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Winter 2008 Farquhar Forum

Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences

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The Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences at Nova Southeastern University offers a comprehensive educational experience for our community. Faculty and staff members and students engage in interdisciplinary learning and discovery throughout the year. This forms a strong, invaluable sense of community in our college.

Our commitment to diversity of scholarship is evident in this issue of the Farquhar Forum. You will find students and faculty members in different roles and disciplines acting upon a shared motivation to learn more, research more, and contribute to their world. The presence of many capable, generous individuals in these articles suggests that the college accomplishes far more than the academic demands of curricula. The experiences of our students and faculty members shape their goals for the future, profoundly touch lives, inspire new interests, and reveal previously unknown talents.

I draw your attention to the clarity of purpose with which the members of the college community speak in these pages. Their desire to accomplish more and contribute to the world around them is undeniable. These students and faculty members—representative of their colleagues—are consistently confident in the beliefs they express, as well as of their sense of inherent responsibility in achieving their goals.

One focus of this issue is the college’s 2007–2008 academic theme of “Truth and Power,” which explores how we guide our actions, frame our intentions, and navigate through the world. The article on truth and power elaborates upon the concept of “speaking truth to power”—communicating our deepest convictions to others, even if that means offending others by supporting an unpopular cause.

Another central focus of this issue is scholarship, which is a core activity in any strong educational institution. Accounts by students and faculty members affirm both the responsibilities and rewards of collaborative study through a variety of research methods. These individuals show an appreciation for the persistence and patience required for effective research, and they also value opportunities to contribute to their fields of study.

This issue of the Farquhar Forum showcases faculty members and students who have come to this college to work hard so that they can accomplish goals of great merit. Through such commitment, habits of lifelong learning are tested and take deep roots. Their examples both motivate and inspire others.

These pages present people with a strong sense of what they believe to be true, who accept responsibility for speaking the truth as they understand it. Their sincere voices reflect the profound educational experience that the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences strives to provide.

As always, I welcome your comments and feedback on the work of our college.

Don Rosenblum, Dean
Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences
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If you want to succeed in a demanding field, it usually helps to work with demanding professionals.

Athletic training student Rudy Rodriguez, Jr., from the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, had a chance to test his career aspirations in a pro sports environment during the summer of 2007. The Washington Redskins accepted him as an intern. He worked the entire preseason with the players and staff at the team’s facilities in Washington, D.C.

Rodriguez was already familiar with a serious football environment, having worked previously with the University of South Carolina football team, which was gaining national prominence under legendary coach Lou Holtz. Next, Rodriguez wanted to find out how the pros functioned.

“The Redskins’ head athletic trainer, John Burrell, called me because of my experience with Division I football at South Carolina. He liked my references, and it didn’t hurt that Larry Hess, an NSU alumnus, is their director of rehabilitation.”

The professional experience was significantly different from his stint with a college team. “For an athletic trainer, it’s a lot more work. With all the treatments and rehabs, you have to be on your toes, always on your A-game. You have to already know a lot about what you’re doing while you’re learning new things.” Staff members supported Rodriguez in gaining new insights into his profession every day. After a treatment, they explained why they did exactly what they did. “Larry Hess, particularly, took me under his wing with everything.”

The work ethic of pro athletes was more intense than what Rodriguez witnessed at the college level. “In the NFL, you’re working with million-dollar athletes, famous people. The atmosphere is more exciting. Everyone’s screaming and yelling. If a player or an athletic trainer wants something from you, you get yelled at. An athletic trainer there is constantly moving. And you can’t take notes when someone yells at you everything he wants because your hands are already busy doing or holding something.”

Rodriguez’s biggest challenge was getting accustomed to the treatments and rehabs ordered for the players. “They had modalities I’d never used, electrical stimulation devices, for example, that I’d never handled before. They also had different ways of doing things than what I was familiar with.”

He also had to learn on the run. Rodriguez worked 12 to 14 hours a day, 7 days a week. Observing evaluations was educational, and working hands-on with players in their treatments and rehabilitation exercises was inspiring. “The NFL atmosphere was incredible,” he said. “Everything starts coming to you naturally in the midst of that intensity. I enjoyed every minute, even when I was most tired. And I had to be careful. Manipulating a defensive lineman’s huge legs through repetitive stretches is a very different process than doing the same series for a receiver’s skinny legs.”

For his dedication and accomplishments, Rodriguez received an NFL Ethnic Minority Scholarship from John Burrell. “The pros, that’s the highest level of my field. I want to work in the NFL full-time.” Now in his last year at the college, Rodriguez said, “Once I graduate, I’ll apply for a full-season internship with a team and get my certification. Then, if an opportunity opens somewhere, I can apply for a year-round position.”

After the excitement and the professional experience, Rodriguez found it hard readjusting to a campus lifestyle in some ways. “Sometimes I work at the NFL intensity here and have to back off and say ‘I’m sorry.’ I have one year of school left, and then I can hardly wait to get back to the pros.”

For further information about the athletic training major in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, visit www.undergrad.nova.edu/MST.
The Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences formally celebrates each new academic year with Convocation in the Miniaci Performing Arts Center. On September 4, the ceremony offered participants and audience members a varied and satisfying experience.

The college dean, Don Rosenblum, Ph.D., shared welcoming remarks. Frank DePiano, Ph.D., NSU's vice president for academic affairs, followed with an invitation, extended particularly to new students, to make full use of the university's resources. Kate Waites, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Humanities, spoke on behalf of the faculty about the college's academic theme of Truth and Power. As recipient of the 2007 Convocation 2007 Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences Full-Time Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award, Waites called for a general culture of academic integrity to strengthen the contract between students and the university.

The keynote speaker, Altaf Ali, kept his remarks brief. As executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Florida Chapter, Ali encouraged the audience to strive for success, not only for themselves, but also for others less fortunate. Ali also praised the college's leadership for their accomplishments and inclusive spirit.

Robin Sherman, Ph.D., assistant director of the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, honored this year's members of the Clinic Exploration Program with the annual tradition of bestowing their blue jackets. Students in the program wear these identifying jackets while they shadow health professionals on the job at NSU's clinics.

Rosenblum honored the Dean's List Scholars by calling to the stage students who made the Dean's List both semesters of their first year in the college. This was followed by a special recognition of this year's orientation leaders, as well as closing remarks and a reception in the atrium of the Carl DeSantis Building.
Students at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences can begin their academic publishing careers before they graduate. The college hosted a launch party for the first edition of the Farquhar Student Journal in the Alvin Sherman Library on September 27. Guests at the event listened to three of the issue’s contributors provide brief, compelling discussions of their articles.

At the 2007 Convocation ceremony offered by the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, the 44 Dean’s List Scholars were called onstage for formal recognition of their accomplishments. These students made the Dean’s List during their first two semesters at NSU by maintaining a GPA of 3.5 or higher. The students appreciated being acknowledged for the consistent quality of their academic efforts, not just as a matter of personal pride, but also because this will help them achieve long-term goals. For example, Myra Rafi recognized her need to achieve good grades to get into medical school. “Med school is very competitive,” she said, “so it was good to be recognized among the Dean’s List Scholars, because you have to work hard for what you want.”

“The award was satisfying because it told me I’m on the right track,” psychology major Briana O’Dowd said. Studying psychology and other subjects she likes offers her more enjoyment than effort, but O’Dowd is willing to work hard at subjects that do not come as easily because, she says, “As a Zen Buddhist, intellectual development is very important to me.”

Kate Waites: Connecting the Dots

Kate Waites, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Humanities, is drawn to advising student groups “because I can interact with them in ways that are different from relationships in the classroom.”

Waites became involved with NSU’s Radio X when it began as a radio club. She said, “I didn’t know anything about radio then. Over time, we fashioned it into a real FM radio station, an energetic and thriving organization with high expectations of its student staff members. It brings out their interests and talents, which amaze me.

“The students have fun with the shows; the DJs develop interesting personalities. They play music you don’t hear anywhere else on local radio,” Waites said. “They work behind the scenes, too, developing policy and everything else that needs to be done. We have to raise money. We’re responsible to the school board and the FCC, so we’re answerable to high expectations. Radio is a serious business. It’s great helping students learn to conduct themselves in a professional way.

Radio X is also a great resource for our communication studies majors. We provide experience and job exploration for these students. At many universities, you have only a small chance of getting on the air, but at NSU, the chances are much better.”

As recipient of the 2007 Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences Full-Time Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award, Waites loves that students continue to find perspectives that are new to her. “You can see it in their faces and body language. The questions they ask show they’re thinking in ways that raise more questions. They’re connecting the dots and finding more dots to connect with. I relate, because I’m still connecting dots myself.”
Ahmed N. Albatineh, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, made two presentations in October at the University of North Carolina—Greensboro. They were “A Correction of Jaccard Similarity Index for Chance Agreement in Cluster Analysis” and “A New Method for Determining the Number of Clusters in a Data Set.”

Frank Casale, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Humanities, was published in the Winter 2006–2007 edition of *Enter Text*. Brunel University in West London, United Kingdom, produces this interactive, interdisciplinary e-journal for cultural and historical studies and creative work. Casale’s article, “W. D. Ehrhart and the extremes of foreign policy, ideology, and the American hegemony,” was included in the War and Peace edition of the journal.

Alexandru Cuc, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, co-published “Silence Is Not Golden: A Case for Socially Shared Retrieval-Induced Forgetting” in the August 2007 issue of *Psychological Science*. The article investigates how a speaker can induce more forgetting in a listener by providing more details about an event rather than fewer details.

Thomas Fagan, Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, published “Professional Education and Training: How Satisfied Are We?” An exploratory study in *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*.

Barbara Brodman, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Humanities, presented, “From Sacrificial Fire to Fire in the Mind: The Mexican Cult of Death in Myth, Literature, and Politics” at the Second International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at the University of Granada, Spain, in July. Brodman discussed how the writings of EZLN Subcomandante Marcos and other Zapatista writers reflect upon the Mexican cult of death.

Matthew He, Ph.D., professor and director of the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, earned international accolades during the summer of 2007. At the University of Rome, Italy, May 19–June 3, He presented a series of research lectures on computational biology and bioinformatics to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty members. The lectures included topics on genetic codes, attributive mappings, and stochastic matrices. His visit was sponsored by the Universita degli Studi di Roma—La Sapienza, Rome, Italy, and the Italian National Research Council.

Madhavi Menon, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, published, “The Developmental Costs of High Self-Esteem for Antisocial Children,” in the October issue of *Child Development*.

Steven Patterson, M.S., ATC, visiting professor in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, served as head athletic trainer for the USA Baseball 2007 Youth National Team. Patterson also served as director of sports medicine coverage at the USA Baseball Junior Olympic Championships in Jupiter, Florida, in June 2007. Athletic training program majors Rudy Rodriguez and Jason Schwartzman assisted him at the tournament.


Jamie Tartar, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, co-published “Sleep Fragmentation Elevates Behavioral, Electrographic, and Neurochemical Measures of Sleepiness” in *Neuroscience*. 
Whether your approach is pragmatic, philosophical, or socially conscious, how you determine what’s true can impact your power to create change.

Each year, the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences chooses a broad theme that the entire college examines over the course of the academic year. The theme for 2007–2008, “Truth and Power,” has stimulated programs and events that encompass students, faculty members, and special guests as they investigate what truth and power might mean. This path of study carries a special injunction to reflect on the obligations of using personal power to advocate what we hold true. The college’s challenging academic environment has turned this theme into a learning laboratory for all.

The Pragmatic Approach

To break this theme down to its most basic components, it is appropriate to seek out one who studies truth and power in the physical world. Diego Castano, Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, was ready to try.

Castano’s specialty is theoretical particle physics, also called high energy physics because it studies particles that usually move very fast at high energy levels. “My field is theoretical,” he explained, “so my laboratory is my pencil. I use mathematics to understand nature at scales that are close to all-encompassing.”

Castano explained his research method in saying, “I take an idea, mold it into a model, then see whether or not it fits experimental data. The ultimate judge of the truth in anything I study is what happens in an experiment. I weave an idea, then check to see whether that matches results in experiments that others have performed.”

At one time, scientists were considered philosophers. Do physicists still believe in truth and power? “Physics was once called natural philosophy because it acquires knowledge about what seems true in the natural world. So yes, a physicist wants to find out what’s true.” The technical definition of power in physics is the transfer of energy in a given amount of time, but, as Castano added, “We also think of power as the ability to do things. Because we know about electrons through experiments, for example, we’re able to build computers, make cars, and address the welfare of the human species.”

Castano can believe in truth in the natural world “because there are facts. Stones drop. If a model helps us understand how the world works and makes reliable predictions, you have the power to make things or to make things happen. Most physicists don’t worry much about peripheral philosophical implications, because we want to be pragmatic.”

Still, ideas of truth and power arise when scientists like Castano view the bigger picture. “A lot of philosophy goes into developing some theories that we can’t yet prove experimentally. But I can be very happy with accurate experimental predictions from a model even if I can’t say it’s definitely the truth.”
The Social-Responsibility Approach

There remains the issue of “speaking truth to power.” In other words, how do we speak out our truths when doing so is unpopular or dangerous. Social psychologist Jason Piccone, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, has been thinking about this question for a long time.

“I consider myself an identity theorist,” he said. “Questions of truth and power, however, coincide with my interest in studying political justice from a psychological perspective.”

Piccone studies how people in power maintain their power over others, and he considers the responsibilities all people have to create change. He finds higher education a healthy environment for such issues.

“As educators, our first responsibility is to help students think critically, which includes looking at society. Not just in politics but everywhere. Thought is like the gene pool—it needs to be diverse. If we lose our diversity of thought, we’re asking for trouble.”

Piccone stated that it can be difficult to practice this approach in a classroom. “That’s a dilemma I battle with regularly. A teacher shouldn’t be politically aligned, but I can raise differing viewpoints. We can discuss the political implications of intelligence testing and how it can be used to subjugate minorities and nonmainstream groups. I raise the questions and hope students think about them after they leave the classroom. And my intention as a teacher is to inspire people to teach themselves so they have their own conceptions.”

How then do we speak truth to power? “We’re social beings,” Piccone maintained. “Through an active dialog and exchange of ideas, we can keep each other informed and unified. Here on campus, there are student-run social action groups that promote learning about issues.”

In daily life, where truth and social power can be difficult to define or measure conclusively, small and personal actions can fulfill our great responsibilities. As Piccone concluded, “Conversations can create social movements. If we share information and ideas, we get those in power worried. We let them know that we need to be appeased. If there’s great injustice, those of us with great opportunities, such as college students and professors, have a responsibility to fight for justice as best we can.”

The Philosophical Approach

Philosophers can expand the discussion of truth and power beyond physical phenomena. Predictably, that doesn’t guarantee easy answers.

Darren Hibbs, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Humanities, studies the ultimate nature of reality and existence. He said, “Many traditional theories of truth don’t include ideas about power because they claim that what is true has nothing to do with what humans think or have the power to do. Philosophers didn’t relate truth to power much until modern philosophers began to consider dynamics in human relations that give or withhold power, which affects how people form beliefs.”

Hibbs’s preferred view is the Correspondence Theory of Truth, which suggests that a belief or statement is true or false depending upon its relationship to reality. From this view, “Every belief proves true or false according to whether the belief matches up to the world, rather than matching what we want to believe.”

A rational conversationalist like Hibbs can make all this sound very sensible. Still, what does this mean to nonphilosophers? “You can appreciate that many beliefs are not as simple and clear as we usually think,” he answered.

“Every belief proves true or false according to whether the belief matches up to the world, rather than matching what we want to believe.”

Is there a way to argue successfully about what is true? “Most people have a default setting about what truth is. To get a better handle on what you’re saying, you could enroll in an introduction to philosophy class or a logic class. Try to consider different theories and, since all have their problems, you should make your best effort to determine which theory is less vulnerable to objections.” The process doesn’t stop there, however. “Understand that the conclusion you arrive at now may not be the one you’ll still adhere to down the line. You may discover objections or insights later that you do not presently recognize.”

If beliefs about truth can vary, even change over time, what can we say about power? “Talking about power is a problem. A common definition is ‘influence over others’ by individuals or organizations. Many say that the beliefs we hold to be true are influenced by ways that society operates, which is a power issue.”

Do philosophers have the answers to these questions? “When we can’t solve problems, we try to give a better understanding of what the issue is about,” Hibbs insisted. Maybe philosophers just have the right questions.
We watch them pass us on the roads. Romantic loners, from the look of them, hunched over their motorcycle handlebars, an engine and two wheels between them and the road. Our windows are rolled up and our air conditioning is on, while their clothes ripple in the breeze. We watch and wonder who that rider is under the helmet.

The average motorcyclist today is in his 40s, professional, college-educated, and makes about $50,000 a year, according to Steven E. Alford, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Humanities in the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. “While the image of the biker is still that of the angry proletarian,” he said, “the real rider resembles someone who could live next door to you.”

Since World War II, the dominant cultural image for motorcycling in the United States has been the outlaw motorcyclist on the big cruiser. But around the world, the prevailing model is the small sport bike, particularly in third world countries. The motorcycle that came to represent untamed American individualism also symbolizes youthful rebellion in Japan. “But in Europe,” explained Suzanne Ferriss, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Humanities, “it’s predominantly associated with racing. The object itself carries different social significance everywhere you go.”

Alford and Ferriss have pursued cultural investigations of motorcycles for several years. This interest led to Motorcycle, their book that looks at motorcycles as a design object, a source of identity and community, a cultural icon, and an aesthetic object. These aspects have been covered individually before, but this is the first book to address all four concerns in global culture.

He appears as laid back as she is pinpoint attentive. Neither seems to miss anything around them, which is safety-appropriate for avid motorcyclists. The authors’ academic interest in this subject was aroused at the Popular Culture/American Culture Conference in Albuquerque in 2000, where they found other academics who were also motorcyclists. This prompted them to establish an online journal, hosted by NSU, called The International Journal of Motorcycle Studies (http://ijms.nova.edu). “It’s the only peer-review academic journal devoted to motorcycle studies,” Ferriss said. Their cultural research interests were vast enough, however, to fill a book.

As Ferriss explained, “The motorcycle is an enduring icon of the 20th century. We discuss ways that its influence extends far beyond American culture. People ride motorcycles, look at them, and use them to construct a sense of self. It’s still a significant part of its time as we move into the 21st century.”

“This is the exemplary Modernist object,” Alford said, “developed to join the rider and machine in a unified balance. This varies from common media images of violent or deviant social roles.”

The motorcycle continues to grow in popularity. “The bike can now be made much lighter and more agile,” Ferriss said.
“There are more styles than ever to fit the needs of different riders. Motorcycles are more environmentally friendly than cars and trucks. Manufacturers are working with alternative fuels and also on making motorcycling safer. What’s more, about 10 percent of riders are women. Said Alford, “Nothing about the motorcycle’s construction genders it. Women can ride them as easily as men, so the number of women riders is likely to rise dramatically.”

The two-wheeler is an enduring icon of an earlier ethic of savoring the feel of the road. “Motorcycles put you in contact with the environment,” Alford said. “They don't remove you from it. Motorcyclists cherish the sights, sounds, and smells of the environment. This has sociological implications. Instead of living behind a guard gate and driving an SUV, you’re out in the world. One of the greatest things about motorcycles is the egoless feeling of driving and disappearing into the act of moving down the road. Because you have to be very conscious of safety, you become fused with the machine, whereas in a car, you have a radio, people you're talking with, your drink, and other stimuli that distract you from the act of driving.”

Ferriss added, “You can reach moments of feeling one with the bike, which makes you feel one with the road. It’s a pleasure not to be shut off in your own private world. It requires a high degree of attention and concentration that becomes therapeutic. You’re really present. And you use much less gas too.”

Alford and Ferriss agree that the emphasis must be on safety. This means defensive riding skills and protective clothing, particularly wearing a helmet, whether or not this is required by law. For anyone who finds themselves motivated to launch onto the open road on two wheels, the authors suggest first taking the Motorcycle Safety Foundation course. “Motorcycle, by Steven E. Alford and Suzanne Ferriss, was published in the U.K. by Reaktion Books in October 2007 and distributed in the United States through the University of Chicago Press. For more information, visit www.themotorcyclebook.com. It is also available through Amazon and at major bookstores.

Charles Zelden, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Humanities in the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, is zealous about American politics and equally passionate about educating students to become better citizens. Toward this goal, Zelden has directed much of his writing in recent years to both an academic audience of students and the general public. His course texts and reference books help students understand how society has been influenced by specific policies.

To Zelden, educational writing should not come in dull prose. “I always try to make any piece a good read. When I explain complicated subjects in ways that are understandable, the goal is to make something useful and appealing.” The Judicial Branch, published in August 2007, is a volume that Zelden edited for ABC-Clio Press. Its target audience includes undergraduate and honors high school students who are learning how the federal government works. This book is part of a three-volume series, About the Federal Government: An Encyclopedia of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches, of which Zelden is the general editor. It examines both the history and daily operations of the federal judiciary through the extensive system of district courts, courts of appeal, and the Supreme Court.”

The material extends beyond its academic uses. “When I teach courses on constitutional history, I'm not just teaching students as students, I'm teaching students as citizens. You have to understand how the system works to recognize why the government affects your daily life the way it does.”

The series includes contributions by associate professors Tim Dixon, J.D., and Gary Gershman, Ph.D., fellow faculty members in the Division of Humanities. Dixon contributed a chapter in The Judicial Branch, while Gershman is editing the volume on Congress. Since high school, Zelden has intensely studied how courts function. This interest led Zelden to a study of the Federal District trial courts. He initially asked, “How do we make civil rights real? How do we turn our civil rights into real, concrete results?” He now says, “Lower federal judges have to figure out how to do this. I started researching voting rights, who votes and how they vote, and how voters can be shaken and manipulated. These days I'm writing my third book on that subject, for a more general audience, about the 2000 presidential election, one of the most important events in our political history.” Zelden said, “How can we understand what we need to do about what's going on now unless we understand what was going on before?”

For further information on this book, visit ABC-Clio Press at www.abc-clio.com.
Theatre major Lauren Butler is among the first group of recipients for the Performing and Visual Arts Grant at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. A lively and articulate student, she holds a strong vision of what she intends to accomplish. The grant helps support her on her journey.

The application process for the talent-based grant offers a new look at a familiar process for her. “Though I’ve auditioned many times before,” Butler said, “this was for financial support rather than a role. There was more at stake. This grant offers not only money to go to school, which is awesome, but also the prestige of the award.”

To help support talented students, the college provides an audition-earned Performing and Visual Arts Grant. Students participating in the college’s theatre, dance, music, and visual arts programs may apply. This grant, awarded on a yearly basis, is available to current undergraduate students, incoming freshmen, and transfer students. Of 15 students who auditioned for theatre grants, Butler was among the 8 who received one.

Students who win these grants are required to dedicate time to their craft. But these activities take on greater significance. “It’s getting financial support for doing what we love to do,” Butler said. “So, in that way, it’s like what a successful career would feel like.”

There are many ways for Butler to participate in theatre productions, according to the conditions of the grant. Though an actress at heart, she could also satisfy her responsibilities by helping with other phases of a production—applying her tool skills in the scene shop, for example, or making costumes.

Applying for the grant required serious preparation. “I had my monologue and my song—I auditioned for both—and had to prepare them without faculty guidance. We’re used to working on our pieces with our professors’ help, but they couldn’t help us rehearse. It taught me more about preparing by myself, making my own acting choices, and bringing that to any audience.”

The process resembled the way Butler will have to handle professional auditions. “No one will be holding my hand and telling me what I have to do when I’m trying to prove myself to strangers.”

She found it difficult to choose and refine the pieces she performed, but she liked the hard work. “I studied every script I could get my hands on until I found something that worked,” she admitted. “Sometimes I choose pieces that the people I audition for may not have heard before. So I do a lot of research. I have to do something that shows my abilities. For the grant audition, I found a part that isn’t like my personality to try to show my acting range.”

Butler has helpful advice for anyone else applying for a Performing and Visual Arts Grant. “Don’t be afraid to try for it. Every audition teaches us something important. Try your best. Independent preparation for the audition will open your eyes to what you can do as an actor. If you get the grant, you’ll feel even more at home in your field of study.”
Rachel Silva enrolled in the paralegal studies program at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences because her professors are practitioners in the field. “I learn what I can actually use,” she said. “And I can ask these professors for references. It’s a big help, having judges and lawyers tell employers I can do the job.”

Working full-time at a law school, Silva also appreciates the practicality of her evening classes. “I’m used to the pace and the demands. I study on weekends and any time I have downtime. If you can’t handle this workload as a student, you won’t do well as a career paralegal.”

Jessica Garcia-Brown, J.D., LL.M., coordinator of paralegal studies and assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, agrees. “Many of our paralegal students already work in law offices and dream of moving up in the legal profession,” she insisted. “They’re doers, willing to handle everything a law practice needs for success.”

Lawyers are the stars of a case, but paralegals are the producers, making sure the show goes on. As Garcia-Brown explained, “One example is the college’s recent Distinguished Speaker, Erin Brockovich, a single mother who helped many sick individuals get money they deserved and uncovered the physical harm that big businesses were causing.”

All paralegal courses are taught by practicing lawyers or judges to ensure that students graduate with solid professional knowledge. As a result, students approach their careers with confidence and pride. “Lawyers who hire one of our paralegal students know they have a well-trained individual,” Garcia-Brown said. “Our students know what the lawyers are talking about and how to handle many tasks. They know the logistics.”

This approach is confirmed by student Patrick Rafferty: “Our professors talk about the real world. Judges talk in class about what they see from the bench, and one takes us into his courtroom while it’s in session. I get to see what really goes on in the practice of law, not just the theory of law. Everything we do and learn makes a difference in getting the careers we want.”

Still, many paralegals don’t know at first how influential they can be, according to Garcia-Brown. “There’s important work to be done in society, foundation work that’s essential but doesn’t draw much attention. Paralegals sustain many responsibilities in a legal practice so the lawyer can go to trial and present the case. Paralegals are the strong links in the legal chain, holding things together.”

This is a role that a doer like Silva can appreciate. As she pointed out, “I came here because I wanted a bachelor’s degree, not just a certificate in my field. I love the work with people, the busywork, and the research. All of it.”
The rigors of research can teach a student the rewards and responsibilities of becoming a true scholar. For this reason, the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences promotes opportunities for students to engage in research with faculty members.

Learning how to research and critically analyze findings is a stage of maturity for a student. Becoming a skilled academic investigator supports a student’s confidence in self-generated learning. Also, contributing new information or insights to a field of study expands the resources available to all other researchers who follow.

Through its many disciplines, the college provides diverse opportunities for students and faculty members to collaborate in specialized research, such as maintaining a rare butterfly population on campus, investigating effects of HIV on cognitive functioning, and considering how media stereotypes can harm groups of people.

Researching Civilized Ways to Manage Wildlife

Small, jewel-colored creatures have joined the NSU community. Catching a view of one of these atala butterflies, dark blue wings dappled with aquamarine spots, is one incentive for studying the Mesozoic Garden by the Parker Building on main campus. Joshua Feingold, Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, first discovered atalas staging a revival on campus. He found that the plants in the Mesozoic Garden, grown to demonstrate foliage from an ancient era, provide food for the butterfly. “The problem is that cycads and coontie grow back slowly after the atalas use them,” Feingold said. “Keeping the current atala population safe and healthy means planting enough to be sure their support plants don’t run out.”

“I’ve always been drawn to the atala because it’s an environmental success story,” said Eileen Smith-Cavros, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences. She wrote her master’s degree thesis on the creature. “Development was destroying the plants it depended on, so it almost went extinct.”

Environmental science major Sandy Koi mentioned, “These butterflies may be an ancient species because they use host plants from the era of dinosaurs, but they’ve lasted. Until the development boom in the mid-20th century, they were the most conspicuous insect in South Florida.”

Koi has focused much of her research, which she had initiated three years before enrolling at NSU, on finding practical ways to support distribution of the population. This means providing host plants for the larvae to thrive on as well as nectar sources for the adults. “I’d like to see the campus become a corridor for the atalas to spread,” she said in a soft, patient voice. “If we make other food and host plants available a half mile away, these creatures will find it.”

While Feingold and Smith-Cavros have given her guidance, Koi came to NSU with three years’ experience in atala research and will be publishing a paper on atala nectar sources this spring in the scientific journal *Florida Entomologist*. As part of this ongoing research, she observes on-site what the butterfly population needs and assesses the results of different support strategies. Afterwards, Koi, whose unruffled demeanor contrasts greatly to a butterfly’s careening activity, plants and maintains the needed flora. “Hand-management is an essential part of this research,” she said. “When you have too many butterflies at one time, you need to distribute them elsewhere. Otherwise, the population crashes when it exhausts the local plant supply.”

For Koi, research means getting her hands dirty. To inspire others to support the atala’s revival, Koi posts the results of her research on her blog at http://e-atala.blogspot.com. In this way, her research supports wider efforts to sustain the atala’s survival in South Florida.

“All interested parties are welcome to join the effort,” Koi insisted. “We need a civilized way to manage wildlife here.”
Researching Ways That People Respond

“There’s much we don’t know about what changes behavior and personality at an unconscious level,” said Jaime Tartar, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Her eyes bump up a level of luminosity when she says, “The research opportunities are enormous.”

A behavioral neuroscientist and an electrophysiologist by training, Tartar studies electrical components of the brain. This interest led her and two students into a study at the Children’s Diagnostic and Treatment Center in Fort Lauderdale. They are assessing women’s cognitive and affective functioning in HIV-associated central nervous system impairments.

“There’s a lack of research in this area,” Tartar said. “If HIV affects cognitive functioning, this study could help with counseling for women, particularly in their asymptomatic phases.” The testing will examine the women’s emotional states as well.

Biology major Kristen DeAlmeida added, “We’re studying HIV-positive women to learn how it affects their problem-solving, memory, and learning.” Their research project shows women affective pictures: “positive” pictures that should make people feel good, “negative” pictures that should make people feel bad, and “neutral” pictures. The researchers take an EEG measure of the response in the brain to each picture presentation. At the same time, the participant is engaged in the cognitive task of counting certain audible tones. This measure, called an Event Related Potential (ERP), helps record the subjects’ responses to pictures a 300th of a millisecond after the stimulus.

“I like the environment of the experiment and the hands-on experience,” DeAlmeida said. “It’s great to learn how to read EEGs and how to place electrodes.” She and her fellow student-researcher, biology major Lara Murphy, test each other with the equipment to better understand the experiment.

Murphy, who is interested in medical practice and neuroscience, found that being a subject of her own experimental procedures was exciting. “It’s surreal to see my own brainwaves and learn how my brain reacts to sound,” she said. “It’s very exciting.”

Researching Ways We See Each Other

“All research starts from a personal perspective of some sort,” said Allison Brimmer, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Humanities. “My research involves language as a reflection, and creator, of cultural trends: issues of sexism, racism, and other types of discrimination, and on the flip side, privilege.” As a specialist in rhetoric and composition, she looks at encounters in culture such as popular media and conversations to study the means and effects of privilege.

“I look into things that bother, concern, or amuse me,” Brimmer said. “I tell my students to pick something they love and something they struggle with, and look critically into that. They come back and tell me that they read various aspects of culture—TV, their classes, family interactions—in new ways.”

A lively mentor with broad interests and a full laugh, Brimmer tries to help students hone their research focus by asking more questions. “Students have passions, they care. They can find an answer or another good question by following their interests. And I tell them to embrace failure because you can’t write without failure.”

Some class projects have led students into further research projects. Humanities major Micah Moreno wrote about persistent stereotypes of homosexuals on network television and the negative, dangerous impact this can have on members of society. Interest in pursuing this subject came from reading The Laramie Project in conjunction with a theatre production presented by the college in the winter 2007 semester.

Moreno explained, “I read articles in the electronic library database, used Web sites for statistics, and studied books from the NSU library.” She embraced a process of discovery rather than just reporting on intended findings. “The more I researched, the more passionate I became about my topic as I read both sides of the story.”

She tried to focus her intensity without tempering it too much. Moreno used Brimmer as a sounding board for her ideas, talking out possibilities until she heard herself saying things that felt right to her. She added that Brimmer “helped me navigate by toning down my arguments, though I was resistant to that at first. I have a hard time withholding my opinion, but I hope my writing can help open people’s minds.”

Moreno found that she liked research. “It showed me that what other people think is always important, and that there’s always a problem to be fixed. It also taught me that I have to not give up on what I believe, particularly for issues involving women and gender studies. I want to write more about things I feel passionate about.”
As a child, she lived near the Johnson Space Center in Houston and hoped to be a biochemical engineer there one day. Nandita Ragbir, B.S., who was a dual admission prepharmacy student, graduated from the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences in 2007. She continued to pursue her interests in the space program by attending an adult session of Space Camp. But this camp wasn’t about marshmallow roasts and campfire songs. This was hands-on science and the chance to personally undergo the NASA experience at the Kennedy Space Center. One of 16 applicants accepted out of 91, Ragbir was the only person with a biology background in the week-long adult camp. The rest were from mechanical and electrical engineering programs. She was assigned to the robotics team with two others.

Their mission was to design a robot that could follow a masking tape path on the floor and dodge obstacles such as trash cans. “The robot had to be built from scratch from Lego’s and programmed to respond to the tape without us controlling it. Also, we were challenged to present our robot, Optimus Prime, to the president of robotics at NASA in five days. The instructors were there to supervise, but did not provide one piece of information about how to write programs for the robot or build it. I had never built or programmed a robot in my life, so the coding and design technique had me working overtime in my room.”

Her other team project was to design and release a GPS-navigated weather balloon equipped with a camera that sent a live feed to the team on the ground. One highlight of Ragbir’s week was a private, guided tour of the Kennedy Space Center’s Life Sciences labs. “Our coordinator took me behind the locked doors, and we even took a detour to see the Cape Canaveral lighthouse since I told him I collect lighthouses.” Her team met many outstanding NASA employees and presented a live demonstration of their robot to top NASA officials and the president of Lockheed Martin at the end of camp. The experience was inspirational for Ragbir. “I saw that I could integrate my plans to be a pharmacist with my passion for NASA by furthering the study of medicine and how the body is affected by space. I would like to work in life sciences at the Space Center as a pharmacist. Being there stretched the realms of my imagination.”

Detecting Solutions

Terry-Ann Dawes has spent three years working in the chemistry lab with Dimitrios Giarikos, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. Together, they are developing a chemical compound that attaches to traces of DNA. “People use fluorescent light to find DNA, but it scatters too much,” Dawes said, lifting a vial that holds the pale solution she’s been developing. “We’re looking for something that holds the light for a long time. This would be more efficient and more accurate.”

Dawes is writing on this project for her undergraduate honors program thesis. “We have a compound we feel is working. Now we’re binding it with different concentrations of DNA to measure the amount of emitted light, which varies depending on the concentration of DNA present.”

Giarikos said of her, “Dawes may be an undergraduate student, but this is graduate-level research.”

Now in her last year as an undergraduate student, Dawes hopes to become an oncologist. She wants to include research in her medical practice because she enjoys long-term projects. “I like the full process of working a problem through in the lab. I have a lot of patience. It’s been mostly trial and error for three years, and now we’re close to getting the results we need. I feel satisfied.”
Ask him about his work. He’ll turn the conversation into a class, answering some questions with more questions or laying a track of details that lead to a bigger theme.

Jason Rosenzweig, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, details his love for research with generous explanations, methodical answers, and a love of teaching. His primary focus is on bacterial agents that cause disease, especially human-parasite interactions.

For this research, he explained, “We gauge mutated strains of bacteria for their ability to grow in certain environmental conditions that predispose them to become agents of infection. We’re looking now at a bacterium that’s somehow able to grow at refrigerated temperatures in meat-packing facilities, allowing it to make its way to our dinner tables.”

Rosenzweig and his students, including Richard Wheeler, Jessica Blanco, and Maria Cevallos, manipulate pieces of a bacterium’s chromosome to identify parts of the genome that promote its survival in low temperatures. “Other researchers can apply our data to new developments, new vaccines, and techniques that help us defend ourselves,” Rosenzweig said. “We’ll improve the human condition.”

Researchers are links in a biomedical chain, he said. “My undergraduate researchers are the academic grandchildren of the mentor who guided my dissertation work, and this research links with work by people at other institutions. Together, we form an interconnected community of biomedical scientists trying to understand how particular pathogens interact with their hosts and how we can thwart or impede those interactions. What a wonderful privilege to be part of all this.”

Rosenzweig’s students gain from his infectious attitude. “Great wisdom comes from modesty and honesty,” he observed. “Modesty allows us to move forward without ego impediments. Honesty lets us start at, ‘I don’t know.’ That leads to asking more questions. Science may be the only business in which success is usually met not with reward, but with more work on more questions. If you’re a successful scientist, the work doesn’t end, it only gets more demanding. You gauge success in this field by the scope of work you do.”

He was born with a hunger for the work itself, the time hunched over research tools. “We’re remunerated for our research by contributing to publications and being an active link in the research community. Improving the human condition is itself a big payoff.”

Rosenzweig feels much the same about teaching. “My day can be full of meetings, discussions, and safety inspections. But the highlight comes when I see a student in class become excited, encouraged. It’s the moment the light turns on; it’s academically shocking a student into seeing a new level of complexity in the subject.”

An effective teacher of biological sciences requires being an effective researcher. “Students shouldn’t just read about research, they should actually do primary research. To excel as a biology teacher, you have to succeed in teaching as well as engaging students in basic research. You have to want to do all the work.”
The entry hall is often as quiet as a library. Yet this office sustains a steady flow of activity—room after room—where students receive tutoring. The exceptional support provided by the Office of Academic Services in the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences is in demand for students at every level of achievement.

Biology majors Mariam Haroun, a premedical student, and Sarah Siddiqui, who is premed, both had tutoring experience before they were hired as peer tutors. But as Haroun said, “We were trained here in more productive and interactive approaches to tutoring. Before, we worked with people by starting from scratch. Here, we clarify and reinforce what the teacher has already accomplished. We help students gain the confidence to go forward by themselves.”

The Office of Academic Services trains new tutors in mentoring skills. “What helped me most was shadowing experienced tutors,” Siddiqui explained. “They modeled effective strategies for me, skills I can use the rest of my life.” Haroun added, “Students want to know how we’ve succeeded because they want to succeed as well. They see us as role models. We want people to leave here capable and confident.”

Both of these peer tutors have been amazed by the growing number of students using these services. “We’re fully booked,” Siddiqui said. She also appreciates that the work “keeps us at a significant level of academic endurance, which helps prepare me for medical school.”

“Being a peer tutor helps me with my own studies,” Haroun explained, “by keeping me up with material I studied before this year. I’m reviewing old chemistry and biology course material for my professional school exams by leading others through it.”

Assistant director Gail Levine, Ed.S., said, “Our professional and peer tutors are not just academic technicians in math, science, and writing. Many peer tutors are nominated by faculty members as outstanding students who have course knowledge and exceptional interpersonal skills.”

Lisa Walther-Austin, M.P.A., director of academic services, added, “Sessions are interactive discussions because our tutors know how to listen well. Peer tutors guide students into achieving course goals and developing greater life success skills such as organization and study techniques.”

The staff members promote student retention by supporting academic success throughout students’ careers at NSU. Levine said that these services “help all students maximize their potential, whether they are struggling or excelling in a course.”

The Office of Academic Services supports success by tailoring each session according to the student’s goals, needs, and capabilities. As Walther-Austin summed up, “We are a student success center. Students who get the most from us come early in the semester and as often as needed.”

Many Solutions

The Office of Academic Services offers support in several ways beyond in-person tutoring.

- Online students can speak with a tutor while both view the same material on their screens.
- Web links provide many support materials and interactive tutorials.
- A DVD is available for every math class. A student who misses a class or wants a review can take out the DVD for that session, skipping ahead to difficult material, if needed.
- Testing services are available to accommodate students with disabilities.
- Workshops are offered regularly on study skills, APA and MLA style guidelines, and other popular topics.
Generous donors continue to support the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences in our growth. Patrons have enhanced efforts by the college to develop new scholarship resources and programs, as well as reinforced those already in place.

As the college fulfills an important role in the overall development of NSU, we wish to thank all those who have been willing to assume the responsibilities of benefactor in a collaborative commitment to our mission.

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Thank You.
Nick Rocco: Succeeding with Passion and a Plan

“IT’s important to have an education and to be passionate,” Nick Rocco claimed. It seems he means it.

A biology major in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, Rocco is in his final year at the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. He is the current president of the Pre-Medical Society. He volunteers at health fairs on and off campus to assist faculty members with public health screenings and engages in research at the college’s labs. By maintaining an unwavering focus on his goals, he is able to enjoy himself as he fulfills his ambitions.

Rocco has made the most of the small-school atmosphere at the college. “I’ve been able to work closely with professors. I went to an NSU Board of Trustees meeting with Dean Rosenblum to speak about the need for undergraduate students to have lab space at the new research facility the university is building. I’m also happy I came here because I’ve been able to do research with professors and work with the public at health events.” Research advances both students and their fields of study, especially when working with Jason Rosenzweig, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Division of Math, Science, and Technology.

“Helping those in need is a lot of what being a doctor is about. It’s something I can see myself enjoying every day.”

“I’m doing research with him on bacterial genomes and antimicrobial compounds. Yesterday, I was using the fluorescence microscope at NSU’s optometry school. Then we went over to Florida Atlantic University’s campus, right across the street, to work with researchers there for a couple of hours. I came back and ran an experiment on a different project until my class at 6:00 p.m. I do all this because I want to make the most of the great mentors available to me here.”

One of the highlights of Rocco’s undergraduate experience has been his participation in the Cadaver Prosection program at the Indiana University School of Medicine—Northwest. Run by Ernest Talarico, Jr., Ph.D., this program allows undergraduate students to prepare cadavers for study by medical students. When Talarico came to NSU to speak, he accepted Rocco and another student, Chris Tann, for the upcoming summer session. “We dissected the human body on the first day,” Rocco said. “It was a phenomenal opportunity. I was inspired. The intricacies of the human body are astonishing. The next day, we did the same thing and later participated in a workshop on how to do a total knee replacement. We also looked at MRIs, CT scans, and X rays and worked with brains and spinal cords.”

Rocco and Tann received the session’s two top awards for academic excellence and prosector skills.

“I’d like to do Doctors Without Borders for a year or more, providing medical care for people in crisis,” Rocco said about his plans. “Helping those in need is a lot of what being a doctor is about. It’s something I can see myself enjoying every day.”

For him, this is his life’s work, not just a good career choice. Rocco said, “I always had a passion for medicine. Those of us who really want to be doctors are willing to do the work that needs to be done.”
Adams explained. “When you listen to yourself, it sounds different than how you sound to others. My goal is to push students until they get over their self-consciousness. It’s also a mistake to try to correct your voice before it gets out. That’s not possible. You have to get it out, use it, before you can correct it.”

Adams encourages students to develop a singing technique that makes sense to them physically. “Singing shouldn’t be painful. Search for a free tone. If it hurts, you’re doing it wrong. Air is also crucial. Please take a breath. Most people start without a preparation breath.”

He also believes in the enduring rewards of methodical practice to overcome the biggest challenge for aspiring singers—themselves. “The sound of your voice distracts you. If you try to improve the way it sounds to you, you’re probably wrong. You have to go with how it feels and you have to understand the physiology involved. Also, you have old habits because you’ve been talking since you were around two. So if I suggest a means to change the way you use your voice, it changes how you do everything vocally. You can’t even sing the same in the shower anymore. It’s a big adjustment.”

Adams is working with Mark Duncan, M.F.A., coordinator of the college’s Performing Arts Program and assistant professor in the Division of Humanities, to create a music major from the ground up. “Mark Duncan has been a fantastic mentor,” said Adams. “And this environment seems ready for the arts. The facilities and interest on campus are great. Mark and I know we can generate excitement with a musical theater program.”

Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella, the first musical produced by the college’s Performing Arts Program, will be performed on March 28–April 5, 2008. Adams looks forward to engaging students in the production. “Musical theater has fewer rights and wrongs than opera. It’s more subjective. The singers work in a place between actors and classical singers. Their interpretations and the uniqueness of their voices matter.” Also, the popularity of TV shows such as High School Musical and American Idol generate a broader pool of talent for musical theater. “I have several theatre majors in the voice class and they’re hungry to learn,” he said.

His enthusiasm is Broadway-worthy. “Everything interests me here in South Florida. The area is primed and ready for new opportunities in the arts. We’re going to be the only local four-year degree program with music, theatre, and dance programs. People in the community are excited. They’ve been waiting for this.”
Exemplary undergraduate students are invited to join an honor society according to strict criteria of exceptional achievement in their fields of study and commendable cumulative GPAs. These organizations help students broaden their knowledge of the research, practice, and career opportunities in their chosen fields—goals that support the overall mission of the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences. Membership can lead to invitations to publish in academic journals, subscriptions to the society's publications, and cultivation of a national network of professionals. Students also benefit from close faculty guidance in preparing applications for graduate school, collaborating on research, and attending national conferences.

Don Rosenblum, Ph.D., dean of the college, said that membership in honor societies “recognizes achievement, as well as potential, through a commitment to academic excellence. In many cases, the honor societies conduct significant campus and community service work, which enables students to extend that dimension of their academic life.” He continued, “I very much enjoy meeting with students and their families at honor society induction ceremonies, where I can hear their stories about the paths and challenges that led students to earn these honors.”

One of the college's honor societies, Psi Chi, hosts social and academic events for its members that range from informal barbecues to trips to annual conferences for the Association for Psychological Sciences. Faculty representative Weylin Sternglanz, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, also stressed the importance of Psi Chi in facilitating students' future planning.

“Often, psychology students are not aware of job opportunities and graduate programs outside of clinical psychology,” Sternglanz said. “Psi Chi has presented several sessions on topics related to various subfields of psychology, such as developmental, social, cognitive, forensic, evolutionary, and neuropsychology. We also meet to discuss graduate school applications and methods for obtaining funding in graduate school.”

Jennifer Reem, M.S., coordinator of the communication program, is faculty adviser for Lambda Pi Eta, the honor society for the National Communication Association. “Student members are recognized for both overall high achievement and achievement in communication studies,” she explained. As a result, society members are able to share the findings of their research with other members at regional and national conferences. And, as Reem added, “Because students become lifetime members, they gain opportunities for networking possibilities with communication studies organizations, media, and public relations organizations.”
Sharein El-Tourky: In the Company of Leaders

It’s good to know where you’re going if you expect to take others with you. As a leader, honors student Sharein El-Tourky keeps her objectives clearly in mind while trying to help others fulfill their own goals. A second-year marine biology major within the Division of Math, Science, and Technology, El-Tourky was invited to join the Leadership Roundtable Scholarship (LRS) program when she began her studies at NSU. An organization for outstanding undergraduate students, LRS chooses 10 new students each year to read and discuss materials on leadership development, as well as to participate in projects that benefit both the university and the surrounding community.

The program connects its members with other leaders on campus and in the local community. “Leadership Roundtable gives us the tools to be better leaders,” El-Tourky explained. “It also keeps me on track with my community service and helps me perform at a better level. This will be helpful when I lead a research team one day, or even if I’m leading myself toward a bigger goal.”

Her steady confidence and enthusiasm have led her to consistently meet these aspirations. El-Tourky is happy to live like a leader, heading projects and organizations that help others, such as beach and street cleanups, assisting the homeless, and other kinds of community service. “I noticed that this is something I do, not something I decided to do one day.”

A support group helps students learn to lead, she said. “Everyone was already a leader in some way before we joined, but we don’t always know how to best use what we have. Older students share their experience. Leadership Roundtable helps me take advantage of my skills.”

It may be hard to imagine a group of leaders getting along smoothly, but somehow it works. “It’s good to share ideas with everyone in a cooperative environment,” she said. “We all have different backgrounds and interests, so there aren’t any typical members.

“Collaboration lets these students each bring their own toolbox of leadership skills. Our goal is to help them fill their toolboxes and learn to use the tools more effectively.”

Leaders don’t always agree, or join each other’s agendas; but most of the time, we’re cooperative.”

Having grown up a few minutes from the Atlantic Ocean on Long Island, El-Tourky was drawn to NSU partly for the ability to enjoy Florida’s coastal waters year-round. She likes to kayak, scuba dive, and pursue most other water activities. However, career goals are seldom far from her mind. “I studied the ocean from a young age, conducting my own experiments, testing variations in visibility and salinity through the seasons. Then I volunteered at a marine lab, where I helped other scientists conduct experiments. I learned ways to solve problems and saw my hard work pay off. It was different every day. This clarified my suspicion that marine biology was the field I wanted.”

Being a scientist fits El-Tourky’s goals. “I love how it challenges me. You observe, devise explanations, and test them. I like the whole spectrum of research from initial curiosity to working with other people on problems, trying to figure out puzzles.” Her interests in future research range from jellyfish, especially ones with bioluminescent capabilities, to the mysterious, perhaps undiscovered, creatures in the farthest depths of the sea. Leadership training will serve her well on teams studying places as remote as the bottom of the ocean.

Her aptitude for leadership fits comfortably with her openness to collaboration. According to Joel Nemes, M.S., the director of student development and retention and head of the Leadership Roundtable Scholarship program, El-Tourky “has a strong foundation for leadership—values, beliefs, intelligence—and she’s open to working with many different kinds of people on their own projects too. The diversity at NSU gives students the chance to experience different work styles. Most effective leaders surround themselves with other talented leaders, as she has.

“Collaboration,” Nemes explained, “lets these students each bring their own toolbox of leadership skills. Our goal is to help them fill their toolboxes and learn to use the tools more effectively.”

Nemes appreciates El-Tourky’s dedication. “Sharein works above and beyond what she’s given,” he said. “With her great listening skills, she takes everything in and gives it back to you in her own understanding. She doesn’t get involved just to put things on her resume. She only commits herself to things she can contribute to.”

With her ability to follow through on ambitious goals, she’d better buy the giant-sized leadership toolbox. (For more information about the Leadership Roundtable Scholarship program, visit www.undergrad.nova.edu/leadership.)
When I first sat down in the autobiography and memoir graduate writing workshop, I wondered what I, a single, thirty-something, Canadian graduate student, would use as fodder for a memoir. It turned out, I had a lot to say. And it felt good to say it. I was, at first, reluctant to write my thoughts, worried that my depictions of others might offend. How would my parents and sister react if they were included in my stories? Despite my worries, I wrote for myself. It didn’t take long before I found my voice and realized that the stories I told were my own truths—my own recollections of experiences I have had. My voice appeared when I started to listen to, and write, my inner thoughts. I came to realize that my interpretation of events made the stories unique.

The first time I shared one of my stories with my mother, I worried that she would not appreciate my description of her. I thought, perhaps, she would insist that the events I described had happened a different way. Instead, she laughed and was flattered to be a character in my memoir. She asked to read more. Regardless of how my family remembered our shared past, I was able to tell stories from my point of view, truthful to my own memory. The memoir-writing experience not only enabled me to find my voice, but gave me the confidence to keep writing my own story. I now understand the importance of writing for myself.

For further information on the master’s of arts in writing degree program, please visit www.undergrad.nova.edu/hum.