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PANTHERS ON THE

Florida Tech breeds success. How do we know? Stories like these. Featuring current students, young alumni, thinkers, doers, innovators, none is the same as another. But they share a common theme: the relentless pursuit of greatness.

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

J.T. Hassell ’19 is the first Panther to make an NFL 53-man roster. J.T. played two seasons and tallied more than 200 tackles while at Florida Tech. During the 2019 NFL draft season, he signed a three-year undrafted free agent contract with the Cleveland Browns and was later elevated to the team’s active roster.

Before playing for the Browns, J.T. received all-America honors from five organizations, including first team honors from the American Football Coaches Association, the Division II Conference Commissioners Association and the Don Hansen Football Committee and second team honors from the Associated Press and D2Football.com. He was voted Florida Tech’s 2018–2019 Co-Male Athlete of the Year. Thanks to his relentless determination, J.T. accomplished all of this while overcoming a left-arm defect that he was born with.
BEHIND THE SCENES TO CENTER STAGE

Kelly Reardon ’16 is the weekend morning meteorologist for 22News in Springfield, Massachusetts. Originally, Kelly planned to work in a behind-the-scenes role within the meteorology field. However, she was steered toward broadcast while at Florida Tech. As part of the meteorology program, students had to remain on campus for one summer to conduct research. During her summer on campus, Kelly worked on a project at the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Melbourne—a partnership so successful, she continued interning there for two years, which taught her how to forecast.

After graduating cum laude, Kelly began working for a Cleveland news website, Cleveland.com, and its associated newspaper, The Plain Dealer, writing weather forecasts and related stories for northeast Ohio. She took the initiative to begin a weekly YouTube series of her forecasts.

“I started these YouTube video weekend forecasts from local restaurants in Cleveland,” Kelly says. “22News in Springfield picked up on them and invited me out to interview for their meteorologist/reporter position.”

Kelly has achieved her dream of becoming a TV meteorologist, and her next goal is to be in front of the green screen five days a week.

ECO-CONSCIOUS ENTREPRENEUR

Growing up enjoying life in and on the waters of Florida’s east coast, business senior Dylan Cross saw firsthand the negative impact that humans have on his favorite ecosystem. Dylan’s proactive and entrepreneurial mind saw this as an opportunity to create something that could make a real difference.

“I saw an emerging market in eco-friendly clothing and a problem I wanted to solve with so much plastic pollution ending up in our oceans,” Dylan says.

The mission of Sea Thredz is humbling: Allow the next generations of children and wildlife to enjoy the ocean in the same way we have.

Dylan founded Sea Thredz to interrupt the vicious cycle of ocean pollution. Its short-sleeve shirts are woven from the plastic of six post-consumer water bottles, which flow into our waterways at a rate of 1.5 million tons per year, and its long-sleeve performance wear from 16 of the same kind.

“We are excited to give customers the opportunity to be a part of this environmental solution by wearing it!”

FORBES FAMOUS

“I don’t care where we go, as long as we fly there.”

Such was the response Tiziano Bernard ’15, ’16 M.S., ’18 Ph.D., a Trieste, Italy, native, gave his parents every time they asked where he wanted to go on their next family vacation. As Tiziano grew, so did the breadth of his passion for flight. Now an aviation systems and human factors engineer at Garmin International, Tiziano was named one of Forbes Italia’s 2019 “30 Under 30” young trailblazers in their industries. While at Florida Tech, not only did Tiziano and his team win the Northrop Grumman Engineering and Science Student Design Showcase with the development of a Mars rover, but he also was the first graduate of the university’s flight test engineering master’s program, all of which were discussed in the two-page Forbes feature.

“Science does not belong to a country. It is without borders, and I think that’s a very strong message,” Tiziano says. “The fact that Forbes recognized me from the other side of the world, that’s very reassuring to see that what I’m doing has value.”

Continued on page 6
**TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

Nikki Mosblech ‘12 Ph.D. was named a Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) Teacher of the Year finalist for her role as an Advanced Placement and honors environmental science and chemistry teacher at Vero Beach High School (VBHS). Her career in education began teaching English in South Korea. In 2005, she moved back to the United States and began teaching science at the VBHS Freshman Learning Center before pursuing a doctorate in ecology at Florida Tech. Upon earning her Ph.D., she returned to VBHS and has been teaching ever since.

Being chosen as a finalist for Teacher of the Year was a great honor for Nikki, and it came to her as a surprise.

“I absolutely didn’t expect this, as there are so many amazing teachers this year that have been chosen to represent their counties,” Nikki says.

Nikki was named District Teacher of the Year in January. She then submitted a state packet, including a video recording of one of her lessons, featuring a case study in which students used scientific research and published data to analyze the effectiveness of culling wolves to save endangered caribou as a conservation strategy.

The pass rate of her students exceeds the national rate significantly and consistently. Nikki provides high-quality education while instilling an appreciation of the world in which we live. There is no doubt that Nikki has had a lasting positive impact upon each of her students.

**THE SAND MAN**

At 22 years old, Stephen Hammond ’19 was selected from a pool of more than 30 applicants to be St. Johns County’s coastal environment project manager in charge of multiple county projects, particularly those along the coastline and beaches.

“I plan, budget and document the projects while managing the consultants we hire to assist with the projects,” Stephen says. “Another big part of this job as a public servant is communicating with the public and making sure they know what we are doing for their county.”

His U.S. Army Corps of Engineers beach renourishment project is set to begin construction in early 2020. The project will restore the beaches of South Ponte Vedra and Vilano to their 2015, pre-hurricanes Matthew and Irma status and add a 60-foot berm extension, a fortification line preventing the dunes from being washed away in future storms.

Stephen is the fifth Hammond to have graduated from Florida Tech. An avid surfer, beachgoer and Florida native, Hammond calls his new role an ideal combination of his education and passion.

**CORAL CHAMPION**

Lauren Toth ’13 Ph.D., a coral-reef geologist at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) with more than a decade of experience, was recently featured in Science magazine for her project aimed at increasing the minimal existing data on modern and historical coral reef growth and erosion.

To measure erosion at 46 sites along the Florida Keys, where scientists implanted a series of metal rods for an annual photographic survey 25 years ago, Lauren has developed a portable tool that measures the distance from the coral to the cement that holds the rods in place, which were once flush.

“It’s an incredible honor to have my work featured in Science, and I’m grateful that I was given that opportunity to share my research,” Lauren says. “It breaks my heart to see how degraded those reefs are today, but I do still have hope that we can restore the health of reefs for future generations.”

Lauren also received the 2019 Young Scientist Award from the International Coral Reef Society.

**FROM STUDENT TO HARVARD TEACHER**

After the many years behind a desk that Chris Tanner ’06, Ph.D., spent in school leading up to the receipt of his Ph.D., he was ready to experience higher education from the other side of the classroom.

In fall 2019, Chris joined Harvard University as a lecturer, teaching graduate and undergraduate data science and machine learning courses, as well as advising master’s students on their capstone projects.

After earning undergraduate degrees in computer science and applied mathematics from Florida Tech, Chris completed his master’s degree at UCLA and then joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Lab for three years as an associate staff researcher. Most recently, he completed his Ph.D. in computer science at Brown University, where he first enjoyed the freedom to design and teach a class however he wanted.

“Unlike being a student, where there’s often a direct, clear path to well-accepted answers, teaching and research are riddled with uncertainty, exploration and pushing the boundaries on our current world knowledge,” Chris says. “Success predicates upon collaborating with others, discussing ideas, reading a lot, experimenting, being completely unafraid of failing, having patience and just doing the best that you can.”
Earning his bachelor’s degree was no easy task for Chris Bonanno ’08, ’13 M.S., and he considers his commencement day to be the greatest of his life so far. Deciding to earn a master’s degree in technical and professional communication stemmed from his desire to explore a career in public relations. However, he always had an interest in journalism and joined The Crimson, our student-run newspaper. “Perhaps the best part of my time while getting my master’s was being the editor-in-chief of The Crimson, which helped guide me into my journalism career,” Chris says.

Chris began his professional journalism career at Florida Today, where he spent several years working his way up from a freelance reporter to part-time sports assistant to a full-time breaking news reporter. In 2016, he took a break from journalism and spent two years instructing English at local high schools before becoming an adjunct professor at Florida Tech. Chris has recently taken on the role of senior editor and reporter at Space Coast Daily. “There is no greater satisfaction I get than when someone tells me what I did helped them,” he says.

SOLDIER IN THE MAKING

Once she was introduced to the military science department by her close friend at the beginning of her sophomore year, Alexia Pearah ’19 took the Army physical fitness test the next day, and the rest is history. By the end of the first semester, she was awarded a scholarship and is now one of the program’s top graduates. Despite tearing her ACL, Alexia was still able to keep her commitments, studying in the hospital while completing extensive rehabilitation. All the while, she drew motivation from her favorite quote from Abraham Lincoln: “Things may come to those who wait but only the things left by those who hustle.”

An aspiring Army surgeon, Alexia interned at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii while she was a cadet at Florida Tech. This summer, she returned for an internship in orthopedic surgery, for which she flew in a helicopter with Army medevac pilots.

Her next adventure will be heading to Basic Officer Leaders Course (BOLC) training to learn the fundamental requirements for her field. “And from there, we will see where the Army takes me,” Alexia says.

MARS BOUND

Even as a young girl, astrobiology freshman Alyssa Carson dreamed of becoming an astronaut. It all began when she was 3 years old watching an episode of “The Backyardigans” titled “Mission to Mars.” When she told her father that she wanted to be among the first to walk on Mars, they didn’t realize that this seemingly fleeting childhood idea would become Alyssa’s lifelong mission.

Today, at just 18 years old, Alyssa has already accomplished much in pursuit of this goal. One of her most notable achievements was being the youngest person to be accepted and to graduate from the Advanced PoSSUM Academy, officially certifying her to go to space. More recently, she received her pilot license.

In an interview with Florida Today, Alyssa said she chose to major in astrobiology “to be more of a well-rounded scientist.” Since Florida Tech has the first and only undergraduate astrobiology program in the country, it was an obvious choice.

ROCKET MAN

Kineo Wallace ’17, ’19 M.S., is a propulsion engineer at Rocket Crafters, a local manufacturer of cutting-edge hybrid rocket engine technology. With his main focus on research and development and testing, Kineo also serves as the primary concept designer for Rocket Crafters’ mobile launch platform for its intrepid rocket.

“This is truly a job that lives up to the saying that ‘If you choose a job you love, you will never have to work a day in your life!’” Kineo says.

In part, Kineo credits landing his dream job at Rocket Crafters to his participation in the Student Rocket Society.

“My freshman year, I was a team lead for the Maximum Altitude Hybrid Rocket Competition. Little did I know that the propulsion technology that we were using for our rockets was the exact same technology that I am working with now. It turns out that Florida Tech was and still is licensing the fuel grain tech from Rocket Crafters, which is why we always win the competition!”

SPACE COAST JOURNALIST

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Officer Swartz wanted to be an attorney when he was 18, but after meeting with his college advisor, he began to look into a career in law enforcement. After receiving his degree, Officer Swartz accelerated through the qualifications and began a 31-year career in law enforcement.

Florida Tech’s diversity is his favorite thing about the university. He enjoys learning about many different cultures and applying that knowledge to his work. He is an excellent communicator and understands the practices of all cultures.

When Officer Swartz first arrived on campus, he was amazed at how safe it was, and he is proud to be part of keeping it that way.

“We each take great pride in our teamwork and are totally dedicated to achieving our common goals,” Officer Swartz says.

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Favorite Sport: Formula One  
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Throughout your time at Florida Tech, you’ll not only make lifelong friends; you’ll meet staff and faculty who will make you feel like family. These are just some of the popular Panthers you’ll see around campus.
Mr. Muth teaches a number of business college classes, including Foundations in Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which aims to push freshmen out of their comfort zones. Mr. Muth cherishes his time interacting with students outside of the classroom, too. “I try to get out to at least one game of each of my athletes per semester, then bring up their performance in class,” he says. He most admires students’ inquisitiveness and stresses the importance of time management in all of his classes. “The diversity of the student body is a big positive for students at Florida Tech,” Mr. Muth says. “Meeting and learning a number of different cultures provides a massive advantage when going into the global marketplace.”

Martin provides expert support on all gizmos and gadgets at the Digital Scholarship Lab (DSL), a facility within the library that holds the latest software and hardware for students. He works with 3D printing and modeling and virtual reality systems and, most recently, he created a podcast studio. “I reach out to businesses to get the latest technology and best practices,” Martin says. “This allows me to give students updated world information that helps them become future-proof.” Martin is not driven by economic reason, he says. Instead, his motivation is learning something new every day.

“I feel I am a lifelong learner and enjoy passing anything I learn or develop onto others.” Martin advises prospective students to keep an open mind and to be adaptive. Today’s employers are looking for diversity in education, so it is important to learn how to solve problems by adapting, he says. “Make sure your education fits your passion. Become the best at what you love, and the money will follow.”

“I'm technically a cashier but also a greeter, information booth and Florida Tech mom for the students,” says the longtime PDH fixture known to students only by her nickname, “Miss Dailey.” Always with a smile on her face, Miss Dailey takes care to remember students’ names and their achievements. The students are Miss Dailey’s main source of motivation, and watching them grow from freshmen to graduates is one reason she enjoys her job. “I care deeply for the students; you guys are in my heart.” Her advice to prospective students is to work hard, but also, “Come up for air once in a while: Take a walk, hit the beach and clear your head. Have some fun—after all, you are in college!”

Dr. White teaches a number of mathematics classes to students from all colleges, so it is very likely that you will get the pleasure of being taught by him. A Florida Tech alumnus, curiosity is what motivates him to do the work he does. “The curiosity of the students provides me with energy to educate and helps to spark ideas for my next research paper,” Dr. White says. The students are his favorite source of feedback—the opinions that matter to him. Receiving the 2018–2019 Professor of the Year award for the College of Engineering and Science meant a lot to him, as it was based on a student poll. His advice: Study hard, and don’t fear your professors—they are there to help and want you to ask questions.

Mr. Muth teaches a number of business college classes, including Foundations in Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which aims to push freshmen out of their comfort zones. Mr. Muth cherishes his time interacting with students outside of the classroom, too. “I try to get out to at least one game of each of my athletes per semester, then bring up their performance in class,” he says. He most admires students’ inquisitiveness and stresses the importance of time management in all of his classes. “The diversity of the student body is a big positive for students at Florida Tech,” Mr. Muth says. “Meeting and learning a number of different cultures provides a massive advantage when going into the global marketplace.”

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The Aerospace Experiments Lab is home to the PanthAir 1000, a student-built wind tunnel. The tunnel provides aerodynamic testing capabilities that students can use for research projects. The tunnel can measure lift, draft, pitching, rolling and yawing and can be used in heat convection and experimental dynamics courses.
"When it’s still dark outside and most students are sleeping, we are meeting at the boathouse or in Clemente for a first workout. Most people think we are crazy because of that and the length of our workouts. But we know what we are doing between September and March determines our place at NCAAs. We had a unique goal, and we have been fighting for it together all year long. We pushed and supported each other to get where we finished at NCAAs. Finishing the season with a great race, knowing that you left everything that you had, is the best feeling and worth all the work."

—Theresa Gadilhe, Junior, Business Administration, Women’s Rowing Team Member
“There is some evidence that psychopaths did not adequately develop mirror neurons—their brains literally have no idea what it’s like to have your feelings. This is like what Voldemort felt when he entered Harry Potter’s body and couldn’t tolerate his grief over lost love.”
Julie Costopoulos, Associate Professor, Psychology

“Mark Twain participated in experiments in Nikola Tesla’s lab and commented on the ‘War of the Currents’ between Tesla’s alternating current (AC) system and Edison’s direct current (DC) system in depictions of a destructive electrical pulse near the end of his time-travel novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court.*”
Debbie Lelekis, Associate Professor, Arts and Communication

“There is no such thing as a free lunch.”
Timothy Muth, Instructor, Business

“A car could fit inside a blue whale’s fart bubble.”
Toby Daly-Engel, Assistant Professor, Ocean Engineering and Marine Sciences

“The name for Oz in the Wizard of Oz was thought up when the creator, Frank Baum, looked at his filing cabinet and saw ‘A–N’ and ‘O–Z.’ Hence, ‘Oz.’”
Cheryl Davis, Distance Learning Librarian, Evans Library

“Tarsiers are the only carnivorous primate.”
Darby Proctor, Assistant Professor, Psychology

“Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. His corpse was discovered in 2013, buried underneath a car park in Leicester, England. Recent memes crown him as being the current hide-and-go-seek champion.”
Melissa Crofton, Assistant Professor, Arts and Communication

“In 1999, Brevard had grown so much, it was time for our own area code. Thankfully, a local resident petitioned for the area code to reflect our connection to space and mirror the launch countdown, 3-2-1.”
Debbie Carstens, Professor and Graduate Program Chair, Aeronautics

“‘Alice in Wonderland syndrome’ was a term coined by Dr. John Todd in 1955 to describe a condition in which objects appear small (micropsia) or large (macropsia). Some believe that the book’s author, Lewis Carroll (pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), who suffered from migraines and epilepsy, also had this condition.”
Lisa Perdigao, Assistant Vice President, Honors College
“Moist air is lighter (less dense) than dry air at the same temperature.”
Steven Lazarus, Professor and Program Chair, Ocean Engineering and Marine Sciences

“Fishing shrinks the size of fish over time.”
Ralph Turingan, Professor, Ocean Engineering and Marine Sciences

“An invention that has stood the test of time also ended the debate over which way to properly hang a toilet paper roll and was patented in 1891 by Seth Wheeler.”
Abram Walton, Professor and Director of the Center for Lifecycle and Innovation Management, Business

“Gravity is everywhere in space, even when you feel weightless.”
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“One of the most expensive software errors ever cost its [nameless] organization $1.2 billion. It was caused by the change of one character to a previously working program.”
Keith Gallagher, Associate Professor, Computer Engineering and Sciences

“The original Atlas missiles—forerunners of today’s United Launch Alliance Atlas V rockets—had fuel tanks with walls so thin that they required internal pressure to keep them from collapsing, even when empty. The tanks were filled, like balloons, with nitrogen to keep them safe prior to fueling. To save weight, the tanks were unpainted. A special water-displacing oil was applied to the outside to keep the metal from rusting. This oil eventually became a well-known consumer product, WD-40. The ‘WD’ stands for ‘Water Displacement.’”
David Fleming, Associate Professor, Aerospace, Physics and Space Sciences

“Fun Facts
Who knew?! From the funny to the mind-blowing, these faculty-favorite factoids are sure to come in handy during your next trivia game or conversation lull. You can thank them later.

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ANATOMY OF THE
L3HARRIS STUDENT DESIGN CENTER

The L3Harris Student Design Center is like a second home for student makers and innovators. As a hub for all things student design, engineering and science students tackling their capstone projects have a plethora of tools, er, tools, at the ready to level up their designs.
JUDGES: In April, 135 judges from across the country make the annual pilgrimage to the Northrop Grumman Engineering and Science Student Design Showcase. With judges representing organizations like Northrop Grumman, Siemens, Dassault Aviation, NASA, Lockheed Martin and Leonardo DRS, among many more, the caliber of judges speaks to the quality of the projects.

“The ability to interact with students and prepare them for what companies are looking for and to have the opportunity to share my thought leadership with them is very exciting for me,” says Gerald Deren, a showcase judge from Siemens PLM Software.

HANDS-ON: Never used a 3D printer before? What about a water jet? Learning how to use the abundance of tools in the design center is part of the Florida Tech college experience. Regularly scheduled classes help students get acquainted with what could be their greatest asset for delivering a winning project.

GIVING BACK: From a device that creates flip-flops from old tires to low-cost rainwater collection systems, the student design projects that some student teams develop address humanitarian aid issues. Since teams often include students from all over the globe, collectively, they have better insight into issues plaguing impoverished countries, like access to clean water or lack of basic necessities, like shoes.

Together, they create inventions that can be built with limited resources and make an impact in communities around the world.

ALUMNI CAPSTONE COACHES: Each year, several student design teams are paired with an alumni “capstone coach” who provides mentorship and brings relevant industry experience to the table. Together, capstone coaches and their student teams are able to elevate the project, many of which win awards at the showcase.

“[I became a capstone coach] to be able to provide guidance from the corporate world to FIT students. It’s a program that was not available to us at FIT 25 years ago and is of great benefit to students,” says Ed G. Dallal ’91, founder, president and CEO of Krystal Analytix and Computing.
Larsen Motorsports is an award-winning innovator in the jet car racing space. LMS is a proven leader in community outreach and STEM advocacy, and it provides valuable hands-on experience to our students who receive the unique opportunity to work on the Florida Tech jet dragster driven by Elaine Larsen, LMS co-founder and CEO.

“The true measurements of success regarding the internships comes from feedback from the employers that regularly tell us how valuable the hands-on skills the students receive are to their company,” Larsen says. “Our internships set up every hardworking and open-minded student for success with those employers.”
As fires rage in the Amazon, the research of Professor Mark Bush and postdoctoral research associate Majoi de Novaes Nascimento is more critical than ever. By connecting the past with the current state of the Amazon, their research will help to inform conservation strategies and local community education.

“When a forest burns, the small—width of a human hair or smaller—charcoal particles that are produced leave sedimentates on the bottom of lakes close by and build up the history of that landscape’s fire activities through time. We can then use lake sediment cores to investigate the history of both recent and past fire activity on a certain region. Here, I am collecting a sediment core from a [dried] lake in the Brazilian Amazon, and the objective is to contextualize the fire regimes in the region over long time scales—thousands of years.”

—Majoi de Novaes Nascimento, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Harris Institute for Assured Information

Photo Credit: Yoshi Maezumi
During Professor Ralph Turingan’s yearly biological sciences summer field research course in Rincón, Puerto Rico, students learn how to conduct surveys to assess fish abundance and diversity, coral reef health and habitat composition and reef complexity.

“We hiked mountains and learned how vegetation and runoff can affect the ocean. We snorkeled all over Puerto Rico and saw how diverse marine environments can be, even in close proximity to each other. And we learned practical field survey skills and actually put them to use for data collection.”

—Erin Walters ’18 M.S., Ocean Engineering
ABROAD
You’ve probably heard of study abroad programs at Oxford University in England. We’ve got one of those, and it’s awesome. But have you ever heard of programs offering course credit for kayaking the White Cliffs of Dover or snorkeling Puerto Rico’s coral reefs? We’ve got those, too. Not to mention programs in Spain, France, Taiwan, the Andes, the Amazon rainforest, Belize, China, Hungary, Belgium and the Netherlands.

FIELD RESEARCH
At the end of Dock C at Cape Marina in Port Canaveral, a huge Disney cruise ship looms in the distance. Aside from serving as Mickey and Minnie’s vacation home, it’s also where Florida Tech students, scientists and engineers research novel ways to prevent barnacles from attaching to ship hulls. The port is just one of many locations where students learn firsthand how to conduct such research.

MAKERSPACE
How do you get that idea out of your head and into your hands? You build it in the MakerSpace. Here, you can 3D print, program CNC routers, create silicone molds or do CAD modeling.

THE STANDS
On Fridays, we wear crimson. Whether by wearing Florida Tech colors or rubbing the bronze Panther’s nose for good luck, alumni, students, faculty and staff always show their Panther pride on game day in support of our athletes.
Cliches dictate that college is where you will get “in your element” and “find yourself.” They aren’t wrong, but let’s get more specific with a few Florida Tech places with which you’re likely to “find yourself” and discover “your element.”

**Flight Line**
Located at the Orlando-Melbourne International Airport, F.I.T. Aviation’s flight line is always bustling with flight students and instructors. Here, students practice their departures, landings, touch-and-goes and event aerobatics. Photo Credit: Instagram @ashleyaksu

**A Lightning Storm**
OK, hear us out. Florida Tech researchers studying an interesting phenomenon called “upward lightning” recently received new findings that are expected to lead to improved lightning protection for tall buildings and other structures. Research like this has the potential to save not only buildings, but lives—and it looks pretty cool, too. Maybe lightning isn’t your thing, but at Florida Tech, fascinating, ground-breaking research opportunities are everywhere—you just need to keep exploring until the right idea strikes.

**ROTC Challenge Course**
On this 80-acre preserve of pure Florida wilderness, you’ll often find ROTC candidates training on mentally and physically challenging obstacles. However, it’s also open to students and the public looking to push their limits on one of the custom courses.

**Patterson Botanical Garden**
A fan favorite, the 15-acre Botanical Garden is a calming reprieve from the stresses of college life. It’s a quiet place to study, relax and enjoy the sounds of nature.
Panthers are passionate about giving back to the community. Students often choose to spend their free time participating in beach cleanups, fundraising for nonprofits and hosting special events.

“Florida Tech gives us the opportunity to build our community into a place we all love to be, and that ripples out from our individual efforts.”

—Taylor Greene, Senior, Sustainability Studies
Delta Tau Delta organized a game of soap hockey to fundraise for JDRF, a nonprofit that works to prevent and treat Type 1 diabetes.

Student clubs and volunteers from all over campus dedicated many Saturday mornings to cleaning up trash on campus and on local beaches.

Chi Phi hosted Ruff Rock, a concert benefiting the SPCA of Brevard County, which is an organization that works to find homes for unwanted or homeless animals.

Instead of taking the time off to relax, each year, students apply to be part of the Office of Civic Engagement’s “alternative fall break” trip. This year, several students traveled to Florida’s panhandle to help those in need.

“I’m so grateful to have been a part of this trip. I met lifelong friends while also helping restore a community that truly needed it.”
—April Dabrowski, Sophomore, Aviation Management

Every year around Thanksgiving, the Florida Tech Student-Athlete Advisory Committee hosts a food drive benefitting Daily Bread Inc. This year, Panther athletes donated a total of 6,038 food items.

Members of Pi Kappa Alpha spent a weekend volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. Together, they worked on the interior of a new home that will soon house a deserving family in need.

Even coursework incorporates civic engagement. For their service-learning team project, communication students volunteered at Walk on Water, a nonprofit equine ranch that offers equine therapy to people with special needs. Students helped the organization by mucking stalls, feeding horses and clearing debris.
Astronaut scholar and astrobiology student Nathan Hadland is getting suited up at the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS), a simulated Mars research center in Utah. Nathan and fellow students have developed a relationship with the MDRS that will continue to provide this unique Mars experience to future Florida Tech students.

“We are taking freshmen and sophomores with no experience and molding them into ideal candidates for future missions, so that we can build annual crews not just for the Mars Desert Research Station but for other habitability studies.”

—Nathan Hadland, Senior, Astrobiology
Engineering systems and civil engineering students work with unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, to provide real-time remote access inspection data. By evaluating the system’s capabilities, the research will help the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) develop more efficient methods for inspecting bridges and high mast luminaires (HMLs). Every two years, FDOT inspects approximately 7,000 bridges and 4,300 HMLs, a typically time-consuming task that often involves costly traffic delays.
At Florida Tech, taking a trip around the globe is a lot easier than it sounds. In fact, you don’t even need to leave campus! Each spring, Florida Tech’s International Festival takes over Panther Plaza for a celebration of cultural diversity and community. During the event, student groups and local cultural organizations host country- and diversity-themed display booths, showcasing a variety of traditional clothing, informational literature, maps, flags and artifacts while dance and vocal groups, bands and other performers provide live entertainment on the Panthereum’s outdoor stage and attendees feast on a variety of delicious ethnic foods.

2. FREE SPEECH WEEK
Free speech. Free press. Free cookies. Now those are some things we can get behind, and each spring, we do! Hosted by Florida Tech and its student-run newspaper, The Crimson, Free Speech Week features a series of lectures and activities centered on and designed to foster a better understanding of the First Amendment. In 2019, from expressing their thoughts on a “free-speech wall” in exchange for a cookie and surrendering their First Amendment rights for a slice of pizza to hearing from Peabody Award winner and This American Life producer Robyn Semien, students learned the value of their voices and the gravity of how they use them.

3. FUTURE PROFESSIONALS
Throughout the year, students who are ready to prepare for the “real world” attend various networking, career education and elective events through the Future Professionals Certificate Program. By attending a certain number of events, like mock interviews, alumni career panels, résumé critiques and community service experiences, students not only earn a certificate sure to impress future employers but also develop soft skills that make them both more hirable and successful after graduation.

4. A DAY IN THE LIFE
With the Indian River Lagoon at the center of many Florida Tech research projects, students and faculty are eager to share their passion for what is North America’s most biologically diverse estuary with local youth each fall. A Day in the Life of the Indian River Lagoon is an annual event that this year paired about 1,600 elementary through high school students with environmental partners, including Florida Tech, to simultaneously collect scientific data at 40 sites along the 156-mile stretch of the lagoon.

Sponsored by SEA a difference Environmental Services, the event is less about viable scientific research than it is about teaching young students to answer their own questions, allowing them to own their work and providing a glimpse at potential future careers.

5. CONCRETE CANOE
In summer 2019, 24 deceptively simple-looking canoes raced across Turkey Creek at Goode Park in Palm Bay for the 2019 American Society of Civil Engineers National Concrete Canoe Competition. Hosted by Florida Tech for the first time in 20 years, the competition engages hundreds of college students from across the country who not only design and build the canoes—learning critical lessons about structural and hull-form analysis, properties and mechanics of materials, ocean and civil engineering and more—but also paddle them across the water during the annual event.

6. TEAM IMPACT
Thanks to a partnership with Team IMPACT, some of Florida Tech’s strongest sports team members aren’t even old enough for high school yet. A national nonprofit organization that aims to enhance the lives of children facing life-threatening diseases by “drafting” them to local college athletics teams for the duration of their treatments and beyond, Team IMPACT has been at Florida Tech since 2015. After a Draft Day kick-off ceremony, children bond with their teammates by attending practices, getting help with their homework, rooting for them at games and going on small group outings, as well as during difficult times like hospital visits and feeding tube changes. But according to the student-athletes involved, the positive IMPACT is as much on them as it is on the children.

“I think it’s amazing to be able to show younger kids the value of teamwork and support,” says swimming team member Olivia McKelvey. “But when it comes to Team IMPACT, we’re also giving back by being a support system. ... That means a lot to us. We look forward to being a part of their lives now and in the future.”
Launch Alliance (ULA) President and CEO Salvatore T. “Tory” Bruno to campus. Considered the nation’s most experienced space launch company, with 132 consecutive launches and a 100% mission success rate, ULA aims to transform space launch by making it more affordable and accessible. After his presentation discussing the company’s new Vulcan Centaur rocket that will make the “impossible possible with capabilities that will allow a thriving lunar economy and extend the reaches of space exploration for generations to come,” Bruno spent hours on campus learning about the university’s cutting-edge facilities, interacting with students, praising their work and emphasizing their importance to the future of space launch.

9. Bringin’ It Home
A little rain didn’t dampen the spirits of the countless alumni, faculty, staff, students and community members who gathered for Florida Tech’s four days of Homecoming 2019 festivities. The Homecoming 5K saw its largest turnout ever, with more than 600 runners/walkers who, afterward, met at Meg O’Malley’s Restaurant & Irish Pub for post-race food, drinks and live music. But the real entertainment came Friday night at the free Homecoming Fest concert, featuring Grammy-nominated alternative rock artist Matisyahu in Downtown Melbourne. The weekend celebration concluded with Saturday’s riveting football matchup against the West Florida Argonauts and the traditional halftime crowning of the homecoming king and queen in Panther Stadium.

10. Ethos Community Garden
Started in 2017 by a small group of students on the Residence Life Sustainability Committee, the Ethos Community Garden is 59 feet by 39 feet of fenced-in land that houses nearly two dozen planting beds in the middle of the Residence Quad. The garden serves as a platform for sustainable education, allowing residents to become self-sufficient in food cultivation skills and has been a catalyst for larger sustainability-based movements around campus and throughout Brevard County.

11. Market Day
From improving sustainability to consuming fresher food to establishing stronger community ties, the reasons to buy local are many. But if you need more convincing, see for yourself at Florida Tech’s Market Day. Hosted by the university’s radio station, WFIT 89.5 FM, Market Day is an eclectic open-air marketplace offering a variety of local foods and products that pops up on campus monthly during the fall and spring semesters. From food trucks and produce to crafts, baked goods, skin care products, photography and more, Market Day has a little something for everyone.

12. Space Technology Day
In May 2019, Florida Tech hosted Space Technology Day, which brought together professors, students, engineers, technologists and business leaders from around Florida to engage with NASA personnel on current and future space technology activities and the agency’s plans for exploring the moon, Mars and beyond. Featuring a keynote address from NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine, technical presentations and breakout discussion groups, the event aimed to connect NASA leadership to leading academic and commercial research and development capabilities and to forge new collaborations with participants, ranging from undergraduate students to senior research faculty.

13. Hurricane Dorian Relief
Florida was fortunate to have remained outside of Hurricane Dorian’s disastrous path, but our Bahamian neighbors just a few hundred miles off the coast weren’t so lucky. After the Category 5 hurricane ravaged the Bahamas, destroying homes and claiming many lives, the Florida Tech community rallied to provide aid to the devastated islands. Spearheaded by the College of Aeronautics (COA) and local alumni, the university’s relief efforts collected more than 5,000 pounds of supplies, which COA alumni delivered in multiple trips to Sandy Point on Grand Abaco, Bahamas, in one of Florida Tech’s Piper Chieftain airplanes less than a week after the storm’s initial landfall.

14. Girls in Aviation Day
While boys are welcome at Women in Aviation Space Coast Florida Tech Chapter’s Girls in Aviation Day, the event is all about girl power. Featuring a variety of aviation activities, like aircraft tours, drone flying and flight simulations, as well as guests from Republic Airways, the Spaceport 99s, Collins Aerospace, Fallon Pilot Shop, Kennedy Space Center and the university’s UAS club, Girls in Aviation Day is designed to show girls and young women that aviation is a fun, exciting and viable career path for them.

15. Music to Your Ears
Team building, Communication, Expression. No matter their major, all students can benefit from developing these skills, and at Florida Tech, we offer just the program to do so: music. The music program provides a creative and engaging environment for musicians ranging from beginners looking to learn a new instrument to experienced performers eager to continue honing their already advanced skills. For years, this creative complement to the university’s tradition of science and research has set Florida Tech graduates apart as competent, confident individuals prepared for life outside of college.

16. Apollo Symposium
In November 2019, Florida Tech hosted a symposium honoring the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon mission, “JFK’s Moonshot Mandate: Then, Now and Destiny.” Moderated by former CNN correspondent John Zarrella and featuring Apollo 15 command module pilot Al Worden, the event drew nearly 400 people to the Gleason Performing Arts Center while more than 500 watched it online.

17. Alumni Center
The Alumni House is getting a makeover, and while the facade of the new Alumni Center will be traditional Florida Tech crimson and gray, the guts of the project are all green. Scheduled to be completed this spring, the Alumni Center will be a zero-energy facility featuring a host of cutting-edge renewable energy technologies. Students and faculty have been involved with the project since day one, from applying for state grant funding and securing donations from several community partners to modeling the building materials and systems and predicting the energy performance during the design phase. A model for a cost-effective, zero-energy commercial office building design in Florida climates, the center will provide continued research and development opportunities not only for Florida Tech but for the whole community.
They say you can't judge a person until you've walked a mile in his/her shoes. Well, you could stock a closet from floor to ceiling with the number of shoes it would take to fully understand what it means to be a Panther.

So lace them up or slip them on, and get a feel for where a stroll in our shoes might take you.

TO THE BEACH
With the beach just 10 minutes from campus, you'll wear out your flip-flops pretty quickly. Of course, when you live in Florida, you can pretty much wear these everywhere—year-round.

TO BOOTCAMP
To stand with the Panther Battalion, Florida Tech’s U.S. Army ROTC unit, your boots are going to have to get a little dirty.

SOMewhere NEW
You don’t even need to leave campus to immerse yourself in a rich new culture with the variety of international clubs, organizations and events at Florida Tech. Taste the flavors of India at Panther Dining Hall during the International Dinner Series; view a range of cultural performances and traditional garb at the annual International Festival, and discuss unique traditions with students, faculty and staff from abroad at monthly International Coffee Hour events—international footwear not required (albeit encouraged).

ON AN INTERVIEW
Thanks to our ProTrack co-op program and the wealth of local employers, like SpaceX, Embraer and NASA’s Kennedy Space Center, looking for young talent, you will have no shortage of professional interviews—job, internship or otherwise.
TO THE SORORITY HOUSE
From Greek Life’s social gatherings to its networking events, joining one of our three sororities or eight fraternities ensures that you’ll always have an excuse to dress up if you’re looking for it.

ONTATO THE DANCE FLOOR
Not ready to hang up your dancing shoes? We’ve got you covered: Pump up the crowds at halftime as a member of Florida Tech’s Fever dance team, kick up your heels with the swing-, street- and belly-dancing clubs or take the stage in one of the College Players’ musicals.

UNDERWATER
Whether you’re snorkeling in the Atlantic Ocean or conducting research in the Indian River Lagoon, at Florida Tech, you’ll spend a lot of time underwater. Sub waders and water shoes as necessary.

TO THE GYM
To take advantage of the 58,000-square-foot Clemente Center, which includes varsity and intramural gyms, a fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment, various multi-purpose and aerobics rooms and a cafe, you’ll need some sneakers. And a sweat towel. Never forget the sweat towel.

ON THE FIELD
Or the court, the track, the rink, the course—you get the picture. As an NCAA Division II school and member of the prestigious Sunshine State Conference, we have 20 men’s and women’s intercollegiate varsity sports teams. And for those looking for a little less commitment, we’ve got a host of intramural athletics and club sports, ranging from basketball to Ultimate Frisbee to ice hockey and more.

THROUGH THE SNOW?
Not around here.

MOSTLY ANYWHERE
Around here, shoes of any kind are often redundant. From swimming to surfing to oft-effective toes-in-the-sand therapy, sometimes, going barefoot is just good for the sole.
“I think we need to show young girls and women the real faces of technology and science. There are so many inspirational women out there, and we need to make sure that young girls know more than just the stereotypes.”

Jessica Vidmark ’16, Electrical Engineering

**PROFESSION:** Biomedical engineering Ph.D. student at University of Southern California

**HUMBLE BRAZ:** Can rap all the lyrics to “Love the Way You Lie” (try me!)

**ALTERNATE (NON-STEM) CAREER:** Tennis pro

**PET PEEVE:** When people mix up Sweden and Switzerland...

“Don’t let the biases and expectations of society limit you in your journey to achieving your dreams. Set your own standards and break those expectations. Throw yourself into everything with your head held high.”

Brooklynn Byford ’17, Ocean Engineering

**PROFESSION:** Ocean engineering graduate student at Florida Tech

**ALTERNATE (NON-STEM) CAREER:** Crime scene investigator

**UNPOPULAR OPINION:** Ranch goes on EVERYTHING!

“Women, be bold. Be assertive. Apply for things. Apply for things even if you don’t think you’re qualified. Volunteer for projects and run for leadership positions. Don’t let others’ opinions of you hold you back.”

Laura Seward Forczyk ’06, Astronomy & Astrophysics

**PROFESSION:** Owner, Astralytical

**REST DAYS ARE:** Nonexistent — I’m a mom!

**UNPOPULAR OPINION:** Dark chocolate is the best chocolate

**PET PEEVE:** “Manned” spaceflight—it’s human spaceflight!

“One thing I can say is don’t be afraid to be your authentic self in your field. If you get backlash for it, use that as fuel to be even more confident.”

Jeana Mascio ’11, Meteorology

**PROFESSION:** Senior research associate at Atmospheric and Environmental Research Inc.

**ALTERNATE (NON-STEM) CAREER:** Owning my own vegan bakery

**REST DAYS ARE FOR:** Long naps in the sun
While American society has seen considerable improvement in female representation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, gender parity in STEM remains elusive. What has changed? What hasn’t? And, most important, where do we go from here?

“The more we talk about it, the more we address the issue and work toward it, the faster we’ll reach the point where everything is neutral—there’s no minority or discrimination.”

Anika Ahmed ’17, Aerospace Engineering
What can a ring-tailed lemur named Matilda teach us about our own poor decision-making skills? School of Psychology Assistant Professor Darby Proctor is working to understand why a nonhuman primate makes the choices it does, especially when they appear to be counterproductive. Proctor uses a touch screen to teach Matilda how to associate one object on the screen with a higher food reward compared to the other screen options.

“To really understand bad decisions, we need to determine why we evolved to have this bias. To do that, we conduct similar research with our nonhuman primate relatives to see whether or not they share the bias. If they do, then it suggests there was an adaptive reason why we evolved this way. If not, then it may be a quirk of human behavior.”

—Assistant Professor Darby Proctor, Psychology

The Big Picture

Bad Behavior
Everything but the weather was chilly at “Frosty Friday,” the last of fall 2019’s weeklong orientation activities welcoming about 1,200 incoming students to campus. With winter-themed bounce houses, Rita’s Italian Ice and a surfboard simulator, the event closed out with a Florida-fashion melted snowball—aka water balloon—fight.