
# Dr. Christine Mann Darden
## 1942-
## Hampton, Mechanical Engineer, NASA Researcher

Raised by parents who emphasized the importance of education, Dr. Darden has become a leader in the field of sonic boom technology. Born in Monroe, North Carolina, Christine Mann Darden came to Virginia to study at the Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), where she received a bachelor of science in mathematics in 1962. She taught mathematics at a series of high schools before deciding to continue her education at Virginia State College (now Virginia State University), earning a master's degree in applied mathematics.

In 1967, after spending a year as an instructor at VSU, Dr. Darden began her career at NASA as a data analyst. Five years later, she switched to an engineering position and began taking supporting engineering courses. One of her first independent assignments was working in sonic boom research. Sonic booms, the explosive sound that occurs when airplanes fly beyond the speed of sound over ground, can be powerful enough to shatter windows and damage structures. The problems associated with supersonic travel over land have stymied its expansion in the United States. Through her research and the redesign of supersonic airplanes to minimize destructive sound, Dr. Darden has become a leader in sonic boom technology. In 1983, she earned a Doctor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Darden also holds a certificate of advanced study in management from Simmons College Graduate School of Management in Boston, Massachusetts.

During her career at NASA, Dr. Darden has served as a Senior Program Manager in the High Speed Research Program Office - working to develop the technology for building a supersonic airplane by the year 2015. As the current Director of the Aero Performing Center Program Management Office at the NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, she oversees the work of Rotorcraft, Air Space Capacity, Information Technology, and High Performance Computing at NASA Langley. Dr. Darden has authored over 54 technical papers and articles, primarily in the areas of sonic boom prediction, sonic boom minimization, and supersonic wing design.

As an African-American woman engineer, Dr. Darden has overcome the twin barriers of gender and racial discrimination. She uses her success to advocate increasing the number of women and minorities in the sciences by speaking on issues of gender and racial equality.

Dr. Darden has been recognized with dozens of awards and honors including two NASA medals, several NASA Outstanding Performance and Achievement Awards, the Black Engineer of the Year Outstanding Achievement in Government Award, and the Women in Engineering Lifetime Achievement Award. She is a true trailblazer.