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Mechanical engineering student Corley serving internship at Kennedy Space Center

JULY 27, 2007

So, what did *you* do this summer?

Unlike many young people, when Katrina Corley is asked this question, she won't have to respond with the typical litany of leisurely activities.

Instead of simply relaxing and recharging her batteries, the Georgia Southern University student has been serving an internship with NASA.

A native of Thomaston who graduated from Pike County High School, Corley is working with the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program at the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

'I am developing a Web application for UAS flight projects that are flown at the Kennedy Space Center, Patrick Air Force Base and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station,' said Corley, who is a mechanical engineering major at Georgia Southern.

'At the end of my internship, I will have an in-depth knowledge of advanced range development projects done in coordination with the Air Force Space Command and enabling technologies for the management and use of U.S. space launch bases and ranges.'

Corley is enrolled in the Regents Engineering Transfer Program (RETP) at Georgia Southern. Established by the University System of Georgia (USG) Board of Regents in 1986, the RETP allows prospective engineering students to conduct their first two years of study at a participating USG institution, and then complete the program with two years at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Corley credits a former high school teacher, Eric Andersen, with helping to spark her initial interest in engineering.

'Mr. Andersen instructed me in a drafting course where I learned to design, first on paper and then on computer programs,' she said. 'This opened new doors and led to my interest in mechanical engineering and design.'

Upon arriving at Georgia Southern, Corley had her intellectual curiosity further aroused by one of her professors, Gerald Jones, who is the director of engineering programs in the Department of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Technology.

'Dr. Jones' encouragement and support, paired with my interest in space and the technologies used to explore space, led to my interest in the Kennedy Space Center internship program,' Corley said.

'After checking out the center's Web site and reading several articles on the technologies that the center is currently working with, I felt this would be an invaluable experience for me.'

Located on the east coast of Florida, the Kennedy Space Center is often billed as 'the gateway to the universe.' The center has been the launching point for all of America's manned space missions for more than four decades, from the early days of Project Mercury to the space shuttle.

'The internship at the Kennedy Space Center has allowed me to work with and gather information from the best of the best in the field of engineering,' Corley said. 'I am gaining experience in the UAS field through my work with my mentor and her staff, and I attend group training sessions and conferences where I have the opportunity to network with other interns and their mentors.'

'With opportunities to shadow other NASA programs, I will be able to decide which fields I am truly interested in applying my engineering degree to someday.'

Corley expects to graduate from college in 2009.

'I plan on continuing my education through a master's program before entering the workforce,' she said. 'I must say that my internship with NASA has created a desire to work in the field of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.'