

## December Newsletter

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### KEEP THOSE GRADES UP!

Remember, in accordance with St. Johns County School district standards, Academy students must keep their Academy course semester grade at a 70 or higher. If a student's semester grade is not at least a 70%, a letter will be sent home letting the student and their parent know that they are on Academy Academic Probation for the semester following the one in which they earned less than a 70%. Students must earn at least a 70% or higher for the following semester in order to remain in the Career Academy. If the student earns a grade lower than a 70% for two semesters in a row, that student is released from the Career Academy for the following semester, and cannot re-enroll at any time.

If a student needs any academic help, they can get FREE tutoring in any subject from the National Honor Society. Tutoring sessions take place from 4-5 pm on Tuesdays & Thursdays, and during Excel Time in the Media Center.

Teachers are also available to assist students during Excel periods on Wednesdays. Students can get help in their Academy classes during Excel A.

If students or parents have any questions about this St. Johns County School District policy, email [Jaime.combs@stjohns.k12.fl.us](mailto:Jaime.combs@stjohns.k12.fl.us)

Academy Students and Parents,

We have almost made it to winter break! Students, keep up the good work as we finish the first semester of the year. Have a safe, happy and healthy holiday season as we say goodbye to 2021!

Many thanks,

Jaime Combs  
Academy Coordinator

### INTENT TO RETURN PROCESS TAKES PLACE THIS MONTH



This month, all Academy students will be asked to indicate if they want to remain in their Academy for the 2022-23 school year by signing an Intent to Return roster in their Academy class. If the student checks "Yes," then that student will be automatically re-enrolled in the Academy for 2022-

23. The student will also receive a recommendation to move on to the next-level Academy course, as long as he/she is meeting Academy requirements.

If an Academy student checks "No" on the roster to indicate that he/she does not want to continue in the Academy next year, a Program of Choice Drop Form will be sent home for the student and a parent to sign after winter break, confirming that the student would like to be removed from the Academy for the 2022-23 school year.

Students who will be zoned for Beachside High School in 2022-23 but are returning Nease Academy students can remain at Nease. These students will then be designated as out-of-zone Academy students. The St. Johns County School District does guarantee transportation to students attending an out-of-zone school. Because transportation is not guaranteed to out-of-zone students in our district, families need to discuss whether they can provide transportation to students who are zoned for Beachside High School, if the district doesn't provide bussing. As long as the student can provide transportation, keeps an Academy course on his/her schedule every year, and remains within Academy grade and behavioral guidelines, he/she can attend an out-of-zone school. If you have any questions about the Intent to Return process, please reach out to Academy Coordinator Jaime Combs at [Jaime.combs@stjohns.k12.fl.us](mailto:Jaime.combs@stjohns.k12.fl.us)



## SPOTLIGHTING CIVIL ENGINEERING AS STELLAR ACADEMY STUDENTS TOUR A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR EXPRESSWAY PROJECT



Civil engineering offers a multitude of opportunities for students, and, as they learned during a field trip with Superior Construction, there are dozens of different types of jobs tied to civil engineering projects, like the First Coast Expressway. The expressway is a \$180 million dollar transportation project currently under construction in Clay County. Students started their tour at the Superior Construction field office, where they met with a safety official who discussed the importance of safety on job sites. They got an overview of the major construction project via an aerial view, taken by a drone

operator employed by Superior Construction, and learned more about the background of the project. They also met the recruitment manager for Superior Construction, who introduced the students to a UNF engineering intern. Then, everyone loaded onto the bus for a ride out to the First Coast Expressway job site. On the way, Project Manager Alton Chamberlain explained how the bid process works with the FDOT, and what it means to be a general contractor on the project. The First Coast Expressway is a 9.7-mile-long, 4-lane divided highway project which will help drivers get from St. Augustine to the Baldwin with the ability to bypass downtown Jacksonville traffic. While it's projected to be a 4-5 year process, Mr. Chamberlain explained that they're a year ahead of schedule already. Once at the site, students met Tim Gebauer, who shared the opportunities in surveying for construction jobs. He introduced the student group to drone operators who get the surveying done in record time (30 minutes) over what the old-fashioned methods. The same work used to take a survey team a week to accomplish. The drone operators gave the students a look at their drones, as well as an



example of just what those flying cameras could do. The students saw the images produced by the drones as they flew over a massive borrow pit. Mr. Gebauer shared that technology is being integrated into the industry at a rapid pace, citing that even bulldozers now have model design screens built right in to tell the bulldozer operators what to do each day. He shared that there are so many tracks to success in this industry, whether you graduate from high school and jump right into entry-level surveying, or if you go to college to study engineering or geomatics.

On the way back, students enjoyed a "safari tour," as Mr. Chamberlain pointed out some of the structures and construction vehicles on site, and explained their purposes. Superior Construction Recruiter Nicole Greene told

the students more about the company's college internship program and said that they may be expanding to high school students, as well. She also offered opportunities for day shadow experiences for those students who are interested. It was an amazingly informative field trip with lots to see and lots to learn. We thank Superior Construction for hosting our students and look forward to continuing to work with the company in the future!

## UNF WELCOMES COMMUNICATIONS ACADEMY STUDENTS, SHOWS THEM HOW TO TAKE THEIR SKILLS TO THE NEXT LEVEL



Recently, Digital Design Juniors and Seniors took a trip to the University of North Florida to learn about the college's Design program. Professor David Begley, Head of UNF's Art, Art History and Design Department, took the group on a guided tour of the fine arts building to kick off the trip. Students got to visit the ceramics lab, photograph building, printmaking lab, and see student work. During their tour, students were informed about the design major, the small class sizes offered to students, extracurricular activities on campus, and they learned about UNF's on-campus art galleries. Students were then welcomed into a

design classroom, where Professor Begley discussed his background in design, and how he came to UNF as an instructor. He shared what types of jobs students can get with a degree in design, what types of courses are offered in the curriculum, and discussed the new Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design. Students were able to see work created by design majors and ask questions. It was an incredibly informative field trip, and our students had a great opportunity to learn about what UNF has to offer those who have an eye on digital design as a future career!



Not long after the Digital Design students spent some time with the Ospreys, the upper-level Wired and Sports Media students travelled to the University of North Florida's campus, learning more about the University's School of Communications. The students toured the school's Production studio, control room and equipment room. They had the chance to watch students produce a Facebook Live weather report and learn more about the control room and studio equipment UNF's program features. On a walk through campus,

students learned that a B.S. in Communications from the University of North Florida features four concentrations from which they can choose: Advertising, Multimedia Journalism, Digital Video Production and Public Relations. Following the tour of the Communications Department, students visited UNF's student union building, which



houses Spinnaker Media, a student-run media outlet for television, news, and radio. Our students got to speak with UNF students and learn more about the ample opportunities to hone their broadcasting or journalism skills via Spinnaker Media. The UNF field trip, organized by Communications Academy Advisory Board member, Professor David Deeley, offered students valuable information and a first-hand view of the opportunities that UNF has to offer at the college level, and we thank him for organizing the event for us!



## FEMALE ENGINEERING STUDENTS LEARN SOME SECRETS TO SUCCESS FROM A RETIRED ENGINEER, COLLEGE PROFESSOR



Stellar Academy of Engineering students learned about paths to finding success in the industry thanks to a recent guest speaker, Debra Bienert. Mrs. Bienert, who is passionate about encouraging young female students to follow their passion into the world of engineering, is a former professional engineer and college professor. First, she discussed her background in electrical engineering for the first 13 years of her career, and then her transition to teaching math courses for engineering majors. Mrs. Bienert shared which high school courses which would set students up for success in college, and then discussed what college math and science courses are available to help prepare students for a career in engineering. She answered student questions and encouraged all the students in the room to continue on in the Engineering Academy, as it's a great opportunity to learn more about the many fields of engineering before choosing a more specialized path at the University level. While this was a "Women in Engineering"-focused event, everyone was invited to participate and learn, and we were thrilled to have a variety of students attend the event. We thank Mrs. Bienert, a Stellar Academy of Engineering Advisory Board member, for spending time with our students!