

## Reaching for the Stars through Opportunities at USF

*By Brad Stager*

Kiran Shila is spending his summer vacation in Greenbelt, Maryland, but his cooperative education experience at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center is taking him out of this world as a member of a team that's developing microwave technology that will explore the origins of the Universe and how it formed.

"There's so much unknown about the relationship between our universe and radio waves, and I feel like working in this kind of research puts me in the forefront of discovery, which is really why I wanted to go to college in the first place," says Shila, who expects to graduate with his BSEE in the Spring of 2018.

The interest in electrical engineering came early to Shila, who is especially interested in working with high-frequency electronics, such as designing antennas, transmitters and filters.

"I've wanted to be an electrical engineer since I knew what an electrical engineer was," says Shila, who grew up in Tampa.

Fortunately the University of South Florida, ranked in the top 50 of all university in the country for research spending, was just down the road from his home and provides a viable choice for his college education.

"USF offered me the opportunity to graduate without any debt, and I got into the College of Engineering which is a tremendous school."

According to Shila, the College of Engineering provides many ways to develop knowledge beyond the classroom.

"It's all about finding the opportunities," he says. "There are gems inside USF that can make someone successful."

One of the opportunities he has taken advantage of is the College of Engineering Research for Undergraduates (COE-REU) program. Undergraduates selected for the program become team members alongside faculty and graduate students in the College's research labs.

“In my freshman year, I got immediately put into research working with Dr. Weller, the chair of the Electrical Engineering Department doing high-frequency research and that has been invaluable because it’s going to give me a leg up in applying to graduate school,” says Shila who has his sights set upon earning a PhD.

Another supportive feature Shila cites is the Design for X Labs, where he works as a student assistant.

“What makes USF special is the Design for X Labs,” he says.

“Having all those tools; the 3D printers, the laser cutters and the knowledge of a community of people who want to build things. These are people who are engaged with their major, are excited about what they’re doing and spending their own time creating things and sharing ideas.”

Shila says USF’s Student Innovation Incubator provides resources to develop his entrepreneurial talents. He and fellow electrical engineering student Coyt Barringer created Lizard Power Systems, a company that develops and sells portable power products.

“They helped us a lot, especially with marketing.”

When he’s not involved in extragalactic research or harnessing the power of electrons, Shila enjoys playing the vibraphone and building electronic instruments which he plays in weekly jam sessions with friends. Hiking and biking in the wilderness give him a chance to view and reflect upon the Universe from this end of things. As for his place in the scheme of things, he speaks with conviction.

“I want to be one of the people who finds something new and expands the wealth of knowledge of humanity.”