

Student Shadows NASA Deputy Chief Scientist

By Danae Jarrett

Through the NSU University School ASPIRE Program, Vladimir Zeltsman, grade 10, has been able to connect with and explore his passion by collaborating with his mentor, NSU alumnus and NASA deputy chief scientist, Gale Allen, D.B.A., to design a landing vehicle that can land on Mars.

“Dr. Allen provides cutting-edge, scientific information that helps me with the vehicle design, creating a 3D model. We have also discussed how the environment on Mars can impact the habitat where astronauts live.” Vladimir explained.

As part of the ASPIRE program, Vladimir has been in communication with Dr. Allen via phone, email, and skype on a biweekly basis, enabling him to gain more direction and guidance regarding his project, and network with other



scientists in the field. Since enrolling in the ASPIRE Program in September, Vladimir’s passion and love for space has increased.

As an NSU University School student since second grade, Vladimir has been involved in many extracurricular activities and has achieved many awards and accolades for his accomplishments. He has taken Robotics 1 and Robotics 2, beginning with the foundations, and later

learning programming and building competition robots. As head engineer of Robotics team B, Vladimir has competed in many competitions including the VEX World Championship. Some of the awards he has received as part of the Robotics team are the Excellence Award and Tournament Champion Award. At the VEX World Championship, the Robotics team had the 9th highest scoring points in their division and 24th highest scoring points in the world!

Furthermore, Vladimir placed within the top ten in the world in an online world wide Robotics challenge where he used VEX Robotics parts to create a tool that can aid teachers and students in the classroom setting.

In addition to Robotics and the ASPIRE program, Vladimir has been involved in many other activities. He has been a varsity member of the NSU University School Rowing team since eighth grade. As a freshman, he received 10th Place Rowing Pair in the state of Florida, during a majority eleventh and twelfth grade student race. Since Middle School, he has also been a member of the chess team. During Middle School, Vladimir received a 1st and 3rd place chess award. More recently, Vladimir has been active in the Fairchild Challenge, created by NASA to test and see which edible plants can grow and thrive in space. In the Fairchild Challenge, our students placed bronze out of the entire country. Vladimir is also part of the National Honor Society, the National Chinese Honor Society, and the Mu Alpha Theta Chapter of the National Math Honors Society.

Vladimir is thankful for his teachers and has had a very enriching experience at NSU University School thus far. “I have always had teachers who want to see me succeed and see the potential in me. They continue to push me to become the best,” said Vladimir.

When he’s not participating in Robotics, Rowing, Chess and the Fairchild Challenge, Vladimir is busy serving in his community. He is a Boy Scout Senior Patrol Leader and facilitates meetings, oversees the scouts and their advancements, and runs the troop. Moreover, Vladimir is a life scout, and hopes to earn the rank of Eagle Scout in the near future.

Vladimir has dreams of attending MIT, Cal Tech or Carnegie Melon for college, with a plan to earn a dual major in aerospace engineering and mechanical engineering, with a minor in astrophysics. His ultimate career goal is to become an aerospace engineer, work for NASA, and travel to space as an astronaut.

