SCF: At the Intersect of Talents and Dreams

State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) takes pride in students from all walks of life who garner honors on their paths to pursuing their dreams, including SCF’s 2013 Spring graduates and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) All-Florida Academic First Team members Lidia O’Shields, Christine Gambino and Madeline Heath.

O’Shields, a Russian native, achieved her dream of an American college education at SCF where she was named Spring 2013 Outstanding Graduate and recipient of the SCF Image Award for overcoming barriers to success. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, O’Shields’ family suffered hardship and could not afford to send her to a Russian university. She learned French and English by listening to music and working as a tour guide while dreaming of studying in English by attending Florida State University. She learned French, Japanese and Russian folk dancing at a summer camp in Maine where she met Tom. After the couple married, they moved to Boca Grande, Fla.

Although she spoke very little English when she arrived at SCF in 2011, O’Shields overcame the language barrier by assisting students as a peer tutor at SCF’s academic resource center. Gambino also taught Sabbath school and led Vacation Bible School and was in the Bradenton Pathfinder Club. This fall, Gambino plans to pursue a bachelor’s degree in chemical/biomedical engineering, at the University of South Florida.

SCF’s decorated graduates Christine Gambino and Madeline Heath each received a scholarship and special medallion for being selected among 50 college students nationwide to be named 2013 Coca-Cola Community College Academic Team Silver Scholars.

Gambino, an aspiring engineer who touts SCF’s academic quality and state-of-the-art technology as keys to her success, was a member of the Nu Zeta chapter of the PTK Honor Society at SCF Bradenton, assisting in organizing the Honors in Action project and attending the 2012 Regional Honors Conference. She participated in the SCF Symphony Orchestra, road-side cleanups and Trick-or-Treat for the United Nations Children’s Fund. Heath plans to study education and theatre at Florida Gulf Coast University this fall.

O’Shields received a scholarship to study Chinese in a summer program at Middlebury College in Vermont this summer. Accepted into the University of Florida where she will major in Russian and French studies and minor in mathematics and Chinese, O’Shields plans to pursue a master’s degree in foreign languages to become a U.S. Foreign Service officer. She is in the process of becoming an American citizen.

Heath, a Sarasota resident, loved the clubs at SCF and the “family” she built by connecting with other students and the faculty in the SCF Theatre Program. She was involved in Delta Psi Omega, an honorary theatre fraternity, and built sets and performed with SCF’s Studio 84 Productions. Heath also was secretary of the Nu Zeta chapter of the PTK Honor Society at SCF Bradenton, assisting in organizing the Honors in Action project and attending the 2012 Regional Honors Conference. She participated in the SCF Symphony Orchestra, road-side cleanups and Trick-or-Treat for the United Nations Children’s Fund. Heath plans to study education and theatre at Florida Gulf Coast University this fall.

More SCF Student Honors

SCF’s United Nations team was among 70 delegations to receive Best Position Paper in the 2013 Southern Regional Model United Nations Spring Conference. Led by adviser Danny Fuerstman, SCF social and behavioral sciences instructor, SCF’s team members Alessandra DeVivo, Emily Moore, Jared Padgett and Erin Smith represented South Korea in a multiday simulation of the United Nations, participating as delegates communicating their country’s position on issues.

SCF Manatees student-athletes kept up their winning tradition, excelling on the court, field and in the classroom. SCF’s women’s volleyball, women’s softball and men’s baseball teams were named 2012-2013 NJCAA All-Academic Teams for exceeding the team grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0. Six student-athletes won NJCAA Athletes of Distinction honors based on their GPAs, including Superior Academic Achievement (3.80-3.99) award recipients Chelsea Wildey, softball; Abigail Martinez, tennis; Jeff Dally, baseball; and Exemplary Academic Achievement (3.6-3.79) award recipients Chelsea Williams, volleyball; and Bryan Voelkl, baseball; and Exemplary Academic Achievement (3.6-3.79) award recipients Chelsea Wildey, softball; Abigail Martinez, tennis; Jeff Dally, baseball; and Jarred Smith, baseball.

View Student Voices videos at scf.edu/videos