



We see the future in you.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS HIGHLIGHTS

FALL 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

GRANTS & AWARDS	2
SCHOLARSHIP & PUBLICATIONS.....	5
PANELS & PRESENTATIONS.....	7
LEADERSHIP & OUTREACH	9





Dr. Aurelia Taylor Williams '94, a 2025 American Council on Education fellow and a Norfolk State University 2024 Distinguished Alum, was selected with NSU's President, Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston, as one of CoVABIZ's 150 Most Influential People. Selected among the top 50 women leaders in education by [Women We Admire](#), Dr. Williams, a professor of Computer Science, Founding Executive Director of the Cyber Complex, and special advisor to the President, **took on Academic Affairs leadership as Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in late June 2025** to strengthen its core and amplify its critical role in the ongoing success of NSU's mission.

For the 2025-2026 academic year, the theme Amplifying Academic Affairs: Back to Basics, Forward with Purpose will guide the operations, practices, and foci of Academic Affairs at NSU. Under Dr. Williams' leadership, Academic Affairs is moving forward to meet NSU's strategic goals and advance its mission. The Academic Affairs leadership team includes the following members:

Dr. Khadijah O. Miller, Interim Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs

Dr. Aixi Zhou, Vice Provost for Research and Innovation

Dr. Marshall Thompson, Vice Provost for Academic Effectiveness

Dr. Andrea Neal-Smith, Vice Provost for Academic Engagement

Dr. Lamiaa Youssef, Associate Vice Provost for Community Engagement

Dr. Torian Lee, Associate Vice Provost for Global Learning and Internationalization

Dr. Bebonchu Atems, Dean, School of Business

Dr. Tyson King-Meadows, Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Dr. Isiah Marshall, Dean, Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work

Dr. Michael Keeve, Dean, College of Science, Engineering and Technology

Dr. Denelle Wallace-Alexander, Dean, School of Education

Dr. Desi Hacker, Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Research

Dr. Khadijah O. Miller, Dean, Robert C. Nusbaum Honors College

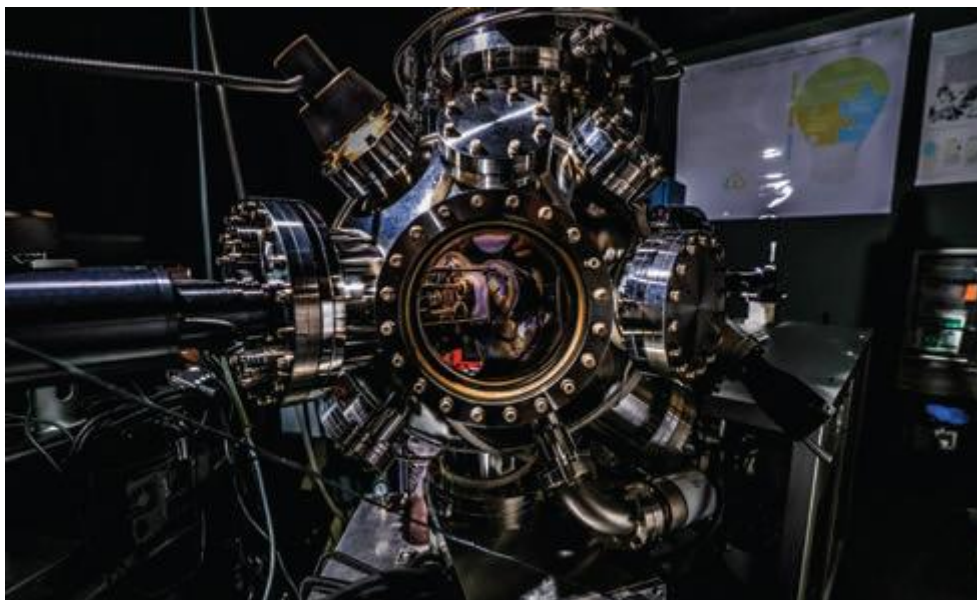
GRANTS & AWARDS

NSU Receives New Carnegie Classification as a Research College and University (RCU)

Norfolk State University has been classified as a Research College and University (RCU) according to the 2025 Research Activity Designations published by the American Council of Education (ACE) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Carnegie Foundation). This new designation places NSU among the top 12 percent of colleges and universities in the United States. “Norfolk State University is proud to be one of just over 500 schools in the nation to reach Carnegie Research classification,” said NSU President **Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston**. The Carnegie Foundation and ACE simultaneously “unveiled an updated methodology designed to better account for and reflect the multifaceted, wide-ranging research landscape of higher education institutions” in the United States, according to its news release. Previously, NSU’s Carnegie Classification was based on the institution’s master’s degrees granting status. “We have worked hard and continue to work hard to be recognized as a University and College Research institution,” added Dr. Adams-Gaston.



Carnegie Foundation
for the Advancement of Teaching





School of Education

Dr. Leon Rouson, Professor of Early Childhood/Elementary and Special Education, received funding from the US Department of Education. The “SSS Teacher PREP TRIO” proposal was accepted for a 5-year cycle (2025-2030) in the amount of \$1.4 Million over 5 years starting September 1, 2025. The SOE shares Dr. Rouson’s excitement as the team starts its fourth 5-year cycle in the School of Education at Norfolk State University.

Dr. Tamara Smith-Moyler, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood/Elementary and Special Education, and **Dr. Priscilla Spencer**, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood/Elementary and Special Education, received funding from the Virginia Department of Education Department of Special Services. The “Teaching All Learners: Advancing General Educators' Expertise in Specially Designed Instruction” proposal received an award of \$314,619.

Dr. Sheila Ward, Professor of Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science, and **Dr. Cynthia Burwell**, Professor of Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science, received the “Virginia Accountable Health Equity and Action Dashboard (VA-AHEAD): Community Framing of Equity Data to Support Clinical and Translational Science” grant, which was awarded by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)/National Institute of Health in the amount of \$567,736 for the period of September 18, 2024 through June 30, 2029.

College of Science, Engineering, & Technology

NSF-Funded Graduate Internship on Atmospheric Plasma Jet Printing at Space Foundry Inc.



Supplementary funding of \$55,000 awarded under NSF grant #2100930 for Excellence in Research: Aptamer-Integrated Graphene-Gold Conjugates for Machine Learning Aided Pesticide Residue Screening led by **Dr. Renny Fernandez**, Associate Professor of Engineering, was used to support a six-month graduate internship at Space Foundry Inc., San Jose, California. During this internship, graduate student **Soumadeep De** gained valuable hands-on experience in Atmospheric Plasma Jet Printing (APJP), focusing on the design and implementation of a feedback system to control misting of nanoparticle suspensions in real

time to improve print quality. The internship significantly strengthened the research team’s capabilities in plasma-based additive manufacturing and flexible electronics and contributed to expanding Norfolk State University’s expertise in advanced printing technologies.



Dr. Messaoud Bahoura, Professor of Engineering and Director of the Center for Materials Research, and his AI Expert Team from Old Dominion University (ODU) have been awarded a Professional Enrichment and Growth (PEG) Grant by the Office of Faculty Affairs and Professional Development at Old Dominion University. Their funded proposal, Expert Contribution Recognition Ecosystem: Performance-Based Support for AI Research Advisory Group, will launch the first structured AI Research Support initiative for clinicians at the

Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences Center at ODU. This groundbreaking program will connect clinical investigators from ODU and Norfolk State University (NSU) with AI experts to strengthen research methodologies in areas such as medical imaging, clinical documentation, genomics, disease modeling, and population health. By bridging clinical expertise with advanced AI applications, the initiative will enhance the institution's ability to secure competitive extramural funding and accelerate innovations that improve patient care and health outcomes.

School of Social Work

The **MSW Program at NSU** ranks in the top half of MSW Programs in the United States according to the 2025 US News and World Report. Tied at 120 out of 319 programs, the MSW Program is ranked alongside top R1 institutions such as the University of Cincinnati, Ohio University, University of Montana, University of Arkansas, and the University of Mississippi. Additionally, the MSW program has been ranked in the top 10 of HBCU MSW Programs according to BestColleges.com. In the development of its rankings, Best Colleges ranks programs using criteria such as affordability, student outcomes, reputation, diversity, and social mobility. The BSW and MSW Programs in the School of Social Work are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

SCHOLARSHIP & PUBLICATIONS

College of Liberal Arts



Dr. Tyson King-Meadows, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, has co-authored and published the following journal articles:

1. King-Meadows, Tyson D., Vishakha Agarwal, and Priscilla Nalubula. (2024). "Navigating Heir Disputes over the New American South: Confederate Memorials and Media Framing of Black Mayoral Leadership Against Symbols of White Authoritarianism." *Social Sciences* 13(11):594. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13110594>.
2. Russell, Mia B., Tyson King-Meadows, and Aryan Waghmode. (2025). "COVID-19 Economic Displacement and AFS Use: Evidence from the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey." *COVID* 5(9): 146. <https://doi.org/10.3390/covid5090146>

College of Science, Engineering, and Technology

Dr. Renny Fernandez, Associate Professor of Engineering, and his research team have successfully published their paper, "Direct Printing of Metal Oxide Nanostructures for Wearable Electrochemical

Sensing,” in *Scientific Reports*. This work, authored by Nithin Krisshna Gunasekaran, Harikrishnan Muraleedharan Jalajamony, Santhosh Adhinarayanan, Soumadeep De, Reven Adu, Shawn Strobel, Govindarajan Ramesh, and Renny Fernandez, is the first to demonstrate a rapid, binder-free, direct printing method for depositing metal oxide nanostructures onto flexible substrates, enabling advanced wearable electrochemical sensing applications. The study details a single-step plasma-assisted inkjet printing approach that combines nanoparticle deposition and plasma activation in one process. Using this method, the team successfully fabricated flexible sensing layers with ZnO for pH detection and CeO binders or post-treatment, offering a scalable and efficient route to produce durable, high-performance wearable sensors. This advancement represents a significant step toward next-generation technologies for health and environmental monitoring. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-04426-1>



A new study led by **Dr. Ramakanta Chapai**, Assistant Professor of Physics, in collaboration with researchers at Argonne National Laboratory, Northwestern University, and the University of Notre Dame, reveals how subtle electronic “hot spots,” known as van Hove singularities, influence superconductivity in quantum materials. Published as a Letter in *Physical Review B*, this study helps explain how these singularities affect superconductivity and magnetotransport, highlighting the connection between electronic structure and macroscopic behavior in advanced quantum materials. The paper is titled “Upper critical field behavior of the

kagome superconductor CsV_3Sb_5 driven by van Hove singularities,” Chapai et al., *Phys. Rev. B* 112, L140501 (2025) <https://journals.aps.org/prb/abstract/10.1103/s2s9-f7tx>

Dr. Messaoud Bahoura, Professor of Engineering and Director of the Center for Materials Research, published research in *Scientific Reports* (Nature Publishing Group) titled “Scientific Report 15, 31653, 2025.” This study addresses a major challenge in energy storage by improving material for lithium-ion batteries. The research team demonstrated that sulfurization treatment significantly enhances the chemical composition, crystallinity, and long-term electrochemical findings provide a new pathway to advance sustainable battery technologies and highlight the innovative contributions of NSU scholars to global energy research.

School of Education



Dr. Adam Forbes, Assistant Professor of Health, Physical Education & Exercise Science, has published the following journal article: Forbes, A. S., Arroyo-Rojas, F., & Block, M. E. (2025). “The experiences of Muslim parents of children with disabilities within special education in the United States.” *The Journal of Special Education*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00224669251352827>



Dr. Priscilla Spencer, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Special Education, has published the following article: Spencer, Priscilla and Juergensen, Rachel (2025) "Unique Challenges of Small Special Educator Preparation Program Faculty at HBCUs," *The Journal of Case Learning and Exceptional Learners*. Vol. 0: Iss. 1, Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.20429/jclel.2024.000104>.

PANELS & PRESENTATIONS

School of Education



Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport, Assistant Professor of Secondary Education and School Leadership and Urban Education Graduate Programs Coordinator, shared her expertise on an international level at the Ghana ASCD International Educators Summit in Accra, Ghana. The summit enabled educators to engage in sessions focused on innovations in teaching and the future of education through interactive sessions and networking. Her session was entitled "Distributed Leadership & Multicultural Self-Efficacy: A Model for Leading School Improvement."

Spark and Steer: Driving Instructional Excellence and Engagement was a one-day conference held in the School of Education on August 6, 2025. The Spark and Steer Conference was designed for instructional leaders. More than 60 participants engaged in sessions focused on student engagement, authentic connections, and transforming educational practices. The sessions listed below were research-based, engaging, and well received.

1. Session Title: "Steering with Insight, Sparking Belonging: Understanding Identity to Empower Engagement" Presenter: **Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport**
2. Session Title: "Sparkling Curiosity, Steering Engagement: Instructional Strategies that Ignite Learning" Presenter: **Dr. Tamara Smith-Moyler**
3. Session Title: "Sparkling Trust, Steering Change: Inclusive Strategies for Family and Community Engagement" Presenter: **Dr. Priscilla Spencer**
4. Session Title: "Sparkling Insight, Steering Impact: Real Strategies for Advancing Educational Justice" Presenters: **Dr. Cynthia Nicholson** and **Dr. Kimberly Hutson**



LEADERSHIP & OUTREACH

School of Education

Instilling a Love for the Teaching Profession



Dr. Ronald White, Assistant Professor of Secondary Education and Director of Spartans Teach Math and Science Program, led two successful recruitment initiatives through an NSF Noyce Award of \$1.2 million. The “Pipeline to Purpose” project was a collaboration with Portsmouth Public Schools. Over the course of an intensive 15 days during the Spring 2025 semester and one Summer 2025 session, the profession of teaching (in particular Math and Science) was elevated to attract high school students from I.C. Norcom and Manor to the field of education. Students experienced hands-on math/science professional development, modeled best practices in STEM Education, were exposed to teaching abroad opportunities and benefits, and earned a stipend that resembled a P-12 teacher’s monthly net income.





Dr. Shafeeq Ameen, Director of the Office of Clinical Experiences and Student Services, participated in a study abroad opportunity this summer in which he visited Ghana with several NSU students in various majors. He visited students at a P-12 school and expanded his understanding of instructional delivery practices through an international lens.

On August 6, 2025, the Board of Directors of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) notified **Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston**, NSU President that our Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling specialty areas had been approved for accreditation through October 31, 2033. This major milestone achievement would not have been possible without the leadership of **Dr. Keesha Kerns**, Associate Professor of Secondary Education and School Leadership and Counseling Education Graduate Programs Coordinator, and the support of the amazing counseling team, which consists of **Dr. Melendez Byrd**, **Dr. Jennifer Perry**, **Dr. Nicole Harris**, and **Mr. Andre Wiggins**. This accreditation status provides graduates of our counseling program with so many new opportunities. Thank you to everyone for their commitment to this effort.



Promoting Engaging Physical Education Experiences for All Students

On Monday, August 18, 2025, **Dr. Adam Forbes**, Assistant Professor of Health, Physical Education & Exercise Science, was invited to hold a professional development session for adapted physical education and individualized physical education teachers in Newport News. The title of the session was “What's New in Adapted Physical Education?” Newport News Public School educators explored a range of topics such as the STTEP (Space, Time, Task, Equipment, People) model for modifications and adaptations to physical activities, inclusion as an intersubjective experience, and sensory integration through purposeful play (low motor planning but high output activities).



Strengthening Student Presentation Skills

Senior exercise science student **Joseph Bracey** presented with **Dr. Donna Wolf**, Associate Professor of Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science, and **Dr. Kathleen Thomas**, Professor of Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science, at the Virginia Public Health Association (VPHA) Annual Conference in Richmond, VA on Thursday, September 25, 2025. Their research presentation on the impact of exercise and knowledge of gait improved the mobility of African American women participating in their study was well attended. Joseph Bracey did a great job responding to questions from the audience along with Drs. Wolf and Thomas.



MSIPP-NoVEL Consortium holds annual summer retreat at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, July 29 August 2.

Forty-two NoVEL Consortium participants attended the multi-day project retreat at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in Livermore, CA. The retreat program included LLNL facility tours, technical and professional talks by LLNL staff, NoVEL-LLNL student-intern panel, research presentations by students, planning meetings, and networking and team-building activities. The group picture was taken in front of NIF, the National Ignition Facility, a three-football-field-sized building which has in recent years enabled net positive fusion energy output using lasers. **Dr. Suely Black**, Professor of Chemistry, CMR member and the Consortium Education and Management Director, led the event. Eighteen NSU STEM graduates and undergraduate students and six chemistry faculty and staff members joined fourteen consortium participants from Virginia State University and Elizabeth City State University, and three others from LLNL. The NoVEL Consortium, an acronym for NSU, VSU, ECSU and LLLN, explores its theme of research and education in photonics materials to provide technical and professional development activities to partnering university students. This September NoVEL, a Department of Energy Minority Serving Institution Partnership Program consortium, completes its fourth successful year. A month ago, NSU received notice of the release of the \$1,000,000 annual award to NoVEL, which will enable us to continue our efforts to offer students out-of-the classroom professional experiences.



MSIPP-NoVEL Consortium group picture in front of NIF, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, July 2025.



Academic Affairs Highlights is a newsletter published twice a year by the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to promote the accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students in the areas of research, scholarship, professional development, and service. The submission deadline for the fall issue is November 10, and the submission deadline for the spring issue is April 10. Please submit good news items, and any accompanying pictures, in a Microsoft Word document via email to the newsletter editor, Dr. Lamiaa Youssef @ lsyoussef@nsu.edu.

View all issues at <https://www.nsu.edu/About/Administrative-Offices-Services/Office-of-the-Provost/Documents-and-Forms/Academic-Affairs-Highlights>

Academic Affairs website: www.nsu.edu/academic-affairs