Students fulfill dreams at NASA

Jessica MacNeil - October 12, 2007

Sometimes opportunity knocks where you least expect it.

In 2004, Elizabeth Muller was a part-time engineering student searching for a way to pursue her dreams when she got the opportunity of a lifetime thanks to a chance encounter with two NASA engineers while working in a Virginia restaurant.

Through the advice of her customers, Muller got a three-year internship in NASA’s Langley Aerospace Research Summer Scholars project (LARSS) in Hampton, VA. She was able to earn scholarships to complete her degree at Old Dominion University and was assigned to the Airborne Subscale Transport Aircraft Research (Air STAR) testbed development activity under the Single Aircraft Accident Prevention project within NASA’s Aviation Safety Program. There, Muller worked with remotely piloted vehicles to improve aircraft safety.

Muller is just one of the more than 150 students that participate every year in the project, run by the Virginia Space Grant Consortium (VSGC) and sponsored by the National Institute of Aerospace (NIA).

The program offers students hands-on experience in aerospace research and the chance to work with NASA scientists and engineers (See our article "NASA aerospace engineers to receive SAE award") at the NASA Langley Research Center (LaRC). The center, founded in 1917, is the nation’s first civilian aeronautical research facility and is NASA’s Center of Excellence for Structures and Materials.

The project’s goal is to train skilled workers to enter the national science and engineering workforce, as well as NASA’s own workforce. It aims to encourage students to pursue graduate degrees, foster their interest in aerospace research and introduce them to the professional research resources and state-of-the-art facilities of LaRC.

LARSS accepts rising undergraduate juniors and seniors and graduate students pursuing a degree in most engineering fields, particularly aeronautical, electrical, chemical, and mechanical. Concentrations such as science, technology, mathematics, materials science, atmospheric science and other aerospace-related fields, as well as other majors that lend support to NASA’s mission in special project areas may also apply.

These paid internships are offered year-round in three sessions. The summer session is 10 weeks, while the spring and fall are 15-week sessions. During the summer session stipend amounts for graduate students is $5,000, with $4,500 offered to rising undergraduate juniors and seniors.

Program requirements include US citizenship and a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. Applicants are also required to be enrolled full-time at an accredited college or university in...
the US, although community college students can apply if they intend to apply to a four-year school.


The deadline to apply for the 2008 spring session is Friday, October 26, 2007 at midnight. The application information is available here. Questions on the program should be directed to Program Coordinator Debbie Murray and LARSS Program Assistant Sarah Pauls, whose contact information can be found on the LARSS homepage.