

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

BELHOLD

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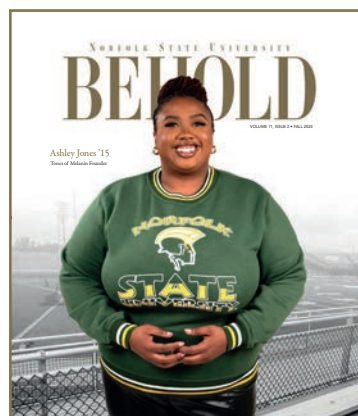
Ashley Jones '15
Tones of Melanin Founder



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Ashley Jones '15
Tones of Melanin Founder
Cover Photographed by Lateef Gibson

Standing Ovation: The NSU Theatre Company is celebrating its 10th Anniversary.





From the Desk of the President of Norfolk State University

The Fall 2023 issue of Behold Magazine celebrates the accomplishments of our NSU community, highlighting the transformative power of education and the remarkable achievements of our graduates.

A Spartan education instills in students the belief that they can make meaningful contributions to their chosen fields and communities. The inspiring story of Ashley Jones, a proud NSU alumna from the class of '15, serves as a prime example of how hard work can lead to success. Jones embarked on her entrepreneurial journey by establishing Tones of Melanin, an athleisure brand that specializes in HBCU-themed apparel. Her remarkable journey in the fashion industry is detailed on page 18.



This fall, NSU was named an Apple Distinguished School (page 3) and became one of the select, esteemed members of higher education institutions in the country to receive the designation. By distributing over 7,000 devices, NSU's Office of Information Technology has played a crucial role in bridging the digital divide that previously affected some students. This effort has ensured that all students have access to the necessary technology to complete their degree programs.

Our students have whole-heartedly embraced their devices. Furthermore, our faculty members have been utilizing these devices in innovative ways to enhance the learning experiences of our students. This dedication to leveraging technology for educational purposes is an exciting prospect for the future.

In the realm of research, Norfolk State University's Department of History and Interdisciplinary Studies is pioneering efforts to gather information about early descendants. Throughout much of Virginia's history, the institution of slavery permeated society. Although slavery was abolished following the Civil War, tracing the history of enslaved individuals remains a challenging task. However, the department, in collaboration with the Sargeant Memorial Collection at the Norfolk Public Library, is undertaking a significant project. "Sold Down River" (featured on page 12) aims to document the slave trade in Norfolk.

This groundbreaking endeavor sheds light on a painful chapter in history, providing valuable insights into the lives of those who were forcibly displaced. The dedication and commitment of the Norfolk State University community, in collaboration with the Norfolk Public Library, exemplify our collective determination to uncover the truth and honor the legacies of those who suffered during this tumultuous era.

In the area of sports, Norfolk State University's student-athletes have consistently demonstrated excellence, achieving remarkable victories in various competitions throughout 2023. Notably, our women's basketball team secured the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) title, which propelled them to the first round of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) national women's basketball tournament.

Moreover, our men's and women's track programs and cross-country teams have also made us proud by clinching MEAC titles. These victories reflect the rich history and tradition of success that our NSU Athletics program has cultivated (page 27). Readers can delve deeper into the inspiring stories of our student-athletes who have continuously raised the bar and brought glory to Norfolk State University.

This issue will also feature stories about a new master's program in the Department of Nursing and Allied Health, our 2023 Founders Day, our highly successful Homecoming weekend held in October and many notable alumni achievements.

Norfolk State University is built on hard work, intention, perseverance, and service. The Spartan Family continuously steps up to the challenge to demonstrate excellence and success. The fruits of our labor are paying off for Norfolk State University, our alumni and our communities across the nation and the world. As we continue to make incredible progress, we make the founders of this institution proud.

BEHOLD...

Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.

Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.
President, Norfolk State University

BEHOLD

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 2 • 2023

A MAGAZINE WITH GLOBAL REACH

The word "Behold" is often used by those who love Norfolk State. It sums up the excellence of the University and pride felt for it. That is why when it came to naming the magazine featuring the accomplishments and progress taking place at Norfolk State, "Behold," easily came to mind.

Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.
University President

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Innovation Earns University Coveted **APPLE DISTINGUISHED** *School Designation*

WHEN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FORCED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO SHUT DOWN ON-CAMPUS, FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING, IT PROVIDED NORFOLK STATE WITH AN AVENUE TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE OF DELIVERING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A WAY THAT WAS INNOVATIVE, PROACTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE.

CONTINUED ON PG. 4



Apple presents Norfolk State University with the Apple Distinguished School designation.

“The iPad and Apple pencil have enhanced the teaching and learning experience at NSU. Faculty can give interactive lectures and teach directly from their iPad, projecting their screen instead of using the traditional whiteboard.”

—Dr. Rhonda Fitzgerald



Teaching and learning continuity had to ensure access to the necessary educational tools for students to succeed at NSU and for faculty to deliver the excellent instruction and curriculum that is offered on campus and from afar.

Building on NSU’s participation as a community coding center through the HBCU C2 national teaching and learning initiative, an Apple-supported program focused on empowering HBCUs to bring coding and creativity to their campuses and communities, NSU utilized learning outcomes

from that 2020 program to create the new initiative. The Spartan Innovation Academy successfully piloted with first-year students over the 2019-20 academic year.

It was fully launched in the Fall semester of 2021, providing students, faculty and staff with access to industry-leading Apple technology that included the iPad Pro, Apple Pen, Apple SmartKeyboard Folio and Air Pod Pro with noise cancellation, as well as specialized training for app development.

With that undertaking, NSU became the first Historically Black College and University to facilitate a campus-wide deployment of Apple devices to all students in that first year. Since then, over 7,000 devices have been distributed to students, faculty and others.

Just recently, Norfolk State University was celebrated as a 2023-2026 Apple Distinguished School. The announcement, made during the University’s Board of Visitors meeting, recognized the University’s innovative approach to using Apple tools to teach and motivate students and provide them with opportunities to create their own innovative approaches to learning and engagement. Our continued partnership with Apple continues to benefit the entire campus.

We have experienced the usage of the devices of nearly all of our students and increased faculty usage integration of Apple devices in the classroom to connect and engage with students in new and innovative ways.

A survey of our students showed that the majority used their iPads daily or every other day



for studying, notetaking and entertainment. They also used the Apple pencil when notetaking. The students expressed that the Apple products helped them to be better organized, and they enjoy the mobility of the iPad and the convenience of connecting all their devices.

“It helps me to keep everything organized. As a Freshman, there were a lot of changes to get used to. The iPad helped me capture a lot I needed to remember,” read one student comment.

“I am able to stay current with assignments and up to date with my emails to my Professors,” another student commented.

For several students, the iPad provided them with a device or replaced an aging, outdated device. “Without it, it would make life difficult in completing my work,” wrote one student whose computer had become outdated. “I didn’t have a device to do homework before I got an iPad,” commented another student.

Early adopters such as Dr. Rhonda Fitzgerald, Professor of Math and the Director for the Center for Teaching and Learning, have been a model exemplar of device integration. She provides development and training opportunities regarding the usage of the devices in learning spaces in collaboration with the University’s Apple Professional Learning Specialist, Jeri Brown.

“The iPad and Apple pencil have enhanced the teaching and learning experience at NSU,” said Dr. Fitzgerald. “Faculty can give interactive lectures and teach directly from their iPad, projecting their screen instead of using the traditional whiteboard.”

“This not only allows the professor to be mobile in the classroom but also allows them to share lecture notes with the students by airdropping or posting them to our learning management system.” Additionally, the Apple pencil allows faculty to provide feedback digitally in multiple ways, she said. “Professors can annotate directly on a work submitted digitally and or provide step-by-step feedback with videos created using various applications.”

According to Dr. Fitzgerald, students love the personalized feedback that is easy to create with Apple technology. “The iPad has been a valuable tool for creating accessible content for students with diverse learning needs. In addition, it offers flexibility in how content is created. Professors can create video lectures and other multimedia materials with ease and adapt their teaching methods to suit our many students with different learning styles.”



One of the actions that seemed to impress Apple in the decision to award the designation is that the University built its program in two years, rather than the standard four to five years that it takes many colleges and universities because NSU President Javaune Adams-Gaston insisted on rolling the program out in one piece instead of small increments.

“A lot of this was born out of the COVID pandemic where we were watching our students struggle with trying to do their courses on their phones and not have the tools needed,” said Dr. Adams-Gaston. “But tools are just a part of it. We’ve always said that this is about the learning, the faculty’s engagement in the learning and the way that they use the tools with the students in order for them to have the kind of learning that we think is learning of the future.” **B**





FACULTY STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

In August 2023, the Virginia Secretary of Education, Aimee Rogstad Guidera (to the right of NSU President Javaune Adams-Gaston), and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) took a tour of NSU's campus and discussed the University's six-year plan.



Jill Comess, Food Science and Nutrition Program Director and Instructor in the Department of Nursing and Allied Health, published **Introduction to the Gut Microbiome and Its Impact on Health and Disease** in the July 2023 Journal of Topics in Clinical Nutrition.



Dr. Katrina B. Miller, Title III Director, was elected **Vice-President of the National Association of HBCU Title III Administrators Inc.** She was installed for a two-year term (2023-2025) during the 2023 National HBCU Week Conference on September 26, 2023.



Jennifer Malia, Professor of English and Creative Writing Coordinator, was featured on the front page of the **Virginian-Pilot** for her children's chapter book, **Nick and the Brick Builder Challenge**, the first in a series called The Infinity Rainbow Club, by Beaming Books.



Debbie Lyn Jones, University Webmaster in the Office of Communications and Marketing, was selected to work with the **Virginia IT Agency (VITA) and SiteImprove** as they collaborate to expand SiteImprove Frontier's courses regarding accessibility from the standpoint of Web Developers, Web Designers and Content Editors.



The HistoryMakers, the nation's largest African American video oral history archive, has awarded its 2023-2024 Innovations in Pedagogy and Teaching Fellowship to **Dr. Alexa Harris**, Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies.



Department of Physics faculty **Drs. Doyle Temple** and **Leroy Salary** received a grant from the Department of Defense titled **Discovery and Investigation of New Materials for Quantum Photonics**. The \$800,000, four-year award focuses on new materials for entangled photon sources and fabrication of new metamaterials nanostructures.



The Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work received its reaffirmation of accreditation of the Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work programs by the **Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)**. The program faculty prepared self-study documents, and a site visit was conducted in February 2023 with students, administrators, faculty, advisory board members, and constituents. The next accreditation review cycle will take place in June 2030. To learn more, visit CSWE's website: <https://bit.ly/3NdpqkT>



Sam Hughes, Assistant Professor of Photography and Graphic Design, has his photography on display as part of the national art exhibition **All Water Has a Perfect Memory: The Poetics of Resilience and Retreat at the Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab in Norfolk, VA**. His photo is titled **Foggy Morning Tug**. The exhibit is the first public event of the Ryan Resilience Lab and celebrates resilience from the perspective of rivers. It is a collaboration of the **Elizabeth River Project and Norfolk State University**. The exhibit is scheduled to run for six months. **B**

THEN



Alisia Smith-Rucker '94

NOW



NSUAA Life Member

Oral History Project CAPTURES ALUMNI STORIES

By GAIL KENT

Alumni will soon have a tangible remembrance of their fond Norfolk State memories as a book of collected stories.

Last summer, alumni were invited to submit their stories via writing or recording, and to date, more than 3,200 alumni have participated in the University's first oral history project. Many of the stories will be included in a book that will be available for purchase next summer.

"The oral history project allows us to tell the story of Norfolk State through our alumni," says Assistant Vice President for Development Shana Z. James. "It is allowing us to celebrate the memories and experiences our students had while they were here on campus – how Norfolk State impacted their lives and careers."

James says there were many marriages among alumni who met at NSU and

"so many fantastic careers that began here."

NSU is partnering with Publishing Concepts, Inc. (PCI) to bring the book to life. "Our engagement campaign is compiling a unique oral history archive, uniting Norfolk State University across generations, professions, geography and life experiences," says Jeffrey Hecker, PCI project manager. He says the company has completed similar projects for other HBCUs, including Howard University, Morehouse College, Delaware State University and Savannah State University.

"By sharing your memory, you'll ensure that the rich history of Norfolk State will be preserved for generations to come," Hecker says.

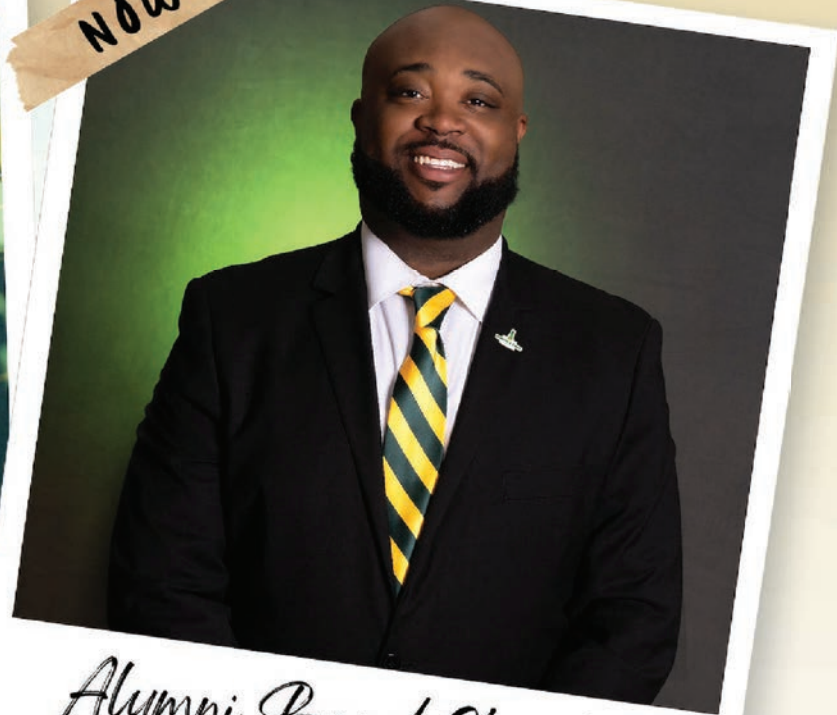
Alumni have been asked to submit their stories by calling the provided number. They speak to a representative who asks questions about their time

THEN



William Bynum '20

NOW



Alumni Band Chapter

“It is allowing us to celebrate the memories and experiences our students had while they were here on campus – how Norfolk State impacted their lives and careers.” – Shana Z. James, Asst. Vice President for Development

as students and records responses for transcription. Participants have the opportunity to edit their stories online after submission. Not all stories will be included due to space restrictions, and longer stories will be edited and excerpted.

The stories include alumni responses to questions about most memorable professors, friendships, love stories and careers, James says. Some alumni share photos for inclusion in the book, which will feature sections on each topic.

“The book is going to be a great piece for the coffee table,” James says. “It’s something they will be proud to share.”

In addition to providing an opportunity to serve alumni, the project will aid in fund development. “I’m on the major gifts fundraising side, and oftentimes we like to hear stories so that we can share why Norfolk State is so

important and why we need dollars to help run this institution,” James says.

“I need these stories when I talk to people and tell them how their major gifts provide scholarships for students, many of whom don’t have the money to go to college. Because of the benevolence of our donors, we are able to provide scholarships to our students.”

James says scholarships enable students to graduate with less debt. “My department is charged with helping to bring in the dollars to help mitigate students’ financial burdens. At every college, students graduate with tons of loans and debt, and they don’t always leave making the top salaries. Anything we can do to help raise dollars to minimize that is great.”

Alumni may continue submitting stories by phone until Jan. 12 by calling 855-912-8518. **B**



Norfolk State University Becomes
1st HBCU in the Commonwealth

TO OFFER MASTER'S IN HEALTH INFORMATICS

By SHARON RIDDICK HOGGARD (MA '04)

Ever had your physician order medical tests? Sure you have. You simply went to a lab, provided the doctor's order, had blood drawn, and you were on your way in a matter of minutes . . . or you may have gone to a specialized imaging center for a chest x-ray or bone density scan. These tests are analyzed, results are compared to the patient's medical history and other medical markers, and finally posted in the patient's electronic medical record. Now imagine the ever-increasing power of computers and medical professionals reviewing and cross-referencing your medical history, and your lab results and developing a diagnosis. These processes are the basics of health informatics – the study of patient data using computational techniques.

Norfolk State University received a \$5 million grant from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (housed in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Public Health Informatics & Technology Workforce Development Program) to create the new health informatics degree program. “Norfolk State is part of a nationwide effort to train 5,000 individuals in public health informatics. The grant funds have had a positive effect on the importance of health informatics across the nation and forged new relationships for NSU. The workforce plan specifically targeted five types of higher education institutions, including HBCUs,” explained Dr. Marie St. Rose, Director of Allied Health programs housed in NSU's Department of Nursing and Allied Health. Dr. St. Rose is a registered nurse by profession and also serves as a professor in the department. Norfolk State University's consortium partners include the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Hampton Roads Community Health Center (HRCCH). These organizations will be providing internships for NSU students. This first cohort is expected to finish their studies in about 13 months.

Fifty-two Norfolk State students are currently enrolled in the Master's of Health Informatics program (MHI). These scholars, from diverse educational and professional backgrounds, will take the course entirely online — except for a six-week internship. Health informatics is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on developing methods and technologies for the acquisition, processing and study of patient data. The data is curated from patient electronic health records, diagnostic test results, medical scans, etc. Health informatics professionals leverage computer technology to collect, organize and analyze medical information. Health informaticists play a critical role in making medical care better and more effective by using data to improve healthcare delivery.

“Health informatics offers the opportunity to use technology to manage and analyze health data,” said Dr. St. Rose. “This data is compiled from an electronic health record or paper chart. The electronic health record is a version of the paper chart with a record of patient information gleaned from a visit to a healthcare setting.” According to the National Library of Medicine, healthcare

“Health informatics offers the opportunity to use technology to manage and analyze health data.”

— Dr. Marie St. Rose

informatics has been in existence since the 1950s. The field's fifth stage of development from 1995 to the present is heavily intertwined with the advancement of computer technologies.

Dr. St. Rose discussed the importance of health informatics and the need for a diverse workforce. “Health informatics is so important now because it can empower healthcare providers to make better decisions about the health of all people, as well as addressing future pandemics such as COVID-19.” She acknowledged, “There is evidence that the public health workforce lacks diverse representation, knowledge and skills to address health disparities and to utilize technology and health data to improve health outcomes. Universities and colleges have the opportunity to offer academic programs to train underrepresented minorities in health informatics to meet the needs of state and local healthcare organizations.”

NSU's health informatics degree program is open to all majors. The curriculum includes core components including data management, data analysis, use of electronic health records and interoperability. “Required coursework will train students to use online health record systems to organize and analyze health data. Students will learn to present the results of data analysis to healthcare providers to develop processes and make sound organizational decisions,” Dr. St. Rose added. Additionally, students will learn how to protect and secure patients' electronic health records. “The curriculum will provide students with the opportunity to learn about inequity issues such as bias, inaccuracies, and incomplete health information related to data analysis and reporting. The internship will provide students the chance to apply what they have learned and provide them with the opportunity to learn new skills.”

“My hopes and aspirations are that the students and communities will envision the Master of Health Informatics degree as a signature program that will help diversify the public health workforce focusing on underrepresented minorities as well as improving public health outcomes.” **B**



By JALEESA MANLEY

SOLD DOWN RIVER: MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

The desire to trace your lineage has been a journey many have gone on. This journey for African Americans, however, can be challenging due to the long history of slavery in the United States. Researching descendants before the 1870 census is where the difficulty lies since records for the enslaved were either handwritten, passed down by word of mouth, maintained poorly, or lost over time. Sold Down River wants to change that, particularly for descendants of enslaved Virginians.



Approximately 20,000 enslaved women, men and children were sold from the ports in Norfolk, Virginia, to New Orleans, Savannah and other southern ports to feed the growing demand for enslaved labor in cotton and sugar cane fields. Roadstead Montessori High School, the Joseph Jenkins Roberts Center for the Study of the African Diaspora at Norfolk State University and the Sargeant Collection at Slover Libraries, Norfolk Public Libraries are all working together to find their names and tell their stories.

The Sold Down River project was conceived by Troy Valos, Special Collections Librarian at the Sargeant Memorial Collection at the Norfolk Public Library. Through his research assisting genealogists, historians and city officials, Valos discovered the location of Norfolk's Slave Jail, a site long lost in the city's changing structure. With this discovery, he was prompted to begin researching the slave trade in Norfolk. "This project is so important because we are giving the forgotten their voice back. Either by design or circumstances, or both allowed Norfolk's role to be forgotten and a very large group of people disappeared from our collective history," says Valos.

Finding the names and stories of those in the slave trade is a crucial task, which is how Norfolk State, and its students, became a part of the project to develop the research, database and historical background beyond local history. Dr. Stephanie Richmond, Associate Professor of History and Co-Director of the Roberts Center at NSU, is the Project Director of Sold Down River. "This is a project that is deeply rooted in striving for equity, historical truth and reconciliation," says Dr. Richmond. "Norfolk's centrality in the domestic slave trade has been downplayed and

overlooked by historians and that lack impacts our understanding of the institution of slavery on our region and on Black families whose ancestors lived here."

In 2022, the Roberts Center obtained a \$150,000 grant from the Virginia African American Cultural Center (VAACC) to support the efforts of the Sold Down

River project, such as stipends for NSU and Roadstead students, researchers, a database developer and more. Through this project, Dr. Richmond wants to build a tool that will help genealogists and family historians climb the wall that currently exists in researching southern Black family history before 1870. To continue this extensive work, the Roberts Center also received a \$150,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation this year.

Through this effort, Melissa Williams and Camilia Bell, who are currently researchers on the project, have uncovered numerous names and stories. They began working on Sold Down River as Norfolk State students and have since graduated. Williams, who has been tracing her family's lineage since 2012, describes the process as overwhelming at times saying, "The number of children that were part of this domestic slave trade and the amounts at which they were sold was so emotional for me."

For Bell, learning about how free African Americans interacted with the enslaved and the stories behind that kind of difficult history was what stood out most. "In fact, there were free Black women, in the notaries they would be referred to as f.w. of c. (free women of color), who would buy their family members to emancipate them afterward. For example, on June 19, 1839, a free Black woman named Rozine Durald, paid \$700 for her 23-year-old son Jules ("a reduced price"), claiming she would "grant freedom in due form," explains Bell.

Stories like this are continuously being discovered by the Sold Down River project, including stories telling the experiences of men, women and children sold in New Orleans with ties to Virginia. In 1830, Jack, a 26-year-old enslaved carpenter, boarded a ship bound for New Orleans and had been sold by John Walker of Norfolk to slave trader Paul Pascal. Jenny, an 11-year-old girl, was purchased in Norfolk, by slave trader James Barnes Diggs and transported to New Orleans. And on March 7, 1838, an enslaved young woman named Sarah was sold at auction for \$400. Sarah had been owned by Dr. Augustus Davezac, son of the U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands who lived in New Orleans.

Learn more about their stories and the Sold Down River project at solddownriver.com **B**

50 Negroes.
I WILL give the highest Cash price for **50 NEGROES**, from 10 to 25 years of age, with or without certificates.
Aug 7—ts
Charles Hatcher,
Norfolk, Virginia.

NEGROES WANTED.
The highest price will be given for **30 NEGROES**, Men, Women, Boys and Girls. Certificates will not be required. Apply to
James B. Crowder,
At Johnson's Hotel.
Aug 6—3t

NEGROES WANTED.
The highest cash price will be given for **Negroes**, Of both sexes, from 12 to 25 years of age, accompanied with the necessary certificates, for the Louisiana market, a form of which will be forwarded, by letter or otherwise, if application be made to
James B. Diggs & Co.
July 30—damp
Norfolk.

...that this day before mentioned...

...and seven pounds and ten shillings...

...James Diggs of Norfolk Virginia...

...that he does by these presents release and...

...Melanie Bourgeois...

...and to pay to the said...

...eighteen hundred and twenty...

...as well the Conservator in and for the...

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...the said officer respective office...

...San Juan Pastors, and William Lake...

...appear and the notary this twenty eight...

...day of January eighteen hundred thirty...

William Lake

◀ **Left Top** - Cash for slave advertisements of various Norfolk traders. Source: American Beacon, August 8, 1829, page 1.

Left Bottom: Slave sale document of Charles, a 21-year-old enslaved black man, who was purchased for \$700 in 1831.

STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

has Deep Impact on Students

By GAIL KENT

Photos courtesy of Sam Hughes and NSU students



NSU student Elijah Pierce shares his modeling talents while in Milan, Italy.

Photo by NSU student Mark Harmon

Thirty NSU students received a life-changing taste of Italy last summer while earning credits toward their degrees in Fine Arts & Graphic Design.

“It has always been a college dream to study abroad,” says Asha Hilliard ’24, who went on the trip to Florence with the fashion photography class. Half the students went as photography students and the other half as fashion students. “I had never traveled outside the country. Leaving the country wasn’t a common thing with my family.”

Hilliard says that in addition to helping her build her resume for a future career in graphic design, she grew personally by experiencing a different culture. “Having conversations with my Italian professors allowed us to get a better understanding by debunking stereotypes Americans are taught about Italians based on American film culture.”

Asiko-oluwa Aderin ’24, also a Fine Arts major, went on the trip with her fashion class.

“I thought the trip would be just a great chance to have my first traveling experience — I had never even been on a plane before.” Aderin plans to go to graduate school to pursue painting and printmaking or curatorial studies and art administration.

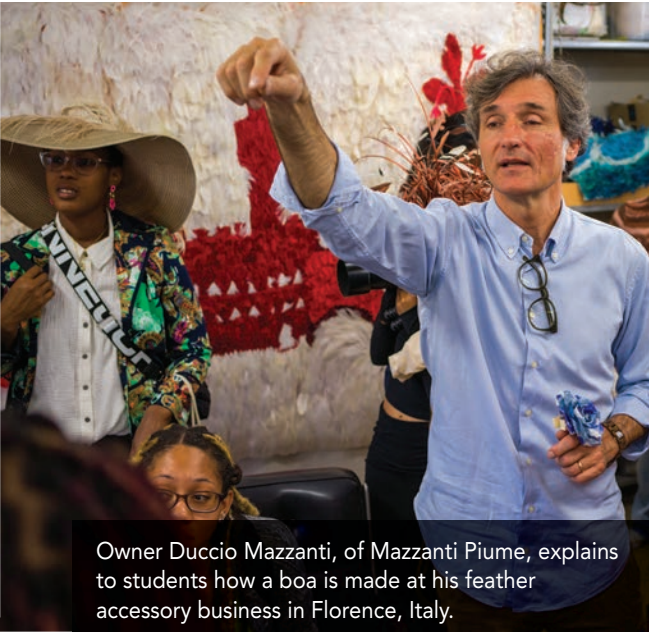
She enjoyed the great Italian food and visits with fashion designers’ shops where they spent time with businesses that have been in families for generations. “What caught me by surprise was the attention to quality and detail in everything they do.”

These summer travel groups, facilitated by the NSU Office of Global Learning and International Programs, were two of five faculty-led programs that went abroad. Other groups participated in creative writing, foreign language and social work classes in London. The groups were hosted by The London Metropolitan University and The Florence University of the Arts.

Torian Lee, the Director of NSU’s Office of Global Learning & International Programs, says international



Above: Group shot at Mazzanti Piume, Florence, Italy - Photo by Sam Hughes



Owner Duccio Mazzanti, of Mazzanti Piume, explains to students how a boa is made at his feather accessory business in Florence, Italy.

Photo By: Sam Hughes

“What caught me by surprise was the attention to quality and detail in everything they do.”
— Asiko-oluwa Aderin '24

education is tied to the NSU Mission and the goals of the University Strategic Plan. “The study abroad program allows students to engage in academic study, research, or a service-learning experience in a country outside of the United States,” says Lee. “These experiences will enhance global competence skills, assisting students in reaching their full potential as ‘well rounded, resourceful citizens and leaders for the 21st Century.’”

In addition to the study groups, individual students are choosing to study abroad in other locations, such as Qatar, Thailand and Germany, through partnerships with other U.S. universities. “We work with all students, faculty, staff administrators and university partners to facilitate and support multiple and varied opportunities for global learning.”

Students have a number of ways to help fund their trip. Lee says resources such as government and university scholarships, grants and research opportunities are available. Sam Hughes, Associate Professor of Visual and Performing Arts in the Division of Fine Arts, said that some enterprising art students sold their work to raise funds.

Hughes, who teaches photography, accompanied the group with fashion design teacher Christy Frederick, also an associate professor in the division. Both professors were enthusiastic about the experience and plan to take students abroad in the future.

Hughes’ students spent much of their time shooting fashion photos with models, as well as on the streets, where they stopped well-dressed locals and asked for permission to take photos.

In addition to attending classes and visiting design houses, Frederick says she took her group to renowned art sites such as the Sistine Chapel. “When we entered every room, there were gasps from the students. When you see these things in real life, rather than in pictures, it’s just wonderful.”

The study abroad trip had a deep impact on many of the students. “We had students who had never traveled out of the state before,” Frederick says. “One student began crying when the plane took off. When we got to Florence, it was like a religious experience for her and many of the students.” **B**



photo by NSU student Angel Smith

Right: NSU student Destiny Taylor models in an alley in Florence, Italy during a street photography session

BEHOLD



ALUMNA COMBINES IMAGINATION & BUSINESS DEGREE

to Launch Athleisure Clothing Line

By SHARON RIDDICK HOGGARD (MA '04)

Photography By Lateef Gibson
and photos courtesy of Ashley Jones





“I saw the need for something that looks like me in the market, and essentially this gave birth to Tones of Melanin.”

about their products and/or services and face the real possibility of rejection and, ultimately, disappointment. Jones’ appearance on the season 14 finale of the competition was inspiring. She was cool, stayed on point, and responded concisely to questions. In November 2022, she participated in a similar business-pitch competition called Pull Up & Pitch: Life’s Dream. Ashley Jones has learned much in her journey, and it all started in her business classes. “My experience at Norfolk State University was life changing,” she admitted.

Although her original goal was to work at a Fortune 100 company after graduation, her artistic talents — specifically sketching — kept pushing their way to the surface. “I’ve been drawing since I was 13 years old. I merged the creative with the business knowledge,” Jones confided. While at NSU, the young entrepreneur “designed for every organization on campus, including the Student Government Association (SGA) and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. “If it was a design for a t-shirt or a flyer, I was the go-to girl.” After a random visit to the university bookstore, Jones felt there was a lack of sportswear that would be appealing to the masses. “I saw the need for something that looks like me in the market, and essentially this gave birth to Tones of Melanin.”

Jones has created a line of casual clothing labeled athleisure. She describes the clothing genre as everyday wear. “Not just clothing you’d wear to a football game or the airport, but clothing you’d wear to go out with friends, you know — common wear. It’s sports collegiate wear that we’re just combining a lot of different fashion elements to create our own field of fashion.” Jones never thought she would be considered a clothing designer. “To be honest, it just kind of came to me.” Tones of Melanin was born in 2017. “I was mainly designing stuff for HBCUs. Then in 2020, I got my licensing and started designing wear for Norfolk State.” Today, Tones of Melanin has about 40 HBCU clients, including the Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University aka FAMU and Elizabeth City State University.

The young entrepreneur talks about the production process with passion. “Cotton is my favorite fabric. It’s very forgiving, and it’s easier to make all sizes from the extra small to 5x. But we’re also using polyester.” She describes her creative method as layered, curating ideas from the old to create something new and different. “I get an idea and use Photoshop and Illustrator to put concepts to paper. I drag the logos here and there and play with the colors. From there, I make flat layouts and mockups and then send it off to my manufacturer. I tell them what fabrics I want to use and the item’s dimensions,” Jones explained.

With a million-dollar smile and the confidence of a skilled warrior, Ashley Jones, Norfolk State University class of 2015, has parlayed those attributes and many more into a successful business. In May 2023, the young businesswoman and her enterprise, Tones of Melanin, received an opportunity to appear on the business reality show, Shark Tank. If you have never seen the competition, here’s a little background: Shark Tank is a television series that made its debut in 2009. The program features entrepreneurs who pitch their ideas, startups or products to a panel of venture capitalists (Sharks) who decide whether or not to invest in their companies. It takes more than sheer nerve to present to the Sharks. Competitors get peppered with difficult questions



When asked about recent business pitch experiences and the takeaways, Jones remarked, “Over the last year, I’ve learned my own value. I’ve learned the value of what I’m doing. It’s not just about a t-shirt. We’re hoping to inspire the next generation to also attend an HBCU, get their degrees and become entrepreneurs. I feel like that’s the story that has been told over the last couple of months. I also learned that I present very well. I give all the credit to the NSU business department and its professors. Every semester I had to do a business plan. I knew how to do it and was prepared to answer any questions.”

She has very strategic goals for Tones of Melanin. “We are also designing a line of drinkware. Which kind of broadens our horizons to other things besides clothing.” The ultimate goal — to establish deeper connections with the colleges and universities she serves. “For the future, we’re looking to have more hands-on relationships with these universities. We want to help them foster improved relationships with their alumni. In addition, we plan to venture more into the tech world by turning our data into an updated database for HBCUs.” Her goal here is to capture data from alumni customers across Tones of Melanin’s clients. She believes that the ‘customer cycle’ — something she learned in her business classes, will set up patrons for decades into the future. “So that’s the goal,” Jones continued.

The future is looking brilliant for the former Shark Tank and the Pull Up & Pitch contestant. “I’m excited about the future. For us to break into selling our merchandise in department stores is really hard. To break through that barrier is going to make it even easier for the next Black fashion designers in the world. With us breaking the door down with Belk and Dick’s Sporting Goods selling our clothing, we’re opening a door for the next generation.”

For a look at Ashley Jones’ pitch on Shark Tank, use the link provided here: **WATCH:** <https://rb.gy/1ky06g> Here’s hoping the Shark Tank effect impacts Ashley Jones and Tones of Melanin for years to come. **B**



Above: In May 2023, Ashley Jones and her enterprise, Tones of Melanin, appeared on the business reality show, Shark Tank.



SPARTAN PRIDE: *From Graduation and Beyond*

Contributed By DOMINION ENERGY



Norfolk State University alumnus Troy Lindsey can often be spotted sporting his green and gold colors, whether it's from the sidelines enjoying homecoming festivities, mentoring students or meeting with university leaders.

Troy Lindsey, a 1988 graduate, loves displaying his Spartan pride. Lindsey now enjoys strengthening these connections to the community through his role as Dominion Energy Manager of State and Local Affairs. He still lives in Hampton Roads and works in Norfolk, not too far from campus.

"Community is everything; I enjoy coming back to campus as often as I can. Taking time to give back to the university that I came from is important," said Lindsey. "I am also proud of my commitment to serve through Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.'s Kappa League, a mentorship program helping to prepare underprivileged, high school males for college."

Lindsey emphasizes the importance of giving back. After 22 years with the company, the thing that Lindsey enjoys most is Dominion Energy's fulfillment of promises, like HBCU Promise, including Norfolk State which received a 2.75-million-dollar grant. The six-year partnership and 25-million-dollar grant is distributed to 11 of the Nation's HBCUs across Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, and South Carolina.



In 2021, Dominion Energy's Troy Lindsey '88 and Eric Fallen '10, presented a check to Javaune President Adams-Gaston for \$2.75 million as a grant to support STEM studies programs through their HBCU Promise education equity initiative.

Dominion Energy also offers multiple other Educational Equity programs, such as the Diversity Student Conference, to provide scholarships and resources for underrepresented minority students and STEM education.

"These programs are important because they show that Dominion Energy is passionate about supporting diverse perspectives and ideas," said Lindsey. "We avoid tunnel vision by promoting the education of students of color and recognizing historically Black colleges and universities. We want everyone in our service area to know that we want to give back, we want to help, we listen, and we care."

In addition to his instrumental work connecting Dominion Energy's HBCU Promise to Norfolk State, Lindsey provides support to the community with the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project.

"CVOW is a 9.8-billion-dollar project, 27 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach, which once completed in 2026 will provide safe, reliable and renewable energy to 660,000 homes," said Lindsey. "This is the largest project

in company history, and a huge step in the transition toward renewable energy, which is the future. We are focusing on solar and wind power, resources that we can continue to use because they will never run out."

Lindsey, a mathematics major, is hopeful that more students of color will pursue careers in STEM, including jobs related to offshore wind, which is a growing industry. One entry point is internships, he said. Plus, he encourages students to find mentors who can aid them in their educational journey.

"Internships are so important. If I could tell students one thing it would be to take an internship, gain that experience in your field, and take time to discover if a certain company and career path is right for you," stated Lindsey. "Enjoy your college experience and build that connection to campus, but take your future seriously, and do things that will help you advance."

Lindsey encourages fellow alumni to get involved on campus, invest in future generations through mentorship programs, and to always wear their Spartans gear with pride! **B**



DREAMS ACHIEVED:

The POWER *of an* NSU DEGREE



THERE IS NOTHING QUITE LIKE ACHIEVING A LONG-HELD DREAM. THAT FEELING OF SATISFACTION. THE CULMINATION OF HARD WORK. WHEN WE REACH IT, WE OFTEN REFLECT ON HOW WE GOT THERE.

Norfolk State University's latest commercial video, produced in conjunction with Studio Center, does just that. Filmed on campus, the commercial was truly a Spartan family affair. Alumni, students, faculty and staff were all a part of it. From groundskeeping to housekeeping to Housing and Residence Life to Campus Ministries. And at the center of it all was the Hardy family, who included a family comprised of three alumni and a current student — Arlisa Hardy '16, '18, security consultant at Accenture, who played the NSU graduate; Alana Hardy '25, a pre-Nursing major, who played Arlisa as a student; and their parents, Pamela Battle-Hardy '91, director of Special Education and Related Services, Portsmouth Public Schools and Yvonn Hardy, '89, '93, retired teacher, Norfolk Public Schools, 30 years of service, who played themselves.

The video builds on the University's brand and tagline of "We See the Future in You." It begins with an alumna starting the first day of her dream job. As she gazes at her NSU degree framed and hanging on her office wall, she reminisces about her four years at Norfolk State.

Filming took place over two days on the Norfolk State campus.

According to Chris Karvellas, director and DP for the Norfolk State project, it was important to show both sides of what makes a successful graduate. "It is clear that our hero is focused, self-motivated and extremely hard working," said Karvellas, "but she didn't triumph in a vacuum. The school she chose and the people she met and interacted with along the way are integral components to her story of individual achievement."

Also key to the successful production of the 60-second television spot was the overwhelming support of the Norfolk State University students, faculty, employees, and alumni. "The passion they showed for education was infectious," said Dwenda Mosley, Studio Center video producer, "and it inspired Studio Center to make certain we properly captured the energy and spirit of campus life, as well as the pride that comes with being a Spartan and attending one of the nation's great historically Black universities." **B**

To view the commercial video, use the following link: <https://rb.gy/0y83mj>



2023 FOUNDERS DAY



Norfolk State opened its doors on September 18, 1935, in three rooms on the second floor of the Hunton YMCA on Brambleton Avenue. Named the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University at its founding, Norfolk State was the last historically Black institution established in the Commonwealth of Virginia. By 1969, Norfolk State began its transformation into a vibrant, independent college and in 1979, it obtained university status. As the University celebrates its founding 88 years ago with a week of events, Norfolk State remains a source of inspiration for those who aspire to fulfill their dreams of attaining a college education and earning a degree. Events include the Founders Day Breakfast featuring journalist, best-selling author and political analyst Juan Williams, Freshman Convocation, a scholarship dinner, recognizing scholarship recipients and donors, sponsored by the NSU Foundation Inc., and more.



2023-24
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

11/6	WILLIAM & MARY	1/20	HOWARD
11/8	DREXEL	1/22	MARY WASHINGTON
11/12	RADFORD	1/27	COPPIN STATE
11/16	APPALACHIAN STATE	1/29	MORGAN STATE
11/19	HAMPTON	2/3	DELAWARE STATE
11/24-26	MIAMI THANKSGIVING TOURNEY	2/5	MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE
11/29	MINNESOTA	2/17	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
12/2	CHICAGO STATE	2/19	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL
12/10	WAKE FOREST	2/24	COPPIN STATE
12/16	AUBURN	2/26	MORGAN STATE
12/18	HIGH POINT	3/2	DELAWARE STATE
12/28	NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON	3/4	MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE
12/31	LONGWOOD	3/7	HOWARD
1/6	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	3/13-16	MEAC TOURNAMENT
1/8	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL		

BEHOLD THE GREEN AND GOLD

#GOLDSTANDARD NSUSPARTANS.COM @NSUSPARTANS @NSUATHLETICS MEAC

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD Banister NISSAN Bubba's Checkered Flag pepsi Langley Virginia529 VIRGINIA LOTTERY

2023-24
MEN'S BASKETBALL

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

11/6	PENN STATE WILKES-BARRE	1/15	VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY OF LYNCHBURG
11/9	APPRENTICE SCHOOL	1/20	HOWARD
11/13	HAMPTON	1/27	COPPIN STATE
11/17-20	PARADISE JAM	1/29	MORGAN STATE
11/25	WICHITA STATE	2/3	DELAWARE STATE
11/28	WILLIAM & MARY	2/5	MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE
12/1	VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH	2/17	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
12/9	ILLINOIS STATE	2/19	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL
12/13	STONY BROOK	2/24	COPPIN STATE
12/16	HOFSTRA	2/26	MORGAN STATE
12/18	SOUTHERN VIRGINIA	3/2	DELAWARE STATE
12/20-21	SUN BOWL INVITATIONAL	3/4	MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE
1/2	TENNESSEE	3/7	HOWARD
1/6	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	3/13-16	MEAC TOURNAMENT
1/8	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL		

BEHOLD THE GREEN AND GOLD

#GOLDSTANDARD NSUSPARTANS.COM @NSUSPARTANS @NSUATHLETICS MEAC

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD Banister NISSAN Bubba's Checkered Flag pepsi Langley Virginia529 VIRGINIA LOTTERY

SPARTAN MEN, WOMEN WIN MEAC CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS



The Norfolk State men's cross country team continued its dominance of the MEAC. The men won the 2023 MEAC Cross Country Championships by winning their fourth consecutive men's conference championship and its 16th overall. While the women won their fifth overall title and the first since 2021.

Kenneth Giles was named the Outstanding Coach for both the men's and women's meets.

For the men, junior **Gidion Sigei** won the individual title for the second consecutive year, finishing the 8k course in 24:39.1, 24.8 seconds ahead of the next finisher. The time was just three-tenths of a second slower than his historic performance in last year's MEAC Championships.

The Spartans tallied just 18 points total for the meet, sweeping the top four places. It marked the fourth consecutive time that the Spartans earned the top three finishers.

Delaware State took second place at the meet with 71 points, a whopping 53 points behind the first-place Spartans.

Raphael Kitur took second with a time of 25:03.9, while **Brian Rotich** earned his first All-MEAC Cross Country honor by finishing third in 25:22.2.

Making his first appearance of the 2023 season, **Victor Jumo** wasted no time getting comfortable, finishing the race in 26:18.9 to round out the top four. **Evans Polelet** closed out the Spartan scorers, taking eighth in 26 minutes, 57.6 seconds.

All of Norfolk State's top finishers earned All-MEAC honors.

The Spartan women were led by junior **Mercyline Kimaiyo**. She took the individual title for the second consecutive year, completing the 5k course in 18:24.9, over 20 seconds ahead of the next finisher.

All five Spartan scorers finished in the top 10 slots of the competition, going 1-5-6-8-10 to tally just 30 points total. Howard University took runner-up with 49 points.

Junior **Jahmei Wyatt** (19:33.5) and senior **Kara Grant** (19:29.2) took fifth and sixth, respectively, while **Dorcias Kosgei** earned eighth (19:35.8). **Ludjenie Mondesir** rounded out the Spartan scorers (19:44.7) by finishing 10th.

The meet marked the seventh time a Norfolk State student-athlete has won the women's conference race, and Kimaiyo became just the second female athlete to win the title in back-to-back years. **B**

—Compiled from NSU Athletics Reports

October 22 – 29, 2023



Alumni activities at the Norfolk Division of Virginia State College (VSC) began on November 28, 1949, when the Norfolk Division of Virginia State College Alumni Association was formally organized. At that time, one game during football season was designated as Homecoming. This family reunion has become a celebration that has fostered a long legacy of fellowship, entertainment, and Spartan pride.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- The presentation of Harper Rucker, Little Miss Athletics Foundation; Parker Taylor, Little Mister Athletics Foundation and Phyllis S. Coley '75 as Ms. Athletics Foundation.
- Alisia Smith-Rucker '94 was crowned Ms. Alumni 2023-24.
- LaVoris Pace '87 served as the grand marshal of the annual parade.
- Members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.® donated \$50,000 in honor of the Epsilon Zeta Chapter's 60th Anniversary.







YASMINE CHARLES

University Was Her 'Saving Grace'

By Kesha Williams

As far as Yasmine Charles is concerned, everyone has a story. Yet, the trick to successful living is making sure life's lessons propel you to a state of thankfulness and compassion.

Charles, a 2017 graduate of Norfolk State University, links her gratitude to earning her bachelor's degree. That credential has repeatedly propelled her career. Yet, the road to independence was not easy.

As a freshman, Charles discovered she was not prepared for rigorous college courses. She was a non-traditional student, a Haitian immigrant who fled a violence-riddled nation, and an eight-year U.S. Navy veteran.

"When I was stationed in Norfolk, I fell in love with Virginia. I knew I wanted the HBCU experience because I remembered watching the TV show, *A Different World*, Charles said.

"That was my first exposure to American culture. I knew if I was going to college, it would have to be an HBCU. Norfolk State had a veterans department, and I began building my network there," Charles said.

In reflection, the Navy provided her with a great sense of stability. Charles declares it changed her life by allowing her to instantly apply cooking skills she acquired previously at a New York culinary school. The 600 daily meals she and a team of cooks prepared provided the essential item everyone needed no matter their military rank — proper nutrition.

Among NSU veterans, she heard some common discussions. Despite a sea of scheduled green and gold glimmering campus events amusing traditional college-aged students, Charles knew veterans who sometimes viewed campus life as awkward.

A three-month stint with homelessness in 2015 left Charles sleeping in her car on campus. It interrupted her junior year of classes, so Charles wrote former NSU President Eddie N. Moore Jr. requesting help. Two gracious scholarships arose and covered the cost of her campus residency and meals. Charles graduated from the Food Sciences/Interdisciplinary program at NSU. Afterward, she taught culinary and nutrition courses at Stratford University and in public schools.

Charles is a published book author and a food writer for *Kingdom Life Magazine*. In 2020, she collaborated with a local TV news anchor to report the challenges veterans face transitioning to civilian life. She also worked as a patrolling Hampton Roads advocate who assisted homeless veterans.

In 2019, Charles created a cooking show and posted it on YouTube, *Yasmine's Cooking Show*, where she provides culinary and nutrition education. She has also made guest appearances on local TV shows, *The Hampton Roads Show* and *Living 757*.

Today, she is a military educator at the Norfolk Naval Station who teaches life skills to currently enlisted personnel.

"We talk about financial management, anger management, suicide prevention, whatever the commanding officers say they need us to cover," Charles said.

"God put me back in a community using my experiences as a vet. I say to them, 'this [homelessness] is what happened to me after working 8 years in the Navy, and it could happen to anyone else,'" Charles said.

Many veterans, Charles said, are proud to have served their country. Yet, the lack of adequate preparation for civilian life contributes to a large number of homeless veterans. Charles treasures the many people at NSU — whether administrators, professors, university police, mentors or fellow veterans — who helped her.

"Norfolk State was my saving grace. It taught me the importance of giving back, so I donate money to NSU," Charles said.

"I attend events and volunteer as an usher when NSU students are performing at the Wells Theatre."

"I pushed through the Food Science program at Norfolk State because of the support I received there. It's an honor to serve our military, to share nutrition, my passion for food and share my story," Charles said. **B**

DESMOND WALKER

Mentoring is Essential Step in Production of Next Generation Officers

By Kesha Williams

It's not uncommon for an award recipient to spend time reflecting on their accomplishments. Norfolk State University (NSU) alumnus, Commander Desmond Walker, is determined to spend more time investing in others than basking in the glory of his achievements.

In 2022, Walker received the Career Achievement in Government Award at the 36th Black Engineer of the Year Awards STEM Conference. Walker noted that the award, presented to a mid-career professional who has made significant achievements in engineering, was an honor.

According to Walker, the committee looks at the body of work produced by the nominee, the social and economic value and impact, and the nominee's performance as a role model and mentor for minorities in technology. For Walker, that career includes his assignment as the commander of a \$2 billion guided missile destroyer, the USS *Stout*. In a 2020 U.S. Naval Institute editorial, *The Burden of a Black Naval Officer*, Walker notes the U.S. Navy has advanced but it still struggles to train a sufficient number of Black officers. Consequently, he concluded there is no time for today's officers to relish in their glory. He has other plans.

"I'm trying to be a positive influencer across the board. I am going to try to be the example I wish I'd had," Walker said.

Walker said he has mentored younger Navy colleagues and reserved time to return to speak with NSU students. He recalls the days when he benefited from the wise counsel of experienced personnel. The university's ROTC commanding officers were his mentors when he arrived in 2003.

Walker bypassed college enrollment as a high school graduate and opted to enter the U.S. Navy as an electronics technician. After serving 1996 – 2002, he realized a bachelor's degree was an essential step for a sailor who hoped to advance. In 2002, he entered the Seaman to Admiral program.

The program, a naval officer training program completed in conjunction with a university ROTC unit, steers active-duty sailors toward the completion of their bachelor's degree. After their university commissioning ceremony, they proceed to work in a specified naval assignment. Walker earned his bachelor's degree in electronics technology at NSU and later earned two master's degrees elsewhere.

As an ROTC officer candidate, Walker witnessed a powerful phenomenon that he would never again minimize — the combination of a leadership training program and a mentoring program. For college students now pondering military enlistment, he offers several suggestions.



"Do some research and ask yourself, 'Is this something I really want to do?' Educate yourself on the type of careers you might have in the Navy. With ROTC you are never alone because the officers working there are there to answer questions," Walker said.

"Remove the anxiety or apprehension that accepting a scholarship or an initial commitment to ROTC means that is something you have to do the rest of your life. See it as a five-year investment in the next 50 years of your life," Walker said.

"ROTC students have an opportunity to transition into adulthood in a controlled environment, to grow, take some risks, and begin serving your country in a positive way," Walker said.

Walker, a member of the university's alumni association, suggests NSU students get acquainted with alumni and benefit from their wisdom. He encourages alumni veterans to find ways to volunteer and to dispel outdated myths about military careers. Serving in the military is an opportunity to influence the country in a positive way, Walker said.

"I am a naval officer, a Black man, an HBCU grad, an ROTC grad. I wear those four badges of honor with pride," Walker said.

You may read *The Burden of a Black Naval Officer* at <https://bit.ly/487lams> **B**



NSUAA HONORS

Recognizing the Achievements of our Members




On Thursday, October 26, the NSU Alumni Association Inc. publicly recognized and honored members, and chapters of the alumni association who have supported its mission and goals.

Renee Grant '03 received the NSUAA's Alumna of the Year Award. The Chapter Service Award was awarded to a diverse group of alumni who have proudly represented the association in their community. **Shanteria Akinson, Sheronda Benson, Jacqueline Blount, Dollicia Boone, Regina Cuffee, Priscilla Ferebee, Adrienne James, Bryant Johnson, Clevester Jones, Danielle Smith-Jones, Melvin Jordan, Tonya Mackey, Jean Monroe, Annette Morris, Tichira Smith,**

Sonya M. Smith, Denise Tonkins, and Jackie Wilson-Coffee were recipients of this award.

The NSUAA also honored two regional groups with its Chapter of the Year Award. The recipients have consistently supported the mission and goals of the alumni association and donated their time and treasure to Norfolk State University. The **Baltimore Alumni Chapter** received the 2023 Chapter of the Year Award for the 35 and under membership category, while the **Chesapeake Alumni Chapter** received the award for 36+ membership category.

The final recognition of the evening was the crowning of **Alisia Smith-Rucker '94** as Ms. Alumni 2023-24. 



NAT WARREN TENNIS CENTER NAMED AFTER ALUMNUS AND COACH



On October 14, 2023, Nathaniel “Nat” Warren ‘69 & ‘85, a highly respected figure in the world of tennis, was celebrated at the Norfolk Yacht Club. This two-time Norfolk State graduate dedicated 17 years of his career as the head coach for Norfolk State University’s Men’s Tennis team. His passion for the sport extended beyond the men’s team, as he also played an essential role in establishing the women’s tennis team during the 1994-1995 season.

His dedication to NSU went beyond the realms of coaching. For eight years, he served as the facilities coordinator. His exceptional coaching skills were recognized when he received the 1994 CIAA Coach of the Year and the 1995 U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) Virginia Coach of the Year. In honor of his outstanding achievements, the Board of Visitors of Norfolk State University approved the naming of the tennis courts located on Presidential Parkway as the Nat Warren Tennis Center. This effort was made possible by the Nat Warren Naming Committee, who successfully raised more than \$100,000 to support the NSU tennis program and realize the naming opportunity honoring the achievements of Coach Nat Warren.

Nat Warren’s remarkable contributions to NSU and the world of tennis have left an unforgettable mark. **B**



www.nsu.edu



The Hardy family, comprised of three alumni and a current student, were the stars of NSU's latest commercial. From left to right are: Yvonn Hardy '89, '93, Pamela Battle-Hardy '91, Alana Hardy '25, Arlisa Hardy '16, '18 and NSU President Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.