

EMPOWERING STUDENTS. BUILDING FUTURES.

SPARTAN SUCCESS

FALL 2025

Table of Contents

Message from the Vice Provost ...	03
A Message from Dr. Neal-Smith, Vice Provost for the Office of Academic Engagement.	
Undergraduate Research Program ...	04
Spotlight on student research, campus initiatives, and community engagement.	
Pathfinders ...	11
Explore how NSU's Pathfinders support academic and social success.	
Learning Communities ...	14
Explore how NSU's Learning Communities support academic and social success.	
Common Reader ...	19
Provides students, faculty, and staff with a clear roadmap for engaging in discussions, activities, and reflections centered on the Common Reader of the Year, <i>Take Your Seat at the Table</i> by Anthony O'Neal.	
Dr Patricia Lynch Stith Center ...	22
A vital role in advancing student success, leadership development, and holistic support at Norfolk State University. Through innovative programming, mentorship, and intentional engagement.	
Student Success ...	28
Features on students thriving inside and outside the classroom.	
The Writing Center ...	34
Tools, activities, and resources supporting student writing across all disciplines.	
Student Pathways & Academic Formation ...	38
A behind-the-scenes look at mentorship, advising, and student support initiatives.	
Upcoming Events ...	43
All of OAE's Departments upcoming events.	
Message from the Editor ...	47
A reflective note from the editor.	

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PROVOST

Happy New Year and welcome to a new semester!



As we begin 2026, we are excited for the opportunities ahead and grateful for the momentum built during the Fall 2025 semester. This past term was filled with meaningful activity and impactful initiatives aimed at strengthening Academic Affairs through intentional, strategic, high-impact, and holistic support for our students and campus partners.

Our work remains grounded in a deep commitment to ensuring that Spartan scholars are supported at every stage of their academic journey. Through collaborative efforts, innovative programming, and a focus on student-centered practices, we continue to expand opportunities that promote academic success, personal development, and post-graduation readiness.

As you read through this newsletter, we hope you'll see the collective impact of our work and find opportunities to engage, collaborate, and grow alongside us. Thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to student success.

Here's to a productive, purpose-filled, and successful new year ahead!

Andrea Neal-Smith



Undergraduate Research

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH TAKES A SWING AT SUCCESS

EXPLORING GRADUATE PATHWAYS: URMP SCHOLARS VISIT VIRGINIA TECH

The Undergraduate Research and Mentorship Program scholars embarked on a meaningful and inspiring graduate school tour to Virginia Tech. This visit offered students an up-close look at advanced academic opportunities, campus culture, and the resources available to support their future scholarly pursuits.

The trip showcased our scholars' commitment to academic excellence and their continued dedication to preparing for graduate studies. From program presentations to campus exploration, students gained valuable insight into what lies ahead on their educational journeys.

As our students continue preparing for their futures, we look forward to offering even more impactful tours and academic experiences.



Spartans Making an Impact



This semester's URM Service Day was a meaningful and inspiring success. Our Spartans came together with purpose, assembling gift bags for children at CHKD while supporting Fear 2 Freedom's powerful mission to restore hope and dignity to survivors of sexual assault.

The room was filled with teamwork, compassion, and a genuine desire to make a difference. Each bag assembled reflected the heart of our program service, empathy, and community engagement.

Learning, Laughter, and Leadership with Dr. Christina Pinkston

The Undergraduate Research and Mentorship Program had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Christina Pinkston for an engaging and empowering workshop. Dr. Pinkston shared insightful strategies on public speaking from mastering confidence to delivering clear, compelling messages.

Her dynamic presentation kept the room energized, filled with laughter, and eager to learn. Students left feeling more prepared, more inspired, and more confident in their ability to communicate their research with impact.

A true gem in our Spartan community, Dr. Pinkston continues to demonstrate what it means to uplift and empower the next generation of scholars.



SPARTAN CELEBRATIONS



Rachel Vincitore, Ed.D.
Spiritual Coach certification



Brandon Matthews
Winter Graduate



A'Lauren Gilchrist
Winter Graduate



Xavier Jones
2026 Vice Chairman for the
DEI/Fair Housing Committee



Aleivy Robinson
Internship with TowneBank



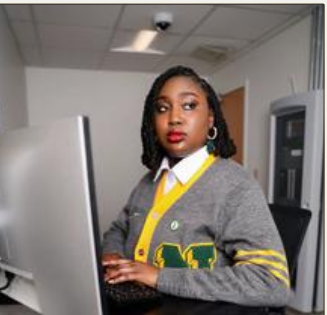
Toni Hall
Accepted into Grad School



Takedra Smith
Received Doctoral Degree



My'Chael Hyman
Honored at NACADA



Lazarea Butler
Winter Graduate



Kya Peaks
Sworn in as a CASA



Dr Andrea Neal-Smith
Completion of VA Women's leader
seminarian program.



Mr. Simon Marius Reed
Hired FullTime

Honoring the Heart of Academic Engagement

At the Office of Academic Engagement, every achievement big or small reflects the passion, dedication, and resilience of our incredible team. Spartan Celebrations is a space to spotlight the individuals and groups who go above and beyond to support student success, build community, and strengthen NSU's mission.

MEET

DR OMEGA WILSON

LEADERSHIP



Dr. Omega Wilson is a seasoned educational leader and leadership development expert with an impressive background in education and operations. As a former Principal, Director of High School Education, and Vice President of Operations and now the Founder and CEO of Innovative Strategies Consulting, LLC—Dr. Wilson brings a wealth of knowledge and real-world experience.

She is passionate about developing leaders and specializes in supporting high-performing professionals as they transition into impactful leadership roles.

Dr. Wilson truly understands what it takes to grow to the next level and is deeply committed to helping others do the same.



We were honored to welcome Dr. Wilson to our department, where she facilitated a dynamic and impactful leadership training for several of our leaders. The session was intentionally designed to support leaders at various stages of their professional journeys, with a focus on leadership identity, effective communication, and confident decision-making. Drawing from her extensive experience in education and executive leadership, Dr. Wilson shared practical strategies, proven leadership frameworks, and real-world insights that challenged participants to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as leaders.

Throughout the training, Dr. Wilson emphasized the importance of self-reflection, accountability, and intentional growth. Participants were encouraged to evaluate their leadership styles, embrace adaptability, and lead with purpose in their respective roles. Her engaging and collaborative approach fostered meaningful dialogue and connection among attendees, leaving our team inspired, motivated, and equipped with actionable tools they can immediately apply in their daily work. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn from Dr. Wilson and appreciate the lasting impact her expertise brought to our department.

PELL INITIATIVE OF VIRGINIA AT NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH ACCESS, BELONGING, AND COMPLETION

The Pell Initiative of Virginia (PIV) is a Commonwealth-funded effort designed to strengthen enrollment, persistence, and degree completion for Pell-eligible students. Through this initiative, Norfolk State University has been awarded more than \$4 million to support targeted, student-centered strategies that promote access, belonging, and long-term success.

At Norfolk State, these funds support several coordinated initiatives designed to meet students at critical transition points in their academic journey. One major component is the Pathfinders Program, which provides holistic, wraparound support across the student lifecycle, focusing on academic success, engagement, and persistence. The program is built on a three-pronged model (attract, support and connect) that emphasizes academic support, personal and social belonging, and persistence-focused interventions designed to meet students where they are. Through connection, academic preparedness, career development and readiness, wellness, and financial literacy, Spartan Pathfinders ensures learners feel supported, confident, and prepared to thrive from their first semester onward to graduation and beyond. The program focuses on leveraging existing signature programs while minimizing duplication of efforts and celebrating current successful initiatives, which are reflected in the Spartan Pathfinder Four-Year Roadmap.



In addition to Pathfinders, NSU has invested in two complementary initiatives that expand support for key student populations:

- Student Parent Network - This initiative supports student parents by connecting them with academic resources, campus services, and community-based supports that acknowledge and address the unique responsibilities they balance while pursuing their degrees. Students are paired with faculty mentors and have community based family engagements to build support.
- Transfer Student Support - This initiative supports both Passport and non-Passport transfer students by fostering early connection, belonging, and academic engagement. While the Passport Program is administered through Enrollment Management, this initiative works collaboratively to ensure transfer students are connected to mentoring, experiential learning opportunities, academic resources, and campus networks that support a smooth transition and long-term success.

Together, these initiatives emphasize belonging, experiential learning, workforce readiness, and faculty engagement, ensuring students are not only retained but supported holistically as they progress toward degree completion.

For more information about the Pell Initiative of Virginia at Norfolk State University and the programs supported through this funding, please contact Dr. Andrea Neal-Smith at apneal@nsu.edu



Pathfinders

The Spartan Pathfinders program at Norfolk State University supports Pell-eligible students through a holistic approach that promotes academic success, well-being, and career readiness, empowering them to persist, graduate, and thrive as global citizens and leaders.

The Pathfinders community continues to shine this semester both on campus and across our social media platforms. From inspirational moments to student spotlights, our Pathfinders Instagram page has captured the energy, growth, and pride that make this program so special.

Pathfinders



Pathfinder joined the LC students and spent a full day volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House, offering support, comfort, and compassion to families navigating serious health challenges.

Throughout the visit, students embraced the true spirit of service showing up with kindness, listening ears, and a commitment to spreading warmth during difficult times. The experience was a powerful reminder of the impact that love, presence, and community can have on families in moments of uncertainty.



Advancing Leadership Excellence



The Office of Academic Engagement is proud to celebrate Dr. Neal-Smith, who officially graduated last month from the Virginia Women's Leadership Seminar Program. This milestone reflects Dr. Neal-Smith's continued commitment to leadership development, professional growth, and service excellence. The Virginia Women's Leadership Seminar Program is designed to empower leaders through intensive training, mentorship, and collaborative learning experiences that strengthen strategic thinking and inclusive leadership practices.

Dr. Neal-Smith's successful completion of the program highlights her dedication to expanding her impact both within the university community and beyond. Dr. Neal-Smith's achievement serves as an inspiration to colleagues and students alike, reinforcing the importance of lifelong learning and leadership advancement. We congratulate Dr. Neal-Smith on this well-deserved accomplishment and look forward to the continued positive influence she will make as a leader and advocate for academic and professional excellence.

Learning communities



Learning Beyond the Classroom: LC Mentors & Influencers at Norfolk CASA

Celebrating Leadership and Community Advocacy: Kya Peaks



LC Mentors & Influencers were in action as Norfolk State University Learning Community students stepped beyond the classroom and into the Norfolk Courthouse to meet with Norfolk CASA, Inc. (Court Appointed Special Advocates). This powerful off-campus experience allowed students to witness advocacy in action and engage with professionals dedicated to supporting children and families within the legal system. Experiences like this reinforce that learning extends far beyond lectures; students grow most when they connect with their community and see the real-world impact of their education.

We are proud to celebrate Kya Peaks, Learning Communities Senior Mentor, who was recently sworn in as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Norfolk, Virginia. This milestone reflects both her commitment to service and the ongoing partnership between Norfolk CASA and Norfolk State University Learning Communities, which has connected students to meaningful civic engagement opportunities for more than a year. As a CASA volunteer, Kya will advocate for the best interests of children navigating the foster care and court systems, embodying the values of leadership, empathy, and community impact that define Spartan mentors & influencers.

Mentors And Influencers



- Mentors provide guidance, advice, and encouragement by sharing knowledge, experiences, and resources to help others navigate academic, personal, and professional goals. They foster growth through listening, coaching, and consistent support.
- Influencers inspire and motivate others by modeling positive behaviors, promoting engagement, and creating connections within a community. They use their voice, actions, and leadership to encourage involvement, build confidence, and drive positive change.

LC Mentors & Influencers were in action this week as Dr. Vincitore welcomed special guest Andrew Burlile, Director of the Writing Center, for an engaging discussion on campus resources, mentorship, leadership, and community building. The session provided students with valuable insights into how to effectively support their peers while strengthening their own leadership skills.



Through conversations like these, Spartans deepen their understanding of the power of guidance, connection, and intentional leadership. LC Mentors & Influencers gain practical strategies for mentoring their peers, navigating campus resources, and building inclusive spaces that encourage collaboration and growth. Each experience equips students with the confidence and tools to lead with purpose, strengthen meaningful campus relationships, and actively contribute to a supportive, engaged, and empowered university community.

Reflect & Represent

Spartans truly showed up and showed out at this year's Reflect & Represent event, a celebration designed to highlight confidence, individuality, and the power of every Spartan story.

Students arrived ready to shine as they stepped in front of the camera for professional headshots, showcasing their style, their pride, and their unique journeys at NSU. These weren't just photos they were meaningful moments captured, memories in the making, and snapshots of growth that students will carry into their academic and professional futures.

The energy was high, the smiles were bright, and the spirit of community was unmistakable. We can't wait to feature these incredible faces in the Learning Communities Yearbook, where each photo represents a chapter in a much larger Spartan story.

Reflect & Represent reminded us once again: every Spartan journey deserves to be seen, celebrated, and remembered.



WHRO

LIGHTS, CAMERAS, LEARNING! A DAY AT WHRO STUDIOS

The Network Learning Community had an unforgettable experience exploring the behind-the-scenes magic at WHRO Studios Hampton Roads' premier public media network owned by 21 local school systems. WHRO is home to WHRO TV 15, WHRV FM 89.5, and a wide range of educational programming, journalism, and local arts content.



During the visit, students got an up-close look at professional media production in action. From cameras to control rooms, the studio turned into a hands-on learning playground that sparked curiosity, creativity, and plenty of excitement.

The group walked away feeling inspired and energized, with a deeper appreciation for the power of storytelling, technology, and public media. The experience not only opened eyes to new career possibilities but also strengthened the bonds within the community.

Spartans left with new knowledge, new inspiration, and a renewed excitement for where their creative journeys can take them.

Common Reader

Take Your Seat at the Table was the Common Reader Selection of 2025.

Take Your Seat at the Table is a powerful guide that challenges readers to reclaim control of their lives and step into their God-given purpose. Anthony O’Neal explains that many people feel drained, overlooked, or unwell because they’re not truly leading their own lives; they’re not sitting at the head of their own table.



ANTHONY O'NEAL

THURSDAY,
NOV. 20, 2025
12:30 P.M.
SAVE THE DATE

COMMON READER AUTHOR



SCAN HERE TO RSVP OR
VISIT WWW.NSU.EDU/COMMON



NORFOLK STATE
UNIVERSITY



Common Reader

Modern collection /
January 2030

Common Reader

Fashion collection /
January 2030

Common Reader

Fashion collection /
January 2030

Common Reader

When Anthony O’Neal first visited Norfolk State University for his transformational master class, he sparked a wave of motivation that spread across campus. This fall, he returned, and the impact was even greater.

Students filled the space wall-to-wall, ready to hear more of the relatable insight, energy, and practical guidance that made his first visit unforgettable. Anthony delivered a dynamic session that equipped Spartans with tools for academic success, financial readiness, and intentional leadership. Faculty left equally inspired, energized by his message of purpose and ownership.

In true Anthony O’Neal fashion, he ended the experience with a surprise twist: select attendees received \$100 gift cards, adding excitement and gratitude to an already high-vibe afternoon.

As he reminds us in *Take a Seat at the Table* :
“Your future changes the moment you decide to show up differently.”

Anthony continues to model that truth by consistently showing up for NSU. We are grateful for his return, his investment in our community, and the renewed fire he helped ignite at Norfolk State University.



Registration meets Celebrations

This semester, the Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith Student Success Center made one thing clear: when Spartans take charge of their academic journey, we celebrate big! From registration milestones to academic wins, the center hosted a series of vibrant, student-centered events designed to motivate, reward, and unite the NSU community.



AGOGE Week Ice Cream Social

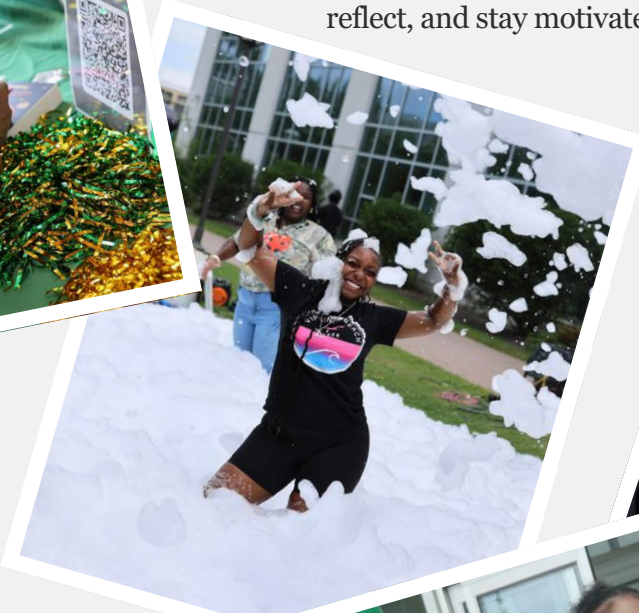
Spartans kicked off the semester by beating the heat with a sweet treat! Students gathered on the Spartan Greens for the AGOGE Week Ice Cream Social on August 14, enjoying free scoops, new connections, and plenty of good vibes. It was the perfect start to a strong semester ahead.

Open House Success

Open House event brought students face-to-face with their advisors while giving them opportunities to win big through exciting giveaways. The energy was high, the engagement was strong, and Spartans showed up ready to start the semester with confidence.

10th Week Celebration

At the semester's halfway point, Spartans were invited to celebrate their achievements during the 10th Week Celebration on November 7. Students proudly showcased their good grades, enjoyed treats, grabbed giveaways, and collected exclusive NSU swag. It was a well-earned moment to pause, reflect, and stay motivated.



Level Up Celebration

As the semester neared its end, we closed out with the Level Up Celebration on November 21. Spartans came together to register for Spring 2026, recharge, and celebrate their progress. With games, snacks, photos, and a supportive community atmosphere, students were reminded that success is a journey and every step forward deserves recognition.

Across every milestone, the Student Success Center continues to champion the mission of fostering academic excellence, meaningful connections, and a strong sense of Spartan pride. Here's to every student who showed up, registered, leveled up, and finished strong. The best is yet to come!



ADVISOR MEET & GREET



The Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith Student Success Center welcomed Spartans to an engaging Advisors Meet & Greet a signature fall event designed to help students build strong, supportive relationships with the advisors guiding their academic journey.

Students had the opportunity to connect one-on-one with the advising team, ask questions, and gain valuable insight on course planning, major exploration, academic success strategies, and campus resources. The atmosphere was warm, encouraging, and focused on ensuring every Spartan feels supported as they navigate their path at NSU.

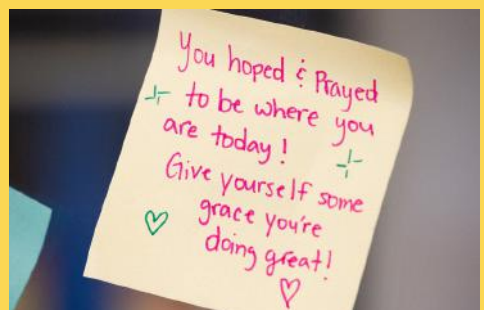
Advisors offered personalized guidance and meaningful conversations that left students feeling confident, informed, and ready for the semester ahead. The event perfectly reflected the mission of the Student Success Center empowering Spartans through connection, clarity, and care.



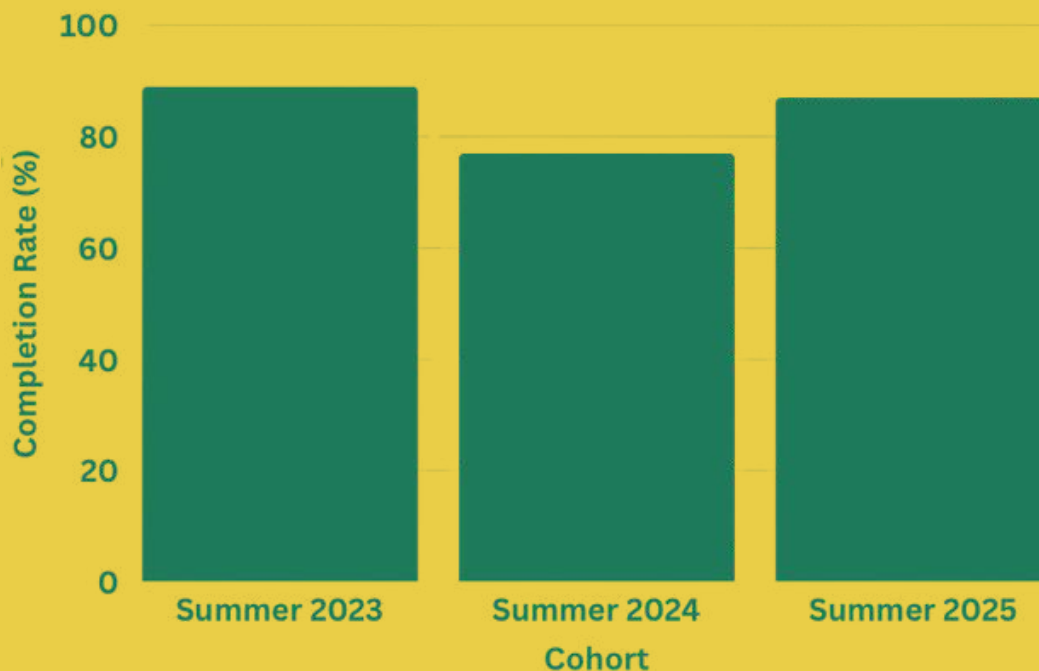
SPARTANS CONNECT AND SHINE AT OPEN HOUSE

The recent Open House was an exciting and successful gathering for the Spartan community. Students showed up in great numbers to connect with their advisors, explore valuable student resources, and participate in an energetic giveaway. The event created meaningful opportunities for engagement and support, setting a positive tone for a strong and successful semester ahead.

We extend a sincere thank you to everyone who helped make this Open House such a memorable experience. A special shout-out goes to Timothy Lemon, a proud Spartan, for capturing incredible photos that showcased the spirit and enthusiasm of the day. Events like these highlight our commitment to student success and reinforce the importance of connection, guidance, and campus community.



Provost Summer Retention Program Helps Students Graduate on Time



Summer Retention Graduate Completion Data

- Summer 2023 66 89%
- Summer 2024 73 77%
- Summer 2025 77 87%

Norfolk State University continues its strong commitment to student success through the Provost Summer Retention Program, an initiative led by the Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith Student Success Center to support students who are nearing graduation and need between 9 and 12 credit hours to complete their degree requirements.

Now in its third year, the program provides eligible students with the opportunity to complete remaining coursework during the summer, allowing them to graduate on time and avoid extending their studies into an additional semester. By addressing common barriers such as delayed course completion and financial strain, the program plays a critical role in improving both student retention and graduation rates.

As the Provost Summer Retention Program continues to grow, it remains a vital component of Norfolk State University's broader retention and student success initiatives supporting students as they transition from academic study to graduation and beyond

The Provost Summer Retention Program has demonstrated strong outcomes across multiple cohorts. In Summer 2023, 66 students participated, resulting in an 89% completion rate. Participation increased in Summer 2024, with 73 students enrolled and a 77% completion rate. Most recently, the Summer 2025 cohort supported 77 students and achieved an impressive 87% completion rate. These results reflect the program's consistent impact on helping students reach degree completion without unnecessary delays. Under the leadership of the Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith Student Success Center, participants benefit from focused academic support, strategic advising, and timely course offerings tailored to their remaining degree requirements. By proactively identifying students who are close to graduation and providing targeted assistance, the Center ensures that more students cross the finish line efficiently and successfully.



NORFOLK STATE
UNIVERSITY
DR. PATRICIA LYNCH STITH
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER



REGISTER

NOW



Forge Your Legacy: Mentorship for Success Partnership

SUBMITTED BY: AVIS LONDON, M.ED, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER AT MENTOR COLLECTIVE, AND JESSICA S. MARSHALL, PH.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SUCCESS AT NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

At Norfolk State University, the Spartan journey is about more than earning a degree. It is about finding a community where you belong and a path to lead. To empower this journey, NSU has launched a transformative partnership with Mentor Collective called Mentorship for All Spartan Success, known as MASS. Managed through the Office of Academic Engagement under the leadership of Dr. Jessica S. Marshall, the MASS program ensures that every incoming first-year student has access to a dedicated mentor. By pairing students with upper-division peers and professional staff, the university is bridging the transition from enrollment to graduation and fostering a culture where every Spartan can thrive.



Understanding the Spartan Class of 2029

Since 2023, this partnership, encompassing first-year students, including scholars from the Robert C. Nusbaum Honors College, has supported 572 mentees. Engagement between mentors and mentees has ranged from individual consultations to more than 24 structured meetings. This is not just a program; it is a growing movement of connection that is already exceeding expectations for the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

- 121% Toward Goal: We have already surpassed our matching targets, with 169 mentees matched to mentors.
- 326 Conversations Logged: Mentors and mentees are actively engaging in real-world dialogue about navigating campus life and academic hurdles.
- Rapid Momentum: The program hit its full matching goal by October 7, 2025, demonstrating the high demand for peer connection among our newest Spartans.

A Call to Action for Alumni and Friends

Our alumni are the backbone of the Spartan spirit. While the program has seen incredible success, the need for guidance continues to grow. We currently have 65 mentees waiting for a mentor to help them navigate their path to success. Your professional wisdom is the exact resource our students are seeking to build their networking skills and career confidence. Through Mentor Collective's AI-powered "Conversation Sparks," it has never been easier to stay engaged and provide high-impact guidance without a massive time commitment. By sharing your journey, you help ensure that no Spartan has to walk their path alone.

Their Stories

Dr. Ivy Krystal, Mentor and Nyliya Adams, Mentee

Nyliya Adams, Mentee

"I became a mentee because I know that this journey isn't something you can navigate alone without guidance; the path can be much more challenging. One area where I hope to gain support is in balancing my time effectively between school and taking care of myself."

Dr. Ivy Krystal, Mentor

"My personal mentoring style is a holistic development and servant-leadership approach with a unique and supportive ecosystem of an HBCU; an advocate and committed to fostering not only academic and research excellence in my STEM students but also their personal growth, resilience, and strong sense of cultural identity. I strive to provide a "safe" space: open dialogue, constructive feedback, and the development of skills needed to thrive in academia and beyond, while also learning from the rich and diverse experiences my students bring. My ultimate goal is to "pay it forward," empowering the next generation of Black STEM professionals to succeed and lead with confidence and purpose."



OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT
NORFOLK STATE
UNIVERSITY

TUTORING

**Got a problem?
We're here to help you solve it.**

**NURSING AND GENERAL
EDUCATION (N.G.E.)
BUILDING FIRST FLOOR,
Room 125**

**HOURS OF OPERATION (IN-
PERSON)
MONDAY-FRIDAY 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.**

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS. CONTACT US
AT
PHONE: 757-823-2122 OR STUDENTSUCCESS@NSU.EDU**

NOT YOUR TYPICAL SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

SPARC'D

OCTOBER '25



NORFOLK STATE
UNIVERSITY

CELEBRATING
25
years
of
Excellence

ALUMNI
HOMECOMING
RECEPTION

THEN
&
NOW

WE
TRANSFORM
LIVES



Behold!
THE GREEN
& THE GOLD



SPARC TURNS 25

A MILESTONE WORTH CELEBRATING

As the world ushered in a new millennium in the year 2000, an all-girls group, Destiny's Child topped the charts, and the nation watched the historic Bush v. Gore decision unfold, Norfolk State University launched an initiative that would quietly yet powerfully reshape the futures of generations of Spartan scholars. Twenty-five years later, the Students Preparing for Academic Rigor in College (SPARC) Summer Bridge Program stands as a testament to the transformative power of intentional student success efforts at HBCUs.

The SPARC Summer Bridge Program has long served as a critical gateway to college success for recent high school graduates, exemplifying Norfolk State University's commitment to access excellence and holistic student development. As a free four-week residential program, SPARC equips incoming first-year students with the tools to thrive before their first semester begins. Participants earn up to seven college credits, engage in rigorous academic coursework, and benefit from intentional peer mentoring alongside deeply invested faculty and staff who support both academic readiness and social transition.

During Homecoming 2025, the Office of Academic Engagement proudly hosted the SPARC Summer Bridge Program Homecoming Reception, bringing together recent cohorts and distinguished NSU alumni who once began their collegiate journeys as SPARC participants. The evening was more than a celebration; it was a powerful reflection of the legacy, community, and the enduring bonds formed through shared purpose and opportunity over the past quarter century.

National research consistently identifies summer bridge programs as a high-impact practice, particularly for first-year and first-generation college students. These programs are proven to strengthen academic preparedness, improve retention, and foster one of the most critical factors in student persistence, a sense of belonging. At SPARC, belonging is not accidental; it is by design. Through Academic Workshop and Enrichment AWESome sessions, students receive structured academic support beyond the classroom, while Spartan Speaks general assemblies intentionally connect them to advising, counseling, financial aid, and other vital campus resources.

Equally impactful are SPARC's co-curricular experiences, which cultivate confidence, identity, and community. From bonding cookouts and campus beautification projects to a Networking and Etiquette Luncheon in partnership with Career Services, students are introduced early to what it means to show up as scholars, leaders, and professionals.

SPARC TURNS 25

A MILESTONE WORTH CELEBRATING

SPARC students do not simply arrive at Norfolk State University in the fall; they arrive connected. Grounded in relationships, culturally affirming spaces, academic confidence, and unwavering support, SPARC creates the foundation for long term success. This early investment is what makes HBCUs like Norfolk State University uniquely powerful engines of social mobility and student achievement.

Twenty-five years strong, SPARC is more than a program; it is a promise. A promise that when institutions lead with intention, equity, and care, students thrive. We celebrate the legacy, honor the present, and look ahead with purpose as we continue preparing the next generation of Spartans empowered, prepared, and proud.

Here's to twenty-five years of bridging students to Norfolk State University and beyond. For more information regarding the SPARC Summer Bridge Program, please email SummerBridge@nsu.edu.



NSU alumni staff and former S.P.A.R.C. Summer Bridge participants were honored for their continued support and commitment, reinforcing the enduring legacy of the S.P.A.R.C. Summer Bridge Program. Pictured from left to right: Ms. Kayla Dunkley-Summers (Housing and Residence Life), Mr. Donald Alexander Jr. (Human Resources), Ms. Alexis Martin (Office of Academic Engagement), Ms. Tia Deas (Office of Academic Engagement). Not pictured: Mr. Ricky Hopkins (Office of Admissions).



2026 Students Preparing for Academic Rigor in College

SPARC

SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

JUNE 20–JULY 18, 2026

Norfolk State University is devoted to offering programs that support student success and opportunities to enhance their collegiate experience. The Students Preparing for Academic Rigor in College (SPARC) Summer Bridge Program is a comprehensive, no-cost, four-week academic residential program for incoming freshmen. Through this program, students have the opportunity to earn university credits. As an institution, our goal is to leverage campus resources and immerse students in a learning environment that will improve academic competencies as they exemplify Spartan characteristics.



STAY CONNECTED!

Use the link or scan the QR Code below to receive notifications regarding the SPARC application process and program details.

► forms.office.com/r/ryxnHEB11Z

► For more information or questions, please email summerbridge@nsu.edu.



www.nsu.edu



OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT
**NORFOLK STATE
UNIVERSITY**

NSU WRITING CENTER



Fall/Spring Hours: 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM Monday through Thursday; 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Friday

Online appointments are available Monday through Thursday from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

VISIT US ONLINE



Beat Procrastination Event

The start of the semester marked an exciting return to campus, and Spartans quickly began finding new ways to stay organized and motivated. The Writing Center welcomed students back by offering resources designed to support academic success and help them stay on top of coursework from the very beginning of the term.



The energy continued at The Write Spot, where several Spartans stopped in and discovered a productive space to focus, study, and collaborate. In addition to academic support, students enjoyed a welcoming environment that encouraged engagement, productivity, and even opportunities to win prizes.

Students were invited to visit the Writing Center to receive a 2025 academic planner and personalized assistance with preparing for the semester. By bringing their class syllabi, participants received help organizing due dates, planning major assignments, and creating a clear roadmap for managing their academic responsibilities.



The strong turnout highlighted the sense of community and commitment to academic excellence among students. With continued programming and support ahead, the Writing Center looks forward to building on this momentum and supporting Spartans throughout the semester.



NORFOLK STATE
UNIVERSITY
WRITING CENTER

THANK YOU FOR
1000
CONSULTATIONS

A Milestone Worth Celebrating!

For the first time ever, the Writing Center reached 1,000 consultations during the fall semester! This exciting milestone reflects our students' commitment to academic excellence and the dedication of our Writing Center team. From brainstorming and drafting to revising and polishing, students showed up and the results speak for themselves. Keep reading to explore the stats behind this incredible achievement!

ANNUAL COSTUME PARTY COMPETITION

What began as a fun idea has now officially become an annual favorite! This fall, the Writing Center hosted its highly anticipated Costume Party Competition, transforming the art of writing into a festive, community-building celebration.

Students, faculty, and staff arrived in an impressive array of imaginative costumes some whimsical, others laugh-out-loud hilarious, and even a few inspired by iconic literary characters and celebrated authors. The creativity on display set the tone for an afternoon filled with excitement, originality, and Spartan spirit.

The event offered a variety of themed activities designed to spark interaction and joy. A lively costume parade, book-themed trivia, and friendly competitions brought plenty of laughter and camaraderie. More than just a celebration of costumes, the event highlighted the power of creativity and the vibrant sense of community within the Writing Center.



FINAL PAPER PARTY: ENDING THE SEMESTER ON A HIGH NOTE

This year's Final Paper Party was an absolute vibe! Spartans showed up ready to focus, collaborate, and make real progress on their end-of-semester assignments.

The atmosphere was energized students locked in, shared resources, encouraged one another, and embodied what academic dedication truly looks like. From early brainstorming to final edits, every student demonstrated what it means to finish strong and stay committed to excellence.

We are incredibly proud of all the Spartans who pushed through, stayed motivated, and used this space to elevate their work. Here's to hard work, community, and closing out the semester with confidence and pride!





SPICA 2025

SPICA and SPPEA aren't just programs they're launchpads. With career-focused skills and mentorship, NSU students are graduating confident, capable, and career-ready.

At Norfolk State University, the Student Pathways Industry Collaborations and Alliances (SPICA) and the Student Pathways Professional Empowerment Academy (SPPEA) help students connect academic knowledge with real-world career readiness.

SPICA brings together employers who share feedback on recent graduates and interns Faculty & Staff, who shape instruction based on workforce trends. Together, they ensure SPPEA's curriculum is relevant, practical, and aligned with today's job market
SPPEA: Developing Professional Spartans

Every fall, SPPEA offers:

- 4 one-hour workshops on professionalism, branding, communication, and career prep
- Access to the SPICA Conference, a major networking event at the Sheraton Oceanfront Hotel
- SPICA Star Awards for top-performing students

Spring Recognition & Advancement

Students who complete the fall series can return for:

- 2 advanced workshops
- A Soirée & Pinning Ceremony, featuring dining etiquette and a Professionalism Digital Badge



Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

Norfolk State University
SPICA
Student Pathways Industry
Collaborations & Alliances

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Robin Kenette
Executive Director
SPICA

Dr. Robin Kenette
Executive Director
SPICA

Dr. Robin Kenette
Executive Director
SPICA



A special thank you to Saranette Williams for leading an exceptional Etiquette Luncheon for our SPARC Summer Bridge students. This enriching event focused on professional development and offered students the tools they need to step confidently into career-ready spaces.

Saranette Williams connector, educator, and respected community leader partnered with SPARC and several academic departments to present an engaging, hands-on session centered around professional networking and etiquette.

Through a series of interactive activities, students gained valuable experience in:

- Making strong and confident introductions
- Practicing proper dining and table etiquette
- Navigating professional networking with ease and poise

These experiences not only enhanced students' interpersonal skills but also helped them build confidence and establish meaningful connections with professionals from a wide range of industries.

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Community Partners

This impactful event would not have been possible without the generous support of our partners, whose presence and contributions helped make the experience truly memorable.

NSU Students Excel at TMCFL Leadership Institute

Student Pathways and Academic Formation proudly accompanied 28 Norfolk State University juniors and seniors to the 25th Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCFL) Leadership Institute, held October 1–5, 2025, in Washington, D.C. This prestigious institute brought together students from 47 publicly supported HBCUs to sharpen leadership skills, enhance professional development, and prepare for success in today's competitive global workforce. The experience culminated in a dynamic recruitment fair where NSU students connected with Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and graduate programs, including Wells Fargo, Boeing, John Deere, and Pfizer, and participated in interviews for internship opportunities.



Celebrating Support, Opportunity, and Student Success

This impactful experience would not have been possible without the dedication of Mrs. Saddanathan, whose collaboration with TMCFL and commitment to student success played a vital role in making this opportunity a reality. Students expressed deep appreciation for the guidance and support they received and shared how meaningful the experience was to their academic and professional journeys. We are excited to see how this opportunity propels our students forward and look forward to the great things they will accomplish as a result of this transformative experience.

Student Parent Network Spotlight

OAE's Student Parent Network (SPN) continues to be a transformative support system for student parents as they navigate the unique challenges of balancing academic responsibilities with family life. The program is designed to provide intentional support through mentorship, encouragement, and access to essential resources that help student parents remain focused, motivated, and confident throughout their educational journey. By creating a welcoming and understanding community, SPN ensures that student parents never feel alone in their pursuit of academic success.

Participants consistently share how meaningful the program has been in their lives. One student described the SPN program as “truly a blessing,” emphasizing the consistent support and encouragement they received. The student also highlighted the powerful impact of mentorship, noting that their mentor served as an invaluable source of guidance, wisdom, and reassurance. This personalized mentorship helped them stay grounded, overcome challenges, and remain committed to their goals. Through programs like SPN, OAE remains dedicated to empowering student parents, strengthening retention, and fostering long-term success both inside and outside the classroom. Participants consistently share how meaningful the program has been in their lives. One student described the SPN program as “truly a blessing,” emphasizing the consistent support and encouragement they received. The student also highlighted the powerful impact of mentorship, noting that their mentor served as an invaluable source of guidance, wisdom, and reassurance. This personalized mentorship helped them stay grounded, overcome challenges, and remain committed to their goals. Through programs like SPN, OAE remains dedicated to empowering student parents, strengthening retention, and fostering long-term success both inside and outside the classroom.

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

LC/PF Welcome Back – Jan 30

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND PATHFINDERS

SPPEA Welcome Back – Jan 29

STUDENTPATHWAYS



UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Spartan Coffee House/Book Exchange – (Feb 4)

THE WRITING CENTER

“Love Letter to Yourself:” (Feb 9)

THE WRITING CENTER

WHAT PROFESSORS EXPECT (FEB 10)

PLSSSC

HOW TO STUDY IN COLLEGE (FEB 12)

PLSSSC

BOOKED, BUSY & BEHIND? (FEB 19)

PLSSSC

STUDENT PLANNING BOOTCAMP (FEB 20–25)

PLSSSC

5TH WEEK RESET (FEB 26)

PLSSSC

WHRO (FEB 27)

LEARNING COMMUNITIES



UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

Learning Communities and Pathfinders meeting (Mar 17)

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND PATHFINDERS

Open Mic Mask Making (Mar 18)

THE WRITING CENTER

Mental Wellness & Academic Success (Mar 24)

PLSSSC

Mask On, Mask Off: Open Mic (Mar 25)

THE WRITING CENTER

Library Week (Mar 23–31)

LEARNING COMMUNITIES



UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

10-Week Grade Check (Apr 2)

PLSSSC

Finish Strong Workshop (Apr 14)

PLSSSC

Mentor & Mentee Appreciation (Apr 15)

STUDENT SUCCESS

URM Study Night #3 (Apr 21)

THE WRITING CENTER

“Know Cap” #2 (Apr 22)

THE WRITING CENTER

In Full Bloom Celebration (Apr 24)

PLSSSC

Final Paper Party (Apr 28) -(Apr 29)

THE WRITING CENTER

Exam Jam (Apr 29)

STUDENT SUCCESS



FROM THE EDITOR



As a proud alumna of Norfolk State University, it's an honor to now serve as a Media and Communication Specialist within the very institution that shaped my journey. I earned my B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies with concentrations in Business and Public Relations in May 2024, and my time at NSU has been nothing short of transformative.

From participating in the Disney College Program as a Concierge at Walt Disney World to taking on leadership roles as a Global Studies Ambassador, Residential Leader, and Student Ambassador, I've always found joy in connecting with others and telling stories that matter.

Now, in my role at NSU, I focus on developing impactful visuals and media that elevate our brand and celebrate our community. Whether it's designing digital content, creating cohesive branding, or producing engaging presentations, I strive to ensure that every detail reflects the excellence and spirit of Spartan Nation.

This publication is a reflection of that same passion for storytelling, connection, and community. I hope you find inspiration, insight, and a sense of pride in these pages. Thank you for being part of the journey.

With Spartan pride,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joni Hall". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Editor-in-Chief



At Norfolk State University, the Office of Academic Engagement is committed to helping you discover, define, and navigate your unique path to success. Whether you're seeking academic support, guidance, or resources to help you thrive, we're here for you every step of the way.

Our core units including the Student Success Center, Learning Communities, Undergraduate Research Mentorship, Student Pathways and Academic Formation, NSU Writing Center, and the Common Reading program are all designed to empower you both academically and personally.

Want to learn more, get involved, or access helpful tools? Just scan the QR code to follow us on all platforms. Discover, explore, and engage with everything the Office of Academic Engagement has to offer!

