

ODU Town-N-Gown

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia 23529 757-683-5759



December 2025

December 2 - National Day of Giving
December 7 - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
December 13 - National Guard Birthday (389 years!)
December 15 - Bill of Rights Day
December 21 - Winter Solstice
December 28 - Pledge of Allegiance Day
December is:

Universal Human Rights Month
Learn a Foreign Language Month



Town-N-Gown Leadership

President

Jo Tabb Hayden

Co - 1st Vice Presidents (Programs)

David Heath | Jennifer Douglas Pegues

2nd Vice President, (Membership)

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University Liaison

Veleka Gatling, Ph.D.

AVP, Community Engagement



Website: www.ODUTNG.com

Email: towningownodu@yahoo.com

Upcoming Events / Dates to Remember

Dec 2 Town-N-Gown Board Meeting @ Webb Center
Dec 2 Naro Minded: Tokyo Godfathers @ The Lê (pg 7)
Dec 4 Senior Exhibition Reception @ The Gordon (pg 7)
Dec 5 - 13 Fall Semester Senior Exhibition @ The Gordon
Dec 5 & 6 King's Choir Performances (pg 8)
Dec 6 - 12 -- Fall Semester Exams -
Thru Dec 13 Card for Vets @ The MacArthur Memorial (pg 8)
Dec 13 Fall Commencement (pg 5)
Dec 14 Legacy Speaker Series (pg 9)
Jan 25 New Year Reception @ The Lê (pg 10)
Jan 31 Annual "Play for Kay" Women's Basketball Game (pg 10)
Feb 3 Town-N-Gown Board Meeting @ Waitzer Hall (pg 10)
Feb 7 *Happy Birthday Big Blue!!*
May 19 Annual Membership Meeting and Elections

Around Campus

First of Its Kind AI Incubator for Higher Education

Old Dominion University and Google celebrated a first-of-its-kind AI incubator for higher education with the launch of the MonarchSphere powered by Google Cloud – as part of a comprehensive partnership designed to accelerate discovery, research and digital transformation.



The partnership uniquely positions the University as a national leader in AI innovation and a model for how universities across the nation can prepare students, equip faculty with the latest technological tools, and support communities for a digital future. A connected ecosystem, the MonarchSphere is where Google, ODU faculty and students, and industry partners intersect to explore, create and develop AI-driven solutions to real-world challenges.

For the Commonwealth, this partnership has the power to position Virginia as a leader in the developing AI industry and create a blueprint for how universities can partner with industry to drive innovation that benefits students, communities and the economy.

The MonarchSphere, which was unveiled on October 29 as part of Google’s Public Sector Summit 2025, presents the first-ever AI incubator in higher education and will focus on several key areas for ODU and its collaborators, including business, industry, and municipality partners in the community and across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

For the University, the partnership has accelerated the vision to become a hub for research innovation, workforce preparation and digital transformation. For Google, the partnership is a model of how industry and higher education can co-develop ethical, scalable AI and digital frameworks.

The collaboration also introduces Google Career Certificates to degree and continuing education programs at ODU by expanding access to on-demand credentials and strengthening Virginia's workforce pipeline. This integration ensures that ODU graduates earn a degree and an industry-recognized credential – equipping them with both academic knowledge and career-ready skills that meet the evolving needs of Virginia's workforce.

The program ended with a Community Connection and Enablement Expo where ODU displayed its applications for career pathways, AI summaries, and transcript evaluation, and Google showcased technology, including Vertex AI, Google Gemini, and more. Watch the video [HERE](#)

Credit: Kenya Godette, ODU News | Photo Michael DiBari, ODU

Full story [HERE](#)

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Class of 2025: ODU Student Turns Passion for Water into Real-World Impact

When Cydell Still chose Old Dominion University, she didn't know that Norfolk's coastal setting with its frequent flooding would shape her future. Now, the 23-year-old civil engineering technology major is preparing to graduate with a clear goal: helping communities manage water resources.

As a leader in coastal resilience research, ODU offered her hands-on learning, sustainability classes, a professional internship and a senior design project on coastal resiliency. She credits these applied experiences with building her passion for water resources and community engagement.

At the University, Cydell immersed herself in campus life. She joined the Early Engineering Advantage Program for Women (EEAP), Society of Women Engineers, ODU's Model United Nations and the ODU Softball Club. She is a recipient of the Jodi S. Gidley Legacy Scholarship, established by Virginia Natural Gas in honor of Jodi S. Gidley to support women pursuing STEM degrees. She also serves as a prospective students.



For her senior design project, Cydell worked with the University's Institute for Coastal Adaptation & Resilience (ICAR) to address recurring flooding in Southside Norfolk neighborhoods. The project brings together students, professionals and community members to create practical, nature-based flood solutions. An internship with Gannett Fleming, an architecture, engineering and construction firm in Newport News, also reinforced her interest in water resources.

Credit: Sherry DiBari, ODU News

Full story [HERE](#)



Paths to Coastal Resilience While Building Community

With shorelines shaped by the winds and tides of the Chesapeake Bay and the Elizabeth River, ODU is uniquely situated to tell a story of transformation and adaptation. The University's pursuit of research to promote coastal resilience — including risk assessment, infrastructure adaptation, ecosystem preservation and building community awareness and partnerships — is core to its mission as an R1 institution.



Wie Yusuf, Ph.D., a professor in the School of Public Service, has worked behind the scenes conducting vital research and at the forefront engaging students and communities affected by the changing landscape. Her interdisciplinary research links environmental science, engineering, planning and public policy to bring academics and people living in affected communities together to discover solutions.

Dr. Yusuf came to ODU in 2008 after completing her doctoral program at the University of Kentucky. After her initial interview, the deal was sealed by her brief visit to the beach. She was sold by the 70-degree temperature and having her feet in the sand in December.

Last year she received the 2025 Truitt-Felbinger Award from the American Society for Public Administration's Section on Transportation Policy and Administration for her work that pulls research and practice together.

Credit: Joy Vann, ODU News

Full story & interview [HERE](#)



ODU Ranked as a 2025 Healthiest Employer

Old Dominion University has been recognized in the 2025 Healthiest Employers of Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia for the fourth year in a row. The honor is provided to employers that support the well-being of its employees and their families through proactive and innovative initiatives that promote health, wellness and work-life balance. Distinguishing itself in academic excellence, ODU is the only higher education institution to earn a spot in the DMV category, while also securing a remarkable sixth-place ranking among institutions with 1,500 to 4,999 employees.



The University's Dependent Scholarship Program is among its most unique and impactful initiatives offered. Eligible employees' spouses and children can receive up to six credit hours in the fall and spring semesters. Additionally, the University offers tuition assistance for employees pursuing degrees; robust employee benefits; the Employee Assistance Program, which provides services and resources for employees facing hardships; financial wellness tools; wellness clinics and health promotion campaigns year-round; and

community connection and service initiatives that reinforce belonging among Monarchs.

The Healthiest Employers rankings are a nationally recognized awards program that acknowledges Universities with high-quality employee wellness-centered initiatives and programs.

Credit: Kelsey Kendall, ODU News

Full story [HERE](#)



ODU Awarded \$2.3M NIH Grant

Khan Iftekharuddin, Ph.D., a professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at ODU and the director of the Virginia Beach Data Science Institute, has received a \$2.3 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. This grant will fund his work on creating new AI tools and computer models to help doctors identify whether glioblastoma — a type of brain cancer — has returned or if changes in the brain are due to treatment. Glioblastoma is the most aggressive and deadly type of brain cancer, killing about 10,000 Americans each year and accounting for half of all brain cancer deaths in the U.S.



Dr. Iftekharuddin is collaborating with clinicians at medical facilities across the country, including The Ohio State University, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Jefferson Medical University, and the University of San Diego and Veterans Affairs.

Credit: Sherry DiBari, ODU News

Full story [HERE](#)

Old Dominion University Launches HEROES Initiative

In a region defined by service, the challenges that come with it hit close to home. ODU's new **HEROES** Initiative is designed to honor that reality through action, connecting researchers across disciplines to study the physical, mental and social health of those who protect and serve.

Short for Health Enhancement and Resiliency for those who Serve(d), the HEROES Initiative is a University-wide collaboration that unites experts from across ODU and the community. Its mission is simple and urgent: to enhance health research for those who have served their community and country.



HEROES is designed as a research hub, bringing together faculty whose work connects to military, veteran and first responder health. Rather than focusing on a single project, the initiative fosters collaboration among researchers in public health, psychology, engineering, rehabilitation, artificial intelligence, data science and medicine to build shared expertise and pursue new external funding.

The HEROES Initiative will bring ODU researchers and community partners together who are working in HEROES-connected spaces (or those interested in doing so) to engage in conversations around subject matter expertise, capacity building, pilot project opportunities, and alignment with external funding priorities. For more information or to join the HEROES interest list, contact Dr. Christopher Rhea at crhea@odu.edu. Learn more: odu.edu/heroes-initiative

Credit: Erica Howell, ODU News

Full story [HERE](#)

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Fall Commencement 2025



Saturday, December 13, 2025 | Chartway Arena

9:00 a.m. Ceremony - Batten College of Engineering & Technology; College of Arts & Letters; College of Sciences; School of Cybersecurity; School of Data Science; and School of Supply Chain, Logistics, & Maritime Operations.

12:30 p.m. Ceremony - Darden College of Education & Professional Studies; Ellmer College of Health Sciences; Ellmer School of Nursing; EVMS School of Public Health Professions; Strome College of Business; Graduate School (Biomedical); and Joint School of Public Health.

Congratulations Graduates!!

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New Mural Celebrates Global – and Personal – Filipino Connections



Filipino artist Venazir Martinez paints murals that have brightened streetscapes from Baguio to San Francisco. The artist uses the image of a red thread in much of her work, a symbol that illustrates how human connections can overcome distances and differences. At ODU last month, that same red thread looped back to reconnect part of Martinez's own family.

Before arriving in Norfolk to paint a mural honoring Filipino American contributions in the region, the artist discovered that a branch of her family had migrated to the

Virginia Beach area in the 1960s. A few phone calls later, Martinez discovered that she would soon come face to face with a long-lost relative living in the area.

“He is my lolo!” said Martinez, using the Filipino word for grandfather. “It’s so crazy how the red thread works,” she said, speaking to a capacity crowd gathered at the Gordon Art Galleries for an October 30 artist talk. Her talk was attended by key figures from the region’s Filipino American community. The mural is located along 45th Street near Chartway Arena.

Credit: Sam McDonald, College of Arts & Letters

Full story [HERE](#)



ODU’s 2025 Life in Hampton Roads Survey

ODU continues its long-standing commitment to research initiatives that not only advance academic knowledge but also strengthen communities in the Hampton Roads region. Through its Social Science Research Center (SSRC), ODU recently completed its 16th annual "Life in Hampton Roads" (LIHR) survey, offering fresh insights into the region’s quality of life, economy and social dynamics in 2025.

The LIHR survey, funded by ODU's Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy, serves as a barometer for residents' perceptions on pivotal topics, such as quality of life, housing, flooding, employment and public health.



ODU’s ongoing commitment to the annual survey highlights the University’s critical role in informing policy, fostering dialogue, and driving strategic initiatives that bolster community welfare. ODU ensures its role is not just as an academic institution but as a vital cornerstone in the development and prosperity of the region it calls home. Pictured is Tancy Vandecar-Burdin, Ph.D., director of ODU's Social Science Research Center.

Credit: Jonah Grinkewitz, ODU News

Full story [HERE](#)



@ The Lê Planetarium

December 2, 2025 | 6:15pm doors open | 7pm Movie | FREE

Naro Minded: Tokyo Godfathers

On Christmas Eve, three unhoused characters living on the streets of Tokyo discover a newborn baby among the trash and set out to find its parents.

FREE screening of Satoshi Kon's Tokyo Godfathers courtesy of ODU Libraries



December 3, 2025 | 6:30pm doors open | 7pm Movie | \$4 (cash/credit/debit) at the door

From Earth to the Universe is the world's first full-length full dome planetarium movie freely available for planetarium use. This stunning, 30-minute voyage through time and space conveys, through an arresting combination of sights and sounds, the Universe revealed to us by science. Take an in-depth look through our solar system, fly through our galaxy, see stellar remnants, and tour the Universe beyond the Milky Way.



December 5, 2025 | 6:30pm doors open | 7pm Movie | \$4 (cash/credit/debit) at the door

Santa Claus Conquers the Martians

The first Friday of each month we show classic sci-fi movies on the dome. Some are good. Some are so bad they're good. This month, we continue our annual tradition of showing 1964's "Santa Claus Conquers the Martians." Martians kidnap Santa Claus because there is nobody on Mars to give their children presents.



@ The Gordon



Co•incidence

ODU's Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries present Co•incidence the Fall 2025 Senior Exhibition featuring the work of graduating B.F.A. students. The exhibition will be on view December 5 - December 13, with an opening reception on December 4 from 6-8 pm.

Co•incidence showcases a diverse range of media and artistic voices, representing the culmination of each artist's undergraduate studies at

ODU. Through sculpture, photography, and mixed media, these emerging artists reflect on identity, environment, and the act of creation itself.

Around Town



King's Choir of Hampton Roads

King's Choir of Hampton Roads presents *A Celtic Christmas*, featuring a harmonious blend of the King's Choir of Hampton Roads, Siren City Pipe Band, KEYS Drumline, Celtic composer and artist Ryan Thomas, and a live orchestra of the area's finest musicians! Performances of Celtic and traditional Christmas music will be presented at CoVA (Coastal Virginia) Church in Norfolk, VA on December 5th at 7pm and December 6th at 1pm and 4pm. [TICKETS](#)

If you experience only one holiday celebration, make it *A Celtic Christmas* -- Simply Glorious!



@ The MacArthur Memorial

The MacArthur Memorial's annual *Cards for Veterans* Program returns for another year! During opening hours, come to our Visitor Center to make a holiday card wishing cheer and goodwill to our local Hampton Roads veterans! Cards will be delivered to local VA hospitals and organizations in time for the holiday season. Supplies are provided and participation is free!

Through December 13th

Tues - Sat: 10am - 5pm

198 Bank Street, Norfolk, VA

(757) 441-2965





Jewish Museum & Cultural Center Presents
L'Dor v' Dor
The Hampton Roads Jewish Art Journey

LEGACY 2025

HAMPTON ROADS JEWISH ARTISTS OF THE PAST



Guest Speaker: Samantha Baskind, Ph.D.

The Remarkable Journey of Moses Ezekiel's Norfolk Botanical Garden Artist Statues

In 1877, Virginia-born artist Moses Ezekiel received the prestigious commission to carve eleven larger-than-life sculptures of some of the world's best-known artists to decorate the niches of the first building established in the United States with the express purpose to serve as an art museum. But less than two decades later, those statues were unceremoniously removed from the building and have since had a remarkable, peripatetic afterlife. Ezekiel's sculptures peppered the land around a swimming pool at a multimillionaire socialite's estate before they journeyed to an art dealer, then private hands, and for a time one statue was on display at a major American art museum. Now reunited, since the 1970s all eleven statues brush against flora and live among fauna at the Norfolk Botanical Garden.

Samantha Baskind, Ph.D. is Distinguished Professor of Art History at Cleveland State University. She is the author or editor of seven books, most recently *Moses Jacob Ezekiel: Jewish, Confederate, Expatriate Sculptor*. She served as editor for U.S. art for the 22-volume revised edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2006) and is currently editor of Penn State University Press's book series: "Dimyonot: Jews and the Cultural Imagination."

**SUNDAY
DECEMBER 14
2:00 PM**

**Chrysler Museum of Art
One Memorial Place, Norfolk VA 23510**

Tickets are \$18. For more information and to purchase tickets go to www.jewishmuseumportsmouth.org OR call 757-391-9266.

This lecture is presented in partnership with Arts + Ideas at the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater and with support from:



Go to www.jewishmuseumportsmouth.org or call (757) 391-9266 for ticket info.

Welcome

Town-N-Gown members are always welcome at the board meetings as well as attending any associated scheduled tours. The December 2^d board meeting will be held in Webb Center beginning at 9:30am. Contact Jo Hayden (jthaydn@gmail.com) for more details and to RSVP.

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