



# ODU HFES student chapter NEWSLETTER

November 2011

## Letter from the President:

Hi everyone!

I know it is already November, but I still wanted to welcome everyone back from the annual HFES meeting. We had such a strong presence at the national conference this year! I am excited to be working with the other officers to revitalize our student chapter throughout the rest of the academic year. We have been coordinating “behind the scenes” to ensure that we can keep up a steady momentum. We also want to make the most out of our events. Our philosophy is going to be “quality over quantity” when it comes to events this year.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the Comfort Totes for Kids drive. We were able to fill seven totes with your generous donations! Thanks to Kim for organizing our participation in the drive. It was good to see so many of you at the first webinar hosted by national HFES, Neuroergonomics Theory and Methods. A final thank you goes out to those of you who helped me with the Fall Spooktacular (especially Becca, Kim, and Kellie). I was able to get a generous donation for the event by reaching out to the community on Twitter.

Last month was National Ergonomics Month. I am proud of our outreach efforts – sharing our ergonomics newsletter with students on campus, with clients at Wards Corner Chiropractic, and parents at the Fall Spooktacular. I also want to thank each of the officers for attending student organization meetings around campus to help us build relationships. Let’s continue to strengthen relationships on campus and in the community!

We have some exciting events planned throughout the year, so stay tuned for more information as the details unfold. Being part of the campus community beyond your labs is a rewarding experience, so I invite each of you contribute to our success this year. My definition of success for the year: Working together to educate ODU and the community about Human Factors. I encourage you all to participate in our events, but I also want you to contact the officers if you ever have ideas or suggestions to improve events and outreach. My ultimate goal is to organize events that enhance our graduate school experience, but if we have fun along the way, I think we are definitely doing it right!

Have a great Fall,

Alex Proaps

## Upcoming events (save the date):

- 11/10 - World Usability Day
- 11/11 - Webinar with Tony Andre MGB 125, 12pm
- 12/9 - Holiday dinner at Press 626, 6pm
- December TBD - HFES National webinar panel "Getting the most out of your grad school career"
- February or April - Colloquium with Dr. Chris Wickens cosponsored by Tidewater HFES chapter
- February - HFES 2012 paper submission deadline
- March 12-14 - HFES Symposium in Healthcare
- April - Field trip to VT's driving research lab
- May - Spring Social
- TBD - “HF in the Workplace” brown bags
- TBD - VA HFES student conference

### 2011-2012 ODU HFES

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### Old Dominion University Human Factors and Ergonomics Society student chapter

#### November newsletter contributors:

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Becca Kennedy

Molly Liechty

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## Viva Las Vegas

by Alex Proaps and Molly Liechty



### HFES 2011 attendees

Faculty:  
Mark Scerbo\*  
Chris Brill\*  
Jim Bliss

Students:  
Alex Proaps\*  
Kim Culley\*  
Molly Liechty\*  
Kellie Kennedy  
Becca Kennedy  
Eric Chancey  
Erik Prytz\*  
Wes Harden  
Rachel Liebman  
Rachel Phillips

Alumni:  
Julie Stark  
Amber Nalu\*  
Ian Reagan\*  
Liz Canzone\*

\*Presentations and/or panels

Top: 1) Rachel Liebman at Beatles Love; 2) Kim Culley, Julie Stark, Liz Canzone, Alex Proaps, Kellie Kennedy, Molly Liechty, Becca Kennedy, and Rachel Phillips at Agave; 3) Red Rocks Casino; Bottom: 1) New York New York ; 2) Chris Brill, Jim Bliss, Mark Scerbo, Ian Reagan, Erik Prytz, Amber Nalu, Rachel Liebman, and Wes Harden at Agave; 3) Decorations at Planet Hollywood and Bellagio. Images provided by Alex Proaps.

This year’s annual meeting of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES) was held at the Red Rock Casino and Resort outside Las Vegas, Nevada. We had outstanding attendance with graduate students representing almost every Human Factors lab, five alumni, and three professors from Old Dominion University. The student chapter also presented a poster about one of the HF labs on campus to help recruit students and educate conference attendees about the HF program here at ODU.

The first two evenings involved social and networking events for students, faculty, and professionals in the field. Technical group meetings occurred throughout the conference so students were able to meet professionals whose research interests aligned with their own. Leading researchers in the field of Human Factors were in attendance, such as Chris Wickens, Peter Hancock, and Raja Parasuraman. Several panel discussions were held, including two student favorites: “Human Factors in games” and “Pioneers in cognitive engineering and decision making research.” The panel titled “Application of simulation technology for training in military medicine” featured Dr. Mark Scerbo.

Molly Liechty, a current PhD student in Human Factors, received first place in the student paper competition within the Cognitive Engineering and Decision Making technical group for her paper titled, “An eye movement analysis of contextual cueing effects.” Dr. Poornima Madhavan was her co-author. Another highlight of the conference was the alumni and accreditation celebration held at Agave restaurant. Students, faculty, and alumni attended the dinner to celebrate the recent HFES national accreditation status of Old Dominion University’s HF program!

Next year’s conference will be held in Boston. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!



## First-Time Experiences at the Annual Meeting of HFES

Interviews conducted by Molly Liechty

I was a first timer at this year's 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society. This conference was a very valuable professional development experience for many reasons, but several stand out more than others. One of the most notable things I did at the conference was networking with professionals in the field and serving as an ambassador for the Old Dominion University Human Factors program. As both a presenter and a session co-chair, I had the opportunity to interact with many established professionals in the field. It was also an excellent opportunity to speak with other students about the graduate program at ODU, and promote the department as a great option for graduate study. At the conference, I had the opportunity to interact with several eminent researchers in the field including Christopher Wickens, Peter Hancock, and Raja Parasuraman.

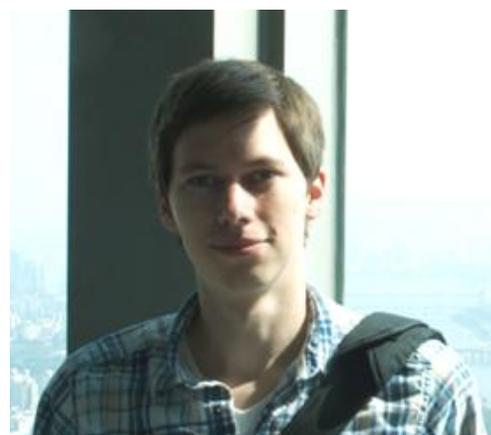
When I was not presenting or fulfilling duties related to being a co-chair, I attended many technical group sessions, including lectures, presentations, and discussion panels. The congregation of so many individuals from different labs addressing similar or related research questions provided interesting insights. It was very beneficial to see the variety of perspectives taken by individuals from different backgrounds and different standpoints.

This year's HFES national conference was similar to many of the previous conferences I have attended in various academic fields. Mid-sized with just over 1,000 participants, it was manageable and easy to navigate. During this conference I took the opportunity to meet as many new people as possible, as well as catching up with those I rarely see. I was pleasantly surprised that most participants, from undergrad student attendees to seasoned veteran fellows, were very approachable and friendly. It led to some very interesting discussions, as well as enough business cards to wallpaper a small living room.

One of the most novel and interesting talks was the plenary speaker Jeff McBride, Master Illusionist. Blending his magic with a talk on the underlying psychological and social principles on which he builds his magic, Jeff provided a unique perspective and the most entertaining plenary talk I have seen to date. While at the conference I spent most of my time at evening social events and early morning presentations, but I found time to attend Ka, by Cirque du Soleil, which was a fantastic experience. A truly impressive display of *nouveau cirque* blending art, music, and a performance in a multitude of disciplines to create a unique and captivating experience.



Kim Culley is a post-Master's Doctoral student in the Human Factors program. She works with Dr. Madhavan. She is studying components that contribute to accurate and effective decision making in critical environments. She is the Vice-President of ODU's HFES student chapter.



Erik Prytz is a post-Master's Doctoral student in the Human Factors program. He works with Dr. Mark Scerbo. He earned his M.S. in Cognitive Science in Computer and Information Sciences department of Linköping University, Sweden. He is the Treasurer of ODU's HFES student chapter.



## Fall lab spotlight: REACTS

by Alex Proaps and Molly Liechty



Pictured left to right: Wes Harden, Eric Chancey, Alex Proaps, Jim Bliss, Rachel Liebman, and Kellie Kennedy. *Image provided by Alex Proaps.*

This semester would like to highlight one of the Human Factors labs on campus. Dr. Jim Bliss is the Principle Investigator of the REACTS laboratory (i.e., research environment for alarms and complex task simulation). Dr. Bliss has published articles concerning human reactions to alarms and the use of virtual environments to train complex tasks. He established the REACTS laboratory at University of Alabama in Huntsville in 1993 and he transferred the lab to Old Dominion University in 2001.

Students and faculty in the REACTS lab conduct human factors research related to cognitive and perceptual issues in applied task domains. According to the lab's website, their goal is to apply behavioral science research to technology, making complex systems safer, easier, and more productive for people to use. The lab collaborates with other labs across campus on applied research projects, as well as research centers, government institutions, and companies to improve user interfaces.

Lab members include six graduate students: Kellie Kennedy, Alex Proaps, Eric Chancey, Wes Harden, Riazul Islam, and Rachel Liebman. Three undergraduate research assistants are also members of the lab.

Kellie Kennedy conducts driving simulator research dealing with wayfinding, directional navigation training, and GPS reliability. Alex Proaps uses Game-based Distributed Interactive System (GDIS) to investigate leadership emergence and team performance in computer games. Eric Chancey uses CAPTURE, a marksmanship trainer funded by DARPA and built by A2-T2, Inc. Eric uses it to evaluate soldier decision making during marksmanship training. Riazul Islam investigates remote diagnosis of PTSD for returning warfighters, in addition to measuring attention and arousal with brain-computer interfaces. Rachel Liebman has helped conduct research using GDIS to assess people's reactions to visual, auditory, or tactile alerts that signal the presence of opposing forces in a computer game. Wes Harden is interested in investigating human interaction with augmented and virtual reality systems such as combat identification for military application.

Students in the lab have also been involved in research with alarm and information reliability. Eric and Dr. Bliss completed a study investigating the effects of unreliable information on infantry situation awareness. Their work was recently accepted for publication in *Simulation and Gaming*.

If you are interested in learning more about the REACTS lab, you can visit the website at: <http://www.lions2.odu.edu/~jbliss/REACTS>





## Fall outreach and charity event: ODU's Fall Spooktacular

By Becca Kennedy

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, ODU's Webb Center was full of superheroes, princesses, and vampires armed with candy baskets they were eager to fill. The Fall Spooktacular was an event open to families in the community. This is now an annual event organized by the Black Student Alliance (BSA). ODU HFES, along with six other student organizations, took part by organizing the event. ODU HFES hosted a pumpkin-painting table. We also handed out our National Ergonomics Month newsletter about backpack ergonomics. Guests at the HFES table exercised their creative juices and painted unique or spooky faces on their pumpkins. Other activities at the Spooktacular included games, contests, coloring, cookie decorating, and a robotics demonstration. At the end of the afternoon, Hampton Roads families left with armloads of food and crafty creations to bring some of the Halloween spirit home.



Images provided by Alex Proaps



Thanks to Will Sokolowski for his generous sponsorship of the ODU HFES pumpkin painting table at the Fall Spooktacular on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Modern Woodmen provided pumpkins, prizes, and bags for the kids to support Make a Difference Day. Will manages the financial services office in Hampton Roads for Modern Woodmen of America, one of the nation's largest fraternal financial service providers. Read more about their services at [modern-woodmen.org](http://modern-woodmen.org).



## Human Factors in the News

### Fisher-Price iXL Learning System Wins the 2011 User-Centered Product Design Award.

section from HFES.org

The Product Design Technical Group (PDTG) of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society congratulates Fisher-Price on receiving the 10th User-Centered Product Design Award for its iXL Learning System™, a “smart device” for children ages 3 to 7. The award was presented to User-Experience Researcher and Senior Manager of Child Research Kathleen Kremer, Industrial Designer Donald Stucke, Jr., and Lead Producer Brian Mysliw.

“The iXL Learning System was highly rated by all judges on the panel,” said Award Cochair Dianne McMullin. “They felt that the Fisher-Price researchers had done an outstanding job of meeting the challenges of understanding children’s behaviors, conducting user testing with children, and designing a user interface to accommodate them. In addition, Fisher-Price was praised for the thoughtfulness of why they did what they did and how they were working in the market.”

The iXL Learning System is a 6-in-1 handheld learning system, incorporating a digital book reader, game player, digital art studio, MP3 music player, notepad, and photo viewer. It was a finalist for the Toy Industry Association’s Preschool Toy of the Year, Educational Toy of the Year, and Most Innovative Toy of the Year.

“We are excited and honored to be the recipient of the 10th Annual PDTG User-Centered Design Award for the iXL Learning System,” said Kremer. “We share with HFES the belief in the importance of working with consumers throughout the entire design and development process to ensure that our products enrich the lives of young children and their families.”



Image from Amazon.com

### Nissan and Swiss researchers are collaborating on a car of the future that will read drivers' minds to make the task at hand easier and safer.

by John Roach

What's on your mind as you drive down the road? Cars of the future may tap into those thoughts in order to keep you and our roads safer. The technology builds on brain-machine interface research pioneered at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne in Switzerland that allows wheelchairs users to get around using their minds. Now, in collaboration with Nissan, the team has announced the car and driver is the next frontier. “The idea is to blend driver and vehicle intelligence together in such a way that eliminates conflict between them, leading to a safer motoring environment,” Jose del Millan, the EPFL researcher leading the project, said in a media statement. The system will measure brain activity, eye movement patterns, and the environment around the car to predict what the driver plans to do - such as turn left or change lanes to pass a slowpoke - and then help the driver make the move.

### Steve Jobs: In memoriam (1955-2011)

editing by Alex Proaps

Steve Jobs passed away on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Linton Weeks of NPR wrote the following in an article titled *Steve Jobs: The Link between Machines and Humans*:

“In memoriam, the Apple.com website last night featured a full-screen photo of Jobs — turtleneck, glasses and grin — and this epitaph: ‘Apple has lost a visionary and a creative genius, and the world has lost an amazing human being. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to know and work with Steve have lost a dear friend and an inspiring mentor. Steve leaves behind a company that only he could have built and his spirit will forever be the foundation of Apple.’

The tech world lost a leader; the creative world lost a soulmate. He straddled both worlds like a colossus. Through his work at pioneering companies like Atari, Pixar, NeXT and, of course, Apple, Jobs imagined ever-present, all-purpose, people-friendly gizmos that bridged the divide between poet and programmer, music lover and machinist, grandparent and gamer, technoid and virtually everyone else. [...] He is not gone. He will not be forgotten. His soul is in the machine.”

Read more at <http://www.npr.org/2011/10/06/141101703/steve-jobs-the-link-between-androids-and-humans>