2013-2014 Farquhar Forum

Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences

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Undergraduate Film Festival Winner Victor Mascitelli Puts His Dreams in Focus
As Nova Southeastern University celebrates 50 years of providing quality higher education, the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences considers our own emerging legacy.

In recent decades, the college has expanded program offerings, attracted dedicated faculty members and guest experts in diverse fields of study, and welcomed students ready to learn and eager to contribute to the world beyond the classroom.

This is our tradition in the making.
TRADITIONS BEGIN WITH A VISION FOR THE FUTURE.

At the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, our vision is to enable students to reach their academic, personal, and professional goals by providing the resources and support they need to discover their passions and gain applicable learning experiences in the classroom and beyond.

Toward this goal, the college has recently opened a new chemistry lab; supported student and faculty member research on the brain and the environment; and celebrated the work of our students creating original music, poetry, visual art, and films.

Victor Mascitelli (featured on the cover) is one such example—a student whose interest in movies flourished into an award-winning film that he directed and costarred in. He credits this success to the encouragement of his faculty mentors, along with the resources and connections made possible by his experiences at the college. Mascitelli’s work was recognized at the 2013 Undergraduate Student Symposium, a college tradition that began more than a decade ago to showcase our students’ outstanding multidisciplinary scholarship.

Another example featured in this issue is alumna Alexa Franky (B.A., Arts Administration), who returned to college after working for almost a decade in advertising and marketing. While earning her degree, she established connections with faculty members who helped her achieve her professional vision. Today, Franky combines her business experience with her passion for the arts in a new career as associate executive director of Augusto Soledade Brazzdance, a not-for-profit dance company founded by Augusto Soledade, M.F.A., an associate professor at the college.

As the college looks ahead, we will continue to foster such connections and discoveries. Providing access and opportunity to students through quality programs and faculty mentorship is not just a vision, but a legacy that lives on in the accomplishments of our graduates.

Don Rosenblum, Ph.D.
Dean, Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences
Attention Alumni: Tell Us What You Are Up To
The Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences is interested in keeping in touch with our graduates. Please visit www.nova.edu/alumniupdate to update your contact information and tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments since graduation. Use the promo code “FCAS” to receive a thank-you gift from the NSU Alumni Association. We look forward to hearing from you.
Why did the manatees disappear from *Laguna Manati*, a lagoon once abundant with the marine mammals, white turtles, birds, and other wildlife in Veracruz, Mexico? What links—cultural or environmental—existed between the manatees and the *campesinos* (farmers) who hunted them for food and medicinal purposes? And what part did these links play in the local extinction of the manatee?
Eileen Smith-Cavros, M.F.A., Ph.D., and the late Edward O. Keith, Ph.D., both associate professors at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, combined their expertise in different disciplines to study how and why the manatee became locally extinct in the region of Veracruz, Mexico, and the impact it’s had on the native community.

The five-year research project took Smith-Cavros and Keith, along with undergraduate students at the college, to the rural area of El Manati, where they sought answers from the elderly residents.

“This meant to the villagers,” Smith-Cavros said. “It’s very difficult to pinpoint why a species disappeared. A lot of factors collided: habitat change, such as the drying out of the lagoon; the land became more agricultural; and the water patterns changed.

“Things that happen in the natural ecosystem have a great impact on what happens in people’s day-to-day lives. It has an impact on the economy and cultural traditions. You start out with questions and you get some answers, but sometimes answers lead to more questions.”

After three trips to Mexico, their research was complete. Soon after, in September 2012, Keith died of cancer in Miami, Florida. Determined to finish the last leg of their project and leave a lasting story for the villagers, Smith-Cavros and sociology major Guadalupe Almanza wrote and codirected a 30-minute documentary film that tells the story of El Manati in the villagers’ own words.

Their film—*Campesinos, Manatee Hunting, and Environmental Regret in Veracruz, Mexico*—traces the environmental, habitat, and cultural changes that led to a legacy of loss in the village with the demise of wildlife, natural resources, and a way of life that no longer exists.

“The original goals were to find out if there were any manatees left in the area, and if not, why? And to try to find out what this meant to the villagers,” Smith-Cavros said. “It’s very difficult to pinpoint why a species disappeared. A lot of factors collided: habitat change, such as the drying out of the lagoon; the land became more agricultural; and the water patterns changed.

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The film is dedicated to Keith, who interviewed the elderly campesinos during the trips to Veracruz with Smith-Cavros, who filmed the interviews and took photographs. Told entirely in Spanish with English subtitles, the film is narrated by Jessica Garcia-Brown, J.D., LL.M., associate professor at the college.

“It was important to us that the story was told in their voices,” Smith-Cavros said of the villagers. “It is the story of their lives. One of our goals was to send this back to the villagers. We wanted it to be in their language.”

*(L–R): Sociology major Guadalupe Almanza and Eileen Smith-Cavros, M.F.A., Ph.D., associate professor, codirected a documentary about the local extinction of the manatee in Veracruz, Mexico.*
Two undergraduate alumni of the college, Sylvia Duluc-Silva and Christie Ledon, traveled to Mexico with the faculty members to assist with interviews, translations, and field notes. Almanza, a current student, helped Smith-Cavros select video clips from more than 40 hours of taped interviews. She also cowrote and codirected the film, which was funded by an award from the NSU President’s Faculty Research and Development Grant.

“Through this project, Professor Smith-Cavros exposed me to distinct perspectives of the environment, which provided a broader understanding of the sociological field,” Almanza said. “I worked with a diverse mix of people on this project, which reinforced my desire to pursue a profession of supporting others.

“The villagers talk about how life used to be easier, even though they didn’t have refrigeration or electricity. They talk about how it used to be a good place to raise children, who could go out and fish and come home with dinner. Now, they need fishing permits, and resources are scarce. It has changed to a cash society with few jobs, and that makes life more difficult.

“What sets the campesinos a world apart is how happy they are. They see the changes, but they are still happy with their lives and their families,” Smith-Cavros said.

“We accomplished more than what we wanted to do. We have a record of how and why the village changed and what those changes meant to the culture. Now, we can pass this along to the younger people in the village and they can get an idea of what life used to be like—and maybe save what’s left.”

There was regret over what happened to the manatees and to the environment. They wished they could have done something to prevent this. They were sad that their grandchildren never got to see the manatees.

—Sylvia Duluc-Silva, alumna (B.S., Sociology)
Edward O. Keith, Ph.D., and students interview elderly villagers (surrounding photos) about the manatees’ disappearance from the lagoon in El Manati and how the loss affected life in this rural community in Mexico. Their stories and the research by Keith and Eileen Smith-Cavros, M.F.A., Ph.D., have been preserved in a documentary.
Students Work Toward Creating a Sustainable Future

As scientists search for solutions to ensure the sustainable future of Planet Earth, students and faculty members at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences are rolling up their sleeves and engaging in research, collaborative events, and the global discussion surrounding sustainability.
During 2013’s Earth Week in April, students in the college’s Natural History of South Florida course got their hands dirty uprooting and replacing nuisance exotic plants on NSU’s main campus with more than 100 native plants, shrubs, ground cover, and small trees.

Environmental science students spent 10 days camping at Badlands National Park in South Dakota, mapping soil samples that scientists hope will help unravel the mystery of a climate anomaly 1,000 years ago—and predict future changes.

A few biology students have been analyzing air quality data and samples in South Florida to examine the impact of cruise ship and other emissions on public health.

“The very nature of sustainability is multidisciplinary. It requires collaboration,” said Song Gao, Ph.D., associate professor at the college, who is helping to develop a new major in sustainability and who leads collaborative events such as Earth Week and the college’s Climate-Sustainability Lecture Series.

The series, which is supported through the college’s Faculty Fellows program, brings together expert speakers, faculty scholars, and students in an exchange of ideas and findings related to climate change and sustainable development. It also gives students a platform to connect with scientists and scholars from other institutions.

“It offers a broad perspective of the issues,” Gao said. “A lot of material in this series is a direct extension of what students are learning in the classroom.

It connects chemistry, physics, biology, engineering, and social science to real-world problems and solution finding. Research discovery is key for sustainability of the human species.”

Shannon Aldridge, a marine biology major and a member of the college’s Undergraduate Honors Program, participated in the college’s Earth Week events by planting native species of trees and shrubs outside the Parker Building. “The field of sustainability is keeping up to date on what can be sustained, and doing everything possible to keep the earth as healthy as we can,” Aldridge said.

Shoveling alongside the students was Paul Arena, Ph.D., assistant professor at the college, who teaches the Natural History of South Florida course and led the replanting project. Arena also teaches Living Sustainability: An Examination of Our Daily Habits and Environmental Impacts, a first-year undergraduate seminar that offers an introduction to sustainability issues and helps students discover how they personally impact the environment.

“Replacing exotics with native plants contributes to sustainability,” Arena said. “Native plants require less water, less pesticide, and contribute to biodiversity, attracting wildlife such as butterflies, birds, and bees.” Students in his Natural History class conducted before-and-after wildlife surveys to measure how the native species changed the biodiversity and abundance of other species.
Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences

“The way we’re using resources right now is unsustainable. We are wasting our resources through practices such as over-fishing and polluting our air through emissions and greenhouse gases,” said Jay Petalio, an environmental science major, who took part in Earth Week. “Sustainability means living in a society with a vision for the future, keeping in mind that the next generation will be using the same resources.”

Students from multiple disciplines are participating in research and activities inside and outside of classrooms that examine sustainability-related issues.

Biology majors Aarabhi Rajagopal and Amal Ayoub (with Song Gao, Ph.D., associate professor) are researching the impact of emissions on the environment.

Biology majors Aarabhi Rajagopal and Amal Ayoub are conducting a research project that examines the impact of cruise ship and other emissions on the environment and public health in South Florida. Both students are members of the Undergraduate Honors Program and the Dual Admission Program. The students have been analyzing field and public domain data, such as the number of cruise ship dockings, car emissions, and wind transport and the levels and types of pollutants found in the air. They presented their initial findings at the Undergraduate Student Symposium in April 2013.

Working under Gao’s mentorship, Rajagopal and Ayoub hope to complete the project by April 2015. “We plan to examine how all of this may affect public health in South Florida, especially with pollution-related diseases such as respiratory ailments,” Rajagopal said. “The research involves analyses of data from several sources such as government agencies, our own sampling, and scientific literature intercomparison.”

Environmental science majors Shari Blaker and Jackea Gray spent 10 days this summer conducting field research at Badlands National Park in South Dakota.

Blaker and Gray mapped the areas where soil samples were being collected to help unlock the mystery surrounding the medieval climate anomaly, which occurred in the Northern Plains of the United States about 1,000 years ago. “Being out in the field and seeing firsthand how our planet has changed over millions of years is unbelievable. We hope the soil samples will tell us a more detailed story of what happened,” Blaker said.

Paul Baldauf, Ph.D., associate professor at the college, who has done extensive research in the Badlands, is guiding the students’ research.

“Within the last 1,000 to 1,500 years, there was a period with warm, dry
In class, we have this ‘aha’ moment. Students don’t realize the power they have. They come into the class not seeing how they are connected to sustainability. And I like to think that they leave trying to think about it.

“Sustainability, to me, is a better and cleaner way of life,” Blaker said. “It is the future we should be striving to achieve. It means becoming less dependent on traditional forms of energy and recycling many of the products we throw away daily. It means creating living and working environments that lead to a cleaner and more self-sustaining life.”

In an Environmental Sociology class, students examine how their day-to-day choices—including what food they eat and the lifestyle they choose—leave an economic, social, or ecological imprint and affect sustainability.

“We look at how society defines environmental problems and challenges,” said Eileen Smith-Cavros, M.F.A., Ph.D., an associate professor who teaches the course. “We look at how what society believes about these issues is equally important. Our society is not designed nor organized to make it easy to be sustainable,” she said.

Environmental science majors Jackea Gray (left) and Shari Blaker traveled to Badlands National Park in South Dakota to conduct field research with Rick Householder, M.A., adjunct professor at the college (center), and Paul Baldauf, Ph.D., associate professor (not pictured).

In conditions and long spells of drought called the medieval climate anomaly. We think this period affected Badlands National Park,” Baldauf said. “We have spent years trying to understand the natural history. Climate changes were inherent in this. Something really dramatic happened here 1,000 years ago.” Information gleaned from the dating of fossil soils and other data is useful to scientists making climate models to better predict future changes.

“We can start to unravel why these things happen,” Baldauf said. “There’s a community of scientists who are trying to come up with solutions and drawing on a multi-disciplinary field … as we confront climate change, deteriorating environmental quality, and sustainability issues.”

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FOR CENTURIES, philosophers and scientists have sought to unmask the secrets of the human brain. Until recent years, though, the bulk of these questions went unanswered.

According to the National Institutes of Health, scientists have learned more about the brain in the past decades than in previous centuries because of the rapid pace of research in neurological and behavioral science and the development of new research techniques. As a result, Congress declared the 1990s the Decade of the Brain.

At the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, faculty members and students are collaborating on multidisciplinary projects and research that explore the relationships between the brain and areas such as cognitive behavior, learning, and memory; the effects of physical and mental exercise; and how meditation and stress affect the way we think, feel, and react.

To advance student scholarship, the college recently added a major in behavioral neuroscience that studies the relationship between the brain and behavior.
“People are becoming increasingly interested in what the brain is doing in a variety of tasks,” said Leanne Boucher, Ph.D., assistant professor at the college, who helps coordinate Brain Awareness Week, an annual series that showcases students’ work in this area. “Today, scientists are looking at the brain mechanisms in various psychological constructs, like memory and social isolation,” Boucher said. “The bigger picture is linking behavior—social, cognitive, perceptual behavior—to brain mechanisms.”

Does the act of learning give birth to new neurons?

Psychology major Jelileh Whitmore and biology major Divya Pandya are collaborating on research that examines changes in neurogenesis (the birth of new neurons) in the common octopus. The goal is to develop a better understanding of the neurobiology of learning and memory.

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“The project is examining how learning might affect neurogenesis,” said James Munoz, Ph.D., assistant professor, who is mentoring the students along with Jaime Tartar, Ph.D., associate professor and coordinator of psychology research at the college. “This is truly an interdisciplinary neuroscience study bridging psychology and biology. Jelileh came up with the idea herself.”

Whitmore is working closely with Pandya, who is a member of the college’s Undergraduate Honors Program and Dual Admission Program for osteopathic medicine. In this study, octopuses are placed in either an enriched- or standard-environment control condition and exposed to various problem-solving tasks and time trials over the course of 30 days. Animals in the enriched environment are presented with various objects prior to the problem-solving tasks. Afterward, they are presented with a series of novel tasks for six days to see if acquired learning has taken place.

“The goal of our research is to gain insight into the neurobiology of learning by examining changes in neurogenesis associated with acquired learning,” Whitmore said. “Our hypothesis is that the octopuses from the enriched environment will show greater learning on the problem-solving tasks, and there will be concomitant changes in neurogenesis.

“If the hypothesis is correct, acquired learning in octopus brains would follow the same processes of mammalian brains. We are asking questions and examining certain types of data that may not be examined in the human brain. I feel there is potential to find something novel about human learning and neurogenesis through this animal model. It would also be interesting to research and understand why the octopus brain has an analogous region to the human brain.”

Continuing this research, Munoz is examining the birth, migration, maturation, and death of newly born brain cells in the adult Mayan cichlid, a freshwater fish abundant in South Florida. Working with Munoz is Ahmed Ali, a 2013 graduate of the college’s biology program who was a member of the Undergraduate Honors Program.

“While the fish brain is reported to contain more neurogenic regions than the mammalian brain, little else is known about neurogenesis in the adult fish brain,” said Ali, who is participating in an Intramural Research Training Award (IRTA) research fellowship at the National Institutes of Health.

“Our preliminary observations suggest that neural stem cells in the adult Mayan cichlid brain proliferate in vascular niches,” Ali said. “An understanding of the proximity of neural stem cells to blood vessels and their ability to respond to factors circulating in response to environmental changes would advance our understanding of how neurogenesis is regulated.” Ali added.

“The findings obtained in this study will advance our understanding of how neurogenesis contributes to ongoing brain functions and will also contribute to future studies examining factors that may alter neurogenesis.”

James Munoz, Ph.D., assistant professor at the college
PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR AND ATHLETE
Katie Dabrowski is comparing the effects of physical exercise (riding a stationary bike at moderate intensity) and mental exercise (computer-based brain training games) on cognition. Which one works better, or works at all, in improving cognitive function?

“Unlike previous studies focusing on aging populations, we utilize a sample population of college students to see how younger adults can benefit from physical or mental exercise. We hypothesize participants will show more cognitive improvement after physical exercise than after mental exercise or the rest condition,” said Dabrowski, whose faculty adviser is Boucher. In the exercise science lab, she works collaboratively with Tobin Silver, Ph.D., assistant professor at the college.

Dabrowski, who is pursuing a minor in behavioral neuroscience, is completing her thesis in the college’s Undergraduate Honors Program. She is a former member of NSU’s women’s rowing team. She was one of only 12 students nationwide who was awarded a Miami Project to Cure Paralysis Summer (2013) Student Fellowship, which is funded by the National Institutes of Health.

“Previous research has not pitted the [potential benefits of] physical and mental exercise against each other,” Boucher said. “I think we have a really interesting question for the scientific community.

“We know that the more exercise you do, the more efficient your brain becomes and that new neurons and connections are created. Katie is looking at how cognition changes as a result of exercise, and indirectly, at how changes in neural connectivity affect cognition. So the next question is, what is the brain mechanism [triggered by exercise] that causes improvement in cognition?”

Dabrowski’s curiosity about the brain has caught fire.

“I am so in awe of the brain and the many angles you can pursue to study,” she said. “You can look at the molecular level of everything we do—what neurons in which areas are firing when we think, laugh, remember, speak, skip, or eat an orange. Or you can look at different aspects of cognition—like attention, decision making, and planning. You can explore the neural mechanisms of language and aging or what happens when certain areas are damaged. The possibilities are endless.

“Studying the brain opens the doors to the ability to understand consciousness, improve learning and memory, reverse or prevent the cognitive deficits associated with aging, and treat individuals with traumatic brain injury. Exploring what makes our brains so powerful and complex is essential to understanding ourselves and the world around us.”
Can Meditation Improve Your Memory?

A GRADUATE STUDENT in the college’s experimental psychology program and a trained yoga instructor, Alexandra Srour is combining the two fields by exploring the effect of mindful meditation on the brain.

Mindful meditation increases present-moment awareness and focused attention. In addition to improving cognitive task performance, meditation also may reduce stress-related impairments on working memory—or the cognitive system that assists with a variety of higher order cognitive tasks such as planning, problem solving, organizing, and paying attention.

Srour is examining the impact of brief meditation training on working memory. The goal of her research is to help identify the cognitive mechanism that is responsible for the impact of meditation on working memory.

“Alexandra’s hypothesis is that mindful meditation produces increases in functional working memory and decreases the impact of a laboratory stress manipulation on working memory,” said Jonathan Banks, Ph.D., assistant professor at the college. “If her hypothesis is correct, this study will help our understanding of factors that impact a variety of cognitive processes.

“Recent studies have shown that mindful meditation has beneficial effects on a variety of basic and higher-order cognitive tasks, such as improvements on SAT scores and working memory. However, there were methodological problems with these recent studies. This project fills a gap in identifying why some types of meditation work,” he said.

“When I began the graduate program, I also began a nine-month teacher-training course in Kundalini yoga, which is also referred to as ‘yoga of awareness.’ The focus of the practice entails meditation, physical postures, and breathing techniques,” Srour said.

“I have always been intrigued by the mind and emotion. Through my meditation training and years of study and research at the college, I’ve had the opportunity to further my [meditation] practice and understanding of the human mind, emotions, and behavior. I’ve also gained an immense understanding of the research process, which has strengthened and refined my skills.”

Alexandra Srour, graduate student in the college’s M.S. in Experimental Psychology program, and Jonathan Banks, Ph.D., assistant professor, are examining the impact of mindful meditation on the brain.
From the Street to the Sky: Art Students Channel Inspiration for Award-Winning Work

ART MAJORS Kate Allen, Fraser Michael Poorman, and Albina Subkangulova find inspiration in unusual places—a picture on the Internet, a red staircase behind a row of shops, in the mystique of a fashion model, or a photograph of a cat.

Each year, students like these at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences showcase their work at the Annual Juried Student Exhibition (AJSE).

The 2013 exhibition—displayed at Gallery 217 at the Don Taft University Center through the month of April—featured a variety of two- and three-dimensional work that included prints, digital art, paintings, photographs, drawings, and sculptures.

Serving as this year’s juror was Martin Casuso, an award-winning contemporary artist and curator at the Lowe Art Museum in Miami.

Allen, Poorman, and Subkangulova—three of the students recognized at this year’s exhibition—discuss their award-winning work.

“arke Allen
Best in Show
Twice Broken
(oil painting)

“I derive creative inspiration from a wild variety of places. The title, Twice Broken, refers to the twin elements of sky and earth—the sun breaking through the clouds and the water breaking against the mountains.

I spent my first year of college as an English major, but after a year of sitting in front of a computer, I decided I’d rather study something that really let me get my hands into something creative. With art, I can make a beautiful mess, pretend it was on purpose, and hang it on my wall. I like to think that I still create poetry, but now I use paint instead of words.”
Fraser Michael Poorman
Purchase Award
(Division of Performing and Visual Arts)
*Woman (collage)*

“I love charcoal because I have the ability to make my work look like
an old photograph.

I first made charcoal rubbings of textures I found around the school.
Most of the rubbings came from construction sites. I had about 32
rubbings and made hundreds of copies. My goal was to create an
image using the rubbings that related to the texture of the image.
For instance, the dress uses the texture of a concrete sidewalk that
emulates the movement of the dress. I cut the pieces freehand and
pieced the parts together like a puzzle. I wasn’t sure what the end
result would be.

The inspiration came from my interest with female fashion models...
a strange curiosity about what the world thinks is beautiful—beauty
that is not seen completely eye-to-eye by everyone.”

Albina Subkangulova
Honorable Mention
*Dexter (charcoal drawing)*

First Place, 2014 Undergraduate Student Symposium
Logo Design

“Being an art student has taught me a lot of great skills including
dedication to my work, discipline, working together with a team,
sharing responsibilities, being confident in what I create, and the
ability to focus on my achievements and channel my creativity.
I fell in love with graphic design when I first learned about it.
It’s a creative process that combines art and technology to
communicate ideas. I work with a variety of communication tools
and media—such as drawing, painting, photography, computer-
generated images, and letterforms—in order to convey a message.”

To read the full interviews with these student artists, visit [www.fcas.nova.edu/arts/spotlights](http://www.fcas.nova.edu/arts/spotlights).
AS AN ASPIRING FILMMAKER, Victor Mascitelli believes that people can be what they want to be through film.

“Film is the one medium I’ve found that encompasses nearly everything you can imagine,” said Mascitelli, a junior communication studies major at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. “If you want to be an astronaut, or make a novel come to life, or write a soaring musical score, you can do it all in film. And then you can try another profession in the next movie you make.”

Mascitelli’s film Zombies: Round 2, which he directed and costarred in with friend Eddie Arocho, recently earned first place at the college’s 2013 Annual Undergraduate Film Festival.

“It has all the elements of a great film,” said Chetachi Egwu, Ph.D., assistant professor and coordinator of the festival. “The production quality was excellent. The sound was really good. He directed it, and he also acted in it, and he did a good job, even though it’s hard to both direct and act in a film. I think the judges recognized that.”

Mascitelli was hesitant to enter the comedy in the festival because, at the time, it was unfinished and missing special effects and color correction. But, Egwu encouraged him to enter when she saw that the film had a defined beginning, middle, and end.

“He came into making the film with production knowledge, but he was willing to learn and ask questions,” Egwu said. “It shows the level of humility Victor has. To be great at your job, you have to be humble, because the only way to learn is to be open. And he is one of the most humble people I know.”

Becoming involved in the film festival helped him meet professionals in the field, Mascitelli said.

“You can’t do it on your own,” he said of these connections. “You always need help from other people in one way or another. It’s called a production for a reason.”

Zombies: Round 2 is the sequel to Mascitelli’s previous film, Call of Duty: Nazi Zombies in Real Life!
Mascitelli got the idea to film zombie movies while playing Nazi Zombies, a mini-game that accompanied the videogame Call of Duty: World at War.

Mascitelli thought filming a video based on the game was a good idea and kept it in mind when he and Arocho started a YouTube channel.

“I looked to see if anyone had done it, and the only people who had were 12-year-old kids. Those videos had terrible quality, but they were getting hundreds of thousands of views,” he said. “So, I thought, if we were to write our own and put in our own jokes—but use the vehicle of this popular game—we could get some exposure to our channel.”

The strategy worked. Mascitelli’s first zombie movie has more than 600,000 views on YouTube. Their channel has more than 10,000 subscribers, and their videos have more than a million views. The channel’s videos not only entertain, but also develop characters Mascitelli and Arocho have created.

“We have a lot of characters and jokes that we’ve developed on the channel, and they are part of the world that we’ve created. We’re using the zombie films as a vehicle to give some backstory to these random characters,” Mascitelli said.

Mascitelli said he makes sure that his productions feature strong writing, intelligent and layered humor, and an interesting story.

“You can make something look really nice, but it can be awful if it’s not interesting to watch,” he said.

As a freelance filmmaker, Mascitelli created videos for NSU with his production company, Vame Studios. Now he works for NSU’s Office of Student Media and Information, writing, filming, directing, and editing videos. He has filmed videos for NSU’s Student Life Achievement Awards and the 2020 Legacy Scholars Program.

Egwu believes Mascitelli has a future in film production. “I would be surprised in a few years if he has not already directed a major television or film project,” she said. “I really see that for him.”

For now, Mascitelli’s goal is to extend his connections in the field and fulfill his dream of becoming a filmmaker who can skillfully create and tell stories that make others laugh.

“I’ve already met a lot of people,” he said. “Building relationships is going to help me—that and continuing to make more films and see where it takes me.”

“**If you want to be an astronaut, or make a novel come to life, or write a soaring musical score, you can do it all in film. And then you can try another profession in the next movie you make.**”

— Victor Mascitelli

Keren Moros is a student in the college’s Master of Arts in Writing program.
James Farquhar Award Winner Hits the Right Note in Music Program

WHEN ADIELLE SILOCHAN was 12, she picked up her mother’s guitar and something magical happened. “The guitar came out of the blue—I fell in love with it,” said Silochan, a 2013 graduate of the Bachelor of Arts in Music program at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences and the recipient of the 2013 James Farquhar Award.

Silochan started singing in school and church choirs as a child, along with writing poetry. By high school, she was taking guitar lessons and writing song lyrics.

Today, the singer-songwriter performs her own music and plays a steel-string acoustic Grand Prix guitar. She describes her style as alternative pop rock— influenced by musicians such as guitarist-vocalist Myles Kennedy and the rock band Lifehouse.

As an undergraduate at the college, Silochan frequently performed on campus. She sang her original song Ready at the 2013 Student Life Achievement Awards, her second consecutive performance at the annual show. She sang at NSU’s Celebration of Excellence, Improv Jam!, Festival of Student Works, and other NSU events.

“The James Farquhar Award recognizes a graduating student who exemplifies the life and values of founding trustee James Farquhar,” said Don Rosenblum, Ph.D., dean of the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences.

“Adielle represents outstanding academic achievement, breadth of campus and community leadership, and a commitment to service. Her energy and enthusiasm in music and the arts has been reflected in her passion for the university. She represents this award, and the award’s namesake, quite well.”

Michael Caldwell, D.M.A., director of the college’s Division of Performing and Visual Arts, said Silochan’s talent, dedication and drive—coupled with her humility and willingness to help—made her stand out.

“She has featured her original musical compositions in numerous NSU musical and theatrical productions and enjoys the respect of her peers,” Caldwell said. “We expect her to make a strong, positive impact in music or any field of her choosing in the future.”

Silochan was born in Trinidad and Tobago and moved to the United States at age eight. “I started playing with my mother’s classical Yamaha guitar. As a child, I had seen her play,” she said. “I started teaching myself to play with a classical guitar book. It was a hobby, but I didn’t realize how much it would influence my life. At 16, the songs started pouring out of me.”

Still, music remained a hobby when she enrolled at the college and graduated in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems. At the time, Silochan was a participant in the Dual Admission Program. She was preparing to begin graduate studies in computer information systems when she decided to return to college to earn a second degree—this one in music.

“I couldn’t get music out of my mind. I thought, ’I’m young, I can do this. I’m going to pursue this and see where it takes me,’” she said.

“When I first started college, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do. Although I was studying computers, my passion for music continued to grow. It was just something I always wanted to do. I was very excited when I made the decision to pursue music at NSU.”

Bill J. Adams, D.M.A., associate professor and coordinator of performing arts at the college, quickly realized Silochan’s passion for music.
“From the day I met Adi, I knew she was special. But I didn’t realize—until she began playing and singing her own music—just how special she is,” Adams said. “She is a very motivated, intelligent, and talented young woman.

“Adi is so open to developing her talents and giving her time for all kinds of ‘gigs’ around campus. She tutored others in music theory because she understands it so well, perhaps because it’s mathematical, like computer systems.”

Silochan said her professors inspired her to believe she could succeed.

“At the time, I never thought I could be a music major. After meeting Professor Adams, I realized my style of music could fit into learning in the music program. He made me feel comfortable, that I could find a niche.”

At the college, Silochan studied music theory and learned how to read music. She vastly improved her voice and guitar skills. She sang with the Bossa Nova Chorale.

“Understanding music theory and studying voice and guitar helped me tremendously. You don’t realize how much learning theory and music can improve your skills. Professor Adams gave us all the tools to expand ourselves and our creativity. I’ve improved my range and the strength of my voice, and my voice is stronger and richer.”

Silochan plans to pursue a career as a performer and earn a Master of Arts degree in Music. And she continues to write her own music.

“When I write, my songs are about things that are weighing on me,” she said. “The goal behind my writing is to relate to people who are going through some difficulty. I want to bring a flicker of hope through my music.”

— Adielle Silochan
2013 Student of the Year Writes to Her Own Beat

SOMETIMES, Sasha Strelitz feels like she was born too late.

“My entire childhood was saturated with 1960s’ rock and folk music,” said Strelitz, a 2013 English graduate of the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences whose passion for the literature of Beat Generation writers helped her win top honors at the Undergraduate Student Symposium.

Strelitz’s fascination with the Beat writers—whose anti-conformist movement in the 1950s was the prelude for the social revolution a decade later—began in the classroom with a course called The Beat Generation (HUMN 3400). Taught by Lynn Wolf, Ph.D., associate professor at the college, the course was a catalyst for Strelitz, who already knew some of the popular literature of the Beat era.

“Dr. Wolf pushed me to dig deeper,” she said. “I realized that the 1960s’ social revolution—which went hand in hand with the music that fascinates me—would never have happened without the Beat Generation.

“Then I found Lawrence Ferlinghetti,” Strelitz said of the poet who co-founded City Lights Bookstore in 1953 in San Francisco. “I was intrigued by the fact that he published most of the Beat Generation literature and that he also wrote poetry himself.”

The result was “‘Ferling’: The Brightest City Light,” Strelitz’s analysis of the poetry written by Ferlinghetti, who is known for publishing the works of more prominent Beat writers such as Allen Ginsberg (Howl, 1956), William S. Burroughs (Naked Lunch, 1959), and Jack Kerouac (On the Road, 1957).

“In my project, I sought to draw awareness to the fact that Ferlinghetti (nicknamed Ferling) is a quintessential Beatnik himself,” Strelitz said.

Strelitz reviewed five themes that run through the body of Beat literature: Eastern religious influences; drug experimentation; jazzy elements; unique poetic alignment; and the employment of Walt Whitman’s poetic methodology, which exemplifies free-verse form.

“Every Ferlinghetti poem I came across utilized almost all of these themes. My conclusion is, whether his name is known or not, Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s writing style epitomizes the literature of the Beat Generation…and he helped spur a movement that would influence the next decade [the 1960s], which changed the Western world.”

Strelitz—chosen as the college’s Student of the Year at the 2013 Student Life Achievement Awards (STUEYS)—brought a passion for literature, writing, and ideas into the classroom.

“One of the great joys of being an English professor is encountering students who share not only a deep and empathetic appreciation of literature, but also feel a genuine passion for words, ideas, and the enduring power of both,” Wolf said. “Sasha has been such a student: a superb and sensitive writer, a remarkably mature reader, and an absolute show-stopper in every class. It is clear that she was born to appreciate the originality, independence, and bursting joy of life that resonate from the Beat writers… . The Beats were a perfect catalyst for Sasha’s imagination because they were creative, original thinkers and writers who radiated passion.
“I once heard, ‘when you are a true writer, you don’t want to write, you need to write.’”

— Sasha Strelitz

“I share the excitement of all of her faculty mentors that Sasha is set to pursue graduate studies in literature. Generations of future students will benefit from her deep love and appreciation of literary work.”

In addition to her award-winning oral presentation about Ferlinghetti, Strelitz was honored at the 2013 symposium for her own poetry and short fiction, published in Digressions, the college’s student-run literary magazine.

“She won awards in two of three categories: poetry and short fiction. That’s a first,” said Suzanne Ferriss, Ph.D., professor at the college.

“Sasha also possesses outstanding skills in analysis, interpretation, and writing. Inquisitive and well-read, she contributed insights in class discussions from her independent research and reading.”

A self-described bookworm, Strelitz aspired to become a fashion designer until she started college and discovered a stronger passion.

“I find it of vital importance to study culture, and I proudly tell people I study literature,” she said.

“The study of literature analyzes the relationship between humanity and the imagination. As for my passion for writing, I once heard, ‘when you are a true writer, you don’t want to write, you need to write.’ I often find myself writing for hours—on napkins, on the newspaper, on a friend’s computer. I have even resorted to writing small codes on my hand so I won’t forget.

“I have always expressed myself by drawing or by writing. Some people have a natural propensity for sports and some for science and math. I could not stop writing even if I wanted.”

Strelitz plans to continue writing, present literary papers, and teach entry-level composition while she studies for a Master of Arts in Literature degree at the University of Central Florida. She hopes to one day teach as a university professor.

“My dream goal is to also have a novel, memoir, and book of poems published.

“Baby steps,” said Strelitz, whose journey is off to a good start.
NSU’s Dual Admission Program: Helping Students Secure Their Future—Today

When Daniel Brookins was considering colleges, he saw a “golden opportunity” to get a jump start on his future by applying to NSU’s Dual Admission Program. The Dual Admission Program offers qualified undergraduate students and incoming college freshmen a reserved seat in one of 28 postgraduate programs at 14 of NSU’s colleges and institutes. By securing a graduate spot early, students who fulfill the requirements can expand their undergraduate experiences, interests, and passions while moving closer to their long-term goals and career choices.

“I quickly discovered my passion for law,” said Brookins, now a junior at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences pursuing a double major in legal studies and philosophy. Brookins is a member of the Dual Admission Program in law as well as the Undergraduate Honors Program.

“Knowing that you have a reserved seat when you graduate is an incredible opportunity for an incoming freshman,” Brookins said. “The program provides a sense of security and motivates you to pursue your end goal.”

About 320 undergraduate students are currently enrolled in the Dual Admission Program, which accepts approximately 10 percent of each incoming freshman class. In addition, about 135 students are enrolled in the program’s graduate or professional schools, and more than 300 alumni of the Dual Admission Program are now professionals in their fields.

“Our program is one of the oldest and most comprehensive dual admission programs in the United States,” said Naomi D’Alessio, Ph.D., assistant professor and former associate dean at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. “It gives highly focused and ambitious students the opportunity to fully engage in their undergraduate education by providing maximum academic flexibility. This encourages students to achieve a broad-based, liberal arts education while building a strong foundation in their chosen fields.”

Robert Coppola knew early on what he wanted to do and realized how the Dual Admission Program could help him achieve those goals.

“I have wanted to become a doctor my entire life,” said Coppola, a senior biology major and a member of the Undergraduate Honors Program. Through the Dual Admission Program, he has secured his admission into NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine. His goal is to become an ophthalmologist.

“Beneath the obvious benefits, the Dual Admission Program allows you to create a strong network with your peers and teachers,” Coppola said. “NSU is an environment that promotes the studying of the health sciences.”

With increasing competition for admission to NSU’s graduate programs, the Dual Admission Program reduces stress on undergraduate students and allows them to focus on their studies.

“One of the strongest benefits of the Dual Admission Program is that it dramatically decreases the stress level,” said Arti Patel, a freshman biology major in the program for osteopathic medicine. “Instead of worrying about being accepted into medical school, I will have a seat in the medical college at NSU. I can focus my efforts on achieving the most I can academically.”

Rajeswari Murugan, a senior biology major, said the program played a pivotal role in her decision to attend NSU.

“Having a reserved seat in NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine made my undergraduate years less stressful,” said Murugan, a member of the Undergraduate Honors Program who also had the opportunity to network with medical students and faculty members at NSU’s Health Professions Division. “This helped me plan and focus my
undergraduate years,” added Murugan, whose long-term goal is to work as a cardiac surgeon with Doctors Without Borders, an international organization that serves indigent patients.

Michael C. Ianniello and Neil Gajera, recent graduates of the college, said the Dual Admission Program prepared them for their studies at NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine.

“The Dual Admission Program provided me with the opportunity of a lifetime by giving me the chance to get an early start toward my goal of becoming a physician,” Ianniello said. “Having this sense of security allowed me to truly focus on my undergraduate studies and my preparation for medical school. I was able to enjoy my undergraduate experience without having to worry about competing with other students for a seat in medical school.”

“The program integrates different facets to produce students capable of learning at the graduate level,” said Gajera, who is in his first year at the College of Osteopathic Medicine. “The Dual Admission Program allows students to have a structured path to a graduate program and provides a secure path for students to pursue their professions... and better the world.”
Chemistry Program Opens the Door to Diverse Careers

FOR DANIELLE ATKINS, majoring in chemistry was a natural fit with her plans to pursue a career in pediatric medicine.

“I chose the chemistry major because I love math and chemistry has a math component—that is, conversion, atomic numbers, and balancing equations. I’m combining two loves in one subject,” said Atkins, a sophomore at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. She was eager to use the new chemistry lab, which enables students to work at an advanced level by using state-of-the-art instrumentation and equipment.

“I also had the opportunity to tour the chemistry lab, and I thought it was amazing. I’m eager to use the equipment,” Atkins said.

Students use the lab for research, coursework, and independent study. With 15 new instruments and 8 new pieces of major equipment, it serves multiple courses at the advanced level and introduces undergraduates to innovative equipment and learning techniques.

“One important aspect of the chemistry major is hands-on training with analytical instrumentation,” said Reza Razeghifard, Ph.D., associate professor and coordinator of physical sciences, who also serves as the chair of the chemistry major.

“Most advanced chemistry courses are taught in the 1,800-square-foot lab, which is divided into two parts: a 1,200-square-foot wet lab and a 600-square-foot dry lab. The lab is equipped with advanced instrumentation covering many widely used analytical techniques, including spectroscopy, chromatography, and voltammetry.”

The lab—which is shared with students in other majors, such as biology and environmental science—prepares chemistry students by providing hands-on training often reserved for the graduate level.

“Having this experience is extremely important,” said Beatrix Aukszi, Ph.D., assistant professor at the college. “Most undergraduates at other institutions would not have the hands-on experience with the level of instruments we have here. Their undergraduate experience becomes so much more evolved.”
Luis F. Perez, a senior biology major with minors in chemistry and business, said “There’s the opportunity for more sophisticated experiments, so I can get my feet wet in advanced chemical techniques.” Perez works as a lab assistant to Dimitri Giarikos, Ph.D., associate professor and assistant director of the college’s Division of Math, Science, and Technology.

“I’ve noticed that working with these instruments has greatly improved my understanding of chemistry and really brought textbook concepts to life,” said Perez, who plans to attend dental school. “From a practical standpoint, having worked with all of these instruments as an undergraduate makes me more marketable to graduate schools and possible research or lab positions.”

Learning to use the equipment helps students perform more complex experiments and analyze results, while it strengthens their professional-level skills, Giarikos said.

“Using the instruments and equipment in the lab helps students understand the concepts that they learn as theory,” he added. “It’s important that they understand the instrument and the theory behind it.”

The chemistry major offers two tracks: a B.S. in Chemistry (non-American Chemical Society [ACS] track) and a B.S. in Chemistry (ACS track). Both tracks serve students who plan to pursue a career in chemistry-related fields or teaching or who wish to enter a graduate program in chemistry or health-related fields such as medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, or optometry. The program blends a chemistry curriculum with study in physics, biology, and mathematics.

Chemistry majors develop strong problem-solving and analytical skills, as well as the mathematical abilities that are required for careers in diverse fields. These skills, along with a chemistry degree, open doors for graduates.

“Many employment opportunities in education, industry, and public service are available to chemistry graduates,” Razeghifard said. “They can work as analytical chemists in pharmaceutical companies, forensic laboratories, or government agencies. They can also work as organic and material chemists in pharmaceuticals and manufacturing industries. As educators, they can teach chemistry courses in secondary schools or colleges and universities with a graduate degree.”
Arts Administration Alumna Finds Passion in Second Career

FOR ALEXA FRANKY, pursuing her passion for the arts made going to college more fulfilling the second time around.

Franky worked as an advertising and marketing professional for almost 10 years before enrolling at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences in 2010 to seek a bachelor’s degree in arts administration.

“I’d been out of school for several years, so the idea of returning was a bit daunting,” said Franky, a 2012 graduate who is now the associate executive director at Augusto Soledade Brazzdance, a not-for-profit dance company in Miami, Florida.

Augusto Soledade, M.F.A., associate professor at the college, is the dance company’s founder, artistic director, and resident choreographer.

“I chose a field of study I was passionate about—in particular, theater and dance. My intention was to combine my business experience with a degree in the arts,” said Franky, who also works as a marketing coordinator at FLL Group Sales Office for the Wyndham Nassau Resort and Crystal Palace Casino in the Bahamas.

At Brazzdance, her responsibilities range from developing advertising and marketing strategies to managing the internship program for arts administration students.

“Alexa came on board in October 2012 to help out with our marketing plan and visual identity,” Soledade said. “It was clear that she had a great talent not only to understand the most impactful ways to visually present our company—she has extensive experience in marketing—but also to understand the steps and actions necessary to make a nonprofit organization like ours thrive.”

Franky has served as associate executive director at Brazzdance since January 2013.

“In that position, she has successfully helped us manage five full-time dancers and a board of directors, and she has been responsible for developing our internship program,” Soledade said. “Her attention to details has been one of her greatest assets. We continue to grow as a dance company, and Alexa’s input on all administrative aspects has really helped us set the company apart.”

Franky credits her career move to her academic studies and the hands-on experience she gained while at the college.

“My experience at NSU was amazing. I pushed myself beyond what I thought I could do,” she said. “I was fortunate to have professors who made the learning experience fun. I didn’t expect to enjoy going back to school as much as I did.

“My studies prepared me for my current position. The degree in arts administration requires classes in many disciplines, providing me with the skills I need to be successful in my profession.

“The summer prior to my senior year, I worked as an intern at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts. I assisted the marketing department and developed a mobile marketing plan, which I presented to the vice president of marketing as my final project. It was a great experience and opportunity for me to get a behind-the-scenes look at how a performing arts venue of that scale operates,” Franky said.

Although Soledade was not one of her professors at NSU, Franky was referred to him when she sought a volunteer position to gain experience at a not-for-profit organization in the arts.

“My goal was to combine my experience in advertising and marketing with my love for live performance,” she said. “I am fortunate to have fulfilled my career goal.”
THE PERFORMANCE SERIES

Sylvia
October 4–13, 2013
By A.R. Gurney
A street-smart dog promptly becomes a bone of contention between two empty nesters—testing their marriage to hilarious and touching effect.

Dance Works
November 8–9, 2013
NSU Dance ensemble members perform new works by dance faculty members and guest choreographers.

Novapool: Dancing on the Internet
Friday, November 22, 2013
This unique dance presentation features students performing live at NSU and across the pond at Liverpool John Moores University in England.

Once on This Island
November 22–24, 2013
A story of forbidden love between people from two different worlds, this production is a culmination of the Beach Clean-Up and Green Theatre ecological awareness project. Book and Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens Music by Stephen Flaherty Based on the Novel My Love, My Love by Rosa Guy Produced by Special Arrangement with Music Theatre International

PEACE: A Holiday Concert
Friday, December 6, 2013
Join the NSU community for an evening of holiday favorites performed by NSU’s ensembles.

Improv Jam!
Friday, January 17, 2014
This fan favorite returns with another night of original sketch comedy, improvisational theater, and pop music.

Everyman
February 14–23, 2014
This wryly humorous, deeply moving, and intensely human drama explores eternal questions of life and death.

Spring Music Concert
Sunday, April 6, 2014
Details TBA online, visit www.fcas.nova.edu/arts.

THE FACULTY SERIES

Joint Faculty Recital
Tuesday, September 17, 2013
This performance features a wide repertoire from the college’s music faculty members.

Faculty Recital
Tuesday, January 28, 2014
Details TBA online, visit our Web site at www.fcas.nova.edu/arts.

Faculty Recital
Wednesday, March 19, 2014
Details TBA online, visit our Web site at www.fcas.nova.edu/arts.

THE EXHIBITION SERIES

Sixth Annual Faculty Exhibition
September 10–October 7, 2013
This gallery show showcases faculty members’ works in various media, including painting, printmaking, video installation, book art, and sculpture.

Daredevils Under Pressure
November 7–December 2, 2013
Featuring the work of book artist Jessica Spring, this series explores some of her typographic experimentation and a variety of masterful prints and process photography.

Sixth Annual Juried Student Exhibition (AJSE14)
April 1–28, 2014
Art and design students compete for top honors exhibiting their works in various media.
2013–2014/DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS SERIES

Each year, the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences brings to campus a series of prominent leaders in their fields through the Distinguished Speakers Series. These events are free and open to the public. Tickets are often required for admission.

For the latest details and profiles of each speaker, visit www.fcas.nova.edu and click on Arts, Culture, News.

Wes Moore, M.Litt.
Thursday, August 22, 2013
Best-selling author, Army officer, Rhodes Scholar, youth advocate, and business leader Wes Moore served as keynote speaker at NSU’s 2013 Convocation ceremony. Moore’s book, The Other Wes Moore, addresses a choice made in his youth that changed the course of his life.

J. Craig Venter, Ph.D.
Wednesday, November 13, 2013
Well-known for his contributions in sequencing the first draft human genome, first complete diploid genome, and construction of the first synthetic bacterial cell, J. Craig Venter is positively impacting human health and the treatment of disease. He is the author of a new book on the field of synthetic biology titled, Life at the Speed of Light.

David H. Petraeus, Ph.D. (General, U.S. Army, Retired)
Thursday, February 6, 2014
David H. Petraeus served 37 years in the U.S. military, including as commander of coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and as commander of the U.S. Central Command. Following retirement from the military in 2011, he served for 14 months as the director of the CIA.

Rebecca Skloot, M.F.A.
Thursday, March 20, 2014
In her book The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, author Rebecca Skloot tells the true story of Henrietta Lacks, a young, black woman who died of cervical cancer in 1951. The woman’s cells—harvested without her knowledge during a biopsy—contributed to scientific advancements as varied as the polio vaccine and the impact of space travel on human cells.