

IN THE NEWS

Accomplishments in Academics, Arts, Athletics & Service

NSU University School
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

The ASPIRE Program Prepares Students for Future Careers



Children are often asked what they aspire to be when they grow up. But, with the rapidly changing world of the 21st Century, the jobs of tomorrow may not exist as they do today.

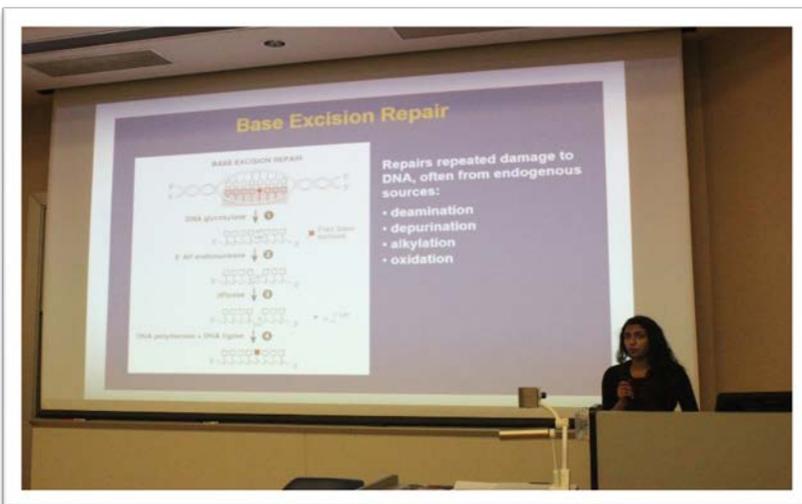
NSU University School recognized the need to prepare students for an evolving workplace and recently created a unique program that provides students the opportunity to collaborate with working professionals. By exploring their current passions and interests in real-world experiences, students find ways to transform today's professions into tomorrow's careers.

The school's newly created ASPIRE Program encourages Middle and Upper School students

to work with mentors in fields such as medicine, engineering, marine biology, art, writing, and culinary arts. The goal of the program is to give students the tools to explore career options before they enter college. The director of the ASPIRE program, David Spangler, Ph.D., added, "This experience is a win-win for students as they are able to explore their passions and interests in the larger community, find out what they like and don't like to do, and have the ASPIRE experience reflected on their college application."

The ASPIRE program has four modes of exploration: Real Investigation Science Experience (RISE), Passion Projects, Immersion, and the Independent Research Study (IRS). All of the professional mentors who collaborate

with the students in the program volunteer their time. Currently, there are 65 Middle and Upper School students involved in the ASPIRE program. Students document their field experience in a written paper or a project and then present their final product to the faculty and staff associated with their real-world experience.



Nisha Chaudhari and Neha Narang, both in grade 12, are completing an IRS. Students involved in the ASPIRE program work in an advanced-level research class and assist in the planning, execution, interpretation, and presentation of an in-depth qualitative or quantitative research project. Chaudhari and

Narang are mentored by Stephen Grant, Ph.D., NSU Professor of Genetics. The students' research study examines mutations caused by age and susceptibility and their connection to autism. Narang pointed out, "The ASPIRE program has provided me with opportunities that I could not have experienced without NSU University School's vast array of resources. I have had the opportunity to work in labs that are usually reserved for graduate students.

The ASPIRE program is definitely preparing me for a successful future.” Both Chaudhari and Narang recently presented a summary of their research on “Reduced Expression of DNA Repair Genes in the Blood of Autistic Children of Younger Fathers” at the NSU Health Professions Division Research Day.

Vladimir Zeltsman, grade 10, is exploring his passion by collaborating on a RISE project with his mentor, NSU alumnus and NASA deputy chief scientist, Gale Allen, D.B.A. Zeltsman hopes to design a landing vehicle that can land on one of Mars’ Moons. Zeltsman explained, “Dr. Allen supports me by giving me cutting-edge information on how to envision the vehicle design, how to create a 3D model, how to research information on space exploration, and how the environment can impact the vehicle’s design.” Zeltsman concluded, “I could not get this type of experience anywhere else but USchool.”

Students in the ASPIRE program not only have an opportunity to develop their passions, they also experience a real-world workplace environment. Sydney Juda, grade 11, summed up her ASPIRE experience by saying, "The ASPIRE program has given me professional experience in the medical field and grant writing. It has also introduced me to people who I can contact once I finish college and begin my medical career. I have also learned professional skills such as scheduling and meeting deadlines." Juda is mentored by Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D. Assistant Dean at NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Shelby Barthelemy, grade 10, is involved in an Immersion Project with Lynn Lafferty, Pharm.D., professor of pharmacology at NSU’s Osteopathic Medicine. Barthelemy is photographing, labeling, and categorizing all of the plants currently growing in Lafferty’s botanical garden. Collaborating with Lafferty has given Barthelemy a chance to foster her passion and the opportunity to learn more about botany, taxonomy, and ecological science.

Students with unique academic, artistic, or athletic talents find opportunities to explore or create projects related to their talent through Passion Projects. Virginia Dragoslavac, grade 10, has a passion for baking and is participating in the ASPIRE program to get real-world experience in the culinary field. Virginia’s experiences will include observing and meeting with students and teachers in the Culinary Arts Program at The Art Institutes of Fort Lauderdale. She will gain practical experience in nutrition, kitchen management, business, cost control, sanitation, and safety.

Although this is the first year of the ASPIRE program, Dr. Spangler is very impressed with the effort that the students and the professionals have put into making the program a success. Spangler added, “NSU University School students have diverse interests and talents and the ASPIRE program is another way for USchool to support its students and their aspirations.”

If you would like to find out more information about the ASPIRE program, please contact David Spangler at davids@nova.edu.