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NASA internship launches OU graduate

By **Liz Lent**, *OU Special Writer*

Imagine creating technology that some day may skim the red sands of Mars or soar weightless across the moon's plateaus. With a 2003 NASA internship, SECS alumnus Matt Rizzo is one step closer to making that dream come true.

As a Langley Research Summer Scholar, Rizzo spent 400 hours over 10 weeks working with a NASA mentor on computer and electronics programming for an autonomous air vehicle.

"It's all hands on," Rizzo said. "I'm actually building up the circuits, and I've used lots of equipment to test products. I'm trying to get the electronics working with two ground vehicles. Then they'll move on and apply my work to an air vehicle. There is quite a bit of theoretical control theory, too. My duties are very widespread."

Rizzo is used to multi-tasking on a grand scale. "My experience with the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems at OU really helped me with my organization," he said. "It helped me learn how to prioritize."

Working side by side with OU faculty put him a step ahead as well. "I came in (to this internship) and basically I've done most of this already with my projects for Professor (Ka C.) Cheok. I'd done all of the programming. I feel like I'm refining my tools here."

Given his success this past summer, Rizzo expressed interested in working for NASA sometime in the future.

"If you can get into one of these internships, it's a pretty good avenue into the field," he said.

This fall, Rizzo is headed to Ann Arbor to pursue a master's degree, and eventually a doctorate, in aerospace engineering. When that's complete, Rizzo knows the sky's the limit on his engineering future.

Look for this story and others in the fall issue of the School of Engineering and Computer Science newsletter, "In Focus." For more information on OU's **School of Engineering & Computer Science**, visit their Web site.

SUMMARY

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