weather gear face calm seas in front of Whitehurst Hall. Soon, a rainbow flotilla of triangle sails speeds past the pier toward the horizon.

At the screech of a horn, a practice race starts. Foamy wakes trail the feisty Z420 dinghies as the Monarch sailors tack, jibe and strategize, zigzagging toward a distant orange buoy marking the finish line.

"Hike, hike, hike! You're not hiking!" Old Dominion University Assistant Sailing Coach Morgan Collins hollers into a megaphone while standing at the helm of a rubberized motorboat and steering alongside a pair of racers.

At each turn, the duos move in unison, ducking under the heavy, horizontal booms that support the foot of the mainsails, easing mainsheet lines to let the wind swing the sail leeward while simultaneously spinning their bodies 180 degrees. Tucking their feet into hiking straps, they lean way, way out from the high side rail until their torsos hang nearly horizontal above the water.

"There you go," Collins shouts, pleased with the execution of the advanced "roll tack," which produces speed by forcing hulls flatter to the water and keeping the wind in the sails.


The mesmerizing maneuver — at once elegant and athletic — takes about three seconds.

An hour later, the wind builds for the final practice race. Whitecaps form on choppy water as 24-knot gusts slap the sails, slamming the vessels sideways and perilously close to capsizing. One boat does, flinging the two-person crew into the Elizabeth River.

These late October races mark the last practice before one of the most important regattas of the year: a qualifier in New York for the Inter-collegiate Sailing Association's single-handed championships to be held on the University's home turf.

Just 18 men and 18 women would make the cut.





Madison Bivins and
Pierce Brindley, son of
Head Coach Mitch Brindley,
trim the sails and balance
the heel in the choppy
Elizabeth River.

“ We have bigger breezes,
choppier conditions and
there’s nine miles of
fetch from Hampton.
It’s one of the best
venues to race. ”

— Head Coach
Mitch Brindley (B.A. '89)





The Monarchs had already racked up a respectable fall season record, traveling to regattas in New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maryland, and at times besting rivals like Navy, Yale, Harvard and Cornell universities.

On this squirrely day of racing, a championship seems in reach.



The University's sailing team, one of 35 varsity programs across the nation, started in 1963 as a club sport.

Winston Culpepper (B.S. '64) was the first commodore of the sailing club. In a 2019 Facebook post, longtime sailing Head Coach **Mitch**

Brindley (B.A.'89) said he had met with Culpepper, who relayed the following origin story:

In 1963, Culpepper and his printmaking instructor Ed Porter went to then-University President Lewis Webb Jr., and said, "Since we don't have a football team, can we have a sailing team?"

A fleet of six Penguin sailboats were purchased shortly thereafter.

By 1982, the team had won the first of 17 national championships competing against Ivy League powerhouses and the United States Merchant Marine Academy. Six Monarch alumni are Olympians, and plaques along a wall in the University's Sailing Center honors 89 All-Americans, with room for more.

That's hardly surprising. The complex on the Elizabeth River near the mouth of the Lafayette River boasts one of the finest collegiate sailing grounds in the country.

"We have bigger breezes, choppier conditions and there's nine miles of fetch from Hampton," said Brindley, referring to the distance wind blows over open water. "It's one of the best venues to race."

Senior Lindsey Kaufmann, of Wilmington, Delaware, chose Old Dominion University due, in part, to the location.

Some college sailing teams practice on lakes that are better protected, she said. "It's not open like this. Even if there is a breeze, it's funky."

And then there's this: sailors can walk right from their dorms to the waterfront.

"I can't guarantee them a waterfront room, but it's something not everyone has," said Brindley, a team alumnus and Inter-collegiate Sailing Association Hall of Famer. "At Stanford, it's a 30-minute commute to the water ... (Monarchs) don't have to take the subway in their smelly sailing gear back to the dorms and their roommates."

The location, the waterfront Sailing Center with its locker rooms and classroom, the adjacent boathouse housing the fleet, plus the award-winning coaching staff make the University a top choice for top-notch sailors.



Old Dominion University sailing Head Coach Mitch Brindley (B.A. '89) reviews video footage from a previous practice session with team members.





Top, left boat: Arabella Duer and James O’Leary; right boat: Esther Ireland and Morgan Auth.
 Above left, from left to right: Esther Ireland, Gianna Dewey and Arabella Duer.
 Above right: Esther Ireland and competitors in the women’s singlehanded championships.

Consider sophomore Marina Conde, of Mallorca, Spain, who represented her country in the Youth Sailing World Championships. Or junior Sam Riley, of Martha’s Vineyard, a Midwest-region champion in high school. Or junior Morgan Auth, a New Jersey state champion.

Freshman Arabella Duer is on the development team for the Olympics. She is also one of three team members, including junior Gianna Dewey and freshman Esther Ireland, who earned spots at nationals, the most female sailors of any college but Brown University.

Noncollegiate events like the November championship regatta that drew 36 of the nation’s top high school sailors to campus are important recruiting tools as well.

“They’re opportunities to showcase the venue and the team,” Brindley said.

Freshman James O’Leary, of Annapolis, Maryland, twice competed here while in high school. He checked out the venue, met the coaches and didn’t look back.

Academics is another draw. For prospective engineers, the University is one of few public

colleges offering strong, varied engineering programs and varsity sailing — two interests that often coincide.

“I loved sailing and I loved science,” said **Ethan Tutt (B.S. ’24)**, who competed with the team as an undergraduate and is now pursuing his master’s in mechanical engineering. “And to learn under Mitch Brindley, he’s like a celebrity to me.”

These brainiac engineer-athletes, with their understanding of physics and a propensity toward linear thinking, might just have an edge in the sport.

“I like to think that it adds up,” said Sam, a mechanical engineering and technology major. “I probably look at (sailing) in a different way versus someone who doesn’t have that background, but who just knows how to make the boat go fast.”

Ethan agrees. “Sailing is not very intuitive,” he said. “(Engineering) helps with the theory part.”

But to be an ace sailor?

“That just takes hours,” he said. 🏆



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for additional content and to watch a video of the sailing team in action.



The Science of Cooperation

What acorn woodpeckers can teach us about family, fire and survival

INTERVIEW BY VICTORIA BOURNE

Expert and amateur bird watchers sometimes talk about their “spark bird,” the feathered creature that marks the origin of their avian fascination. For ornithologist Eric Walters, Ph.D., that spark bird was a whale.

“My goal was to become a marine biologist,” said Dr. Walters, professor of biological sciences and associate dean for faculty affairs for the College of Sciences at Old Dominion University.

A former advisor’s unfortunate experience with lost research data set Dr. Walters, a native of Canada, on the path to become an internationally recognized expert in the field of ornithology, specifically in the study of acorn woodpeckers at the Hastings Natural History Reservation in Carmel Valley, California.

Monarch Magazine caught up with Dr. Walters to learn more about his study subject — the bird whose raucous cackle inspired the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker — and the research that’s held his fascination since 2006.

So, you haven’t always been an ornithologist?

My goal was to become a marine biologist who focuses on veterinary care of marine mammals. I got into the marine biology part — I really liked that — and I wasn’t so hot on vet school. I went to the University of Victoria in British Columbia, which is near Puget Sound, and that’s where I started my marine career.



PHOTO OF ERIC WALTERS BY CHUCK THOMAS (B.A. '90)
PHOTOS OF BIRDS BY BRUCE LYON, PH.D.; UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA AT SANTA CRUZ

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Scan the QR code to hear acorn woodpeckers in their natural habitat.



I got a summer job working at this aquarium looking after fish. Then I made my way up to marine mammals and became a trainer. I trained sea lions, fur seals, harbor seals and then killer whales.

How did you transition from a whale guy to a bird guy?

The whole story goes back to this place called Sable Island, which is many miles off the east coast of Nova Scotia. My master's advisor, when he was a student, was out there studying seals. At the end of the field season, as the aircraft was taking off, the cargo door opens and this great big chest with all his data and everything falls into the ocean. He gets back to the mainland, and his advisor says, "Well, you've lost the entire set of data. Is there anything else you can study out there?" And my advisor says, "There are birds still there."

So, he goes back, and he starts studying birds. From that point on, my advisor studied birds, and he studied marine mammals. When I approached him in Victoria, I knew him from the marine mammal side. We had something lined up, and the funding fell through. He said, "I have this bird project on woodpeckers—would you be interested?"

The whole switch for me, from marine mammals to birds, was simply an artifact of his experience losing this trunk out of his aircraft many decades earlier. I left marine mammals, and I became this bird guy.

How are acorn woodpeckers similar to the whales you once studied?

These woodpeckers live in family groups. They're not matrilineal, but the offspring stay with their parents. They move together as a family, and they cooperatively breed. In that sense, it was very similar to the killer whales I was working with. They have complex social systems.

Why is your research important?

People always wonder, "What could you learn by studying birds that would help humans?" One of those things is, we're learning about cooperation and why so many societies of animals cooperate in different ways. What are the benefits? Why has it evolved?

The woodpeckers have large family groups, and they have offspring that stay with their parents for

sometimes more than a decade. It's much like today's society where kids stay home with their parents longer than they did in the old days. Maybe it's because they can't get a job, but maybe it's because they're learning new things and they're building up their resources so they can eventually head off and be independent. The woodpeckers do the same thing. They stay at home, and they're learning skills like how to feed, how to care for young, how to defend the territory and how to look for predators.

Once they have achieved these skills, they move off, and now they're ready. There's lots of parallels, I think, between what humans are doing and the whales and the woodpeckers.

The Hastings Reservation study of acorn woodpeckers started in 1968 and is one of the longest studies of birds in the world. What are the benefits of longevity when it comes to data collection?

When we get grants from the National Science Foundation, these are usually three years, and we think about what we learned in three years versus what we've learned in nearly 60 years. You learn a lot more the longer your study goes, and you expect to see more rare events. Sometimes the rare things that happen can have a huge effect on the population.

For example, there were no fires in our study until around 2017. We went more than 40 years before we had a fire that occurred while we were studying the woodpeckers. Five fires have occurred in the last 10 years. Now we have a baseline; we know what the woodpeckers were doing over all that time, and we see what they're doing after the fires.

How have fires affected the birds?

One of the big studies showed that it's not always the fire that matters. We did a cool study where we showed the residual effect of smoke, and smoke that moves many hundreds of miles away from fires. We showed how the woodpeckers changed their movement patterns. They were slowing down, they weren't moving, they were staying home.

You recently received the Virginia Society of Ornithology's Mitchell A. Byrd Award, which recognizes outstanding scientific achievement in your field. You're the first recipient from Old Dominion University, and your nomination was supported by former students. How did that feel?

I was shocked. I had no inkling about it at all. I got this message saying, "You have won it, and could you appear at our meeting to accept the award?" I found out that all these colleagues that I worked with, and these other students that I'd worked with had written letters that supported my application, and I was totally oblivious to it all.



Did You Know?

- Acorn woodpeckers forage for insects in the air rather than in rotting logs.
- If they can't catch insects, they hoard as many as 10,000 acorns in tree granaries.
- They have large family groups, and offspring can stay with their parents for more than a decade.


What is unique about the Walters Lab?

Our lab is diverse in what we study — that has to do with my students. My philosophy is I don't try to tell students what to work on, I try to facilitate what they work on. I want them to drive the system. They come up with projects, and sometimes (it has nothing) to do with their ultimate plan, but with funding. Sometimes people switch gears and change systems altogether. You end up with a diverse system of students who work on different things.

Talk about the next generation of ornithologists — who are they?

The core behind each of our interns has not really changed over time. They're all individuals who want to change the world. They want to learn new things so they can make a difference. And they're not there for the money; they're there for the experience. And they're there because they know we care about their future, and we want to give them all the skills they need. I always tell people that I feel more like a life coach than a professor.

How has the University supported your research?

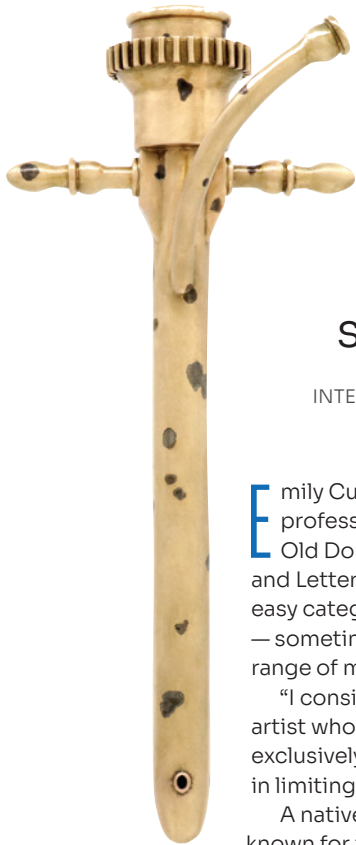
They've provided flexibility. They've allowed me to work my teaching schedule around the field season. I do my research in California, and it makes us a world-class institution. These are field-based projects that bring significant recognition to Old Dominion University; they understand that and support that work. 



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for additional content that includes tips on creating your own bird habitat.





The Art of Becoming

How an artist and educator helps students find strength in the process

INTERVIEW BY VICTORIA BOURNE

Emily Culver, MFA, has been an assistant professor of jewelry and metalsmithing in Old Dominion University's College of Arts and Letters for four years. Her artwork defies easy categorization. It's provocative and tactile — sometimes unintentionally — and exhibits a range of mediums, from silicone to metal.

"I consider myself first and foremost an artist who oftentimes works in metal but not exclusively," she said, adding she has no interest in limiting herself artistically in form or identity.

A native of a rural Pennsylvania town known for its ironworks and a large hospital complex, Culver's art is sculptural and reveals a lifelong fascination with the human body, tools and overcoming the perceived boundaries of corporeal and mechanical forms.

We stepped into Culver's studio last fall as she prepared for a January solo exhibition to learn more about her art, teaching and helping her students develop artistic grit.

When did art become your focus and when did metal become one of your mediums?

I always knew I wanted to be an artist ever since I was a child. So, my parents were well prepared from the very beginning. I was really fortunate to have supportive mentors through my elementary and high school education.

When I went to undergrad, I was going to be an oil painter. I was always painting the body and portraits. I ended up taking a metals class as an elective. It was so hard and challenging and exciting, and there was so much to learn. I just was like, "This is what I want to do."

The challenge of making a good piece in metal is you have gravity to work against. You have to engineer parts to work and fit together. It's also related to chemistry and the way things react to each other. You're turning metal from a liquid state into a solid sometimes. It felt like this giant world that I could sink my teeth into and just immerse myself for a lifetime of making.

What's the appeal of working in 3D?

It's a whole artwork. Even when I was painting, I was cutting into the canvas and pushing it forward and backwards — really trying to interrogate the thing as an object that lives in space. I think so much about objecthood and what it means to be a physical entity in relation to other things. What does the back (of the piece) look like? What does the underside look like? Everything felt important. And that resonated. Everything was an opportunity to bring meaning to the work — there was no surface unaddressed.

You've used a wide variety of materials in your work, including silicone. What are you using now?

I just started introducing pewter and stone carving. I'm not doing as much silicone work, but my knowledge of mold making for those types of materials continues to come in handy. My material palette has narrowed a little bit, mainly to build out cohesive ideas and linkages between works.

Tell me about your students — who are they?

We have a wide variety of students who come with different experiences. In the arts department in general, we have a lot of students who are former military or first generation. A lot of local students come to learn.

Right: This piece by Culver is called "Vestige of Decline III." It is made from nickel-plated copper with an inset of hand-carved stone.

Above, left: "Vestige of Decline V." Nickel and brass plated copper



Emily Culver, an assistant professor of jewelry and metalsmithing, creates art that defies easy categorization.



“ I’m always inspired to think creatively as I help them strategize through their projects. ”

— Emily Culver, MFA



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DIBARI

Culver works with a wide variety of students in her metalsmithing class.

That’s been really rewarding to work with students who have a variety of backgrounds, and they all bring something to the table.

For metals in particular, I also get students from engineering; I have two engineering students in my intro class right now. They were like, “It’s just so cool to see all the things that we learned in a textbook but then actually apply it in this class.”

How does your personal artistic practice influence or inform your work as an educator? What do you hope your students take away from your teachings?

During the semester, the students spend a lot of time in the teaching studio completing their coursework. Meanwhile, they’re seeing me outside of class doing my work — popping over to use a piece of equipment or whatever. They see me put in the hours. I’m in my dirty jeans and my black T-shirt. I’ve got my hair thrown up, no makeup on and smudges (on my cheeks). I think that’s probably a weird experience for them, but maybe it gives them some insight — art is hard work. There is no difference between weekends and weekdays. For me, every day is a workday.

What do you enjoy most about mentoring young artists?

I think it’s challenging to inspire a student to devote themselves to their practice. The number of hours it takes to fine tune and (develop) the grit to say, “Okay, that didn’t work. I’ve got to try again.” I like seeing them become those types of makers. I also love seeing who they become as a community and how they rely on each other. They build these friendships because they’re spending so much time together. And they’re doing awesome work.

How do your students inspire your artistic practice?

What I love about teaching — and teaching art, specifically — is that I’m constantly being that problem solver. They come up with an idea, and we talk about logistics — how to make this thing. I’m always inspired to think creatively as I help them strategize through their projects. Sometimes I get inspired because I’m teaching them a technique that (I then bring) into my practice. You do it all the time, but every once in a while, you see it in a different way.



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for additional content that includes more about Culver’s most recent solo exhibition.



DOMINATION NATION



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WINNING DOUBLE ACT





DOMINATION NATION

The “Dom and Dom” duo
behind Monarch tennis’
perennial powerhouse



BY HARRY MINIUM (B.A. '77)

In some ways, Old Dominion University is an unlikely place to find two powerhouse college tennis programs.

Most of the top 100 schools in men’s and women’s tennis are in major conferences with extensive financial resources such as the Atlantic Coast Conference or Southeastern Conference, or they are elite private schools, such as Yale or Pepperdine universities.

Yet when you walk into the Folkes-Stevens Tennis Center, 19 championship trophies in the Brad and Molly Hobbs lobby are evidence that, yes, Monarch tennis is a powerhouse. Several of those trophies have been won in the past five years alone.

And although tennis has been in the University’s DNA since the institution’s founding nearly a century ago, the recent success is a high-water mark — largely thanks to two men known around University Athletics as “Dom and Dom”: **Dominic Manilla (B.A. '07)** and Dominik Mueller, who coach the women’s and men’s teams, respectively.

“They both have blue-collar roots and had to work very hard to become successful,” said Bruce Stewart, the University’s deputy athletics director and chief operating officer. The Doms also hate to lose, he said.

Monarch women have claimed five regular-season and tournament titles in a row, three in the Sun Belt Conference and two more in Conference USA. The men have won regular-season and tournament titles the past four years in the Sun Belt.

Five of the last six Sun Belt/Conference USA women’s tennis players of the year have come from Old Dominion University, and the Monarchs have been to six consecutive NCAA tournaments.

Nationally the women’s team has ranked as high as 16th and the men’s team has ranked as high as 26th.

Intramural Beginnings

Tennis was not a varsity sport when the Norfolk Division of the College of William & Mary opened in 1930. The two-year school sponsored only football, basketball and baseball — for men only.

Tommy Scott, the school’s first athletic director, established a thriving men’s intramural tennis program. It expanded to include women in the mid-1950s. Records from the University’s early years in tennis indicate the Monarch men, then coached by Al Tatem, won their first title in 1969 in the Mason-Dixon League.

A succession of influential leaders helped shape Monarch tennis. Athletic Director Jim Jarrett, a former college player, was an early champion of the program’s growth when he came on board in 1970. Longtime coach Ken Rand sustained that momentum in the mid-1970s, guiding the team to winning seasons in all but one of his 21 years. He was followed in 1994 by alumnus **Darryl Cummings (B.A. '92, M.S. '03)**, who led two more decades of success and helped secure a lasting home for the program with the Folkes-Stevens Tennis Center.

The “Doms” Era

But it was not until “Dom and Dom” came on board in the early 2000s that the Monarchs began consistently winning conference titles.

Wood Selig, Ed.D., the University’s director of athletics, hired Manilla in 2011 as head coach of the women’s team. An alumnus, Manilla came to work for the University after a season at the prestigious John McEnroe Tennis Academy. Mueller, a native of Frankfurt, Germany, starred and then was an assistant coach at Baylor University before Dr. Selig hired him in 2016 to be head coach for men’s tennis.

From the first time they met, the Doms hit it off. That partnership has been critical to the success of both programs. “We really care about each other, and we root for each other,” Mueller said.

Yuliia Starodubtseva (B.A. '21, M.S. '22), a two-time Conference USA Player of the Year from Ukraine who is now playing professionally in Germany, turned down offers from bigger schools to come to Old Dominion University. She says Manilla was the primary reason.

“The one thing that I love about Dom is that while he cares about us on the court, he especially cares

PREVIOUS PAGE: DOMINIC MANILLA (B.A. '07), LEFT, AND DOMINIK MUELLER, RIGHT.
PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS (B.A. '90)



PHOTO COURTESY OF ODU ATHLETICS

Yuliia Starodubtseva (B.A. '21, M.S. '22), a two-time Conference USA Player of the Year from Ukraine who is now playing professionally in Germany, turned down offers from bigger schools to come to Old Dominion University. Women's Head Coach Dominic Manilla was a primary reason.

about us off the court," she said. "He would do anything he can for us. He's a good coach but a better man."


In five of the last six years, Manilla was named conference coach of the year, in addition to winning various other regional awards. His career record at the University is 218-95. Earlier this year, the Norfolk Sports Club named him the state's best coach, among all coaches at all schools in all sports.

Mueller's finest hour came in 2021-2022 season, when he kept his team together through a series of injuries that resulted in the Monarchs finishing the season with just five players, but a 13-9 record. A year later, the Monarchs won their first Sun Belt title.

"He's a very deep human being who really cares about all of us," said **Nicola Vidal (B.S. '23)**, a key player for the men that season who suffered serious injuries in an accident. "That's the difference between a good coach and a great coach."

Mueller has won three conference and several regional coach of the year awards as well. His record is 141-73 at Old Dominion University.

Stewart said the recent "Dom and Dom"-led successes are a sign of momentum, with both tennis programs poised for even greater growth.

"I think the best is yet to come," he said. 

Early Days Highlight Reel

George Consolvo (B.A. '67) was an early star for the Monarchs, winning NCAA East Regional singles titles in 1966 and 1967 and going 43-17 in singles.

Robert Hale (B.S.'83), a junior college transfer, was the first Old Dominion University player to earn a Top 50 ranking in 1981 and led the Monarchs to two Virginia Intercollegiate titles.

Patricia "Pat" Shaulis (B.S.'81, M.S.Ed '83) was 81-20 in singles for the University's women's program, which was just two years old when she came to the University in 1978, and led the Monarchs to the 1981 Virginia state championship.

Nataly Cahana (B.S. '04) was 143-28 in her four seasons as a Monarch and was named Colonial Athletic Association Player of the Year four times and twice an All-American. She was ranked as high as fourth nationally.

Izak van der Merwe (B.S. '05) was the University's first two-time All-American who finished with a 100-39 career record in 2005 and was ranked as high as 24th nationally.





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“I love my donors, and I love the relationships that I have with them.”

— Jena Virga (B.S. '79, MBA '81), senior associate athletic director and ODAF executive director



HEART, HUSTLE & HUDSON BLUE

The Donor Champion that Powers ODU's Rise

BY VICTORIA BOURNE

Jena Virga (B.S. '79, MBA '81) attends a lot of games at Old Dominion University, but she doesn't get to see much of them. She's too busy running around S.B. Ballard Stadium or Chartway Arena, visiting club and ticket holders, donors and fans.

"There's very little time I get to spend and watch a game," said Virga, the University's senior associate athletic director and executive director of the Old Dominion Athletic Foundation (ODAF).

She may not be following plays and logging stats, but "the donors don't want me for that," she said. "They want me to talk about their commitments, their finances and what they want to support."

Virga has been in ODU Athletics donor relations for more than 15 years. In that time, she has helped raise more than \$170 million toward the University's athletic facility capital projects, supporting programmatic enhancements, endowment and planned giving efforts, and annual scholarship funding. She's led those efforts since 2022.

That money has helped renovate the S.B. Ballard Stadium, Mitchum Family Basketball Performance Center, Paul Keyes Baseball Hitting Complex and the soon-to-be Ellmer Family Baseball Complex at Bud Metheny Ballpark, currently underway. Fifteen endowed scholarships were added in 2025, totaling nearly \$50 million.

The University's debut of women's volleyball in 2021 is a particular highlight for Virga. It included a \$3.1 million renovation of the old basketball practice facility at the Jim Jarrett Athletic Administration Building into a volleyball venue.

"It was so exciting to start another women's program and to be on the very front line of it," she said.

In August 2024, the Norfolk Sports Club named Virga its Tom Fergusson Metropolitan Person of the Year in Sports. She is only the fifth woman to receive that honor since the sports club created the award in 1943.

"Everything big that has happened at ODU Athletics in recent years, Jena has been a part of it," said Jack Ankerson, who served on the committee that selected Virga, in a 2024 story on the ODU Athletics website. "What she's done for ODU has just been remarkable."

Relationships Matter

"I love my donors, and I love the relationships that I have with them," Virga said.

Virga's office is full of memorabilia. A large aerial shot of Ballard Stadium adorns one wall. There are football helmets in Hudson Blue, a pennant from the 2018-2019 Conference USA men's basketball championships and a variety of ODAF awards. Her door is decorated with photos of her with smiling donors at various sports events.



When asked what traits make her excel at her job, the former bank executive says she's never met a stranger, and what you see is what you get. "I wear my heart on my sleeve, which can be good or bad in this world."

If a donor texts her late at night, she can't help but respond to that ping. A strong work ethic was instilled at a young age. She was 12 when she started answering phones in her father's real estate office, she said.

"Robert D. Woodley, real estate and insurance," she recited without hesitation.

Virga, a Norfolk, Virginia, native, was a commuter student in the mid-1970s like many of her high school friends who also attended Old Dominion University. "I'll tell people I have been driving to ODU for over 50 years."

From left: Chandler Shirer Daugherty (B.S. '17, M.S. '19), former Old Dominion Athletic Foundation co-worker; Sam Perelman (B.S. '18, MBA '20), former ODAF intern; Virga; and Alyssa Jones Miralrio (B.S. '16), former ODAF co-worker, at Foreman Field during renovations.



Virga credits the University with helping her land her first job in banking. While pursuing her MBA, she worked every other semester for First Virginia Bank through the University's cooperative education program. She was hired into management training and became a branch manager at 22, she said.

She was driven by results: how many loans could she help secure, how many checking and savings accounts could she help open? But she recalled older customers approaching her with skepticism.

"They would walk in, and they'd look at me and they'd be like, 'There is no way I'm going to talk to that girl back there about my money,'" recalled Virga, who had a decade-long career in banking. "And before I left (that branch), they'd sit and talk to me for hours."

'The Best Job Ever'

Virga reconnected with her alma mater as a member of the advisory board for the Strome College of Business. As she was considering next career steps, it dawned on her: "It'd be kind of fun to go to work at ODU," Virga recalled. She was hired in 2008 as the major gifts officer for Strome College. It was Mark Benson, then the University's senior associate athletic director, who convinced Virga to bring her talents to ODU Athletics in 2010.

"I know nothing about athletics," Virga recalled telling him. "Don't worry about it," Benson told her. "It's a piece of cake."

Virga said it was actually a trial by fire. She was no stranger to raising money, but collegiate sports were something else entirely. She started shortly before the beginning of the University's football season, which — having been resurrected in 2009 after a 69-year hiatus — was a hot ticket item. The calls were incessant.

"I'm telling you, for two weeks I had a twitch in my eye because every time I would write down 10 messages of

Photo previous page, pictured from left: Old Dominion University Athletics Director Wood Selig, Ed.D.; W. Sheppard “Shep” Miller, his wife, Gigi Miller, and their family members; and Virga.

things I needed to do, I’d get 10 more,” she said. “I was so stressed out because I had no idea what I was doing.”

But she survived, and she decided she had “the best job ever.”

“I’ve never had so much fun trying to figure out how to get people their tickets, how to show them the premium areas, how to get them their hospitality and their parking, and all the things that go into game day and what we do for our donors. And I just loved it.”

Leading with Heart

Wood Selig, Ed.D., was hired as the University’s athletic director around the same time as Virga. He recalls her energy, passion and enthusiasm. Dr. Selig said people give to causes that resonate with them, but first they give to the individuals representing the cause — Virga’s passion for ODU Athletics is infectious.

“She’s very good at articulating the need, and she’s not hesitant to ask for support.”

Her consistency of sustained excellence is the biggest feather in Virga’s cap, he added, and her steadfastness has enabled her to deepen her relationship with donors.

“Jena makes a hundred-dollar donor feel like a million-dollar donor,” Dr. Selig said. “And she makes a million-dollar donor feel like a million-dollar donor.”

But she especially loves the University’s student-athletes, he said. “I think that’s her passion, knowing that at the end of the day, she’s making education, an ODU degree and athletic opportunities available for so many ODU student-athletes.”

ODAF board member **Kelly Till (B.S. ’94)** says Virga is her alma mater’s No. 1 cheerleader and “an exceptional ambassador for the University.”

Virga leads with heart and purpose, Till said, and she credits Virga with increasing the number of women on the board. In January 2024, when Till became the second woman to chair the ODAF board, Virga’s excitement may have exceeded her own, Till said.

Till, who is the first woman president and publisher to lead the Richmond Times-Dispatch, said she and Virga have swapped stories about filling positions that have been historically male-dominated.

“She just rolls with the punches, even when there’s been challenges in that area. I respect her for it, but I think part of it is just her attitude and who she is. She doesn’t take things too seriously. She doesn’t let things get her too worked up. She tries to find a solution around whatever the issue is,” Till said.


“She’s just a good human.”

Working Hard and With Purpose

Back in her office, Virga said she may have had to work a little harder to prove herself among her male counterparts, but she considered it just another challenge to overcome. And now there are more women filling similar roles than when she started.

“That’s been wonderful to see women coming up in this industry and playing bigger roles,” said Virga, a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletic Development Directors executive board.

Reflecting on her University career, Virga said the work is challenging but often a lot of fun. The driving force is the University’s student-athletes, her development team and generous donors, many of whom feel like family.

“We do the best we can and we try so hard,” Virga said. “Everybody’s committed on this team, and we’re so lucky. We have the best donors in the world — they always step up to the plate. How fortunate are we to have that?” 

What’s Teed Up Next?

A fundraising campaign to support Old Dominion University’s golf program launched in early January. One of its goals is to renovate the University’s performance center for men’s and women’s golf. Virga said the \$7 million – \$8 million project will include new locker rooms, coaches’ offices, hitting bays and enhanced performance technology. It also includes the purchase of Riverfront Golf Course in Suffolk, Virginia, placing the University among an elite group in the state and conference that owns its own golf course.



Want to support student-athletes? Learn more at olddominionaf.com.



ALUMNUS NIGEL TIERNEY

Scenes From a Life in Motion

From first jobs to major studios,
a path defined by momentum and craft

BY JANICE RHOSHALLE LITTLEJOHN

The Pacific Ocean glitters behind a beachfront, members-only social club in Malibu, California. Nigel Tierney (B.S. '07, M.S. '08) settles into a long conversation chronicling his journey to realize his California dreams while actor Jon Hamm sits nearby having breakfast with a companion. It is a quintessential Los Angeles, California scene — but for Tierney, it's just another Monday.

And yet the 42-year-old animation director and producer, who has worked for companies like DreamWorks and Yahoo, hasn't forgotten where he came from: the medieval town of Kilkenny, Ireland. Tierney left his Emerald Isle home in 2002 to travel to the United States to work as "the Irishman" character at Busch Gardens Williamsburg and attend Tidewater Community College. He eventually transferred to Old Dominion University, scrambling together scholarships and construction gigs in pursuit of two computer science degrees,

and congregating with any student organization offering free pizza.

Tierney recalled his first day on campus and being among people from so many different places in Virginia and around the globe.

"It was kind of mind-blowing," he said.

Tierney's interest in entertainment, and animation, specifically, started in high school and was inspired by the "Shrek" movies. "I was like, 'I want to work on "Shrek 17" or something one day,'" he recalled, his Irish accent still strong after all these years.

His hustle is innate. But what carried him as a Monarch — and what defines him now — is his ability to build community wherever he lands.

"You cannot meet Nigel and not love Nigel," said Dionicia Mahler-Rogers, Ph.D., associate director for the Center for Career and Leadership

Development. She worked with international students during Tierney's time at the University, and her office



became an unofficial hangout for Tierney and others. “They brought so much life and light into my day,” Dr. Mahler-Rogers said.

Tierney — along with Monarch swim champion **Patrik Balint (B.S. '08)** from Budapest, Hungary, and **Mragendra Singh (M.S. '08)** from Bhopal, India, — co-founded an international student group that embraced a mission grounded in creating space for anyone who felt like an outsider.

“The premise was, if you weren’t born on the quad, you were foreign to campus,” Tierney said. “Everyone was welcome.”

Singh, now an award-winning writer-director, recalls how they organized themselves with tongue-in-cheek formality. “Patrik was president, Nigel was prime minister, I was secretary or treasurer,” he said, laughing. “But these were just titles. We all did everything.”

The group hosted events like a homecoming ball, picked up new students from the airport and provided mentorship. But mostly, they made the University feel like home.

“It was basically like my family for many years there,” said Virginia native **Caitlin Kelly (B.S. '08)**. She recalls how Tierney ensured everyone felt included, valued and seen, qualities that would become his trademark.

Steven Risch, director of International Admissions, helped Tierney secure his graduate school scholarship at Old Dominion University. He watched the young Irishman juggle financial hardship, a rigorous computer science program (Tierney completed his master’s in record time) and multiple campus jobs. “I saw that the University helped develop his hustle mentality,” Risch said. “He definitely worked his tail off.”

Tierney’s hustle paid dividends. After graduation,

he crashed with Singh in Los Angeles to attend an animation convention where he brought his own printer to update his resume for on-the-spot interviews.

“I wasn’t a talented artist,” Tierney admitted. But he knew computers and math helped him create animation projects. “That was the cheat code.”

He eventually landed a gig at DreamWorks Animation, where he worked on “Kung Fu Panda,” “The Croods,” and “Shrek 4: Shrek Forever After,” the very franchise that inspired him as a teenager in Ireland.


His breakout project came in 2019: “Earth,” a computer-animated music video (with a live action introduction) for rapper Lil Dicky featuring over 30 celebrities, including Leonardo DiCaprio, Ariana Grande and Snoop Dogg, that sought to raise awareness for environmentally focused nonprofits.

“Everyone contributed their time,” Tierney said of the project, for which he co-directed and co-produced the animation. “They all believed in the cause.”

These days, Tierney runs his own production company, Tierney Corps., and works with major brands such as The Walt Disney Company, the National Football League and IMG, a sports marketing company.

Reflecting on his time as an Old Dominion University student, Tierney waxed nostalgic for campus life. “I would wish I’d have a community like that again — just to accidentally bump into somebody who’s trying to do something, trying to hustle together and make stuff.”

From University programs to student-led organizations, Tierney’s advice for current and future Monarchs is to take advantage of everything that’s offered.

“You’re only in school for four or six years — however long,” he said. “Milk it for what it’s worth.” 


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Class Notes



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A Monarch Wedding

Two Monarchs tied the knot on May 16, 2025, in Leesburg, Virginia, and the nuptials would've made Big Blue proud. "(Old Dominion University) means a lot to us because it's where our love story started," said **Katie Ellett Wilkins (B.S. '21)** who married **Noah Wilkins (B.S. '21, M.P.H. '23)**. He's from Louisiana. She's from Maryland. "If we didn't both go to ODU, we aren't sure if we ever would have met."

Both are former members of the swim team and Student Athlete Advisory Committee. Decorations included blue and white pom poms, photos from their college days and a swimming-themed cake that incorporated the couples' old trophies as toppers. Fellow Monarchs joined the couple in dancing to "Ice Cream and Cake."

With all they'd gotten from their alma mater — friendship, opportunities and love — Wilkins said, "It felt like our wedding wouldn't be complete without a nod to ODU."



Paparo Highlights U.S. Strategy in Indo-Pacific at Waldo Family Lecture

During a late September 2025 lecture at Old Dominion University, **Adm. Samuel Paparo (M.S. '98)**, commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, emphasized the importance of maintaining peace through strength as a central theme of U.S. strategy in a region that includes China and North Korea.

The evolving nature of warfare — driven by advancements in AI, cyber capabilities, unmanned systems and hypersonic missiles — means

Distinguished Alumni 2025

Each year, the Old Dominion University Alumni Association honors graduates and friends of the University whose achievements elevate their fields and strengthen the Monarch Nation. This year's Distinguished Alumni represent extraordinary professional accomplishment, service, leadership and lasting impact.



Jay Kossman (B.S. '68), recipient of the Alumni Association's Jack Frost Service Award, has built a distinguished career in industrial sales and healthcare leadership while remaining deeply committed to service. A former student leader and fraternity member, he went on to shape several major health plans and continues to support his community and alma mater through extensive nonprofit and advisory board work.



Michael Lê (B.S. '80), who arrived in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1975 as a Vietnamese refugee, built a remarkable career in technology after graduating. From juggling four jobs as a student to launching and selling two multimillion-dollar companies, he now leads Advantco International LLC, a global software integration firm. Lê remains a dedicated supporter of STEM education, including helping fund the University's Michael and Kimthanh Lê Planetarium.



Lt. Gen. Donna Martin, USA (Ret.) (B.S. '88), a Yorktown, Virginia, native, forged a groundbreaking 36-year Army career. Commissioned in 1988, she became the first woman to lead the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence and Fort Leonard Wood, and the first woman of color to command the U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Command. She later served as the Army's Provost Marshal General and, in 2021, became the first woman to serve as the Army's Inspector General before retiring in 2025.



Jeffrey Wilson, MD (MD '97), a U.S. Navy veteran and graduate of Eastern Virginia Medical School, now Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University, is one half of the bestselling author duo Andrews & Wilson, known for their work on the Tom Clancy "Jack Ryan" series. A former combat surgeon with Naval Special Warfare, he has co-written more than 30 novels and supports veteran communities through mentorship and partnerships with organizations like the SEAL Legacy Foundation.



Cathy Lewis (H.A. '25), a renowned speaker, facilitator and longtime host of WHRV-FM's "HearSay," was named an honorary Old Dominion University alumna at the 2025 Distinguished Alumni event. A familiar presence at major University gatherings, she is also a Gallup CliftonStrengths coach and a regional civic leader. She was recently presented with CIVIC's inaugural Founders' Honoree Award for her enduring impact on Hampton Roads.



Lewis Webb III (H.A. '25), a devoted advocate for the arts and education, Webb was named an honorary Old Dominion University alumnus at the 2025 Distinguished Alumni event. A partner at Kaufman & Canoles, he is a longtime civic leader who has chaired organizations such as the Arts Alliance, Barry Art Museum, Chrysler Museum, United Way and American Red Cross. Webb continues a family legacy of service while championing the arts' role in strengthening communities.



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for alumni videos.

FROM ALUMNI RELATIONS



A Legacy that Unites Us

I have been reflecting on the life and legacy of **Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07)**, who we lost on March 12, and the way our Monarch community showed up in response. It was immediate, personal and deeply felt — nothing short of extraordinary.

At his core, Lt. Col. Shah was a connector. He brought people together — students, colleagues, alumni — with a genuine belief that relationships move us forward. He was deeply invested in Old Dominion University, and in the success of the students he served. It came through in every conversation and every introduction he made. He didn't just represent the University; he lived what it meant to be a Monarch.

When we recognized him as part of our Alumni Association 40 Under 40 Class of 2023, it was clear that he embodied the absolute best of our alumni community: leadership, service and an unwavering commitment to others. His impact was already significant and would have continued through the years. I was privileged to know him and see his influence up close.

In the days following the tragedy, messages poured in from alumni who reached out to me and to each other simply to check-in. There was a real desire to reconnect, to share their love for our University and to be together in the moment. That kind of outreach stays with you. It was overwhelmingly meaningful and such a strong reflection of the community Lt. Col. Shah helped build.

That's the responsibility we carry forward. To keep building connections, supporting one another and staying engaged in ways that matter.

Lt. Col. Shah brought people together — and in many ways, he still is.

Forever Monarch Strong,

Krista Harrell, Ph.D., '01 (M.S.Ed. '03, Ph.D. '12)

any conflict would take place at an accelerated pace and the role of deterrence in maintaining peace and security is more critical than ever.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command oversees 36 nations and is responsible for about 420,000 personnel across the Department of Defense and military services. The command covers a vast geographic area, from the West Coast of the U.S. to the India-Pakistan border, spanning both hemispheres.

Paparo spoke as part of the Waldo Family Lecture Series on International Relations, which was established in 1985 as the University's first endowed lecture.

Alumni Authors

"Justice in Alabama?" and "Black Friday: Accident or Murder?" by **W.J. "Jim" Haynie (B.S. '70)**. One is a faith-based historical fiction novel whose protagonist, Judge Marty McCarthy, presides over a lynching trial. The other is a whodunit in which protagonist Kim Harrison finds his best friend fatally shot and must convince the police it was neither suicide nor an accident. (Self-published, January and August 2025)

"Colorsss," by **Deborah Hutchinson, Ph.D. (M.S. '01, Ph.D. '06)**. This debut picture book, featuring photos taken by the author, teaches children about colors by using nature as their guide. It includes bonus pages filled with scientific facts about snakes. (Peanut Butter Publishing, September 2025)

"Temporary Gods and Arbitrary Arrangements," by **Angelo Letizia (M.A. '09)**. A novel about dreams and memories and how they bind lives together. (Silver Bow Publishing, Kindle edition, February 2025)

"This Here Is Love: A Novel," by **Princess Joy L. Perry (B.S. '93, MFA '98)**. Set at the close of the 17th century, the novel is described as an epic saga that intertwines three lives — two enslaved, one indentured — as they struggle against their circumstances. (W. W. Norton & Company, August 2025)

"Goodbye Morton, Goodbye Friend," by **Lacie Davis (B.S. '99, MPA '00)**. A touching story about a young boy who must confront the heart-wrenching decision to euthanize his beloved pet dog, Morton. (Self-published, May 2025)

Alumni Honors

The Old Dominion University Alumni Association (ODUAA) hosted its annual Alumni Honors event at Chartway Arena last October. Honorees and guests enjoyed dinner and live music, celebrating the association's 40 Under 40 Class of 2025 and six Distinguished Alumni.



Pictured clockwise from top left:

- 1.** The 40 Under 40 Class of 2025
- 2.** 40 Under 40 Class of 2025 K. Janea' Daniel (B.S. '13), left, and guest
- 3.** From left: ODUAA board President Michele Mulich (B.S. '85) with alumni awardees Jeffrey Wilson, MD (MD '97); Jay Kossman (B.S. '68), Michael Lê (B.S. '80), Cathy Lewis (H.A. '25), Lt. Gen. Donna Martin, USA (Ret.) (B.S. '88), Lewis Webb III (H.A. '25); and Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations Krista Harrell, Ph.D. (B.S. '01, M.S.Ed. '03, Ph.D. '12)
- 4.** 40 Under 40 Class of 2025 Keyanna Hawkins. Ed.D. (B.S. '12)
- 5.** ODUAA board President Michele Mulich (B.S. '85)
- 6.** 40 Under 40 Class of 2025 Mariam Abdelhamid, Ph.D. (B.S. '13, M.A. '16, Ph.D. '22), center, with guests.

PHOTOS BY CHUCK THOMAS (B.A. '90) AND METRO PRODUCTIONS

Top 40 Under 40

Several Monarchs were recently named to Inside Business' Top Forty Under 40 list, which honors successful young professionals who are also involved in the Hampton Roads community. Scan the QR code to read more about the honorees.



Young Career Professionals Share Expertise

The Frank Batten College of Engineering and Technology at Old Dominion University recently established an Early Career Alumni Council. The council's initial cohort formed in 2025 and is made up of engineering alumni who graduated within the past 12 years. It strengthens connections among alumni and students while advising the college on mentorship programs, networking opportunities and other initiatives that connect current students with industry professionals. The council will augment the existing Engineering Leadership Council and departmental advisory boards. Scan the QR code to read more.



Medical Alumni Honored

The Medical Society of Virginia (MSV) recently honored two medical residents and alumni from Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University for their service to the community.

Kaitlin Hardy, MD (MD '25) a resident in Pediatrics, founded the Community-Engaged Learning initiative known as Adaptive Gymnastics for children with disabilities across Hampton Roads in collaboration with Excalibur Gymnastics while she was in medical school.

Megan Powers, MD (MD '24), a resident in Emergency Medicine, founded Red Flags to Freedom, a nonprofit organization that teaches healthcare professionals how to recognize and respond to human trafficking.

M I L E S T O N E S

In early 2025, family members of artist **Michael "Termite" Hires (B.S. '72)** of Norfolk, Virginia, donated 16 pieces of Hires' pottery to the University's Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries. Hires, who died in 2024, created a large body of work that he once described as a "visual symphony."

Joyce Trump (M.S.Ed. '76) was named Suffolk, Virginia's, First Citizen for 2025. The award recognized her lifelong commitment to education, civic service and historical preservation. She served for several decades in a variety of roles across Suffolk and Franklin public schools, and in 1995, she was appointed the first woman superintendent of Suffolk Public Schools. Trump was named an ODU Distinguished Alumni in 1997.

In 2025, **William "Billy" Foster III (B.S. '78)** was included among Virginia Business magazine's C-Suite Award winners in the category of large public companies with more than \$500 million in annual revenue. Foster is the president and chief executive officer of TowneBank based in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. He joined TowneBank in 2004.

In July 2025, **David J. Masterson (B.S. '85)** became president of Sentara Halifax Regional Hospital in South Boston, Virginia, after serving nearly four years as president of Sentara Obici Hospital and its Sentara BelleHarbour outpatient campus in Suffolk, Virginia. He previously helmed Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center for eight years.

Kimberly Hughes Phillips (B.S. '88) was recently appointed to the Fourth Judicial District Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in Norfolk, Virginia, for a term of six years. Prior to her appointment, Phillips spent nearly 15 years in private practice with a focus on family law.

Charles "Monty" Ayers (M.A. '89) was appointed chairperson of the Veterans Affairs Commission in Dallas, Texas, by Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson.

After spending 30 years as a surgical assistant and community faculty member at Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University, **Deborah Redmond (B.S. '90)** became the clinical coordinator of the master's surgical assistant program in the EVMS School of Health Professions at ODU.

Jared A. Cotton, Ed.D. (B.S. '92), who has served as Chesapeake Public Schools superintendent in Chesapeake, Virginia, since 2018, announced his retirement in October 2025. Cotton spearheaded the development of the school system's strategic plan, Empower 2025. His retirement will be effective on July 1. "Serving Chesapeake Public Schools has been the honor of my career," Dr. Cotton said in a news release.

Colleen Gard-Craig (B.S. '93, M.S.Ed. '95) was recently appointed vice president of the Board of Directors at Sugar Plum Bakery. The nonprofit bakery is based in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and serves the needs of individuals with disabilities through employment, education and training. Gard-Craig joined the board in 2008.

Jim Jenkins (B.S. '95) was recently promoted to site vice president at Dominion Energy's North Anna Nuclear Power Station in Louisa County, Virginia. Jenkins' more than three decades-long career at North Anna began as part of the University's cooperative education program.

Poorva Joshipura (B.S. '98) was recently named the first president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) International. Joshipura, who was raised in Suffolk, Virginia, got her start as a PETA intern 25 years ago. She will oversee the animal welfare organization's projects and operations in Europe, Asia and parts of the Middle East.

Roger Kelly (B.S. '98, MBA '04) was recently promoted to vice president of contracts and pricing at Huntington Ingalls Industries, (HII) Inc.'s Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) division. In his new role, Kelly will be responsible for contracts, pricing and export/import licensing and compliance for NNS.

Annette Tudor (M.S.Ed. '98), director of schools for Bristol Tennessee City Schools, was named the 2026 Tennessee Superintendent of the Year last September. She has led Bristol Tennessee City Schools since 2020. She began her career as a special education teacher.

Roger Wakeman (M.S. '98), a Navy veteran, was recently hired as Kenyon College's inaugural chief operating officer. The college is based in Gambier, Ohio. He previously worked at Dartmouth College as vice president for facilities and energy.

James Phillips (B.S. '00) was recently named chief human resources officer at Catholic Charities of Baltimore, Maryland's largest private human services agency, offering over 80 programs across 200 locations and serving more than 160,000 people each year.

In August 2025, **Adm. Daryl Caudle (M.E.M. '03)** assumed his new duties as the 34th Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) during a ceremony at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. In this role, Caudle advises the President of the United States as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The career submariner will direct the command, resources and efficiency of naval and shore operations worldwide.

Brent Watts (B.S. '03), a longtime chief meteorologist and journalist with WDBJ, was recently named the new director of communications for Botetourt County, Virginia.

Justin Crocker, MD (B.S. '04), a gastroenterologist with Duke Health, was recently promoted to associate professor of medicine at Duke University. Dr. Crocker, who is in his 12th year at the Raleigh, North Carolina, campus, leads trainee and patient education efforts and serves as director of quality improvement for the Division of Gastroenterology.

Joshua Pennise (B.A. '03, M.A. '07) was recently elected president of the Association of Language Companies, the industry trade association for U.S.-based language service companies, representing \$20 billion in annual revenue and nearly 100,000 jobs.

Laura Hayes Chalk (MPA '12) was named to the Virginia Business magazine Top 40 Under 40 for 2025. Chalk is the executive director of Virginia Beach Vision, a business advocacy organization dedicated to promoting economic growth and community prosperity in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Last year marked the 10-year anniversary of G.I.R.L.S. Club, a nonprofit founded by **Chekesha White (Ed.S. '13)**, who also serves as its executive director. White said she started the club, which stands for "Girls Influenced by Righteous Living in all Situations," with the mission of empowering young girls in grades 3-12 through mentorship, life skills and community support.

Rick Lovato (B.S. '15), who played nine seasons as a long snapper for the Philadelphia Eagles, winning two Super Bowls in 2017 and 2025, and earning Pro Bowl honors in 2019, announced his retirement from the NFL in November, 2025. Lovato spent the early part of the 2025 season with the Los Angeles Chargers.

Aaron McDonough (B.S. '16) recently joined Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti LLP as an associate in the law firm's business and corporate and bankruptcy practice groups.

Jennifer Brown, Ph.D. (Ph.D. '17), library director for Augusta County Library in Fishersville, Virginia, was named a Library Journal Mover & Shaker for 2025. She was recognized for her work with the Virginia Library Leadership Academy, where she led the redesign of the year-long leadership program and helped secure funding to make it free to participants. The change expanded access and awareness across the state.

In 2024, **Mubarak Al Jowder (B.S. '17)** became head of commercial portfolio development at Arab Shipbuilding & Repair Yard (ASRY), the leading shipyard in the Middle East and a key subsidiary of Bapco Energies, the national oil and gas holding company of the Kingdom of Bahrain. He got his start at ASRY as a Civil Project Engineer in early 2021.

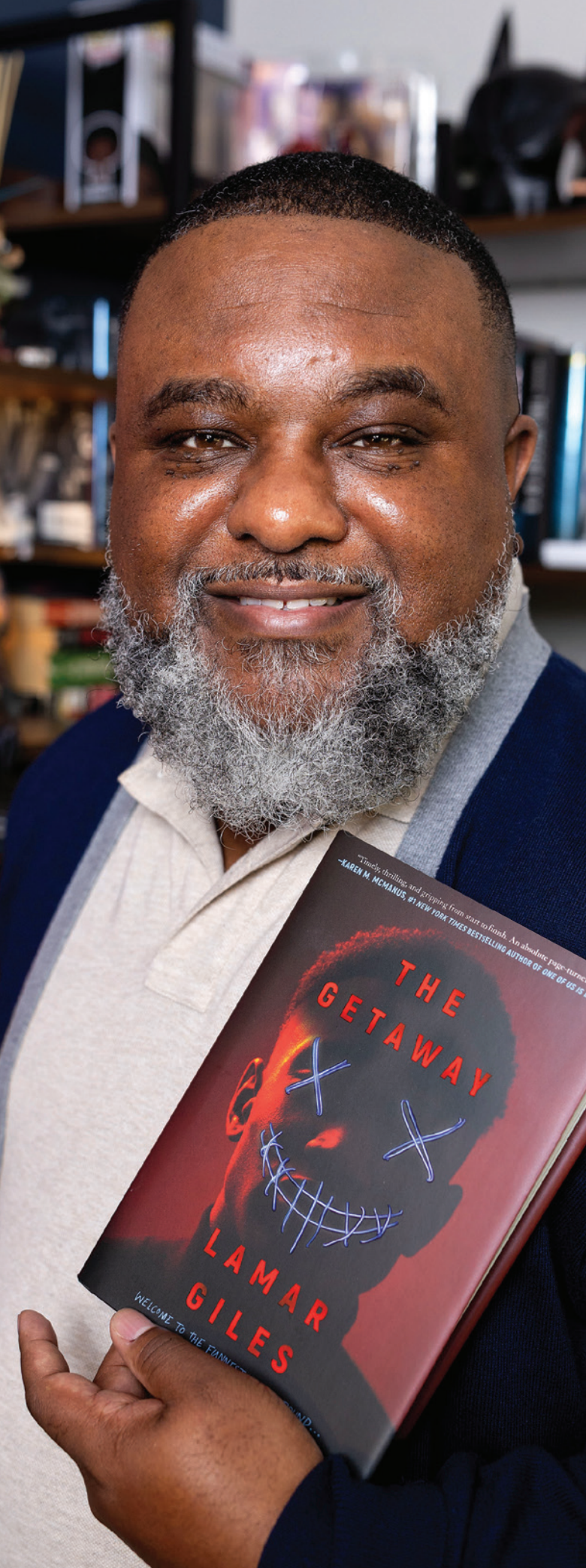
Bradley Lockwood (MBA '17) recently joined SmithGroup, an architectural, engineering and planning firm, as its higher education studio leader based in Denver, Colorado. Lockwood has nearly 20 years of experience in the higher education sector and most recently served as vice president and managing principal of higher education at Moseley Architects.



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ALUMNUS LAMAR GILES

Books, Belonging and the Power of Libraries

INTERVIEW BY JEFF CUNNINGHAM (B.S. '06)

While many children ask for toys when shopping with their parents, **Lamar Giles (B.S. '01, MFA '17)** and his sister were more likely to request books. Buying books is expensive, though, so Giles' mother introduced him to the library where he discovered an infinite world of possibilities. "Anything that struck my interest, a section of the library had something about it," Giles said. Decades later, the Hopewell, Virginia, native has built a career with words.

Giles is the author of "Star Wars: Sanctuary," "Ruin Road" and "The Getaway," which has a television adaptation in the works through Don Cheadle's This Radicle Act and Sony Pictures Television. He is also the inaugural writer-in-residence at William & Mary.

His writing is geared toward audiences who traditionally have not seen themselves represented in fiction. Giles cofounded the nonprofit We Need Diverse Books in 2014, and much of his focus at William & Mary revolves around archiving and sharing the work of Virginia's women writers.

Monarch Magazine caught up with the two-time alum last fall to discuss "Star Wars," libraries and his lifelong love for storytelling.

Describe what it was like being a student at Old Dominion University.

(Being an) undergraduate was probably one of the best experiences of my life. I made friends that I'm still friends with today. I met my wife. We often talk about the first time we met on campus, and how we never would've expected it to lead to a 23-year relationship with a 4-year-old running around that looks like us. That part is special.

Grad school was when I came back to get my MFA in creative writing. And that's after I sold two novels. I wanted to have a stronger foundation for the career I was pursuing. I'd gone from having a corporate day job for over a decade to being a full-time artist, a novelist. And I had some really great teachers — Sheri Reynolds, Janet Peery ... all the rest of that department. I really did learn a lot that has still served me to this day.

What lessons from the University do you carry with you?

Meeting a professor like Sheri Reynolds, who had actually done the work that I wanted to do, had a bigger impression on me than just what we learned

in books. Because I saw that Sheri was a regular person with a big personality, huge talent and an incredible way of encouraging students. That's something I've tried to take with me as I moved on in my career, and eventually, became a teacher who tried to pass on some of her lessons.

When you spoke at the University's Literary Festival in 2017, you talked about having a realization that books come from people, not from on high.

I grew up in Hopewell, Virginia. It's a blue-collar town. It's factory workers. It's soldiers because we're right next to the Army base. It's teachers, firefighters ... there were hardly any artists that I knew of, growing up. So, the idea that someone could make a living from art, that these books I got from my library every week came from actual people felt ridiculous to me as a child — up until a teacher I had in elementary school made us compete in a writing contest. It gave me permission to write and create. It dawned on me then, "Oh, wait a minute. I can do this?"

How surreal is it to see a "Star Wars" book with your name on the cover?

Honestly, it almost still doesn't feel real. I don't remember a time when "Star Wars" wasn't part of my life. It's that big of a deal. To get the call to work on these characters that I grew up with, it's the sort of thing that makes you feel like you made the right steps. You made the right decisions. You've done the right things in your career for this thing to come back full circle to something that once inspired you. You really can't ask for more than to be able to contribute to one of your favorite fictional universes.

You're up-front that you write books for Black kids. Has that always been the focus of your work, or is that something that's evolved?

It's always been the focus. One of my biggest frustrations, particularly in high school, was that nothing we were reading (was) about Virginians. That was the first level, and the next level was, "I don't recognize these kids as kids in my neighborhood (or) in my classes." I vowed very early on, not knowing what would come of it, "If I get a chance to ever write and publish things, someone who reads my stuff is going to have to read about Black

kids in Virginia the same way I had to read about white children in London."

Is there anything you can tell us about the TV adaptation of "The Getaway"?

We have several writers working on it that used to work on HBO's "Westworld." So, really just top-tier talent that are pitching the project to a couple of studios. The story's strong with the adjustments they've made to make it an episodic TV show. This team did stuff with the story I never thought of; if I had thought of it, I would've put it in the book. That's how good they are. And it just becomes a situation where you're looking for someone to give you the green light. So, we're going to keep our fingers crossed. I hope one day you'll get to see that story on a screen somewhere.

Talk about being a writer-in-residence at William & Mary. What exactly does that entail?

The opportunity came through William & Mary's Swem Library. They were looking for a writer with strong ties to Virginia to help be an ambassador for the library (and) help promote the library as a research facility with some emphasis on Virginia's women writers. I am working on several initiatives to put a spotlight on the special collections that William & Mary has.

A quote that stuck out to me in your residency announcement, and also appears in the novel "Ruin Road," was, "The library can be one of the best schools in the world." Can you expand on that?

As far back as I can remember, my mother was a factory worker who didn't want her kids to be factory workers. She would always tell us to work on our minds, because if we worked on our minds, when it was our time to go out and earn a living, at the very least we could have air conditioning. Her version of working on our minds was that we read a lot. It started with anytime we'd go into a store. She knew kids were going to ask for toys and stuff. The deal she made was, "You won't get toys unless it's a special occasion, but you can always get a book." That became very expensive, because me and my sister would always find a book to bring home. To keep from going broke, she said, "Okay, you know what? I'm going to take you to the library every week."

From there, I learned that I could touch on any subject I wanted. Anything that struck my interest, a section of the library had something about it. I didn't have to wait for there to be a classroom situation where a teacher chose what we would discuss. If I wanted to learn something new, I could go to the library. For me, it meant the library was as good a school as any. 📖



FOR MORE

Scan the QR code for more content and to see Lamar give a reading at ODU's 2017 Lit Fest. Go to odu.edu/monarch-magazine to read the extended interview.



ALUMNUS MIKE GOODING

Military Storyteller, Monarch for Life

BY SONJA BARISIC

When **Mike Gooding (B.A. '85)** went to English professor Alfred J. Mapp Jr.'s home to interview him for Hampton Roads ABC-affiliated TV station WVEC, he heard a familiar voice from the foyer: "Well, Mr. Gooding, I'm pleased to see you finally made something of yourself."

Gooding remembered the "humbling" he received years earlier in Mapp's Southern literature course at

"What Mike has developed in these 40 years is the respect of viewers, the respect of the military, the enlisted, the admirals, the politicians statewide and national as well," said former WVEC reporter Kathryn Barrett in an online story last April.

Gooding reported from 19 countries and embedded with U.S. forces in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, filing from aircraft carrier decks and combat outposts. Raised in a Navy family, military stories especially resonated with him, he said, because "this is somebody's son or somebody's daughter, and this is always a worthwhile tale to tell."

He joined Channel 13 as an assignment editor and stumbled into his first on-air assignment with a CNN live shot during a Suffolk, Virginia, train derailment. He later covered the Virginia General Assembly and anchored sports and news. In the late 1990s, he carved out the military beat that defined his career. A favorite assignment took him to Vietnam in 2000 with teams searching remote mountains for the remains of missing Americans.

At Old Dominion University, Gooding was editor-in-chief of *The Mace & Crown* where he learned craft and leadership — "how to manage people, how to be fair to people, how to be kind to people."

He wasn't a model student. "I was on academic probation more often than I was not," he said. After stepping away short of graduation, he returned and found his footing. "All you've got to do is show up, pay attention, turn in your work on time and actually read the books," he said.

"ODU did everything for me," Gooding said, noting it shaped his life beyond the classroom. He met his wife, **Donna Gooding (BFA '82)**, at the student newspaper. Their son, **Erik Gooding (B.S. '23)**, completed a computer science degree during the pandemic. They also have a daughter, Kate Loftis. Gooding remains a fixture in the stands, holding season tickets for football and men's basketball.

After multiple knee surgeries failed to improve ongoing mobility issues, neurologists diagnosed Gooding with multiple sclerosis in spring 2023. He now walks with a cane and stays active and optimistic. Infusion therapy helps keep his condition stable but suppresses the immune system. "It's MS," he said. "It's manageable. You don't get better, but by getting the infusions, hopefully you don't get worse."


In retirement, Gooding is channeling his energy into veterans and community service. "I'm trying to keep my hand in things that I think are worthy," he said. 



PHOTO BY CHUCK THOMAS (B.A. '90)

Old Dominion University. "I had gotten an A on the midterm, an A on the term paper and an A on the final. But he gave me an F because I skipped six classes."

That lesson stuck. "What I learned is you've got to follow rules," Gooding said. "If there are deadlines, you've got to meet deadlines. If it's expected that you're going to turn something in, you're going to turn it in, completed and proper."

Gooding signed off from WVEC on April 1, 2025, ending a 40-year run as a broadcast journalist — the longest on-air tenure in the station's history. He earned multiple honors, including a regional Emmy, the Meritorious Award from the Virginia Associated Press and the Navy Superior Public Service Award.

ODU ALUMNA SARAH KATE HARRINGTON

Where Wonder Meets the Road

BY RICHARD NICKEL

A once-yellow bus — stripped down and rebuilt into a vibrant, mobile learning space — winds through Norfolk, Virginia, transforming everyday landscapes into living classrooms. Inside, children engage in science experiments, create art from natural materials and learn history by standing where it happened.

This mobile classroom is the heart of Solstice Hybrid Academy, a Montessori-inspired microscool created by art educator and ceramicist **Sarah Kate Harrington (BFA '12)** that serves registered homeschoolers.

Her journey to founding her school on wheels didn't begin with education. It began with clay — and last September, it landed her on national television after a call from the NBC's "Today" show.

"Our students and families were absolutely thrilled to be part of the experience," Harrington said. "We were all a little nervous at first, but honestly, it ended up feeling like an ordinary day ... just with a camera crew tagging along."

NBC reporter Laura Jarrett likened her to a modern-day Ms. Frizzle from the mid-1990s animated children's TV show and books, "The Magic School Bus." Harrington takes the comparison as "the ultimate compliment."

"Like Ms. Frizzle, I'm endlessly passionate about what I do," Harrington said.

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, Harrington earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 3D Media with a minor in art history at Old Dominion University, graduating in 2012. While originally focused on opening a ceramics studio, her career path shifted after she began substitute teaching.

"I totally fell in love with teaching," she said. That realization led her back to the University to complete a post-baccalaureate endorsement in K-12 art education, which she completed in 2016.

During her time in the art education program, Harrington taught in what came to be called Youth Art Saturday School, an initiative that pairs University students with local youth for weekend art workshops.

"That experience was a game-changer for me," she said. "It helped me see how powerful art can be when it's taught with heart and intention. I learned how to communicate creative ideas to kids, adapt lessons on the fly and embrace experimentation as part of the process."

She eventually channeled her energy into public education, including five years at W.H. Taylor Elementary School in Norfolk, Virginia. But after spending time in traditional classrooms, she felt something was missing.

"I've always been fascinated with skoolies," she said, referring to converted school buses. "The idea of a mobile classroom just made sense. I wanted a way to merge hands-on learning, flexibility and adventure — all the things I wished I had more room for in public school."



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FOR MORE

Scan the QR code watch a video of the mobile classroom.

PHOTO BY WILLIAM TIERNAN

In 2024, that dream became Solstice Hybrid Academy, where learning is split into three parts: Montessori-inspired activities, computer-based instruction and daily excursions where students apply what they've learned in the real world.

Its mission is to offer a "homeschool style" learning environment for children of working families, and additional guidance and creative opportunities for current homeschool students to socialize and learn with peers, according to the Solstice Hybrid Academy website. Students range from 5 to 10 years old; Harrington's son is among them.

Field trips have included visits to Jamestown, the Hermitage Museum & Gardens and the WHRO public media station in Norfolk, Virginia, where the students learned about weather forecasting.

Meghan Seiler's daughter, River, a third grader, attends Solstice Hybrid Academy. "The experiences at Solstice are unique because the kids are allowed the space to be seen and heard," said Seiler, who is also a teaching assistant. River is artistic and gets weekly opportunities to explore her creative side with other students. "She loves her friends at school," Seiler said.

Harrington said she thrives on sparking her students' wonder and curiosity. "I feel like I'm right where I'm meant to be, doing the work I was born to do." 🏆

In Memoriam

A Life Defined by Leadership, Service and Heroism

BY JONAH GRINKEWITZ

Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07) was always someone you could depend on.

That was clear in 2005, when he was a student worker in facilities management at Old Dominion University, changing air filters in heating and air-conditioning units and doing minor repairs at Powhatan Apartments.

"I can't recall Brandon ever calling out or missing a day of work," said Thomas Maddox, then a maintenance supervisor for Powhatan, now director of building services. He developed a lifelong friendship with Lt. Col. Shah, who was studying for his bachelor's in sociology and criminal justice with a minor in military leadership.

Maddox watched Lt. Col. Shah's career grow from afar — starting with his 2007 Army commissioning through deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe, where he fulfilled his Army pilot dreams by flying an AH64 Apache during Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and Atlantic Resolve.

Lt. Col. Shah served as director of operations for the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade in Savannah, Georgia, before returning to his alma mater in 2022 to lead Old Dominion University's Army ROTC Monarch Battalion. Despite earning numerous awards, including two Bronze Stars, logging more than 1,200 hours across three aircraft, flying combat missions, and commanding multiple battalions and squadrons, Lt. Col. Shah remained humble.

"He was the same Brandon; he was just a lieutenant colonel now," Maddox said.

His leadership and heroism were on display on March 12 when a senseless act of violence took place in a classroom where he was teaching Army ROTC cadets. Lt. Col. Shah was fatally wounded while protecting the students, and two students were injured before the cadets subdued the assailant. Lt. Col. Shah's bravery and quick response, along with that of his students, prevented further injuries.

"I truly believe that Brandon knew exactly what he was doing in those final moments," said his wife, Katherine Martin Shah, during a celebration of life service that drew hundreds of mourners to Chartway Arena on March 22. "He was protecting people. He was protecting his kids."

While Lt. Col. Shah will be remembered as a hero at Old Dominion University — he was posthumously awarded the Legion of Merit and Purple Heart — his wife said he would be "horrified" at all the attention he is receiving.

"And then he would probably turn to me and say, 'I was just doing my job.'"



Scan the QR code for the full remembrance.



A true hero!

RECEIVED OCTOBER 16, 2024 TO AUGUST 31, 2025

1940s

Cary Y. Adams (A.A. '46),
Virginia Beach, Va., 11/15/2024

Baxter C. Carr Jr. (A.A. '42),
Williamsburg, Va., 11/3/2024

Joseph H. Hecht (A.A. '48),
Norfolk, Va., 2/14/2025

1950s

Thomas M. "Tom" Commander Sr. (B.S. '58), Chesapeake, Va., 2/7/2025

Miriam Josephine Sealeam DiRosa (A.A. '51), Virginia Beach, Va., 3/8/2025

Elinor Lee Tingen Edwards (B.A. '50), Virginia Beach, Va., 2/11/2025

Patricia I. King (B.A. '50),
Norfolk, Va., 1/21/2025

Bettye Sue Phillips (Byrd) Machen (B.A. '57), Virginia Beach, Va., 2/1/2025

Gene McNeal (B.S. '58),
Portsmouth, Va., 5/23/2025

Robert J. Naggy (A.A.S. '59),
Virginia Beach, Va., 11/1/2024

Robert Powell (B.S. '59),
Decatur, Ga., 8/1/2025

Jeanne P. Ross (B.S. '57),
Virginia Beach, Va., 1/21/2025

Robert J. Spagnuolo Sr. (B.S. '58), Virginia Beach, Va., 7/28/2025

James W. Stone, III (B.S. '56),
Norfolk, Va., 5/19/2025

George M. Summerfield (Unknown '54), Surry, Va., 1/12/2025

1960s

Karl P. Baetcke (B.S. '61),
Burke, Va., 1/28/2025

Dinah P. Baker (B.A. '68), Chesapeake, Va., 1/22/2025

Janet D. Benz (B.A. '68),
Syracuse, N.Y., 1/23/2025

Anne S. Boggs (B.S. '68),
Richmond, Va., 4/17/2025

James Harris "Jimmy" Bunch, (A.A.S. '60),
Suffolk, Va., 3/8/2025

Robert Louis Bunger Jr. (B.A. '66), Greenville, N.C., 3/26/2025

Larry T. Burroughs (B.S. '66, MBA '71), Virginia Beach, Va., 4/20/2025

Harry T. Butler (B.S. '69),
Newport News, Va., 4/23/2025

Jeanne Modlin Buyrn (B.S. '64, M.A. '73), Chesapeake, Va., 3/18/2025

Martha F. Cannon (B.S. '65),
Virginia Beach, Va., 1/21/2025

Mary L. Coleman (B.S.Ed. '67),
Virginia Beach, Va., 5/2/2025

Andrew G. Dunn Jr. (B.A. '67),
Suffolk, Va., 6/25/2025

Richard R. Early (B.S. '67),
Norfolk, Va., 2/20/2025

Charlene S. Engel, Ph.D. (BFA '68), Beachwood, Ohio, 11/26/2024

Carol R. Estes (B.S. '68),
Virginia Beach, Va., 1/30/2025

Joseph Millard Fail (B.S. '61),
Chesapeake, Va., 2/14/2025

James A. Gallatin (B.A. '69),
Norfolk, Va., 12/21/2024

Thurman E. Gardner (A.A.S. '60), Chesapeake, Va., 8/17/2025

Jeff R. Hall (B.S. '68),
Chesapeake, Va., 1/6/2025

Dr. Jan L. Harris (M.S.Ed. '68),
Richmond, Va., 1/29/2025

Thelus Gayle Howell (B.S. '67),
Sherman, Texas, 3/4/2025

Margaret Ellen W. Hufstедler (B.A. '65), Little Piney River, Va., 7/24/2025

Shirley Dawson Johnson (M.S.Ed. '91, B.S. '67),
Chesapeake, Va., 2/27/2025

Allen H. Jones (B.S. '69),
Greensboro, N.C., 4/30/2025

Joan Skidmore Lancaster (B.S. '68), Temple Terrace, Fla., 2/23/2025

Wanda Littreal (B.S. '65),
Madisonville, Tenn., 7/13/2025

Michael P. Loizides (B.S. '69, MBA '77), Virginia Beach, Va., 12/2/2024

Richard "Dickie" Allen Lyons (B.S. '65), Virginia Beach, Va., 3/14/2025

Burke W. Margulies (B.A. '65),
Virginia Beach, Va., 6/21/2025

Lucy Schenkman Manson (B.S. '65), Central, S.C., 3/30/2025

Nancye P. Smither Morris (B.S. '68), Kilmarnock, Va., 2/18/2025

Ronnie Hermelin Moscovitz (B.S. '62), Norfolk, Va., 2/28/2025

Polly H. Reynolds (B.S. '65),
Virginia Beach, Va., 8/17/2025

Benn Lewis Richels (B.S. '65),
Norfolk, Va., 3/20/2025

Phyllis S. Rossi (B.S. '67),
Richmond, Va., 6/1/2025

Linda W. Sohn (B.S. '69, M.S.Ed. '75), Fishers, Ind., 3/11/2025

Robert Stahl Thompson Jr. (B.S. '67), Springfield, Va., 5/2/2025

C.A. Volder III (B.A. '67),
Virginia Beach, Va., 1/6/2025

William Bill Walker (A.A.S. '65),
Gloucester, Va., 1/29/2025

James L. Wilkerson (B.S. '66),
Ocean Springs, Miss., 7/12/2025

Chapin E. Wilson Jr. (B.A. '67),
Shipman, Va., 2/9/2025

Susanne Faville Wilson (B.S. '65, M.S.Ed. '79), Chesapeake, Va., 2/27/2025

Betty P. Weaver (B.A. '63),
Chesapeake, Va., 7/17/2025

1970s

Donald Burns Lee Agnew (B.S. '70), Jacksonville, Fla., 5/24/2025

Paul W. Andersen (B.S. '71),
Williamsburg, Va., 11/7/2024

Kenneth M. Bass (A.A. '74),
Chesapeake, Va., 7/3/2025

Alvin W. Baugh (B.S. '78),
Newport News, Va., 7/25/2025

Evan E. Becker (MBA. '70, M.A. '78), San Diego, Calif., 7/12/2025

Capt. James B. Birindelli USNR (Ret.) (MBA '71), Southern Shores, N.C., 3/28/2025

Victoria J. Black (B.A. '77),
Southport, N.C., 7/16/2025

Frances A. Brown (M.S.Ed. '79), Las Vegas, Nev., 4/18/2025

Gerald P. Brunick Jr. (B.S. '70),
Norfolk, Va., 12/19/2024

Ruby S. Bunn (B.S. '71),
Newport News, Va., 9/26/2024

Diane J. Bunting (M.S.Ed. '75, M.S. '79), Portsmouth, Va., 3/26/2025

Lea N. Carter (B.S. '76), Virginia Beach, Va., 1/16/2025

Richard D. Cherry (B.S. '76, M.P.A. '87), Virginia Beach, Va., 1/9/2025

Dorothy L. Clark (M.S.Ed. '79),
Chesapeake, Va., 12/17/2024

Charles E. Cockrell (B.S. '78, M.E.M. '90), Yorktown, Va., 7/24/2025

Doris D. Collier (B.S. '73, M.S.Ed. '79), Virginia Beach, Va., 4/9/2025

Pedro A. Colon (B.A. '70),
Portsmouth, Va., 8/19/2025

Andrew Blackmore Connor (MBA '73), Newport News, Va., 6/19/2025

William Conrad (B.S. '70),
Easton, Md., 2/20/2025

William H. Cooper Jr. (B.A. '71),
Battlefield, Mo., 1/21/2025

Arthur F. Deese (B.S. '78),
Charlotte, N.C., 4/7/2025

John E. Downing (B.S. '73, M.S. '82), Onancock, Va., 11/4/2024

Thomas S. Flournoy (B.S. '78),
Arlington, Va., 10/27/2024

Jerol Gordon Fox (B.S. '75),
Dover, Del., 3/16/2025

Roger Allen Fuller (B.S. '72, M.S. '76, C.A.S. '81), Norfolk, Va., 7/8/2025

Frances L. Gilbert (B.S. '76),
Virginia Beach, Va., 8/31/2025

The Rev. Deacon Donna J. Gleaves (B.S. '73), Great Falls, Mont., 5/11/2025

Sylvia Ann Habib (B.S. '77),
Norfolk, Va., 6/26/2025

John Richard Hackworth (B.S. '70), Portsmouth, Va., 3/6/2025

Thomas C. Hall (B.S. '77),
Beaver Falls, Penn. 10/26/2024

Willie Anderson Harris Jr. (B.S. '72), Suffolk, Va., 2/1/2025

George M. Hecker (M.S. '72),
Pittsboro, N.C., 8/25/2025

Patrick Henderson (C.A.S. '73),
Portsmouth, Va., 2/8/2025

Mary E. Hines (M.S.Ed. '72),
Fort Collins, Colo., 4/2/2025

Donald Lee Hipple (B.A. '75),
Virginia Beach, Va., 2/7/2025

William Richard Hoddinott (M.U.S. '76), Chesapeake, Va., 11/3/2024

Robert D. Hoff (B.S. '74),
Garrettsville, Ohio, 1/11/2025

Donna S. Jakob (M.S.Ed. '72),
Mocksville, N.C., 4/9/2025



A Deep Appreciation for the Arts

BY CRISTINA RODRIGUEZ VELEZ

Whether writing about a local concert, a community festival or a neighbor with a hidden talent, **Eric Feber (B.A. '71)** had a gift for finding the beating heart in every story.

For more than four decades as a Virginian-Pilot journalist, Feber chronicled the culture, color and creativity of Hampton Roads. His “Clippie Awards” in the Chesapeake Clipper, The Pilot’s community publication, celebrated the people and moments that made the city shine. The annual feature included a photo of Feber in attire fit for the Oscars.

“Eric agreed to several poses in a black tuxedo with a make-believe giant Chesapeake water tower as the trophy,” said Mark Kozak, a longtime colleague and former editor. “It was a hoot.”

Born in Haarlem, Netherlands, in 1949, Feber moved with his family at age 5 to Norfolk, Virginia. He grew up in the Ghent neighborhood and graduated cum laude from Old Dominion University with a degree in European history and a minor in religious philosophy in 1971.

According to his obituary, Feber’s Dutch heritage remained a source of pride, as was his love for European football, especially Tottenham and Manchester United.

At The Pilot, Feber was known for his encyclopedic knowledge of music and his deep appreciation for the arts. Kozak called him “a Renaissance man,” who was as comfortable discussing Shakespeare as he was jazz. Feber reveled in reviewing local performances and recalled fondly attending Woodstock in 1969. He never tired of the sounds of The Who, The Beatles or The Dave Clark Five.

Despite writing thousands of stories, Feber never chased a byline. He was happiest celebrating others, from local teachers to high school performers, and could always find new angles on even the most familiar annual events. “Some writers might have argued over a comma,” Kozak recalled. “Eric would just quickly reply, ‘Everything looks great.’ He had already moved on to his next story.”

After receiving a heart transplant in 2015, Feber embraced every extra year as a gift. He was especially fond of traveling, reading and doting on his grandchildren, according to his obituary.

“My dad lived life in the moment,” said Claire Billups, Feber’s daughter. Despite his cardiovascular challenges, he wasn’t one to complain and chose instead to embrace joy. Feber chronicled his health journey in The Virginian-Pilot in 2019:

“Each day is sweeter than the previous. Cold winter days, dog-days of summer, rainy periods, I savor them all. Sunrises and sunsets are marveled. Vivaldi sounds more effervescent,” Feber wrote of life after receiving a heart from an unknown donor.

Feber died of cancer on November 15, 2024. He is remembered as a devoted husband, father and grandfather, but also as a writer whose words articulated the joy in everyday life.

Cristina Rodriguez Velez was the Fall 2025 News and Media Relations Intern for University Communications. She is an English major with a technical writing concentration and a marketing minor who is set to graduate in December 2026.

Doris G. Jordan (BFA '70, MFA '85), Norfolk, Va., 1/3/2025

James L. Kay (B.A. '73), Norfolk, Va., 5/19/2025

Anthony C. Kouzis (B.A. '70, M.U.S. '75), Norfolk, Va., 12/17/2024

James B. Lambert (B.A. '77, M.A. '80), Fairfax, Va., 1/31/2025

Joseph G. Lawson (B.S. '73, MBA '78), Roanoke, Va., 11/11/2024

Pamela M. Lingle (M.S. '79), Virginia Beach, Va., 5/30/2025

Bruce W. Lockwood (MBA '75, M.S.Ed. '92), Granbury, Texas, 5/24/2025

Gregory J. Marable (B.S. '73), Chesapeake, Va., 10/21/2024

Karen H. Martino (B.S. '72), Virginia Beach, Va., 1/15/2025

Charles F. Mikula (B.S. '77), Hampton, Va., 5/14/2025

Lt. Cmdr. Donald R. Midgett Sr. USCG (Ret.) (B.S. '78), Virginia Beach, Va., 4/6/2025

Franklin W. “Ted” Morton (M.S.Ed. '79), Chesapeake, Va., 3/7/2025

David C. Nichols (B.A. '70), Norfolk, Va., 11/27/2024

Anne Passantino (M.S.Ed. '73), Seattle, Wash., 3/25/2025

Anthony J. Pawlowski (B.S. '79), Chesapeake, Va., 7/14/2025

Earnest R. Pearce (B.S. '73), Chesapeake Va., 5/18/2025

Gloria W. Philips (B.A. '75), Virginia Beach, Va., 1/20/2025

Walter J. Roberts (B.S. '71), Chesapeake, Va., 12/17/2024

Gail P. Ross (M.S.Ed. '75), Chesapeake, Va., 1/23/2025

Claire B. Shaeffer (B.A. '74), Palm Springs, Calif., 1/11/2025

Robert J. Siclari (B.S. '73), Chesapeake, Va., 5/18/2025

Robert A. Simmons (M.E. '79), Hood River, Ore., 9/19/2024

Phyllis C. Singletary (B.A. '71), Newport News, Va., 9/26/2024

William E. Southard Jr. (B.S. '72), Topeka, Kan., 6/2/2025

Terry W. Springle (B.A. '72), Pocomoke City, Md., 4/12/2025

Michael P. Stark (M.S.E. '77), Norfolk, Va., 1/20/2025

Clyde W. Stewart (B.S. '74), Frostburg, Md., 7/20/2025

Charles F. Swats (B.S. '74), Richmond, Va., 11/26/2024

FACULTY, STAFF AND OTHERS



Christine M. Annett (B.S. '91), who worked for 20 years as an accountant in the Office of Finance, died August 21, 2025. She was 73.



Richard Lester, MD, former dean of Eastern Virginia Medical School and professor emeritus of Radiology, died May 16, 2025. He was 99.



Cecelia "Cee Cee" Tucker, a beloved University leader and longtime Hampton Roads community advocate, died July 29, 2025. She was 86.

Thomas F. Cash, Ph.D., who had a 35-year career as a professor of psychology in the College of Sciences, died February 22, 2025. He was 77.

Tim Cooper, the co-benefactor of Naro Video @ ODU Libraries located inside the Patricia W. and J. Douglas Perry Library, died July 23, 2025. He was 79.

Vera R. Everette, who worked for nearly 20 years as a member of the University's custodial staff, died December 3, 2024. She was 67.

Theresa A. Gosselin, a former education specialist in the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, died January 29, 2025. She was 63.

Tammy J. Subotich, who spent much of her 33-year career as a laboratory and research technician in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, died June 21, 2025. She was 55.

James "Jim" Jarrett, Ph.D., who led Old Dominion University Athletics for 40 years and helped build the Monarchs into a national force — especially in women's sports — died November 13, 2025. He was 88.



Roberta Ann Swift (B.A. '78), Windsor, Vt., 2/12/2025

Jeffrey D. Tarkington (B.A. '76), Virginia Beach, Va., 5/19/2025

Joseph E. Thain (M.S.Ed. '70), Virginia Beach, Va., 8/3/2025

Thomas Manning Tucker (A.A.S. '68, B.S. '75), Chester, Va., 2/7/2025

Doryn N. Morton (M.S.Ed. '71), Asheboro, N.C., 6/10/2025

Larry R. VanNostrand (B.S. '72), Virginia Beach, Va., 12/29/2024

Pamela G. Vardaro (B.S. '77), Midlothian, Va., 5/16/2025

Lt. Col. Ellison Vickery USA (Ret.) (MBA. '75), The Villages, Fla., 7/27/2025

Wayne M. Waibel Sr. (B.S. '73), Chesapeake, Va., 2/22/2025

John R. Walker (B.A. '70), Austell, Ga., 2/16/2025

Raymond S. White (B.A. '70), Spring Hill, Fla., 6/8/2025

Gloria H. Williams (B.S. '77), Chesterfield, Va., 3/2/2025

Henry D. Williams (B.S.'73, M.S.Ed. '74), Murrells Inlet, S.C., 4/22/2025

Mary O. Winstead (B.S. '78), Suffolk, Va., 12/16/2024

Nancy G. Wren (M.S. '78), Suffolk, Va., 7/7/2025

John Gilbert Wynn Sr. (M.S. '70), Brentwood, Md., Unknown

John L. Yerby (B.A. '72), Norfolk, Va., 11/3/2024

Andrew Roy Zagayko (MBA '73), Glen Allen, Va., 3/12/2025

Carmeline Zimmer (M.A. '77, M.S.Ed. '93), Virginia Beach, Va., 8/8/2025

1980s

Kathryn B. Abernathy (B.S. '86), Jefferson City, Mo., 12/20/2024

Ted O. Ambrose Jr. (B.S. '83), Chesapeake, Va., 11/11/2024

Denny Roger Avery (M.S. '83), Worcester, Mass., 3/9/2025

Andrew Graham Baird (B.S. '86), Virginia Beach, Va., 2/25/2025

Michael D. Benda Jr. (B.S. '80), Virginia Beach, Va., 11/26/2024

Cindy M. Bertsch (MBA '81), Venice, Fla., 11/30/2024

Kenneth B. Blair, II (B.S. '87), Chesapeake, Va., 1/9/2025

Kenneth Lee Bradshaw Jr. (B.S. '78, B.S. '84), Norfolk, Va., 3/22/2025

Joseph Brown (B.S. '85), Guyton, Ga., 2/27/2025

Kevin M. Brown (B.S. '83), Virginia Beach, Va., 6/24/2025

Michael B. Burton (B.S. '80), Virginia Beach, Va., 3/28/2025

Rapture Pauleen Butler (B.S.N. '87), Williamsburg, Va., 5/14/2025

Mark P. Cernak (B.A. '80, B.S. '98), Chesapeake, Va., 1/16/2025

Timothy Lawrence Coffey (M.S.Ed. '81), Chesapeake, Va., 2/9/2025

Richard L. Conner (B.S. '81), Abingdon, Va., 12/6/2024

Terry L. Evans (B.S. '88), Suffolk, Va., 12/18/2024

Charles E. Gann Jr. (B.S. '87), Chesapeake, Va., 6/3/2025

Gregory W. Germain (B.S. '84), Chantilly, Va., 1/1/2025

Kieran A. Hanrahan (B.S. '87), Hampton, Va., 5/13/2025

Mary Lou Harty (B.A. '83), Virginia Beach, Va., 7/17/2025

William O. Hixon (B.S. '77, M.E. '83), Newport News, Va., 11/15/2024

Joyce P. Holcomb (B.S. '80), Virginia Beach, Va., 1/5/2025

Henry Hughes (MBA '80), Newport News, Va., 12/25/2024

Christopher G. Hunt (B.S. '80), Chesapeake, Va., 11/13/2024

Carolyn Moore Jenkins (M.S.Ed. '82), Virginia Beach, Va., 3/8/2025

Dennis M. Johnson (B.S. '82), Blue Ridge, Texas, 5/17/2025

William J. Johnson (B.S. '82), Portsmouth, Va., 4/19/2025

Kevin E. Kelly (B.S. '86), Williamsburg, Va., 10/12/2024

Barbara Krumm (B.A. '82), Norfolk, Va., 8/2/2025

Cheryl Ann Latko (M.S.Ed. '80, Ph.D. '11,), Virginia Beach, Va., 2/22/2025

Derek W. Long (B.S. '80), Temple, N.H., 3/11/2025

Donna P. Lorence (B.S. '88), Roanoke Rapids, N.C., 5/14/2025

Cynthia Trice Lowery (M.S.Ed. '88), Chesapeake, Va., 1/6/2025

Dr. Robert C. Maris (Ph.D. '86), Mansfield, Pa., 10/23/2024

Debra B. Marshall (M.S.Ed. '83), Gloucester, Va., 5/2/2025

Sharon D. Mill (B.S. '81), Hampton, Va., 7/4/2025

Amelia Mondok-Pearson (M.S.Ed. '80), Hampton, Va., 6/9/2025

Carolyn Morgan (M.S.Ed. '85), Hampton, Va., 2/27/2025

Edward J. Moyer (B.S. '81), Virginia Beach, Va., 6/2/2025

William Nimmo Jr. (M.A. '85), Virginia Beach, Va., 7/27/2025

Jeffrey S. Pardue (B.S. '87, M.S.Ed. '95), Virginia Beach, Va., 12/20/2024

David R. Perchonok (B.S. '89), Hayden, Idaho, 3/16/2025

Rebecca A. Piemontese (B.S. '86), Silver Spring, Md., 1/22/2025

Charles A. Plant (B.A. '80), Norfolk, Va., 4/10/2025

Bobby C. Powell (A.A.S. '70), Fuquay-Varina, N.C., 4/22/2025

Joseph T. Price-O'Brien (B.S. '88), Terry's Fork, Va., 4/16/2025

Barbara T. Pruitt (B.S. '85), Roanoke, Va., 11/18/2024

John Thomas Ramsey Jr. (B.S. '81), Chesapeake, Va., 2/20/2025

Susan Reese (B.S. '80), Roanoke, Va., 5/12/2025

Barbara F. Schechter (B.A. '81), Virginia Beach, Va., 4/29/2025

Carol A. Shao (B.S. '82), Mount Pleasant, S.C., 1/3/2025

Donna A. Shifflett (B.S. '83), Hampton, Va., 2/25/2025

Gloria K. Simmons (MBA '83), Norfolk, Va., 1/15/2025

George Clarence Sjolund Jr. (MPA '84), Eugene, Ore., 1/29/2025

Susan M. Smith, Ph.D. (B.S. '83), Yorktown, Va., 7/18/2025

Richard Lynn Spohn (B.S. '88), Parksley, Va., 3/1/2025

Frances K. Stahl (M.S.Ed. '84), Virginia Beach, Va., 2/11/2025

Roy E. Starrin (M.S.Ed. '85), Virginia Beach, Va., 3/31/2025

Joyce E. Steiger (B.S. '89), Saint Louis, Mo., 1/24/2025

Lt. Col. John B. Strange USM (Ret.) (B.S. '80), Madison, Ala., 6/8/2025

William A. Sudduth (B.S. '80), Newport News, Va., 1/17/2025

Dr. Louis O. Tonelson (C.A.S. '80), Norfolk, Va., 3/15/2025

George O. Tyner Jr. (B.S. '80), Virginia Beach, Va., 1/13/2025

1990s

Deborah C. Allen (M.S.N. '98), Statesboro, Ga., 11/30/2024

Christine M. Annett (B.S. '91), Norfolk, Va., 8/21/2025

Jeremy N. Baker (B.S. '98), Portsmouth, Va., 4/8/2025

Lawrence L. Bayles (B.A. '93), Pittsfield, Mass., 11/1/2024

Thomas Bland (M.S.Ed. '99), Burke, Va., 7/12/2025

William L. Bort III (B.S. '93), Chesapeake, Va., 1/17/2024

Wilton D. Bradshaw (M.S. '93), Suffolk, Va., 12/13/2024

Heather Ann Brusso (B.S. '99, M.S.Ed. '01, Ed.D. '04), Chesapeake, Va., 5/7/2025

Tamera D. Cauthorne-Burnette (M.S.N. '93), Richmond, Va., 5/11/2025

Roger Ruixi Chen (Ph.D. '95), Yorktown, Va., 2/4/2025

Burette R. Farmer (B.S. '99), Clintwood, Va., 7/20/2025

Priscilla J. Garner (M.S.Ed. '91), Virginia Beach, Va., 5/3/2025

Betsy Tom "B.T." Homewood (M.S.Ed. '91), Littleton, N.C., 2/5/2025

Robert Kluckhohn (M.S. '90), Milton, Fla., 3/27/2025

Marilyn S. Kuhn (MBA '90), Virginia Beach, Va., 12/23/2024

Patricia A. Lambert (B.S. '96), Clintwood, Va., 12/19/2024

Dimitri M. Lawrence (M.S. '95), Chesapeake, Va., 11/15/2024

Susan M. Linsmier (M.S.Ed. '94), Moore, S.C., 1/17/2025

Loftin Wilson McLamb Jr. (C.A.S. '91), Norfolk, Va., 10/23/2024

Suzanne Leenders (B.S. '90), Smithfield, Va., 8/11/2025

Mary M. Ludwig (M.S.Ed. '91), Fleetwood, Pa., 5/5/2025

Arthur Art Everett Merkel (B.S. '99), Alexandria, Va., 3/24/2025

Radford H. Mitchell (B.S. '99), Virginia Beach, Va., 8/21/2025

Richard Mosher (B.A. '95), Clearwater, Fla., 8/13/2025

Donna J. Nelms (M.S.Ed. '94), Smithfield, Va., 4/11/2025

Lori A. Nienaber (B.S. '92), Fairfax, Va., 11/26/2024

Gregory T. Obenchain (B.S. '92), Chesapeake, Va., 7/29/2025

Gina C. Olivieri (B.S. '93, M.S.Ed. '94), Virginia Beach, Va., 6/17/2025

David Parker (B.S. '92), Suffolk, Va., 5/22/2025

Valerie Scott Price (M.S. Ed. '92), Newport News, Va., 3/11/2025

Bonnie (Raye) Mears Riggan (B.S. '98), Eastville, Va., 2/22/2025

Maj. Frederick S. Roberts Jr. USA (Ret.) (M.S.Ed. '97), Clayton, N.C., 8/28/2025

Cynthia G. Robinson (B.A. '90), Suffolk, Va., 12/16/2024

Sharon Rushing (M.S.N. '94), Tumwater, Wash., 5/2/2025

Barbara F. Schechter (B.A. '81, M.A. '97), Norfolk, Va., 4/29/2025

Capt. Jacqueline E. Sharpe USN (Ret.) (Ph.D. '97), Suffolk, Va., 12/13/2024

Tia T. Smith (B.S. '92), Santa Barbara, Calif., 3/4/2025

Mark Swilley (B.S. '93), Hampton, Va., 10/30/2024

Ana F. Tinetti (M.E.M. '94), Norfolk, Va., 11/25/2024

Amy Wanyoike-Stelly (M.S.Ed. '99), Stephenson, Va., 8/21/2025

Karel A. Wetzel (M.S.Ed. '92), Virginia Beach, Va., 3/12/2025

2000s

Leslie Nicole Bradner (M.A. '06), Cullen, Va., 2/19/2025

Ryan Matthew Brown (B.S. '09), Virginia Beach, Va., 2/13/2025

John Thomas Casteen III (H.D. '06), Keswick, Va., 3/18/2025

Robert L. Dye IV (B.A. '09), Little River, S.C., 10/27/2024

William A. Gall (B.S. '03), South Hill, Va., 5/23/2025

Rebecca Lynne Harris (M.S.Ed. '02), Pearisburg, Va., 3/21/2025

Theresa M. Hyler (B.S. '05), Chesapeake, Va., 12/22/2024

Lt. Col. Jimmy B. Jones, USMC (Ret.) (M.S.Ed. '00), Portsmouth, Va., 1/25/2025

Thomas R. Kane (B.S. '09, M.S. N. '11), Pearisburg, Va., 5/22/2025

Scott Lippert (M.E.M. '05), Crystal, Minn., 3/1/2025

Sue E. Smiley (B.S. '04), Williamsburg, Va., 7/17/2025

Pamela Sue Stewart (B.S. '03), Norfolk, Va., 2/25/2025

Rebecca Weltzin (M.S.Ed. '04, M.S.Ed. '09), Norfolk, Va., 8/5/2025

2010s

Nancy Smith Brown (B.S. '13), Suffolk, Va., 2/21/2025

Aimee N. DeBusk (B.S. '10), Suffolk, Va., 10/25/2024

Kiersten Byerly (B.S. '15), Portsmouth, Va., 8/8/2025

Cassandra Elliston (B.S. '11), Staunton, Va., 8/6/2025

John S. Hefley, II (B.S. '10), Las Vegas, Nev. 1/6/2025

Vincent Branden Inman (M.S.Ed. '14), Ruther Glen, Va., 3/9/2025

Marquis T. Jones (B.S. '16), Waverly, Va., 2/10/2025

Katharine A. LaFave (B.S. '15), Virginia Beach, Va., 1/23/2025

Mary R. Leidecker (B.S. '12), Roanoke, Va., 8/17/2024

Michael D. Margulies (B.S. '14), Virginia Beach, Va., 6/18/2025

Robert N. Melatti (B.A. '11, M.A. '16), Norfolk, Va., 7/11/2025

Thomas D. Ritter Jr. (B.S. '02, M.S.Ed. '11), Courtland, Va., 2/5/2025

Willam L. Wiegatz (B.S. '10), Norfolk, Va., 4/22/2025

2020s

Kevin L. Artis (B.S. '20), Suffolk, Va., 3/14/2025

Thomas M. Reynolds (B.S. '23), Williamsburg, Va., 10/28/2024

Haley A. Rineer (B.S. '20), Philadelphia, Pa., 3/21/2025

Jennifer S. Shrader (B.S. '21), Portsmouth, Va., 4/18/2025

Anthony W. "Tony" Sylla (B.S. '21), Gloucester, Va., 1/29/2025

“

As aviators, we learned early, the most dangerous button isn't a trigger button, it's the push to talk. Because what you say can shape a mission, save lives, create clarity or cause chaos. In our profession, words carry weight. There's no room for ego, ambiguity or noise. So, like an aviator — and even more importantly as a commissioned officer — one of the most powerful tools isn't what you carry; it's

your voice.

Never underestimate the impact your words and actions can have, not just on someone's day, but on

their life.”

— Lt. Col. Brandon A. Shah (B.S. '07)
Spring Commissioning Ceremony, May 8, 2025





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