

Building the Future, Uniting Our World

UF Honors in Conversation with Davis United World College Scholar Alumni
Dr. Arthriya Subgranon



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“As human beings, we are so gifted with a capability to make positive changes to our world. I want to use my time wisely to make meaningful impacts that will last for future generations.”

Living with purpose is the driving motivation for Arthriya Subgranon, Ph.D. Profoundly shaped by her experience as a Davis United World College Scholar, the University of Florida Honors Program alumni is committed to living life intentionally and has long aspired to pay forward the gift of education. This fall, Dr. Subgranon returns to campus as an assistant professor in civil engineering.

Born and raised in Thailand, Dr. Subgranon’s love of learning grew with international education, which took root at 16 when she received the United World College scholarship to complete the last two years of high school at Pearson College UWC in Victoria, Canada. Following graduation, she continued her education in the United States with a full scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree in civil engineering at the University of Florida.

Tell us about yourself. What are your academic passions and how did they impact your career path?

Growing up, I knew that I like math and science—especially physics and chemistry—so I aimed toward an engineering degree. Throughout my middle and high school years, I had always been a tutor for my friends. During the summer before I came to UF, I volunteered teaching in a rural community up on the mountain in Thailand and found that I had a passion for teaching so much that I wanted to become a professor.

You were a Davis UWC Scholar. How was that experience meaningful to you and what did it entail as a student on campus?

Two major things that I carry with me from my UWC experience are the mission and the open-minded perspective. My journey is guided by the mission to use education as a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future, so I am always working to fulfill some—if not all—of the mission components. The open-minded perspective comes from the experience of living with students from more than 100 countries around the world for two years. I learned to listen without judging and celebrate the diversity of people and nature around me.

What advice would you give to new UWC Scholars or Honors students who want to make the most of their college experience?

I usually tell myself to “do more than I think I need.” The more you do, the more you are prepared to seize opportunity when it comes.

How did the Honors Program prepare you for the next steps in your career or education?

The Honors Program gave me an opportunity to learn from and be surrounded by motivated people (students, faculty and staff). It inspired me to work hard and pursue my dream of becoming a professor so that I can train and work with the next generations of scientists and engineers, and give back to the community at both local and global levels.

As a Gator, who were your meaningful mentors or groups on campus?

In academic terms, I was one of the University Scholars and had an opportunity to carry out undergraduate research under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Bridge and a graduate student mentor, Justin Martinez. This research experience prepared me for my Ph.D. research.

Regarding extracurricular activity, I was part of the UF Concrete Canoe team during my junior and senior years. We worked collaboratively as a team and used civil engineering knowledge to build a canoe from concrete in order to compete in the SEC and national American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Concrete Canoe Competition. We tried different concrete mixes, prepared the visual display, wrote a paper and helped each other prepare for the presentation. It was such a rewarding experience.



Dr. Subgranon participates in the UF Concrete Canoe Team as an undergraduate

Describe your path after you graduated from UF. What attracted you to return to campus as a faculty member?

After graduating from UF, I got accepted into a Ph.D. program in structural engineering at the University of Michigan. I was conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Seymour Spence on developing a benchmark framework for the design and optimization of building systems subject to wind hazard. Coming back to teach at UF is one of my dreams because I want to give back to the Gator community, where I started my path, and collaborate with the students, faculty and staff. Last but not least, the NHERI facility (Powell Lab) is one of the best research centers for wind engineering. There, I can help develop knowledge and understanding that will benefit society.



Dr. Subgranon in UF grad regalia

What impact do you hope to have through your new position?

I hope that through my research and teaching, I can contribute to the goal of building a resilient and sustainable community. I understand that I alone cannot achieve my goal of a sustainable future, therefore, I educate younger generations to create more agents of change who are motivated to make positive and long-lasting impacts on our world.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Once a Gator, always a Gator!

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