



STEPP PROGRAM

Welcome Back from the STEPP Team!

As the school year kicks off, we are excited to welcome back our upperclassmen along with ten new first-year students! This past summer was a busy one as we met our 2020 cohort applicants, prepared for another great year of learning and events, and moved ahead with a workforce readiness initiative. We remain committed to pursuing best practices for preparing our students with the skills they need to succeed here at ECU and beyond!

STEPP Program Highlights

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Alysha Gray, Instructional Specialist

Last fall, Alysha Gray joined the STEPP team as our Instructional Specialist. Ms. Gray earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from East Carolina University before earning a specialist degree in school psychology. Some of you will recognize her from her time as a STEPP mentor. After graduation, she worked as a school psychologist for Pitt County Schools and is currently pursuing her doctorate in Educational Leadership and Administration at The George Washington University. She is excited to be back on the STEPP team and working with college students again. She has also embraced the research aspect of her job, something that will benefit not only our students, but also students in colleges around the nation.

Workforce Readiness

In order to prepare students for life after graduation, STEPP has recently revisited and enhanced the workforce readiness component of our program. In collaboration with other universities across the country, we have initiated the first in a series of research projects that are designed to collect feedback and advice from students, alumni, and employers. Feedback from these projects will guide our ability to continuously update and strengthen this important aspect of the STEPP Program. Students can expect a more intentional and prominent emphasis on workforce readiness threaded throughout the STEPP curriculum from their senior year in high school through their senior year at ECU. For example, our alumni are now connecting with current students through a series of webinars, which will help them get a glimpse into the future and provide insight into what to expect during life after ECU. Thank you to those who have already shared your experiences to help prepare students for their next steps!

Study Abroad

Preparing students to succeed in a global and multicultural society is a part of the mission of the ECU Office of Global Affairs; one of the ways they do this is through maximizing access to international experiences. Students in STEPP are taking advantage of these wonderful learning opportunities each year! We've asked a few students who traveled this past summer to share their experiences with us.

STEPP senior **West Williams** (2015 cohort) studied in Poland and the Czech Republic this past summer. This experience provided the opportunity to explore and learn for two and a half weeks. His most memorable experiences during the trip included interacting with other students from ECU and across the globe. He appreciated learning about the side of history "we don't fully understand from different perspectives." He recommends studying abroad to all ECU students, emphasizing the value of building new personal understanding and perspectives through putting yourself in unfamiliar situations.



West Williams

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 21, 2019
Family Weekend Tailgate

October 31, 2019
Halloween Celebration

November 20, 2019
Soup Day

December 4, 2019
Cookies & Cocoa

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STUDENT MAJOR SPOTLIGHT

Construction Management

Grant Mackey: Grant (2017 cohort) is studying Construction Management. He first entered this major in 2018, and his interest has grown with each new course he has taken. While completing an internship this summer with Shelco in Charlotte NC, he got “a hands-on view of what this job field is really like.” He was able to shadow leaders in the field and gain first-hand experience that reinforced and expanded his learning from classroom instruction. Some of the biggest challenges he faced during his internship included managing and controlling projects, as well as navigating communication barriers. Grant feels that what he learned through this experience was crucial for finishing his degree and jump-starting his experience in the workforce. For example, Grant benefited from learning “what to do when things go wrong” in certain situations. His advice to other students interested in the construction management field is “not to expect to know everything at first, but to explore internships to get a real grasp of the process and expectations.”



Grant Mackey



Sarah Blackwelder (left)

Sarah Blackwelder: First-year student Sarah Blackwelder (2019 cohort) intends to major in Construction Management as well. Initially, the STEPP Program was a critical factor in Sarah’s decision to attend ECU, and her passion for business and leadership are what attracted her to the construction management field. Her first semester on campus has just begun, so she has not yet had much time to gain experience in the major. However, she is already identifying characteristics that will help her succeed in the workforce. Sarah is especially interested in analytics and project management. She is using this time to explore the different professions associated with this major and to get started with good routines in the college environment. After completing her bachelor’s degree, Sarah hopes to continue her education in graduate school.

Study Abroad, continued

Emma Parkes (2016 cohort) also took advantage of the opportunity to study abroad this past summer on a trip to Italy and Greece, where she completed coursework in Human Development and Family Science.



Emma Parks

Emma’s favorite event during the trip was being able to relax with students on a four-day cruise through the Greek Islands. She commented, “this gave the students a chance to interact more and build new friendships.” A particular highlight was a visit to the Roman Colosseum;

Emma shared, “It was very emotional to witness how much of the old cultures are so well preserved in other countries.” Emma thinks that studying abroad is a crucial experience for those who want to learn more about themselves and others who reside outside of their “bubble.”

Madison Sholar (2015 cohort) enjoyed her study abroad experience in Denmark and Sweden. She spent approximately one week in each country while studying the culture and history of Denmark. As a prospective kindergarten teacher, Madison was amazed to see how different childhood education is in Denmark as compared to the United States. Although many of the children only spoke Danish, Madison and the other ECU students were able to interact and form connections through nonverbal communication. Madison highly recommends these programs to other students. She hopes to incorporate her newly-gained “view of educational systems around the world” into her own future classroom.



Madison Sholar

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