TIES THAT BIND
‘The Greatest Generation’ and UNC Charlotte share a connection

EYEING EQUITY, INCLUSION
Meet the College of Computing and Informatics’ new dean, Fatma Mili

All Aboard
LIGHT RAIL ARRIVES AT UNC CHARLOTTE
With the opening of service on the Lynx Blue Line Extension, we mark the completion of the most transformational project in UNC Charlotte’s history. The distance between Center City and University City has just shrunk dramatically.

At the time I was first introduced to the project in the summer of 2005 by (then) Mayor Pat McCrory, we could foresee that its promise of a rapid and direct alternative to expressways and busy surface routes would create the ideal way to tackle what was once known as the most difficult 10 miles in Charlotte. Light rail offers opportunity for our students, as they are connected like never before to game-changing experiences. Among the strengths derived from being in Charlotte are its terrific internships and employment opportunities. It’s no surprise that about 70 percent of our alumni stay right here in the Charlotte region, when so many of our students are exposed to professional opportunities before graduation.

The easy connection via the UNC Charlotte Main Station and the Ninth Street Station in Uptown will open even wider the doors of opportunity to expand the undergraduate and graduate programs offered at UNC Charlotte Center City. Already we can see beyond our current projected enrollment goal of 35,000 by 2025.

During peak periods, trains will come and go from the UNC Charlotte Main Station at an eight-minute pace, making it possible for many more members of the Charlotte community to take advantage of our beautiful, 1,000-acre campus. It’s now easier than ever before to enroll in classes, earn a degree, attend a Charlotte 49ers basketball or football game, and take in a theatrical performance or concert at Robinson Hall.

Likewise, the business and research communities now have greater direct access to both new and established opportunities to benefit from the University’s role as convener in activities like energy summits at our EPIC building and conversations within our PORTAL building about startups, technology transfer, and business-University partnerships.

The quickening rate of residential and business growth from NoDa to University City is likely to surpass the economic development light rail created in South End. In fact, in the fall of 2020, when we open our new state-of-the-art conference center and hotel at the J.W. Clay/UNC Charlotte Station at North Tryon, patrons of The Marriott at UNC Charlotte will be able to gain access to the amenities of Center City as easily as can be imagined.

Since the northeast location for Charlotte College (later to become UNC Charlotte) was selected by Miss Bonnie Cone 61 years ago on the site of what was then a dairy farm pasture, the University’s growth has kept pace with a remarkable trajectory shared with the city and region. The Blue Line Extension will accelerate exponentially the shared journey of the city and its public research university. We are connected like never before!

Philip L. Dubois
Chancellor
10 All Aboard: Light Rail Arrives at UNC Charlotte

When the first train pulled into UNC Charlotte Main Station, the rhythm of daily campus life was forever changed. A crowd of eager students, faculty members and staff filled the platform, determined to be among the first to ride the train. The Blue Line Extension opens unlimited opportunities for the entire University community in terms of new access to internships and employment for students; programs and events at both campuses; sports, cultural and entertainment options; and much more.

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Organizational science professor wins international Humboldt Award

Steven Rogelberg, a pioneering researcher in the field of organizational science, is among the recipients of the 2018 Humboldt Prize, also known as the Humboldt Research Award. Presented by Germany's Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Humboldt Research Award is a prestigious honor granted in recognition of a researcher's profound, international impact on an academic discipline.

A professor of organizational science, management and psychology, as well as director of the interdisciplinary Organizational Science Ph.D. Program, Rogelberg was lauded for his research and its practical application in three phenomena: work meetings; organizational research methods; and the stress/health of employees engaged in “dirty jobs,” characterized as vital to society but stigmatized as physically, socially or morally tainted.

The award is named for the late Prussian naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt, and it is considered one of the most esteemed honors presented to a scientist.

“My greatest hope is that my scholarship and service to the profession help advance our science and ultimately help people and organizations in meaningful ways,” said Rogelberg. “My passion is to try to do things that matter. I am also so fortunate to have done this work in partnership with incredible friends, colleagues and students.”

Nancy A. Gutierrez, dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, stated, “Steven's work has been transformational, not only at UNC Charlotte, but also within his discipline nationally and internationally. His innovative research has led to improvements in workplace practices, resulting in better working environments for many people, and he has helped nonprofits to understand their strengths and to identify their issues.”

Steven Ott, dean of the Belk College of Business, said, “Steven has made tremendous contributions to industrial and organizational psychology on an international scale. His leadership of the Organizational Science Program has attracted high-quality graduate students to UNC Charlotte and advanced the scholarship about management, well-being and health issues. His interdisciplinary contributions embody UNC Charlotte’s mission as an urban research university and have business and societal impacts.”

In recognition of humanitarian contributions to the field of industrial-organizational psychology, Rogelberg was named the inaugural recipient of the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology Humanitarian Award in spring 2017.

Music Students and Charlotte Symphony celebrate MLK

Students from the Department of Music joined the Charlotte Symphony and A Sign of the Times jazz ensemble to celebrate the life and legacy of Martin Luther King in the 10th annual Bridging Musical Worlds program. This event brought together music and musicians of the European classical tradition and the American jazz tradition. The department's student string quartet – Jane Parris and Ruby Byrd, violins; Yovany Romero Gomez, viola; and Andrew Llamas, cello – performed a movement of Franz Schubert’s “Rosamunde” quartet, then joined the Charlotte Symphony for music by Beethoven, Dvorak and Florence Price. A Sign of the Times performed a jazz set, then all the musicians, including the students, came together for the finale.
Donation from Lowe's CEO opens Niblock Student Center

Robert A. Niblock ('84), chairman, president and CEO of Lowe's Companies Inc., provided a $2.5 million donation to EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte to support and name the Niblock Student Center in the Belk College of Business. The center provides transformative coaching and professional development to nearly 4,000 undergraduate business students in one of the largest business schools in the Carolinas.

At a recent celebration, students shared personal stories of how the center has made a difference to them, and they expressed their appreciation to Niblock for his gift.

The January 2018 grand opening provided an opportunity to showcase the expanded facility and programming. The center now features a new flex space for student events and meetings; will hold an executive conference for students; and will offer expanded professional development programs, tools and staff.

The Belk College of Business first established a student center in 2012 to help undergraduate business majors discover, plan and achieve their career goals while building professional, lifelong competencies essential for success in the 21st century. The center's initial activities were made possible with seed money from the Belk Foundation and the MetLife Foundation and supplemented by gifts from alumni and friends.

Major campus construction projects underway

Construction continues across campus as new projects begin this spring. Perhaps the most anticipated is Belk Plaza’s revitalization, a project that will create a spacious open area for the campus community to utilize. The University will soon have a new recreation center for health and wellness, located near the Popp Martin Student Union. Additionally, an Admissions and Visitors Center, located near the campus’ main entrance, will welcome prospective students and visitors to the University.

The Housing and Residence Life Office has notified on-campus residents that Moore and Sanford Halls have been designated for replacement. University officials, after careful evaluation, have determined the cost to renovate these long-standing structures is much higher than building a single, new modern facility.

Stay current on construction plans, progressions and details by visiting facilities.uncc.edu, or see all construction projects at capitalconstructionplan.uncc.edu.
New dry storage technique could help save endangered species

A team of researchers from UNC Charlotte and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) announced the first successful drying and rehydration of domestic cat spermatozoa using a rapid microwave dehydration method.

Gloria Elliott, a professor in the Lee College of Engineering Department of Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Sciences, and Biology doctoral student Jennifer Patrick, in partnership with Pierre Comizzoli from SCBI, authored papers that show the rehydrated spermatozoa have minimal DNA damage and are able to produce embryos in vitro. Since the group had previously succeeded in producing viable dehydrated cat eggs, this finding shows the possibility of preserving feline reproductive cells in a dried state. The successful preservation is a potentially important step in addressing key issues involved in the reproductive biology of wild felids.

The idea of preserving sperm, eggs and embryos for later use is not new, but generally the preferred preservation technique is for these materials to be frozen. Storage at freezing temperatures requires constant energy supplies, expensive technology and facilities, and complex upkeep operations.

Science might be able to rapidly and successfully improve the status of small animal populations if more “libraries” of preserved eggs and sperm are available. Scientists could simply use stocks of reproductive material, preserved in stable, dried form, re-hydrate them and create a population of viable embryos.

The findings are a proof-of-concept, and work remains to be done in developing and proving the technology.

Terracon Foundation awards scholarship grant to Lee College

The Terracon Foundation awarded $10,000 to the Lee College of Engineering’s Department of Engineering Technology and Construction Management (ETCM) to support scholarships for female and underrepresented minority students in the Construction and Facilities Management master’s degree program.

Terracon employee and UNC Charlotte alumnus Mike Phifer worked with the University in the application process for the grant. A strong supporter of the Lee College of Engineering and a champion for its students, Phifer acknowledged the Lee College of Engineering has had an undeniable impact on Terracon’s workforce.

“The Charlotte office of Terracon is made up of numerous alumni and current students serving at all capacities throughout the various service lines. The workforce we see coming from the college is top-notch – a testament to the quality of the Lee College of Engineering’s program. I am proud to support my university and to work for a company that allows our employees to invest in the future through programs like these,” he said.

Terracon, an employee-owned engineering consulting firm, established the Terracon Foundation to invest in the lives and communities in which its employees serve.
Study shows charter schools contribute to resegregation

Charter schools in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County are directly and indirectly undermining school district efforts to desegregate public schools, according to a new study co-authored by UNC Charlotte researchers and released by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA.

“Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) were once the nation’s bellwether for successful desegregation. Today, the district exemplifies how charter schools can impede districts’ efforts to resist re-segregation,” said Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, UNC Charlotte’s Chancellor’s Professor and professor of Sociology, Public Policy and Women’s and Gender Studies.

Amid a federal push for the expansion of charter schools, the new study of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina, “Charters as a Driver of Resegregation,” illustrates how charter schools have diminished the capacities of CMS leaders to effectively redesign student assignment boundaries to achieve the district’s goal of breaking up high concentrations of poverty.

New partnership deepens, diversifies CTI’s work

In a move designed to deepen and diversify its engagement in professional development for teachers, the Charlotte Teachers Institute (CTI) has formed a new educational partnership with Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) to support classroom teachers in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS).

Through CTI seminars led by UNC Charlotte and JCSU faculty, CMS teachers learn new content, work collaboratively with other teachers and develop new curricula for their students. Teachers serve as leaders in the institute, working collaboratively with University faculty. To date, more than 450 CMS teachers have participated in 68 CTI seminars, producing more than 700 original curriculum units that enrich the educational experience for more than 103,000 students.

CTI is founded on four pillars of strong professional development: content knowledge, creativity, leadership and collaboration. Significantly, CTI’s focus on building social capital among teachers, faculty and graduate students addresses the community-based Leading on Opportunity initiative’s priorities to tackle the community’s upward mobility.

Conference addresses women veterans’ topics

The University recently held its fifth annual UNC Charlotte Veterans Conference, which brought top experts to campus to discuss strategies to serve women veterans transitioning from active duty military to civilian lives.

National, state and regional experts as well as students, faculty, service providers and others from across the region participated in a dialogue about military culture and the need to join forces to support women veterans’ health and reintegration to civilian life.

The conference’s keynote speakers included Rear Admiral Martha Herb, director of the Inter-American Defense College; Penny Greer-Link, Women Veteran Program manager at W.G. Hefner VA Medical Center in Salisbury, North Carolina; and Janene McGee, director of Mecklenburg County Community Support Services Veterans Services Division and interim Region III manager.

McGee noted the state’s large military presence highlights the need to make veterans’ services a priority. “North Carolina is home to more than 80,000 female veterans,” she said. “Mecklenburg County is third in the state with 6,293 female veterans.”
Research team seeks to make blood pressure control easy

According to the Centers for Disease Control, one-third of U.S. adults, or 75 million people, have high blood pressure and the increased risk of heart disease and stroke that comes with it. Researchers at UNC Charlotte are working to address this issue and are producing some very promising results with isometric exercise – flexing muscles without moving a joint.

The specific exercise is called isometric handgrip exercise – squeezing those V-shaped, spring-loaded devices sold at sporting goods stores. Studies have shown that exercising each hand for only two minutes a few times per week can, over time, lower blood pressure by as much as 10 percent.

In one recent study, Master of Science in Kinesiology alumna Emily Zacherle (’15) and current graduate researcher Ben Gordon (Biology and Kinesiology) tracked participants ranging in age from 24 to 60 as they performed the handgrip exercises for 11 minutes per session, three days a week for 12 weeks. The study showed that not only did blood pressure decrease significantly, a checkup six weeks later suggested the benefits last for some time even after the exercise routine has ended.

The team now is focused on the effects of interventions on blood vessel function and inflammation, identifying factors responsible for lowering blood pressure in the long term. Gordon said they are still in the early stages of collecting data for this project, but “the results could really help point us in the right direction for identifying why people respond differently to these types of exercise programs.”

UNC Charlotte chosen to host N.C. Teaching Fellows program

UNC Charlotte is among five North Carolina schools selected as partner institutions for a new initiative aimed at supporting students preparing for a teaching career in the fields of science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) or special education.

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows program was established to recruit, prepare and support students attending North Carolina’s top education programs for preparation as highly effective STEM or special education teachers in the state’s public schools. Students participating in the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program will receive up to $8,250 per year in forgivable loans if they commit to teach in a STEM or a special education area. The program is specifically designed to attract high-quality teachers to low-performing schools by offering an accelerated loan forgiveness schedule.

For three consecutive biennia (2013, 2015, 2017), the Omicron Pi Chapter has received the ACE Award for Achieving Chapter Excellence. Established in 1995, the ACE Awards Program recognizes Kappa Delta Pi chapters that exhibit outstanding programming in support of the society’s mission and strategic goals. 2017 marks the first year Omicron Pi received the award for the overall top chapter.

Education honor society named world’s top chapter

The UNC Charlotte chapter of Kappa Delta Pi (KDP), the international honor society in education, was named the top chapter in the world. The Omicron Pi chapter received the 2017 Florence B. Stratemeyer Award for Chapter Excellence. This honor is given each biennium to the highest-achieving chapter from more than 650 national and international KDP chapters.

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College of Arts + Architecture celebrates its first decade

In 2008, UNC Charlotte established the College of Arts + Architecture (CoA+A), bringing the arts and design together in an educational forum that is unique in the Carolinas and rare in the United States. CoA+A comprises roughly 1,000 students in five academic units: the School of Architecture, the Department of Art & Art History, the Department of Dance, the Department of Music and the Department of Theatre. As Dean Ken Lamba wrote following its formation, the CoA+A “is dedicated to transdisciplinary conversation and collaboration, design innovation, creative leadership development, and research and communication using our senses and imagination.”

While the CoA+A will recognize the 10th anniversary of its founding throughout 2018, a spring celebration, March 15-17, centered around several events: the Roderick MacKillop Memorial Alumni Art Exhibition, honoring the legacy of the beloved art professor; the 2018 CoA+A Distinguished Alumni Awards; and a celebratory dinner in Storrs Hall. Read more about the alumni award winners at inside.uncc.edu/news-features/2018-03-19/coaa-presents-2018-distinguished-alumni-awards.

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Graduate students excel at data analytics competition

Two teams of master’s students from UNC Charlotte won three major awards in the 2017 Teradata University Network (TUN) Data and Analytics Challenge, an international data analytics competition.

One team received the Overall Winner (first place) and also the People’s Choice Award in the competition. The team consisted of five graduate students in the Data Science and Business Analytics (DSBA) program. DSBA students Robyn Levine, Rowena Palima and Lyndsay Richter did not present in the finals competition but were recognized with an honorable mention in the Data Challenge.

The purpose of the team’s project was to help Rise Against Hunger, a North Carolina-based charity aimed at eliminating hunger in underprivileged areas. For the competition, students received the same data set to examine, analyze, visualize and present their findings and results. The challenge was to identify marketing opportunities for the nonprofit partner, Rise Against Hunger (formerly Stop Hunger Now), which provides food and life-changing aid to the world’s most vulnerable communities.

In the Analytics Challenge, DSBA students won for the best use of analytics and visualization tools.

The UNC Charlotte graduate students competed against teams from around the world, including NIDA Thailand, California State University, Singapore Management University and Texas A&M. UNC Charlotte received three of six possible awards.

Music professor named emerging scholar

Carl DuPont, an assistant professor of voice in the Department of Music, was named a 2018 Emerging Scholar by the publication Diverse Issues in Higher Education. The magazine’s Jan. 25 edition profiled 15 scholars from colleges and universities from around the country, many of them under 40, who are making their marks at their institutions through teaching, research and service.

DuPont made his first operatic appearance as a boy in the title role of “Amahl and the Night Visitors” in his hometown of Daytona Beach, Florida, and has been singing ever since. He performs operatic roles around the country and recently appeared in the Opera Carolina production of “Cyrano.” Last summer, he participated in the Young Artists Program at Glimmerglass Festival, a highly regarded summer opera and musical theater festival in Cooperstown, New York.

At UNC Charlotte, DuPont instructs undergraduate students in applied voice, as well as French, German, Italian and English diction. Additionally, he is an affiliate faculty member of the Africana Studies Department and has collaborated with the German and dance departments.

DuPont’s scholarly interest focuses on diversity and inclusion in higher music education, specifically the contributions of black musicians, composers and educators to the discipline.

North Carolina Campus Compact honors ‘Emerging Leader’

Tamara Johnson, research associate for academic planning and analysis in the Provost’s Office, is the 2018 Civic Engagement Professional of the Year – Emerging Leader Award recipient, as presented by North Carolina Campus Compact.

This award recognizes a higher education administrator in the state who works to realize a campus-wide vision of service, supports the engagement of faculty and students and forms innovative campus-community partnerships.

Johnson has shaped the University’s civic engagement landscape and mapped new pathways that connect students and community.

She is the coordinator of the University’s Campus Compact working group, which seeks to expand community-based learning. In 2015, she helped established UNC Charlotte’s Engaged Scholarship and Community Partnership Symposium, an occasion for cross-disciplinary collaboration and sharing best practices. She led committees that organized campus-community gatherings around key local issues: Hunger in Charlotte in 2016 and Housing Affordability in 2017. Last fall, she supported a student-led project to bring Charlotte-Mecklenburg police to campus for a conversation with students about police-involved shootings.

Currently, Johnson leads UNC Charlotte’s Civic Action Plan Committee. The group aims to create a set of strategic initiatives that align teaching, research and service around an urgent community need: economic mobility.
As the recipient of the 2017 Derrick Griffith Servant Leader Award, Adina Houston (’17) has experienced the impact scholarships have on students, and she appreciates the opportunities she had at UNC Charlotte. This is why she made a gift to *Exponential: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte*.

“Giving back is my way of showing gratitude to my University for all of the memories I made, the amazing friends that I met, the lessons I learned and the staff who heavily influenced me on a professional and personal level,” says Houston.

As a young alumna and chair of last year’s Senior Class Gift Campaign, Houston encourages students and young alumni to give back to UNC Charlotte. “Think about all of the opportunities you’ve been given, the organizations you’ve been a part of, and any members of the faculty and staff who have had a positive impact on you. Giving back to UNC Charlotte is important for growth.”

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*Exponential: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte* celebrates the dramatic trajectory of growth of our University and our 130,000 alumni. This campaign offers all of us — alumni, business leaders and the University community — the opportunity to shape a future that is even more exciting than our past.

The power of you makes it possible. *Join us.*
When the train pulled into the new UNC Charlotte Main Station on the morning of March 16, the first day of revenue service for the long-anticipated Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) Blue Line Extension (BLE), the rhythm of daily campus life was forever changed. A crowd of eager students, faculty members and staff filled the platform, determined to be among the first to connect to Uptown Charlotte and points south.

“We’re excited for the opportunities light rail will bring to students at UNC Charlotte’s campuses,” said Tracey Allsbrook, student body president. “In fact, students throughout the entire UNC System are thrilled because they look to Charlotte as a place to start their careers — and light rail is a major factor in drawing them to the city.”

The 9.3-mile stretch of extended tracks offers 11 new stations providing light rail service to the University’s main and Uptown campuses at three locations: 9th Street Station...
(which serves UNC Charlotte Center City), J.W. Clay Boulevard/UNC Charlotte, and UNC Charlotte Main Station near Wallis Hall on the north side of main campus.

Completion of the light rail line represents the culmination of nearly two decades of committed collaboration among elected officials, county government staff, business leaders and elected officials whose combined federal, state and county investment drove the project from concept to reality.

“A university must be a part of the fabric of the community it serves,” said Chancellor Philip L. Dubois. “When I arrived in 2005, deepening community connections was a strategic priority. Through the creation of a new administrative division dedicated to community engagement, we sought funding for the Center City campus as well as examined the benefits of light rail for the University and city. Although our main campus is less than 10 miles from uptown Charlotte, getting there required navigating traffic on busy interstate highways or congested surface streets. Now our two campuses, which bookend the extension, are directly accessible to one another in just 22 minutes. This opens unlimited opportunities for the entire University community in terms of new access to internships and employment for students; programs and events at both campuses; sports, cultural and entertainment options; and much more.”

Economic development is a major factor in community support for the light rail extension. Development along the new corridor is projected to exceed that of Charlotte’s South End, a section of the city along the original CATS line that has experienced a retail, corporate and residential construction boom since the arrival of public rail transit in 2007. The payoff for the new northbound extension to University City began during the construction phase, which generated more than 9,000 jobs and infused $285 million in payroll into the local economy.

“With new investment, development and jobs, the BLE will more than pay for itself,” said Bob Morgan, president of the Charlotte Chamber.

‘We’ve never been more connected,’ captures what light rail means for UNC Charlotte and the city of Charlotte. Travel between the University’s two campuses in 22 minutes on the BLE. Watch an opening day video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJuXsS0qvbY.
“Whether corporations choose Charlotte for their headquarters or decide to expand here, the city will be viewed as a place that is planning for the future – and UNC Charlotte is a vital part of that. It won’t be long before high school students start realizing how light rail and the University are connected, and interest will really take off.”

**Public Support Leads the Process**

An unprecedented level of public support for public works in Charlotte was essential to making the light rail extension a reality. Groundbreaking occurred in 2013 after funding was assured for the $1.16 billion project. Half of that funding was provided by the Federal Transit Administration and 25 percent came from the state of North Carolina. The remaining amount was covered by a half-cent sales tax implemented by Mecklenburg County voters, who supported the tax by referendum in 1998 and rejected its repeal in 2008. For its part, the University donated property and improvements valued at $6 million for the campus portion of the line.

“The Blue Line Extension represents phenomenal commitment and investment from every sector of the community,” said Dubois.

**A Bit of Light Rail History**

When Dubois arrived at UNC Charlotte in July 2005, local leaders, including (then) Mayor Pat McCrory and (then) CATS CEO Ron Tober, urged him to consider bringing light rail to campus. Not only were UNC Charlotte’s student and employee populations critical to ensuring the ridership necessary to qualify for federal funding, light rail aligned with the University’s desire to increase public access to campus, strengthen industry ties to research and academic programs, reduce demand for campus parking, open opportunities for students in Center City and spur economic development. It didn’t take a lot of convincing. Dubois knew, however, that finding a way for light rail trains to move through campus would be a challenge, so he began to work with CATS to identify a path that would allow easy access without disrupting the campus’ core.

According to McCrory, whose influence was instrumental to the project both as mayor of Charlotte (1995-2009) and governor of North Carolina (2013-17), Dubois’ immediate reaction and consistent theme was “bring it on.”

“Without Chancellor Dubois’ leadership and vision to partner with CATS, the BLE would not have been possible,” said John Lewis, CATS CEO. “For years, I’ve imagined trains full of UNC Charlotte students — our future workforce — traveling through the city, and now they’re able to. Likewise, I’ll be riding the train to cheer on the 49ers.”

**Today and Tomorrow**

With safety, campus integration and open communication defined as priorities, a 32-member Light Rail Coordinating Committee was assembled to manage the project from the University’s perspective. The committee, which represents a broad cross-section of University departments, engaged with the campus community to minimize occasional disruptions and inconvenience associated with construction. The Coordinating Committee was also charged with implementing an all-access pass for students, faculty and staff; creating a website devoted to light rail news (lightrail.uncc.edu); and ensuring campus security. In addition to state-of-the-art cameras and security personnel put in place by CATS and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, UNC Charlotte has installed extra security cameras and lighting as well as blue light telephones at campus stations. More campus police officers have been hired and assigned to the area, especially during peak travel times and at night.

Now with 103 trains stopping on campus more than 20 hours every day, the wait for a train is never longer than eight minutes during peak ridership hours. Students simply use their University ID to “show and go,” needing never to purchase a ticket because the fare is covered by a modest addition to their University ID to “show and go,” need never to purchase a ticket because the fare is covered by a modest addition to students’ miscellaneous transportation service charge. Once on campus, riders are able to transfer to Niner Transit, a University-branded bus fleet that stops at both light rail stations and designated campus stops. Charlotte Wheels, the campus bike-share program, gives students and visitors another option for getting to where they need to go.

“This University has experienced tremendous growth over the past several years, and the city of Charlotte is growing and attracting corporate attention and workforce talent like never before,” said Dubois. “Add to that the unprecedented connectivity that the Blue Line Extension offers, and I think we can safely say that the future of UNC Charlotte is brighter than any of us could have predicted.”

**Susan Messina is director of news and information in the UNC Charlotte Office of University Communications.**
Inclusion
Eyeing Equity, Meet the College of Computing and Informatics' new dean, Fatma Mili

BY MELBA NEWSOME • PHOTOS BY KAT LAWRENCE
It’s a Thursday evening in late October and about 25 people have gathered at the Wine Vault near campus for an event hosted by alumni of the College of Computing and Informatics (CCI). The occasion is billed as a fundraiser to endow a $25,000 needs-based scholarship and a chance to meet the college’s new dean.

Fatma Mili is new to Charlotte and fewer than three months into her tenure, yet she moves among the alumni leaders with such ease you might think she’s the veteran trying to put a room full of nervous students at ease before an exam.

As if it were necessary, she introduces herself to everyone in attendance. During her brief speech, she talks about her good fortune in being selected to lead the college, praises its culture of collaboration and openness and reminds attendees that everyone has a role to play in shaping its future. “Your voice is extremely important,” she said. “We — the staff and faculty — are just stewards.”

Listening to her, even for this brief moment, you get her sense of urgency and drive for action. Talk to her about her work for any length of time and you quickly realize it’s the essence of who she is and what she sees as the responsibility of technology and computing, in general, and UNC Charlotte, in particular.

Mili believes those in her field have a rare opportunity to make higher education more relevant, reformist and responsive to the great needs and challenges facing society. As dean of the fastest-growing college in the UNC system and the most comprehensive technology program in the state, she’s determined not to let it go by.

**Doctorate in Paris**

Mili earned a doctorate in computer science from Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris in 1984. Before joining UNC Charlotte, she’d spent her academic career in the Midwest — five years at Purdue University and more than 25 years at Oakland University in Michigan before that.

Her technical research is in formal methods in computing, program verification, distributed computing and bio-inspired algorithms. Her educational research is in broadening participation in STEM, making higher education sync with the needs and expectations of society and with evidence-based findings on human motivation and human learning. At both institutions, Mili ushered in progressive change in computing and greatly expanded her departments. Yet, despite her accomplishments, becoming dean was more organic than planned.

“I started out as a traditional academician with my own research and teaching, and bit by bit started working on larger projects with big teams and realized how much I enjoyed it, and how much other people appreciated it,” she explained. “I got to the point where I had a clear vision and realized that I needed to be in a position to make change happen.”

The culture and mindset she saw at UNC Charlotte made her believe this was the perfect place to do just that. When asked why she chose the school, Mili has a standard four-word response: Public. Research. Urban. University. “This is a university completely embedded in the community and takes its responsibility toward the community very seriously,” she said. She hopes to build on UNC Charlotte’s collaboration with the city and help it realize its urban mission more completely and effectively.

“We are the most important change agents,” she said. “We have to embrace that role, especially at a time when these challenges require novel solutions that take the long view.”

The research currently being conducted at the college in areas such as cybersecurity, data analysis and robotics, which all can be applied to address the business and civic needs of the greater Charlotte region.

“We can’t do it alone with computing,” Mili observes, “but no discipline can do it without computing.”

She rejects the notion that technology and computing should not take consequences into consideration.

“Our role is not just to produce knowledge but to focus that knowledge toward a specific goal,” she said. “We cannot produce technology and leave it for someone else to figure out its impact. Everything we do has many ethical implications, and we must start owning them.”

**Cultural Change to Attract Women**

Mili has long held that colleges and universities are duty bound to lead the fight for gender, ethnic and socio-economic equity. In some ways, the United States seems to be moving in the opposite direction when it comes to achieving gender equity in computing and technology. During the 1980s, women made up almost 37 percent of computer science students, compared to less than 18 percent today. Studies have shown that girls lose interest in the field in middle school and high school and that, once lost, regaining their passion becomes extremely difficult.

“We can’t use that as an excuse,” countered Mili. “Let’s ignore the pipeline for a minute. We have to stop trying to change them and...
NorthState Partnership Aids Women, Minorities in Tech

Building on a tradition of innovation and addressing the need to prepare people for careers in computing, technology provider NorthState has made a generous commitment to EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte, specifically for the College of Computing and Informatics (CCI) to enhance and expand the University’s opportunities for women and minorities pursuing computing and technology-based degrees.

The partnership aligns with NorthState’s mission to provide opportunities within communities to learn through technology.

The company’s commitment focuses on three broad areas:

- The creation of the NorthState UNC Charlotte CCI Mentorship Program, including a designated University staff position to manage the mentorship program. This program will focus on encouraging female students to pursue computing through education and mentorship initiatives.
- Creation of the Velva Hayden Memorial Scholarship, an endowed annual scholarship for excellence and innovation.
- Support of and participation in a CCI Business Partners Program to prepare workforce-ready technology professionals.

“NorthState’s partnership with UNC Charlotte is not only a monetary investment. It is a commitment from our people to engage, interact with and mentor UNC Charlotte students so they can be successful throughout their college career and into the workforce.”

Tucker added, “I’m particularly proud of the Velva Hayden Memorial Scholarship. Velva, who was my great-grandmother, was NorthState’s president from 1952 to 1973. NorthState experienced unprecedented growth and technological advancement under her leadership during a time when few women held such leadership positions. We at NorthState are thrilled to know that her legacy will continue to aid in promoting gender diversity and underrepresented populations in the computer science and technical fields.”

NorthState, through its Technology Solutions Division, delivers cloud, IT and data center services to customers throughout the Southeast.

Melba Newsome is a self-employed writer based in Charlotte.
When the weather turns warm, and ants come out of dormancy, students in Parks Collins’ biology class at Mitchell Community College in Statesville head outside to collect specimens.

“We trap ants in locations across campus, and — working as research groups — the students bring those ants into the lab, and they try to identify those ants as best as they can and as specifically as they can with field guides,” Collins said. “They record how many different species they have, the types of species they have, and then sending the DNA off to be sequenced.”

To guide their research, Collins is using a lab module he created with UNC Charlotte researcher Adam Reitzel and the professor’s lab team members. Their collaboration started when Collins, a community college instructor, searched for a university researcher with a sharing mindset and an active learning approach.

Collins found that — and more — with the Reitzel Lab in the Department of Biological Sciences in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

A prolific researcher, Reitzel joined the faculty at UNC Charlotte in 2012. He has authored more than 60 peer-reviewed journal publications and has received National Science Foundation (NSF) grants and a National Institutes of Health AREA grant. He also received the prestigious Young Investigators’ Grant from the Human Frontier Science Program, one of only seven awarded worldwide in 2016.

Seeing how Reitzel approached his research, Collins decided to reach out.

“I had gone to some conferences and had done some reading on how we could infuse some meaningful research projects or modules into our labs, so that our students are posed with a problem, and they work their way through that problem, and nobody knows what the answer will be,” Collins said. “It’s really about ownership. The students take ownership, and they’re in control.”

This method differs from more traditional...
Supporting Biological Literacy

The new approach responds to findings of the comprehensive national study “Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology Education.” The study found that rapid advances in life sciences demand a transformation of undergraduate biology education, so that students can obtain “the level of biological literacy needed to understand, help solve and make informed decisions about the complex problems facing the world today and tomorrow.” The American Association for the Advancement of Science issued the report, with support from the NSF.

Reitzel, a marine biologist, invited Collins to his lab to learn about its research and approach. The lab primarily studies species in the phylum Cnidaria — sea anemones, corals and jellyfish — because of their ecological importance and phylogenetic position. Lab members conduct their work through a combination of comparative genomics, molecular biology, population genetics, evolutionary ecology and field studies.

“Adam was so gracious with his time and was so willing to think outside the box to help us create classroom modules that kind of had to do with the sea anemone and the genetic aspect, but they really were modules outside the exact realm of his research,” Collins said, referring to his students’ work with ants and DNA.

New questions that arose intrigued Reitzel and have contributed to an evolving, growing partnership from which both teachers benefit. In one development, Reitzel and Collins received funding support from the NSF to explore the link between toxin evolution of a venomous animal and its prey.

In another project, evolutionary biologist Jason Macrander, a postdoctoral fellow in Reitzel’s lab, worked with Collins to develop a lab case study that considers the death of herpetologist Karl P. Schmidt, who died nearly 60 years ago of internal bleeding from the bite of a boaslang snake. Schmidt, believing the bite would not kill him, kept detailed records of his symptoms.

“Bioinformatics and venom and all these things are really complex, but if you can intertwine it with a good story, then students...”

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“Cnidarians can give us insight into how cells function, how metabolic pathways work, how symbiosis evolves,” said evolutionary biologist Jason Macrander, who is a postdoctoral fellow in Reitzel’s lab. Macrander studies venomous animals to probe questions on venom evolution, protein function and the physiology of symbiosis, with the potential for pharmaceutical and biomedical advances.

The broad implications for understanding how evolutionary and ecological factors influence biological interactions and molecular diversity of a species or group of organisms are compelling to the researchers.

“It helps us understand what’s happening at the genomic level, and that can relate back to what’s happening with snakes or cone snails or scorpions or other things,” Macrander said. “We have this box of what we know, and we think everything fits in this box. But then we come to Cnidaria — things are way outside of the box. So we’re trying to understand if we need to get a new box or just make the box bigger.”

Eyeing Biomedical Models

In addition to working with the Reitzel Lab, Provance has collaborated with UNC Charlotte biologist Amy Ringwood. Ringwood’s primary research interest involves understanding the cellular and physiological effects of environmental toxins on estuarine and marine invertebrates, and developing these systems as biomedical models for understanding the effects of toxins on basic cellular processes.

Ringwood has joined Provance, aquarist Matt Lowder, who is also a UNC Charlotte alumnus, and other Discovery Place staff on research trips to the Caribbean island of Curacao. There, scientists from around the world study the sexual reproduction of coral species and experiment on new ways to restore coral. They work under the guidance of SECORE, whose name derives from “SExual COral REproduction,” and is a global network focused on coral reef conservation.

For Discovery Place, forming a symbiotic relationship with researchers at UNC Charlotte aligns with its mission to inspire curious thinkers to discover the wonders of science, technology and nature. It also lines up with the museum’s focus on conservation.

“The most important overlap we have is outreach,” Provance said. “It’s a way for the work that UNC Charlotte researchers are doing to reach the public. We see three quarters of a million people every year on average here at Discovery Place. And when those people come through our doors, they will be able to see the conservation work we’re doing and the research on which we’re collaborating.

“While the research currently goes on behind the scenes,” he added, “the intent is to bring some of the species out onto the exhibit floor with information about the research, so that people can see and learn from it.”

Reitzel sees aspects of the partnership in a similar fashion and expects the collaboration to grow and impact a broad segment of the community.

“I think what we’ll see with Discovery Place is that by reaching out into the community and bringing in science that’s happening right now and sharing that interaction, we will help make science seem more real,” Reitzel said. “Science is not just a book of facts. It’s a practice that real people do.”
will pay attention and understand why you do certain things, or why you’re interested in this protein, or why you want to know where this protein came from,” Macrander said.

Influencing How Labs Are Taught

The impact of the partnership with Mitchell Community College has extended beyond the lab and classroom. Collins has presented at meetings of the N.C. Community College Association of Biology Instructors, and he and Reitzel have provided information to other instructors at Mitchell Community College.

The partners foresee long-range potential for their work to influence the way science labs are taught.

“We see that by bringing together our different expertise,” Reitzel said, “we’re actually able to make some really novel contributions to science, and offer really unique opportunities for students in the classroom through these more learning-based labs as opposed to more cookbook-type labs.”

In addition to benefits Mitchell Community College students have experienced, UNC Charlotte undergraduate and graduate students in Reitzel’s lab have learned from the interactions with Collins and from a collaboration with Discovery Place Science (see sidebar, page 17). Reitzel infuses information about such projects into his classroom to show science in action.

“Not everyone wants to be in academia,” Reitzel said. “People want to go into community outreach. They want to work in government. So they have different career goals. Part of my job is to provide an environment and a platform to make that possible. Part of that is me learning how to make those opportunities available to my students, for both my students in the lab and also my students in the classroom.”

At Discovery Place, the lab’s research team is studying sea anemones, corals and jellyfish. Macrander and undergraduate lab team member Amy Klock are looking at nematocyst-ejected proteins of moon jellies at different life stages. A second project is studying venom in anemones that host clownfish, to see how gene expression changes in these cnidarians that live in an intricate symbiosis with clownfish. As part of an NSF grant, doctoral student Whitney Leach this spring will gain insights into elementary education and outreach techniques at Discovery Place.

The research at Discovery Place will have a community educational impact, through a display showcasing the research collaboration and implications of the work.

Professional Development for Teachers

In yet another collaboration, Lenora Crabtree is teaming with Reitzel to present an intensive, seven-month professional development seminar for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) teachers, beginning in April 2018 through the Charlotte Teachers Institute (CTI).

Crabtree — who is pursuing a doctorate in curriculum and instruction through the Cato College of Education — met Reitzel while working on a master’s degree in biology after being a science educator for 18 years.

“What I saw was that he had a deep commitment to producing and encouraging and mentoring scientists who are well-rounded, who understand all the aspects of the work, who are not only grounded in the science but are grounded in the importance of sharing that science with the broader public,” Crabtree said.

In the CTI seminar, Reitzel and Crabtree are drawing from their strengths to create a rich learning environment for CMS teachers. CTI is a partnership among CMS, UNC Charlotte and Johnson C. Smith University that offers professional development for CMS teachers (see page 6).

The seminar Reitzel and Crabtree are leading will consider environmentally driven modifications of DNA through the lens of social justice, specifically the roles that race and poverty play in community health and the intersection of race, poverty and socio-scientific issues. Each concept will be examined through the current scientific literature.

“Adam is very committed to looking at science not as a knowledge set that is known and established and rigid, but as something that is constantly evolving,” said Crabtree, whose doctoral focus is on urban education. “There is something that’s very powerful about the way he teaches and his openness to the fact that what we know now will change and will then alter the way that we move forward.”

Moving forward for Reitzel means continuing to seek new ideas and partners and being open to others’ views and knowledge.

“Collaboration mostly means melding together ideas from different points of view and different sets of experiences,” he said. “So, I collaborate with my graduate and undergraduate students in the lab. I collaborate with my fellow faculty members for ideas for how to do research, how to do teaching. And certainly I’m starting now to collaborate more with members of our extended community, such as high schools and organizations, to see how we can put ideas together to find more effective solutions and more interesting ways of doing research.”

In this way, Reitzel is living his dream.

“I get to do science. I get to interact with people — students and colleagues around the world — to address the questions that we think are interesting and to come up with solutions to those,” he said. “If I wasn’t doing what I’m doing, I would still be doing this for a hobby. This is just what I love doing. The fact that this is my career is perfect. I could not ask for anything better.”

Lynn Roberson is director of communications for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.
Study abroad opens up a world of opportunities — just ask UNC Charlotte alumnus Ryan Spring ('05).

He now lives in Japan and is on the faculty of Tohoku University, where he teaches English and graduate courses in linguistics. As a UNC Charlotte undergraduate, he valued the impact that becoming more globally aware would have on his future, and he wants to help his students in Japan to better understand other languages and cultures.

This past fall, Spring accompanied 16 students from Tohoku University for a two-week exchange at UNC Charlotte.

“The purpose of this exchange was to enable some of my students to study English and explore American culture,” said Spring. “Charlotte is a very diverse city, and the South has its own unique subcultures.”

University faculty delivered lectures on the complexity of the American people, with emphasis on Native Americans and African Americans. Field trips included visiting the Cherokee Reservation, Latta Plantation and the Levine Museum of the New South.

“I think my students had an opportunity to improve their language skills and gain a better understanding of America; they obtained a great
Ryan Spring’s transformative impact as a scholar resulted in his receiving Tohoku University’s highest honor.

deal of information, and then they were able to put it in context by visiting the various historical sites,” Spring explained.

‘Languages are mysterious’

A native of Charlotte, Spring has been a lifelong aficionado of languages and cultures. At Harding High School, he studied German initially and added Japanese in his junior year. “Languages are mysterious, and I see them almost like a jigsaw puzzle,” said Spring. “Not every culture constructs language the same way, so I find it fascinating to uncover the differences.”

Valedictorian of his high school, Spring elected to stay in the Queen City and enrolled at UNC Charlotte. He said the University’s exceptional reputation for internationalization was the impetus.

“UNC Charlotte’s focus on diversity and globalization was very attractive to me. At the time, Japanese was a minor, so as an alum, I am proud to see it’s now a major and the largest in the UNC System and probably the Southeastern United States,” he said.

Spring recalled visiting the Office of International Programs as a freshman to begin exploring study abroad options. Even though he was a German major, he really wanted to spend a year abroad in Japan to strengthen his proficiency in his least-dominant language. He was accepted to Gakushuin University, a private institution that the Japanese royal family attends. As the first UNC Charlotte exchange student accepted at this selective university in a number of years, Spring was petrified and excited at the same time.

Even though Charlotte and Tokyo are both urban cities, Spring found being a 19-year-old in a new environment was challenging. “Charlotte was big, but Tokyo was even larger,” he said. “Instead of a sprawling metropolis, everything is more compact, and it is built up instead of out.”

With a population akin to New York City, Tokyo never sleeps. “There are seas of people—everywhere. But I liked swimming around those seas. Even the most crowded day in Charlotte can’t compare to Tokyo. As a young person, I wanted to meet people, and Tokyo is conducive to that.”

After completing his undergraduate degree from the University, Spring returned to Japan and earned a master’s degree in cross-cultural education and a Ph.D. in language communication from Tohoku University, located in Sendai, Miyagi. A Japanese national university, Tohoku is the third-oldest Imperial University in Japan and considered one of the top 50 in the world. Its Institute for Materials Research is one of the world’s most advanced organizations and ranked first by the Institute for Scientific Information.

Global Exchange Partners

When he began working at the Institute for Excellence in Higher Education at Tohoku University, Spring learned the institution was seeking global exchange partners, and he knew his alma mater would be a perfect fit.

In 2014, he contacted Fumie Kato, associate professor in the University’s Department of Languages and Culture Studies, and they created a Skype partner program, together with Chikako Mori, a senior lecturer in languages and culture studies, that enabled students between the two institutions to strengthen their language skills in preparation for formal student exchanges. Spring also reached out to the Lee College of Engineering and invited Dean Robert Johnson and Assistant Provost for International Programs Joel Gallegos to visit Tohoku University; Robert Wilhelm, vice chancellor for research and economic development, accompanied them. Now, Lee College and Tohoku are exploring research and faculty/student exchange partnerships.

“Specifically, Tohoku, having been hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011, is interested in specializing in disaster prevention engineering, and it seems that UNC Charlotte has great capacity for this sort of research as well as research in the energy sector through EPIC,” Spring said, referring to Lee College’s Energy Production and Infrastructure Center.

For his excellence in education and educational research, Spring received the 2017 President’s Award, the highest honor one can receive at Tohoku University. In addition to the Skype program, Spring developed a new project-based learning/teaching style course, a novel Introduction to Linguistic Methodology course for graduate students. He was also awarded grants for his research on superior methods of teaching phrasal verbs.

Spring, who lives in Sendai City with his wife, Chinatsu, and their two sons Ryugo, 3, and Hakuren, 4 months, said he wants to continue providing opportunities for cultural exploration for his students and to strengthen the bonds of cooperation between UNC Charlotte and Tohoku University.

“By studying languages and the underlying cultures, you learn insights as to how other people think, and that brings us closer to understanding one another globally, which can be more beneficial for us all,” said Spring.

Phillip Brown is assistant director of internal communication and interim editor of this publication.
By PHILLIP BROWN

UNC Charlotte’s pantheon of legendary architects includes committed individuals who founded and transformed the institution into North Carolina’s urban research university.

Judy Rose, in announcing her decision to retire as director of athletics on June 30, 2018, will forever be among those renowned builders — and heralded, for her leadership in shaping the University’s modern intercollegiate athletics program.

Her legacy includes world-class stadiums, arenas, fields, courts and training facilities that dot UNC Charlotte’s 1,000-acre campus, just eight miles from metropolitan Uptown. Here and in spaces throughout Charlotte, the 49ers compete in 18 sports as members of NCAA Division I’s Conference USA.

UNC Charlotte in 2018 is markedly different than when Judy Wilkins arrived on
campus as a newly minted women's basketball coach on a warm September day in 1975. She would later meet Ken Rose, whom she married in 1986.

“I was hired to lead a startup women's basketball program,” said Rose, who earned an undergraduate degree in physical education from Winthrop University. “But, I also coached tennis, taught a PE (physical education) course and oversaw the lifeguards.”

A contemporary of Pat Summitt, Rose assisted the University of Tennessee coach while completing a master's degree in physical education in 1975. During seven seasons at the helm of UNC Charlotte's women's basketball, Rose compiled a 93-56 record.

For Rose, win-loss records, while a measure of success, are secondary to putting student-athletes first. She recalled being a coach and getting a midnight call that a player's mother had passed away.

“I was living in South Charlotte, but I called the player's roommate and asked her to go to her room until I could get there,” she said. “Then, I brought them both to my house to spend the night. That player, Patricia (Walker) Caldwell was going to need our support — we were going to be her extended family.”

Today, that tight-knit camaraderie among coaches and players continues, with many former players and student-athletes returning to campus for signature events, such as the annual Let Me Play Luncheon or the Gold Rush Auction, fundraisers launched by Rose.

“My girls come from all over — this past luncheon, they came from Kentucky and Georgia, and after the luncheon we go to my house in Lake Norman, and I cook dinner, and we reminisce. We talk about those days playing in the Mine Shaft (Belk Gym) and how the campus has evolved over time.”

Changing Course

Personal and professional aspirations led Rose to transition toward athletics administration. She first served as coordinator of women's sports, before being named associate athletics director under Jeff Mullins, who in addition to being athletics director was the men's basketball coach.

“I felt I could better focus on running the overall program rather than just one sport; I am a detail-oriented person, and I thought I would be a better administrator than coach,” she said. “Also, I thought I'd have more time for myself — which turned out not to be true.”

In 1990, C.D. Spangler, president of the UNC System, issued an edict that coaches could not hold the position of athletics director. Mullins recommended his associate for the job.

“I wanted someone who could help build UNC Charlotte by guiding the
At a Glance
A partial highlight of Judy Rose’s key awards and accomplishments garnered during her 43-year career.

2013 - Women in Business Lifetime Achievement Award
2013 - Sports Business Journal Athletic Director of the Year Finalist
2010 - Charlotte Women Extraordinaire
2005 - Women in Business Achievement Award
2000 - N.C. Sports Summit Leadership Award
1999 - Pegasus Award
1997 - Citizen of the Year, University Chamber of Commerce
1996 - Charlotte Woman of the Year
1996-99 - Member of the Board of Directors, N.C. Sports Hall of Fame
1984 - First female inducted into the Blacksburg High School Hall of Fame
1981 - YWCA Sports Woman of the Year

Served on numerous NCAA committees:
- NCAA Council (2015-18)
- Men’s Basketball Oversight Committee (2015-18)
- Sport and Championship Cabinet (2005-12)
- College Basketball Partnership Committee (2004-18)
- Walter Byers Post-Graduate Scholarship Committee (1996-99)
- Division I NCAA Men’s Basketball Committee (1994 to 2004)

athletics program,” said Chancellor Emeritus Jim Woodward, who acted upon Mullins’ recommendation.

“This person had to know intercollegiate athletics, had to have demonstrated administrative skills and an ability to work in the community and had to be respected by the coaches … Bottom line, Judy Rose was simply the best person for the job at that time,” he continued. “The fact that she was the third female in the country in that position was irrelevant. I appointed her to the administrative team (Chancellor’s Cabinet) in recognition of that position being an institutional officer along with the other vice chancellors.”

Initially, Rose was reluctant to take on the job of athletics director, even though she was already overseeing all the administrative aspects of budgeting and personnel. But once committed to developing a successful athletics program that was regarded as critical to advancing the University’s overall academic mission, Rose applied her personal philosophy to that end.

“My aim was to oversee an ethical athletics program, operated with integrity,” she said. “I set about surrounding myself with people of great character and providing them the resources to be successful.”

Chancellor Woodward encouraged her to seek out influential female mentors among the business community, which she did in Dale Halton, then CEO of Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. of Charlotte, and Pat Rodgers, now president and CEO of Rodgers Builders. Athletics directors C.M. Newton, University of Kentucky (1989-2000), and DeLoss Dodds, University of Texas (1981-2013), took Rose under their tutelage. She described them as progressive ADs who supported women in athletics and administration.

“Dale and Pat were phenomenal; they’d call and invite me to sit at their tables for various fundraisers, which enabled me to meet Charlotte’s movers and shakers,” said Rose. “C.M. and DeLoss had great respect for my basketball background and nominated me for positions that enabled me to showcase that knowledge.”

According to Rose, Newton was instrumental in her being named to the governing body for USA Basketball, which represents the United States in FIBA and oversees the men’s and women’s national basketball teams that compete in the Olympics.

In 1999, Rose became the first woman to serve on the NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Committee, an accomplishment she attributes in part to the support of Newton and Dodds. For the 2003-04 academic year, Rose was president of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics.

Brand Builder
As athletics director, Rose advocated for athletics to have a branding identity to raise its visibility nationally. Her efforts resulted in the creation of the Charlotte 49ers brand for the University’s intercollegiate athletics program, which helped with team standings in print and on television, she said. Since then, the Charlotte 49ers marketing team has entered into various radio and television contracts and other promotional efforts to foster the 49ers brand, regionally and across the country.

She also championed the University and Charlotte as ideal hosts for NCAA tournament events. Her efforts led to the Queen City’s selection for the NCAA Men’s Final Four in 1994, the NCAA Women’s Final Four in 1996 and the 1999 and 2000 Men’s Soccer College Cup. Charlotte continues to host first- and second-round games for the men’s basketball tournament.

Athletics under her leadership also navigated a host of conference moves — from the Sun Belt to the Metro to Conference USA to the Atlantic 10 and back to Conference USA.

Rose spearheaded fundraising for new facilities, starting with the Wachovia Field House (now Wells Fargo Field House) and extending to a wide range of other sites: the James H. Bignhardt Student Activity Center and its Dale F. Halton Arena, the Irwin Belk Track and Field Center (Transamerica Field), Robert & Mariam Hayes Baseball Stadium, Miltimore-Wallis Athletics Training and Academic Center, Halton-Wagner Tennis Complex, Stubblefield Golf Center, Sue M. Daughtridge Softball Stadium, Jani-King Field, D.L. Phillips Sports Complex, Judy W. Rose Football Center, Hunter and Stephanie Edwards Promenade and Jerry Richardson Stadium and its McColl-Richardson Field.

More than $100 million of construction has occurred during Rose’s tenure, with much of the funding from private sources.
Fundraiser, Friend-raiser

While former chancellor Woodward believes Rose may be one of the best fundraisers he knows, Rose said she was initially a hesitant one. She recalled an early fundraising call to Dale Halton and one of her vice presidents.

“I was asking for money for a new scoreboard for the baseball field, and I was explaining my vision that we needed one that illustrated our status as a university,” she said. “Dale’s VP said funding for the same type of scoreboard as a high school should be sufficient. I explained that I didn’t want to sound ungrateful, but I said no thank you. We’re not a high school, and we have to differentiate ourselves.

“He didn’t appear to budge, so Dale spoke up and said they would talk about it, adding if they said yes, could they go to the vendor directly to make the purchase,” Rose continued. “I said as long as the scoreboard was what we wanted and needed. Again, we have an image and a brand to project.”

Later that day, Halton called and agreed to buy a collegiate-level scoreboard. It was the start of a relationship that continues today. Halton is among many generous benefactors of the University’s sports teams.

“Getting people interested in the University and supporting our athletics program has been a major function of my job,” said Rose. “Most of our athletic facilities are named for people who didn’t attend UNC Charlotte, but they adopted us, if you will, which has been very gratifying. With EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte, we are seeing an increasing number of alumni supporters. They are coming of age now and have greater financial resources to give back to their University, which is tremendous.”

49ers Football

Intent on securing the ongoing success of the Charlotte 49ers, Rose engineered a noteworthy capstone to a modern intercollegiate athletics program — football. Chancellor Philip L. Dubois, who’d returned to the University in 2005 after eight years as president of the University of Wyoming, appointed a Football Feasibility Committee, chaired by Mac Everett, a retired banking executive and former UNC Charlotte trustee.

Officials spent nearly two years researching the impact and implications. In November 2008, the UNC Charlotte Board of Trustees voted unanimously to add football as part of the University’s Athletics Department.

“Going after what you want takes courage, and achieving it takes everyone,” Rose said at the time of this historic decision. “Uniting this campus and this city with this game isn’t a challenge — it’s an honor.”

Rose and her team set about the work of building the football program. Football seat licenses were sold to generate revenue to support the program. Brad Lambert was hired as the team’s inaugural coach.
Charlotte philanthropists embraced the vision and provided substantial gifts — including Hugh McColl, former CEO of Bank of America, and Jerry Richardson, owner of the Carolina Panthers. Ground was broken for a stadium in April 2011; it was completed in time for the Charlotte 49ers first game on Aug. 31, 2013.

“I asked Dale Halton for a gift that would give her naming rights for the football field house,” said Rose. “She made the donation, but she and Chancellor Dubois surprised me on that.”

Halton requested the field house be named in Rose’s honor. The Judy W. Rose Football Center was officially named in August 2012.

“Chancellor Dubois was willing to take on adding football, and he worked tirelessly to conduct his own research in addition to that of athletics,” said Rose. “I’ve enjoyed working with him, and I value the relationship we built. I always felt he had my back.”

For his part, Dubois, at a press conference announcing Rose’s retirement, said “Judy has been a great personal friend. I don’t think her record could be matched anywhere in the country … (UNC Charlotte) was a completely different place when I returned in 2005. You can’t ignore Judy’s leadership on making our athletics program into what it has become.”

With regard to football, the chancellor noted Rose was instrumental in building the stadium and in developing the robust fan experience in a short time.

“We have one of the best-ranked new stadiums in the country,” he said.

For Judy Rose, June 30 will bring a close to 43 years at UNC Charlotte, a tenure virtually unprecedented at the highest level of leadership. She promises that she and her husband will continue to be phenomenal supporters and great fans of the 49ers.

“Regrets? Absolutely not. Good, bad, up and down — you take them as they come,” she said. “I surrounded myself with great people who have been very loyal. Together, we’ve created the infrastructure for this program. When we didn’t have the right conference affiliation, we moved to fit us at the time.

“We’re bookended by the ACC and SEC,” she said, noting the prestigious Atlantic Coast and Southeastern conferences. “I hope that what we’ve put into place — the buildings, facilities and support — that at some point in the future, when realignment comes again, we’ll be considered for one of those.

“We’re in a dynamic setting with great relationships with professional sports teams and surrounded by great people across campus and in the community — there’s nothing but bright days ahead.”

Three UNC Charlotte football players, all members of the first class of recruits signed by head coach Brad Lambert, completed their first seasons at the NFL level in 2017-18.

Third-round draft pick Larry Ogunjobi, the school’s first player to be drafted, played in 14 games with the Cleveland Browns, making two starts. He finished the season 11th on the team with 32 tackles and registered his first NFL sack when he brought down Chicago Bears quarterback Mitch Trubisky, a former quarterback at UNC Chapel Hill. Among the NFL’s defensive interior linemen, Ogunjobi was rated above average by Pro Football Focus.

Brandon Banks, who signed as an undrafted free agent with the Washington Redskins, was called up from the team’s practice squad to make his NFL debut, Nov. 12, against the Minnesota Vikings. A defensive end, Banks recorded one tackle in the game.

Wide receiver Austin Duke signed with the Carolina Panthers as an undrafted free agent. He began the season on the practice squad and was re-assigned to the practice squad late in the season and throughout the playoffs. At the end of the season, Duke was signed to a futures contract by the Panthers.

The three were back on campus in January to take in a basketball game at Halton Arena.

“You get to see everybody who you came up with and all the people that helped you along the way,” Banks said.

Ogunjobi concurred, “It’s good to be able to come back and see our coaches and fans and a lot of people that we came to Charlotte with. To come back and be in a different status is a blessing. We’re excited to be here, and the future’s bright for each and every one of us.”

“We never had veterans when we were here at Charlotte,” Duke noted. “We always stuck with each other. That’s why we’re here today. Being around veterans (in the NFL) who have been where we wanted to be — it’s insightful. It’s a blessing to be able to play next to Hall of Famers and Pro Bowlers.”
On Feb. 14 — a day synonymous with love — the University’s softball stadium was officially dedicated as the Sue M. Daughtridge Stadium. It was a tribute to a mother, made by a loving family, borne out of the strongest of family ties.

The Daughtridge family’s support of the 49ers dates as far back as 1976 and the men’s basketball team’s trip to Madison Square Garden to compete in the NIT Finals. And it includes the years in which the team played home games at what was then known as the Charlotte Coliseum, on Independence Boulevard, near the Daughtridge home.

“My mom used to say they could leave home when they started singing ‘The Star-Spangled Banner,’ and she could be parked and in by the time the game started,” recalled daughter Susan.

Her mom, Sue, was a big N.C. State fan, but the Daughtridge family came to adopt the 49ers. Depending on who in the family was living in Charlotte at a given time, some combination of family members attended most men’s basketball games over the years. Sue’s grandson, Robert, has been a regular since he was a baby, attending hundreds of games, especially with his father, Bob. Sue’s granddaughter, Laura, occasionally joined them.

Sue and Susan could often be seen at baseball and women’s basketball games. They’d catch an occasional softball game, some soccer games and sometimes went to away games in Rock Hill or Raleigh. They added football to the mix when the program was added in 2013. They’ve attended Lisa Dubois’ Ladies Luncheons and taken part in Let Me Play Luncheon fundraisers for the Athletics Department.

“We really adopted us,” Director of Athletics Judy Rose said. “She attended games regularly and was always so cheerful and so supportive of our student-athletes.”

“Sue really adopted us,” Director of Athletics Judy Rose said. “She attended games regularly and was always so cheerful and so supportive of our student-athletes.”

“We have been fans for a long time,” said Susan, who also can be found at Atkins Library on a regular basis. “We’d make a lot of friends out there, and you keep up with people. It’s wonderful. Let Me Play is really inspiring. Judy has done such a great job with that, with the attendance and the contributions and the stories. It’s better every year.”

After Sue’s husband, Bob Sr., and later Susan’s brother, Bob Jr., died, Sue and her mom continued to attend games, often with other family members or friends.

“We enjoyed spending time together,” Susan said. “Having meals before basketball games, the facilities were nice and people worked so hard to make it easier for her and that was a real pleasure. She enjoyed seeing her friends there.”

After Sue passed away in October 2015, Susan saw fit to honor her when Rose approached her about naming the softball stadium.

“I was so glad that Judy asked for our participation,” said Susan, whose contribution to name the stadium is part of EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte. “I’d been feeling like I should do something as a tribute to my mom — but I didn’t know what. When she suggested this — it didn’t take a whole lot of thought. It was going to be a good thing for everybody.”

Sue’s grandchildren, Robert and Laura, immediately seconded the idea.

“I can’t be more pleased to have such a strong supporter’s name on our softball facility,” Rose added. “She is a great role model for the young women who will play there and those who will attend games and learn more about her.”

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Athletic Foundation Hosts Spring Fundraisers

The Charlotte 49ers Athletic Foundation hosts two major fundraising events this spring:

- **The 41st annual 49er Club Golf Outing**, sponsored by Mecklenburg Valve Source and Jani-King, is Monday, April 23, at Pine Island Country Club.

- **The 35th annual Great Gold Rush Auction**, sponsored by Compass Group, returns to Halton Arena, June 2.

For more information on how to attend or contribute to these events, call the Athletic Foundation at 704-687-4950.
Baseball Underway, Alums Recognized

As the baseball team plays this spring with hopes of making the Conference USA tournament May 23-27, it owes a debt of gratitude to a host of baseball alums honored on campus last fall.

In October, UNC Charlotte paid tribute to an era of baseball players credited with literally building the baseball program — or at least its field.

Under the guidance of head coach Gary Robinson and his coaching staff, and with the assistance of Terry Miller of the University’s Physical Plant, players from the 1983 and 1984 teams transformed the land that became Tom and Lib Phillips Field.

Robinson and his teams built the original dugouts, fences, batting cages and bullpens and put in the infield over hot summer days. They removed rocks, carted dirt and meticulously groomed the grounds before setting home plate in its current location.

Baseball alumni, including members of the teams that poured sweat into building the original playing surface, attended a reception at Robert & Mariam Hayes Stadium in which a plaque commemorating their efforts was unveiled. Robinson coached the 49ers from 1982 through 1991.

This year’s team was selected sixth in the annual conference preseason coaches’ poll and received votes in collegiate baseball’s preseason poll. The 49ers were picked sixth last year in the league poll before finishing third at the conference tournament, three outs away from the championship game.

Charlotte is expected to rely heavily this season on senior Hunter Jones, along with juniors Jackson Mims and Reece Hampton, to anchor the offensive and defensive efforts.

Jones has improved his batting average in each of his three seasons and has led the defensive charge in helping set the school record for fewest errors in back-to-back seasons. Mims, a transfer from East Carolina, hit .319 last year in the middle part of coach Loren Hibbs’ lineup and held down the hot corner at third base. Hampton will once again use his speed out of the batter’s box while patrolling center field.

Charlotte hosted the University of Alabama at Birmingham during Easter weekend March 29-31, with remaining conference series against Old Dominion (April 20-22), Western Kentucky (May 4-6) and Marshall (May 11-13). Charleston Southern, High Point, Wake Forest and Winthrop make up the final midweek match-ups during the regular season.

Jones Makes Olympics as Alternate

Former 49ers track and field standout Briauna Jones became the school’s first student-athlete to represent the United States at the Olympics when she was named as an alternate for the 2018 women’s bobsled team.

Jones traveled with the team to the 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, and was slated to compete if one of the brakemen on the team was unable to because of illness or injury.

Jones made her first national team in the 2016-2017 season just months after beginning the sport, and won her first World Cup medal, a gold with Elana Meyers Taylor, in St. Moritz, Switzerland, last year. Jones was named 2017 Rookie of the Year for USA Bobsled and Skeleton.

A native of Summerville, South Carolina, Jones compiled an impressive resume of awards and records in her time at UNC Charlotte before graduating in 2014. She holds a place on the top 10 list for the following events: indoor 60-meter dash, indoor and outdoor long jump, indoor and outdoor triple jump, and indoor and outdoor high jump. She was a multiple conference medalist in each of those events, but perhaps her greatest achievement came in 2012 when she helped the program’s 4x100 meter relay team earn a trip to the national championships.

Most recently, Jones served as a volunteer coach with the University’s track and field program under Bob Olesen, the program’s director.

Now in his 16th season at the helm of Charlotte’s track and field, Olesen was a member of the U.S. bobsled team himself, representing his country in the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, Japan. He was the 1995-96 U.S. Olympic Committee’s bobsled Athlete of the Year and a member of the 1996-97 Team of the Year for two-man bobsled.
Women Golfers Compete in First Title Season

The University’s women’s golf team began its first championship season in February and plays five spring events leading to the Conference USA tournament, April 16-18, at the Verandah Club in Fort Myers, Florida.

“The fall was a great learning experience for everyone,” said head coach Holly Clark, whose team made its debut last fall. “Everything was new for our young team with the opportunity to learn and grow as they all settled into college life and competitive collegiate golf.”

In four fall events, the 49ers posted two top-five finishes, including a third place (of 10 teams) at the Mary Fossum Invitational and a fifth place (of 15 teams) at the Yale Women’s Intercollegiate.

Ashley Fowler, one of five players to play in all 11 rounds of the fall, led the team with a stroke average of 75. Siarra Stout posted the best individual finish with a tie for fifth (of 59 golfers) at the Fossum Invitational. Madison Barnett’s two-under round of 70 in the second round of the season-opening Mason Rudolph Championship was the lowest round recorded by the team.

“With a semester under their belt, the girls have a little more of an understanding of what to expect,” Clark said. “We have a solid tournament schedule (this spring). … It should be fun! They have absolutely nothing to lose.”

2018 Football Tickets Available

UNC Charlotte’s football team will play a 12-game schedule this fall that features eight contests against 2017 bowl teams.

The slate includes six home games and six road games, with four non-conference matchups and eight Conference USA contests.

Season tickets are currently available with new seating options available at Jerry Richardson Stadium. For more information, visit charlotte49ers.com. Fans can call the campus ticket office at 704-687-4949.

Tom Whitestone is associate athletic director for media relations for the Charlotte 49ers.

Sophomore Benny LeMay was the 49ers leading rusher in 2017.

2018 Charlotte 49ers Football Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
<th>NOVEMBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Fordham, Jerry Richardson Stadium</td>
<td>6 (bye)</td>
<td>3 at Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Appalachian State, Jerry Richardson Stadium</td>
<td>13 Western Kentucky*, Jerry Richardson Stadium</td>
<td>10 at Marshall*, Huntington, W. Va.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Old Dominion*, Jerry Richardson Stadium</td>
<td>20 at Middle Tennessee*, Murfreesboro, Tenn.</td>
<td>17 Florida International*, Jerry Richardson Stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 at Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass.</td>
<td>27 Southern Miss*, Jerry Richardson Stadium</td>
<td>24 at Florida Atlantic*, Boca Raton, Fla.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 at University of Alabama at Birmingham*, Birmingham, Ala.</td>
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Notes: Home games in bold; * denotes Conference USA games; all games on Saturdays; dates subject to change.
Longtime UNC Charlotte friend and ardent supporter Irwin “Ike” Belk died Feb. 25 at age 95. His relationship with the University stretched more than a half-century – and his influence transformed UNC Charlotte from a two-year college to North Carolina’s urban research university. He helped lead the institution in many capacities, including as a member of the UNC Board of Governors and UNC Charlotte Board of Trustees.

“We have lost a giant figure in the history of our University,” said Chancellor Philip L. Dubois. “Ike Belk will be remembered for generations to come not only for his generosity and commitment to the growth and expanding service of UNC Charlotte, but as a hero at the pivotal moment at which we became the fourth member of the University of North Carolina System.”

As a North Carolina state senator in 1965, Belk introduced legislation that would include UNC Charlotte in the consolidated University of North Carolina System.

Belk and his late wife, Carol, endowed a number of academic scholarships and professorships at UNC Charlotte as well as provided funds for various athletics facilities, including the track and field complex that bears his name.

The University’s 1,000-acre campus is distinctive due to his prolific commissioning of donated artworks; more than 25 sculptures dot the University’s landscape.
As the nation clawed its way out of the darkest days of the Great Depression, teenager Gerald Houston Helms was growing up fast in a working-class neighborhood in north Charlotte.

Just 15 years old, he lied about his age and enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1944, and soon found himself a part of South Pacific battles and Mediterranean aid.

Stationed in the South Pacific on the Navy destroyer USS Denebola, Helms volunteered to work as a scuba diver, making repairs and scraping barnacles off the massive hulls of the large warships.

“In his diary, he wrote a lot about how scared he was of the Japanese submarines in the waters that were chasing the ship,” said his son Houston Helms ('90), who augmented a bachelor's degree in business with an MBA in 1998 at UNC Charlotte.

Even though it's been more than 70 years since the end of World War II, many rich and profound connections still exist between UNC Charlotte alumni, faculty and staff to Gerald Houston Helms and his peers — who are aptly defined by the term coined by TV journalist Tom Brokaw “The Greatest Generation.”

Following the surrender of Japan in fall 1945, the senior Helms was among the scores of veterans returning to the States, looking for a fresh start.

After landing in San Francisco, Helms hitchhiked across the country to get back to his native Charlotte as soon as possible.

Once returned, he followed his mother's advice and enrolled in a newly created night school housed in Central High School to serve primarily World War II veterans going to school on the G.I. Bill (officially the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944).

Under the leadership of Bonnie Cone, the Charlotte Center was one of 14 college sites
located in communities across the state. The Charlotte Center opened in fall 1946.

Bonnie Cone gave up her high school teaching job to become director of the Charlotte Center. In that role, she knew the city lacked sufficient higher education opportunities, not only for returning war veterans but also for many high school graduates who could not go away to college.

Because of its modest roots and a necessity to operate during evening hours in a public high school, the Charlotte Center was fairly inconspicuous to many in the city.

That was to just about everyone except the 278 students who enrolled for classes starting on Sept. 23, 1946.

“My grandmother worked for Duke Power Company as a secretary and because she was raising two sons on her own, she pressured my dad to go back to school,” Houston Helms said.

Little did they know the fledgling two-year school would eventually become UNC Charlotte, with a current enrollment of nearly 30,000 students on a sprawling 1,000-acre campus just a short drive from Gerald Houston Helms’ boyhood home in the Derita neighborhood.

Gerald Houston Helms’ “footprint” at the Charlotte Center is included in archived school records kept in Special Collections at UNC Charlotte’s Atkins Library. A document lists the students enrolled in 1946 and on the roll of student veterans is the name: G.H. Helms.

Houston Helms said his father went to Charlotte Center for two years and took at least one class with Bonnie Cone. “His academic experience was coming back from the war and getting a baseline education,” his son said.

In the 1950s, Gerald Houston Helms got into stock car racing and driving in NASCAR. He ultimately became the property manager of a large downtown Charlotte bank building. He passed away in 2008.

Houston Helms, who currently serves on the University’s Athletics Foundation Board, recalls a father-son connection through sports. His father brought him to basketball games at the University, including the season in 1977 when the 49ers went all the way to the Final Four. They also shared a love for vintage cars like his 1989 Ford Thunderbird.

Today, the younger Helms remains an avid 49ers fan, and his connections to UNC Charlotte continue to run deep. For example, he once managed an important relationship between the University and Bank of America called the Applied Technology Program that continues to exist.

“The program recruits students from UNC Charlotte colleges (Business, Engineering and Computing and Informatics) into a joint relationship with Bank of America, where the students earn a salary and course credit as they support real technology systems,” said Helms, who oversaw the program from 2012-13. “The result is a group of competitive students prepared to enter the Bank of America workforce.”

G.I. Bill transformative for professor’s father

Connections between UNC Charlotte and “The Greatest Generation” are found throughout the University community. Wendel Leeman, 93, is the father of Communications Studies professor Richard Leeman.

While he did not attend the Charlotte Center, his life story is similar in many ways to Gerald Houston Helms.

Wendel Leeman grew up in poverty in Orange, New Jersey, the oldest of eight children. His father was a disabled World War I vet who received a $35 monthly payment from the government.

In an interview, he recalled one of his chores was to take a toy wagon along the nearby train tracks to pick up the coal that fell from the train. The chunks he found was what the family used to heat their home.

“My dad will tell you that he still cannot believe that a kid from ‘the wrong side of the tracks’ made it as far as he did,” said Richard Leeman, who also serves as Faculty Council president at UNC Charlotte.
Wendel Leeman entered the service in 1942 and was assigned to the Naval Construction Force, better known as the Seabees. During the war, he was stationed in the Aleutian Islands.

Although the elder Leeman acknowledges he did not see a lot of action, he endured some tough conditions on the frozen turf.

“We made the worst of it,” he joked. “It was mostly the wind, not the snow. But it was nothing by comparison to what we thought was cold in New Jersey.”

When he returned home in 1946, he got a job at Prudential Insurance Company, where he worked until he retired in 1984. He attended night classes through the G.I. Bill at Rutgers University at its Newark campus. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, and then he returned to complete an MBA.

“I knew all along I wanted to go to school,” Wendel Leeman said. “My dad thought I should be going to college during the day, but with all the other kids coming after me, I wanted to help.”

The decision proved to be fortuitous in more ways than one. While attending night classes, he met his wife, Charlotte. They were married for 46 years at the time of her death. The couple had three sons, including Richard.

“The G.I. Bill was a lifesaver,” he said. “Most people I knew did not have money to go to college. I hoped to get a job in a mill, or work for the postal service or the fire or police department. And I wasn’t alone. A lot of us thought that same way.”

Returning vet stressed ‘power of education’

UNC Charlotte’s connections to veterans of World War II extend to the University’s staff. This includes Jeanette Sims, senior director of Community Relations and University Events.

Her father, the late J. Bryan Sims Jr., was born in 1921 in Wabash, Arkansas. He attended Little Rock public schools and graduated from Little Rock Senior High School in 1939. After attending

Jeanette Sims holds a photo of her father who served as a glider pilot during World War II.

The University’s Academy for Veteran and Military Health consists of faculty scholars from various academic disciplines. They focus on the reintegration of military-affiliated populations. Through research, instruction and support services, academy members address challenges and health disparities facing transitioning service members, veterans and their families.

Currently enrolled students who are veterans can join the Student Veterans Association. This student-led organization provides a social network for its members. It also provides members educational, career-oriented and service-oriented opportunities.

UNC Charlotte works with agencies across the metro region to provide returning veterans the support to ease the transition from military service to being an undergraduate or graduate student. One such agency is Charlotte Bridge Home. This organization coordinates all veteran support activity through N.C. Serves, a network of support agencies for veterans and their families. Charlotte Bridge Home connects veterans to available community, state and federal resources based on their educational, employment, health care and other needs.

Learn more about the University’s Veterans Service Office by accessing https://veterans.uncc.edu or calling 704-687-5488.
Monticello A&M and the University of Arkansas, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

He completed training as a glider pilot and participated in the D-Day invasion of Normandy, piloting a British Horsa glider carrying a Jeep with trailer and 13 men of the 82nd Airborne. For his part in the mission, he was awarded a medal.

Sims also participated in the invasion of Holland and the crossing of the Rhine River into Germany. In a videotaped interview made in the early 2000s, Sims said he was proud of the fact that he delivered his troops uninjured and in the proper location on each of his missions.

During the D-Day landing, Sims needed to make a last-minute maneuver to avoid landing right in the heart of a German battalion.

“I made a low-level turn, which is something our commanders told us not to do, but under the circumstances I needed to try,” he said. “Two other gliders landed in that same field and all their men were captured. They spent the rest of the war in a German prison camp.”

In the family video, Sims shows drawings of some of the aircraft he piloted and the massive C-47 tow planes that brought the gliders into the right position. He also talks about attending the 50th anniversary celebration of D-Day in Normandy. During that 1994 trip, he met former CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite and swapped stories about flying glider planes.

“It was a timely and important event,” Sims said. “People need to remember what it was like (to be there on D-Day).”

Because Jeanette Sims’ father had completed three years of college prior to enlisting in the Army, his education path was not quite the same as that of Gerald Houston Helms or Wendel Leeman. When he returned home, he studied finance and accounting and soon became a certified public accountant.

“If there was one thing my father felt very strongly about, it was the power of education,” she said. “It was very important to him.”

Paul Nowell is a senior communications manager in the UNC Charlotte Office of University Communications.

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Because Jeanette Sims’ father had completed three years of college prior to

Marching Band to Perform in France at D-Day Observance

Thousands of “The Greatest Generation” made the ultimate sacrifice on June 6, 1944, as part of the Allied invasion of Normandy during World War II.

This date, known as D-Day, marked the start of the largest seaborne invasion in history and began the liberation of German-occupied northwestern Europe from Nazi control.

Now, 74 years later, the Pride of the Niner Nation Marching Band is preparing to travel to France as the official band to represent the United States at the 2018 D-Day commemoration.

During its visit, the band will play at multiple venues, including a parade performance in the village of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, France, the first village to be liberated by American troops in 1944. Additional performances include official public ceremonies at the St. James Cemetery and the Normandy American Cemetery.

For the roughly 135 band members who are making this trip, they have a chance to not only honor those heroic service members but to experience the historical significance of D-Day firsthand.

Providing UNC Charlotte students educational and cultural opportunities such as the band’s special trip is one aspect of EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte. Learn more about how you can support the campaign at exponential.uncc.edu.
Mental health and campus safety rose to the national stage in the wake of the 2007 Virginia Tech mass shooting. In response, crisis services and healthy learning environments became critical to the mission of higher education institutions. The role of campus health professionals took on new prominence in the prevention, intervention and management of crisis situations.

Learning to take control of one’s emotional well-being and knowing where to turn for help is inherent to success inside and outside the classroom. While crisis services and campus safety remain critical issues, the most common concerns students experience on a daily basis relate to anxiety, followed by depression, relationship issues and adjustment to college life (stress), according to the Center on Mental Collegiate Health (see infographic, page 38).

This is where CAPS comes in.

Counseling and Psychological Services, or CAPS, is a new name for a familiar face. The department, formerly known as the Counseling Center, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017. In September, the organization moved into a new building, the Christine F. Price Center for Counseling and Psychological Services.
adopting its new name at the same time to reflect its broader services.

The Christine F. Price Center for Counseling and Psychological Services honors its namesake and her family’s service to UNC Charlotte and financial support for EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte. Christine and her husband Joe Price, chair of the UNC Charlotte Board of Trustees, graduated in 1982 and 1983, respectively. CAPS provides individual and group counseling, crisis management, consultation, referral services and educational outreach and preventive services.

“We’re here to help students succeed. We want to help students overcome blocks to academic achievement and grow personally and interpersonally,” said David Spano, associate vice chancellor for health programs and services and director of CAPS. “We want to reach as many students as we can and don’t want anyone falling through the cracks.”

Spano arrived at UNC Charlotte in 2003. At that time, there were seven counselors on staff with enrollment just under 17,000. Many of those students were commuter students. As enrollment and the vibrancy of campus life has grown, so has the demand for counseling services.

“Normally you expect to see a 2 to 3 percent increase in client requests per year to keep up with enrollment, but UNC Charlotte has far exceeded those growth projections,” Spano said. “We’ve also had to adjust our operations to meet the needs of a greater population of residential students; whereas, in the past our students might rely more on local providers for care.”

That increasing demand for mental health services is not unique to UNC Charlotte. “In just the last two years, we’ve seen a 20 percent increase in demand for students’ needs for mental health services — a pattern that models national trends,” Spano said. “This is just the continuation of many years of increased demand. It suggests that the stigma of mental health is decreasing and services are more accessible to students. There’s more of a willingness to seek help.”

By 2014, the University served nearly 27,000 students, and the Counseling Center had expanded to include more counselors and support staff. The organization increased its already existing doctoral training program in psychology, accredited by the American Psychological Association, with new practicum students in psychology and social work and postdoctoral fellows. Requests for care continued to rise, compounded by student demand to lower the student-to-staff ratio.

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Space was a major issue. The center was operating in its original location, accessible by a side entrance to J. Murrey Atkins Library and competing for room with both the library and the University Career Center (also housed in Atkins).

Finding Room to Breathe

“Sharing space with the Atkins Library and the Career Center for the last 50 years had become unsustainable,” Spano said. “We turned every closet into an office and were able to expand a bit into space that was vacated by ITS (Information Technology Services). But we hit a critical point where we physically could not add more staff to meet increasing demand.”

Other barriers interfered with the provision of care, such as privacy and accessibility. The side entrance to the library opened to Belk Plaza, a popular gathering area and pedestrian thoroughfare in the heart of main campus.

The University administration heard the department’s concerns. In 2013, a combination of administrative funding and a health budget surplus aligned. A proposal to build an additional wing to the Student Health Center was not feasible, so a separate facility that would connect CAPS to the Student Health Center and the Center for Wellness Promotion, located at the corner of Craver and Mary Alexander roads, was planned.

“We are grateful to the Price family for their generous service to the University,”

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE PRICE FAMILY FOR THEIR GENEROUS SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY. OUR NEW BUILDING ALLOWS US TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR GROWING STUDENT BODY BY PROVIDING THEM A MORE SPACIOUS, WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT.”

David Spano
said Spano. “Our new building allows us to meet the needs of our growing student body by providing them a more spacious, welcoming environment where staff can expand our individual and group services.”

He added, “The great thing is that we were able to do this without increasing student debt fees through support from the Chancellor’s Office along with surplus money from the student health account,” said Spano. Student debt fees are typically related to new construction of student-fee funded facilities.

With the building designed by EYP Architecture and Engineering Corp., the architectural focus was to create private spaces that are inclusive, comfortable and welcoming to students.

“The architectural team brought in a behavioral health specialist who designs health facilities with the interaction of colors, moods, natural light, materials, fabrics and the flow of activity in mind,” said Spano. “So, we ended up with a physical environment that complements the work we do.”

The completed 10,800-square-foot facility contains space for all counselors and trainees, with room to grow. In addition, there are three group rooms, a conference room and a large, open welcome area.

For the doctoral training program, the facility provides the space needed for supervision of interns and practicum students from social work, clinical psychology and counseling. Additional programs and services such as biofeedback — which will provide students insight about how their bodies are affected by stress — are being considered.

Group spaces are one of the biggest advantages of the new facility. They can be used for therapy groups or educational workshops. The location also facilitates stronger partnerships with the Student Health Center and the Center for Wellness Promotion to provide better continuity of care.

**Building Bridges, Reaching Out**

The new facility undeniably elevates the capacity of mental health services at UNC Charlotte. Even so, with CAPS, not all work takes place behind closed doors.

Because CAPS cannot be every place at once, a variety of outreach and educational programs help identify students at risk and offer general mental wellness instruction to help students take care of themselves and others.

“Not every student in need will find their way to our facility,” Spano noted. “Reaching out to meet students where they are is critical to making that connection that could save lives.”

One way to do this is by providing training and consultation to campus partners, such as faculty and staff.

CAPS offers training of campus gatekeepers to extend the network of care. These faculty and staff volunteers are trained by programs like QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) and Campus Connect, focused on helping others understand the signs and effectively intervene on behalf of those who may be suicidal or at risk for mental health issues.

CAPS is regularly involved in classroom activities such as freshman seminars and student orientation programs. When counseling staff cannot be in the classroom because of client demand, they can provide online videos concerning topics of interest and information about CAPS programs and services. CAPS staff are expanding workshop offerings and meeting with students in the Popp Martin Student Union and elsewhere on campus to teach skills such as anxiety management and resilience.

Partnering with other campus departments is another way to reach students.

“We co-sponsor programming with the Multicultural Resource Center and many others to help break down cultural barriers and connect with underrepresented populations,” Spano said. “For example, first-generation college students may associate a stigma with asking for help, or they may be unaware of our services.

“Reaching out to members of underserved groups can raise awareness of the help available, smooth their college transition and improve their academic success, aligning with the University’s mission of retention and graduation,” he continued. “Quality of care and commitment to their success are what we strive to offer all our students.”

For more on CCMH’s data, see its 2017 annual report, https://sites.psu.edu/ccmh/files/2018/01/2017_CCMH_Report-tr3ir4.pdf. UNC Charlotte is a CCMH member and contributes data to the organization.
Listen to their stories, Erin Coggins’ hands start to tremble. She can feel her pulse quicken, her blood pressure beginning to rise. Sometimes when she thinks about what these girls have endured, she feels like she could tear the whole city down.

But responding to destructive forces with anger alone only yields further damage; Coggins and fellow UNC Charlotte student Sydney Welch know that. So instead, the pair are channeling what they’ve learned working directly with victims and advocates to combat a pervasive but insidious issue in the city of Charlotte: human trafficking.

Many Charlotteans could describe the
quality of local schools, compare their public transportation network with other major cities and outline pressing environmental issues in the area. But victims’ rights advocates say fewer are aware that a form of modern slavery, in which people are bought, sold and sexually exploited for cash, is sinking its claws into the metro region.

North Carolina is the sixth-worst state for human trafficking nationally, and Charlotte, with its easy access to major interstates and the ports with which they connect, is the state’s epicenter. Hundreds are trafficked through the city every year. It’s this knowledge gap that Coggins, Welch and their organization, Not In My City, are working to close, starting on the UNC Charlotte campus.

**Beginnings**

The pair met through their selection as Levine Scholars, the University’s prestigious four-year merit scholarship program whose core is civic engagement. Coggins, a sophomore at the time, became Welch’s mentor. Coggins was beginning her second year as an intern at Present Age Ministries, a nonprofit that works to combat the sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking of teenage girls in the Charlotte area.

Welch joined Coggins there for her own freshman internship. Present Age’s public outreach program focuses on awareness and prevention, and the organization provides direct services to victims. The group was making a difference in the fight against human trafficking, but through Coggins and Welch, Present Age Ministries Executive Director Hannah Arwood saw the opportunity to do more.

“Hannah came to me and said, ‘Erin, we have to figure out how to get our awareness materials in the hands of college students,’” Coggins recalled.

That remark became the catalyst for Not In My City.

“College students are passionate, creative and determined to bring change to social justice issues,” Arwood said. “This was an untapped market of influencers, and we knew that getting them connected would be

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**BY THE NUMBERS**

**The Toll of Human Trafficking**

- **100,000 to 300,000** Minors in the U.S at risk for commercial sexual exploitation annually.
- **12 to 14 years old** Average age of entry into the commercial sex industry.
- **7 years** Average time of survival for victims of human trafficking once they have been trafficked.

---
a huge asset to combating the issue of human trafficking. The question was how.”

**Spreading the Word**

Operating under the guidance of Present Age Ministries and funded by civic engagement grants through the Levine Scholars Program (see sidebar), the Not In My City Project mobilizes students against human trafficking.

In August 2017, Coggins and Welch began training student volunteers to host awareness events and engage peers in their spheres of influence. They focus on general education and challenging misconceptions on a topic rife with stereotypes.

“We find that a lot of people have the perception that trafficking is a lot like the movie ‘Taken,’ in that this happens in other countries, and people are sold into slavery there, when the reality and the reason that our project is named what it is, is because girls are being trafficked out of their homes in Charlotte into places in Charlotte,” Welch said.

Not In My City’s presentations cover the demographics of human trafficking, its mechanisms and risk factors, as well as signs that someone is a victim. In 2017, the group hosted 12 events and reached nearly 450 people. The immediate intent of the outreach is to stimulate informed discussion on campus, but there are higher hopes for a long-term ripple effect.

Welch said, “We want to reach people so when they go on to become teachers, doctors, lawyers, dancers, architects, whatever, they will have that knowledge and can spread it in their circles of influence.”

**Educational Opportunity**

Heather Smith is faculty fellow for the Levine Scholars Program and advises the Not In My City Project. She sees the impact community projects can have on a student’s education.

“The opportunity for students to develop and lead such outward-facing projects is an irreplaceable part of their training as critically engaged and applied scholars and citizens,” she said. “The project helps them hone skills and implement theories and perspectives they are learning in, say, their social work, economics or business classrooms, and put them into practice to address a pressing community issue.”

Coggins and Welch are also trained to work directly with victims, and they participate in bi-monthly group therapy sessions through Present Age Ministries.

“We get to see them as the actual teenagers that they are, and Present Age Ministries gives them the freedom to be that — which I think is an incredible experience, especially knowing that we are trying to do this to help the overarching situation,” Coggins said. “But at the same time, we get to see it on a very micro personal level, too.”

“Interacting with the girls … is the joy of our lives,” Welch said.

Because most college students don’t have the training to participate themselves, Not In My City takes a different approach to supporting direct services. Taking advantage of Coggins’ penchant for graphic design, the group creates and sells T-shirts and donates the proceeds to Present Age, which spends an average of $14,000 per girl per year to provide services.

For now, grants provided by the Levine Scholars Program cover the costs of the shirts and allow Not In My City to funnel all of the profits to Present Age. The group hopes the shirts will soon pay for themselves, but, for now, members are taking a people-first approach.

“We just want to make sure that we are still really focusing on the girls and on our Not In My City Project family, and we’re about our team, and not necessarily on the dollar amount,” Welch said.

The success of efforts like this send a message to community leaders about the role of university students in the places where they study.

“Regardless of age — you can do something,” said Arrowood, the Present Age Ministries director. “I believe that we all have a part to play, and it is learning to take our individual skills and talents and putting them to work for our communities and those who have no voice. When we figure this out, it is a powerful thing.”

The current focus for Coggins and Welch is preparing for long-term sustainability and expansion. Students at other universities have expressed interest in opening chapters, but the two Levine Scholars are continuing to refine the UNC Charlotte program for now, hoping it can ultimately serve as the blueprint for similar initiatives in other cities.

Not In My City hosted a conference Saturday, April 14, with the goal of uniting the campus to learn about engaging in social justice movements and equipping students and members of the community to recognize and combat trafficking. ●

**Editor’s Note:** Erin Coggins is a senior social work major with a minor in communications from Concord, North Carolina. Sydney Welch is a junior accounting major and legal studies minor from Morganton, North Carolina.

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**COMPAARED TO THEIR PEERS, VICTIMS ARE:**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 times</td>
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<td>13 times</td>
<td>more likely to abuse alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 times</td>
<td>more likely to abuse drugs</td>
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**SOURCE:** The Polaris Project ([https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking](https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking))
‘We-Help Town’

ALUMNI-LED ARCHITECTURE TEAM BUILDS MEDICAL CLINIC IN GHANAIAN VILLAGE

BY MEG WHALEN

When UNC Charlotte alumni Eddie Winn and Samantha McPadden landed in Accra, Ghana, last June, they encountered a world that was radically different from anything they had experienced. The city market was flooded with people, “some with boxes, pans or maybe a table balanced on their heads,” said McPadden. “They were squeezing by each other, dodging cars and motorcycles.” At first, it appeared to be total chaos, but soon Winn and McPadden recognized “an innate choreography to it all.”

The two architecture alumni (Winn graduated in 2014, McPadden in 2015) were leading a team of 15 builders to construct an artist-in-residence center in the rural Ghanaian village of Abetenim. The previous year, their design had won an international competition sponsored by a small nongovernmental organization. The award provided a project site, a connection to the village and a network of resources, but McPadden and Winn were solely responsible for assembling a team, raising the money and constructing the building.

“Neither of us had taken on anything like this before,” said Winn, “but we immediately knew we weren’t passing this up.”

To form the core of their team, they turned to their alma mater. Four fellow architecture alumni and three current students signed up. Among those to join the team was third-year architecture student Fritz Ababio, who is from Ghana.

“I was pretty excited to do this project because my goal is to go back home to be an architect,” said Ababio.

Unfamiliar Rural Setting

But while the hustle of Accra was familiar to Ababio, their rural project setting was not. “I’ve lived in the capital city my whole life and had never experienced village life before, so in some ways the other volunteers and I were in the same position,” he said.

“We loved seeing everyone’s days spent outside,” said McPadden. “Small fires for
cooking, kids running around playing with palm sticks with wheels at the end. There were a few tiny shops with people relaxing outside. Houses were scattered through the landscape with no apparent boundaries, all around 200 square feet.”

The headmaster of the local school had made arrangements for them, including securing housing and local workers to join the team. They began work immediately, clearing the land, mixing a soil/gravel/sand concoction for the cast-earth construction.

But two weeks into the project, the district chief of Juaben (the region that includes Abetenim) halted their work. McPadden and Winn never learned why. Fortunately, the school headmaster quickly produced a new opportunity: A village an hour’s drive away wanted a medical clinic. Could the team help?

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Midway through the 2017 Fall Dance Concert, the curtain rose on the Anne R. Belk Theater stage in Robinson Hall to reveal a lone dancer, blindfolded, standing in a pool of light. The piece was "Breaking Pointe," a new work created by Detroit-based choreographer Marcus White for dance students at UNC Charlotte. The dancer was junior Davian "DJ" Robinson.

Soon eight other dancers, all blindfolded, joined Robinson in White’s distinctive choreography, based on club and urban street dances. Together the dancers pranced and posed, blending stylized movements from hip-hop and house dance with postmodern technique. But when the performers arched their backs and pulled off their blindfolds, Robinson, who is legally blind, still could not see.

When Robinson began dancing in sixth grade, he could still see, although not perfectly. Born three months premature, his eyesight had been in jeopardy from just days after his birth, when he underwent his first retinal surgery. At 7 years old, a detached retina left one eye...
blind; four years later, a cataract was removed from the other eye, and his vision began to deteriorate. He left his home in Hickory, North Carolina, to become a resident student at the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, where he learned braille and speech recognition software, became an avid para-cycler, and ultimately earned his high school diploma.

**Community College First**

Encouraged by his accomplishments at the Morehead School, Robinson continued his education nearby at Wake Tech Community College and received an Associate of Arts degree in 2015.

“It was at Wake Tech that I gained my confidence as I transitioned to a new environment and learned to interact with a community of sighted people,” he said. “The knowledge I gained at Wake Tech gave me the skills and confidence to pursue a four-year degree.”

He enrolled at UNC Charlotte, choosing it in part to be closer to family (his brother is also a UNC Charlotte student) and in part because of the school’s reputation for diversity and accessibility. He had visually impaired friends who had come to UNC Charlotte and found a lot of support.

“UNC Charlotte has definitely exceeded my expectations,” he said. “Me being a first-generation college student, and having a disability on top of it all, was baffling me. How was I going to bring myself to this big university and do well?”

Robinson has done well. He has maintained a 3.6 GPA, even with the challenging anatomy courses that his exercise science major requires. He has continued to compete nationally in para-cycling, winning a gold medal in the 2017 National Paralympic Track Cycling Championships. And last semester, he added a dance major.

Robinson signed up for his first dance class in the 2016 spring semester: Vintage Jazz, taught by Associate Professor Karen Hubbard. “I got a note from Disability Services that said a student would need accommodations,” said Hubbard. “The line that caught my eye was, ‘Material presented visually in class needs also to be described verbally.’ Davian arrived to the first class with his white cane, looking very fit.”

Although she is “firmly committed to inclusivity,” at first Hubbard wasn’t quite sure how to integrate Robinson into a class of sighted students. She began to research, but the literature she found addressed teaching dance to classes of students who were all visually impaired, as a method of dance therapy. As she struggled to find a solution, she recommended to Robinson that he drop the class until she could learn more, but he was adamant that he did not want to quit. “I will never forget that, his determination,” Hubbard said.

**Eureka Moment**

One day, as she observed a student in class trying to help Robinson learn the movements, Hubbard had a “eureka!” moment. Robinson needed a “movement mentor,” but it needed to be a dancer who had already taken the class — not a student currently enrolled. Soon, with the help of Disability Services, the dance department secured movement mentors for Robinson’s dance classes.

This year, that mentor is UNC Charlotte alumna Lilly Willis, who received her dance degree last spring.

“I’m really thankful to work with DJ,” Willis said. “I think we’re a great team. There’s just so much courage in him coming into these classes, and the trust he has in me — that stops me in my tracks sometimes.”

In class, Willis constantly communicates with Robinson, describing choreography, giving him the “lay of the land,” molding his body, critiquing his movement. “I’ll say,
Christina Hudgins is a beautiful dancer. While a student at UNC Charlotte, she earned a Professional Training Certificate in Dance, a competitive and rigorous program that the Department of Dance offers with Charlotte Ballet. When she graduated in 2015, she was hired to dance professionally with Virginia Ballet Theatre in her hometown of Norfolk.

But ballet was just one of the passions Hudgins nurtured while at UNC Charlotte. In addition to the Bachelor of Arts in Dance, she earned a degree in psychology and taught dance to special needs children at the John Crosland School. When she got to Norfolk, she was thrilled with the opportunity to teach in an adaptive dance program for children with Down syndrome, autism and other special needs. She traveled to Los Angeles to become certified in the Schlachte Method of teaching ballet technique to children of all abilities.

Among the classes she taught in Norfolk was one for students at St. Mary’s Home for Disabled Children.

"Most of these children were in wheelchairs, unable to freely move their limbs or, really, their bodies," she said. "I was amazed at how much my group advanced!"

Not every moment was happy. Students often became frustrated. One day, a young girl said that she knew she was “retarded,” and that was why she could not do a certain step. In that moment, Hudgins realized she needed more training if she was going to dedicate her life to this work. In July 2017, she entered the dance/movement therapy graduate program at Columbia College Chicago.

"This was one of the hardest decisions for me to make, but a decision I have never felt more confident about in my life," Hudgins said. "I have left behind countless students of different ages and abilities, a position as a company dancer in a professional ballet company and all my close friends and family in the Norfolk area."

As part of her graduate program, she teaches a dance class to children with cerebral palsy and researches how to serve caregivers in the health care field through the arts.

"With another new chapter of my life beginning," she reflected, "I am grounded in my goal to give others and myself what we all seek: joy in life and understanding through expression."
As director of Recreational Services, Jim Walczyk knows how important it is to help students develop lifelong skills such as sportsmanship, leadership, team building, self-esteem and communication. That is why he made a gift to Exponential: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte.

“I consider it a great opportunity to work at UNC Charlotte,” says Walczyk. “The people I meet, work with and serve on a daily basis, along with the assets we have and are developing on campus make my job very enjoyable and deserve support.”

Walczyk encourages his campus colleagues to give back to UNC Charlotte. “One of the biggest impacts you can make is to reinvest back into what you believe in,” he says. “No matter the amount, it will provide dividends for you. You can see that just by looking at this campus and its growth over the years. Every gift is appreciated and makes a difference.”
There is an academic side of being a college student — going to class, taking tests, meeting with professors, completing coursework and attending graduation. Then, there is the business aspect of college — navigating financial aid, registering for courses and paying tuition and fees.

Niner Central is an innovative solution to eliminate the “ping pong” effect described by students in surveys and focus groups. Student responses indicated frustration at being “shuffled” among business units in an effort to resolve financial or registration issues.

As part of Chancellor Philip L. Dubois’ “One University” initiative, a cross-divisional group of departments, led by Enrollment Management, developed a new way for students to conduct business with the University.

“Our students face rigor and challenges daily in their academic journeys as they prepare for their careers. However, the business processes involved with being a student should be simple transactions,” said Tina McEntire, associate provost for Enrollment Management. “Through Niner

Kimberly Laney, standing, is director of Niner Central, an innovative solution to assist students to complete the business aspect of attending college.
Central, the focus of every single interaction with a student, whether it be on the phone, via email or in person, is to provide extraordinary service that helps the student progress toward graduation.”

Located in the Cone University Center, Niner Central is delivering comprehensive services. In conjunction with a specially designed physical space to facilitate student engagement, a new website serves as a single resource for students.

Kimberly Laney is the director of Niner Central; she joined the University this past summer. With more than 20 years of customer service experience, Laney is fulfilling the chancellor’s vision to revolutionize business interactions with students. The Mount Holly, North Carolina, native has familiarity with the University; she completed a bachelor’s degree in political science and a Master of Public Administration at UNC Charlotte.

In addition to serving in the Budget and Evaluation Office for the city of Charlotte, Laney was the director of CharMeck 311, a large contact center for residents of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

“Our goal is for students to develop a strong and lasting connection to the University, so we recognize that delivering exceptional service is integral to building that connection,” said Laney.

She has assembled a staff with representation from multiple business offices and colleges. In addition to drawing on their extensive training, the staff used Salesforce to create an electronic knowledge base to respond to virtually any student query.

“We will go beyond answering questions since students don’t always know the question to ask,” said Laney. “Our team focuses on solving problems and using the wealth of resources we’ve built. Most students will leave Niner Central with issues resolved and equipped to excel academically, as we can direct them to tutoring, advising and other support services.”

When students need more assistance than the Niner Central staff can provide, students will receive a personal introduction and escort to the appropriate campus office to review their situations.

“With Niner Central specializing in the customer service aspect of student interactions, the other business offices will be able to concentrate on the most complex cases,” said Laney.

“As an alum, I can attest to the University’s concern with students progressing toward degree completion,” she continued. “We want our students focusing on their educational journeys and pursuing opportunities for personal and professional success rather than bouncing between administrative offices. Niner Central will enhance students’ ability to do so while demonstrating how much we value their time and their investment in UNC Charlotte.”

Phillip Brown is assistant director for internal communication and interim editor of this magazine.
Belk College of Business students Khabiyrul Gainey, Eric Peterson and Atir Siddique turned out for the fall 2017 CEO Speaker Series featuring alumnus Demond Martin ('97). They never guessed they would demonstrate Martin’s point on the importance of “stepping up” and not allowing fear and hesitation to keep someone from achieving great things in life.

Within the first 15 minutes of the program, Martin asked three volunteers to come forward and give their insight to the assembled crowd of Belk College students and faculty. Siddique, who was sitting in the second row, felt Martin was looking right at him, so he raised his hand; Gainey enjoys a challenge, so he, too, raised his hand, and on impulse, Peterson extended his hand.

After giving their names and class years, Martin thanked them for stepping up and assured them his speech would have “gone bad” without their participation. Rather than asking the trio to speak, he surprised the three undergrads by telling them that he was paying their tuition for the spring 2018 semester. After high-fiving each other, the stunned students took their seats, ready to hear what else Martin had to say.

“This is how business works, and often times, this is how life works,” said Martin. “Most people are sitting around watching on the sidelines giving commentary. When are you going to step up, and when are you not? Fear and hesitation will stop some of the most important things you ever dreamed of from actually happening.”

That 45-minute presentation by Martin has had a profound impact on the three students:
“FEAR AND HESITATION WILL STOP SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU EVER DREAMED OF FROM ACTUALLY HAPPENING.”

Demond Martin (’97)

Eric Peterson (’21)

Peterson is a freshman from Raleigh, North Carolina. A business major, he hopes to follow his father’s footsteps as a restaurant entrepreneur.

“I have definitely grown in a different environment,” said Peterson. “Being in Charlotte has given me (a different) perspective.”

Peterson often drives two-and-a-half hours to Raleigh to help his father open two Smashed Waffles locations, one in Raleigh and another in Greenville, North Carolina. His family also has a horse farm, where they breed horses. Peterson recently spent part of his spring break driving three horses to Texas.

Receiving a semester of free tuition has been significant for Peterson. He attended the lecture by Martin to obtain four extra-credit points on one of his business exams. He sat in the back of the room with his laptop open, working on a paper. After volunteering to “step up,” he returned to his seat and closed his laptop. For the rest of the lecture, he raptly paid attention and continues to maintain that focus.

“My second semester at UNC Charlotte feels like a gift,” said Peterson. “I realize that this is not an opportunity that everyone receives, and I appreciate that.”

Khabiyrul Gainey (’19)

Gainey first applied to UNC Charlotte in 2008. Instead of feeling defeated when he was not accepted immediately, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps as a reservist.

He spent eight years in the military, completing a tour in Afghanistan in 2011. He also ran his own battalion, earned the rank of sergeant and ended up stationed in Pasadena, California, where he trained a new class of reservists.

During that time, he married and had a son. That was when he decided it was time to return to Charlotte and his education. He earned an associate degree in psychology from Central Piedmont Community College and re-applied to UNC Charlotte.

Since returning to the University in fall 2016, Gainey hasn’t stopped. His plan was to continue studying psychology and become a marriage counselor. However, when he could not get into some of the classes needed, he quickly decided to try some business classes and found his place in the Belk College of Business, where he is now an accounting and finance major.

Gainey is also the vice president of the UNC Charlotte National Association of Black Accountants, a network for professionals that encourages scholarship, leadership and financial education while establishing important connections for undergraduate students. He is a member of the Key Club and Beta Alpha Psi, too.

“The University has many resources that have helped me prepare for my future, including the mock interview and resume-building programs offered by the Niblock Student Center and the University Career Center,” said Gainey.

When Gainey found out that he was receiving a semester’s tuition, he thought it was a joke. He quickly realized it was not. Instead, it was a gift benefiting his family, which recently expanded with the birth of his daughter this past January.

“Receiving a semester’s tuition has alleviated some of the financial burdens on me, giving me more time to focus on my studies and family, instead of worrying about finances,” said Gainey. “This gift illustrates how much UNC Charlotte alumni appreciate the University and the values it has instilled in them.”

Atir Siddique (’18)

Siddique is graduating in May 2018 with an accounting degree, and in June will start an internship with KPMG in its Internal Audit and Enterprise Risk Division. He also has applied to the master’s program in accounting at UNC Charlotte.

Siddique’s parents came to Charlotte from Pakistan in 2010 to give him more opportunities. He realizes what his parents gave up for him, including their careers, and never takes anything for granted, especially his education. In fact, he chose UNC Charlotte because he wanted a college experience that was financially feasible, academically rigorous and close to his parents.

On campus, Siddique is involved with Beta Alpha Psi, an honorary organization for financial information students and professionals, and is a member of the Business Honors Program. He also serves as president of UNC Charlotte Enactus, an international nonprofit organization working to empower local and global communities through entrepreneurship. Through the organization, he has organized and led a group of student volunteers to do art therapy with students in the special needs education program at a nearby high school.

“UNC Charlotte has taught me to be a better learner, a servant leader and to be genuine in my relationships,” said Siddique. “My professors have not only taught me the subject matter at hand but were available to give advice on how to lead my extracurricular organizations more efficiently.

“I was able to apply everything I learned in the classroom in campus organizations and through amazing internship opportunities such as the Applied Technology Program at Bank of America,” he continued. “I feel prepared to take on the future and give back to this amazing institution.”

Receiving a free semester of tuition has taught Siddique two important lessons. “First, to give back generously regardless of where you are in life and, secondly, to never shy away from opportunities,” said Siddique. “I have taken those lessons, and I apply them in and out of the classroom.”

Note: Join Demond Martin in the support of expanding opportunities for UNC Charlotte students through a gift to EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte. Learn more at exponential.uncc.edu

Jenn Howe is the divisional communicator for University Advancement.
Assistant Chief Vicki Foster thrives on helping others

BY JENN HOWE

Every day Vicki Foster (’91) influences lives at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD).

“I enjoy impacting change,” said Foster, the assistant police chief over administrative and support services. “In my current role, I have the autonomy to make changes to protocols or procedures if they are good for the citizens and our officers.”

Her role goes from A to Z each day, as she oversees everything not related to patrols and investigations, including animal control, crime scene labs, equipment and human resources, to name a few. While she is involved in mostly administrative matters, which means lots of meetings, she is quick to tell you that she is first and foremost a police officer. “I will not forget that,” she said. Which is why you will often find her training at the range.

During her 26-year career with CMPD, Foster has earned many accolades. She was the recipient of the Chief’s Award for Excellence in Policing, the Police Community Relations Award and the Charlotte Housing Authority Community Police Officer of the Year Award. In 2015, the Mecklenburg Times recognized Foster as one of the 50 most influential women in Mecklenburg County, and just last fall, the UNC Charlotte Black Alumni Chapter honored Foster with an Excellence in Public Service Award.

Believe it or not, Foster never pictured herself in law enforcement; in fact, she had no interest in the law. This was not her dream job, at least until now. As a young alumna, armed with a bachelor’s degree in psychology, Foster contemplated going back to school to become a psychologist. But, that was not what she really wanted to do.

“I wanted to have a job where I could talk to different people every day,” Foster recalled. “A career in law enforcement provides that. Now I get to interact with different people daily, from every walk of life.” She is quick to admit that studying psychology at UNC Charlotte gave her a great career foundation and has provided the tools necessary to excel in law enforcement.

Foster’s passion for helping others led her to start CMPD Hope in November 2007. CMPD Hope (Helping our Personnel in Emergencies) is a nonprofit that assists employees and family members of the police department with timely resources in the face of financial hardship due to circumstances beyond their control, such as a debilitating illness, injuries or unexpected job loss.

Foster was captain of a division when one of her officers passed away after contracting a deadly disease. He was single and predeceased by his parents. His fellow officers were his family. Foster remembers trying to collect money on the day of his funeral to pay the organist.

“I couldn’t believe that I didn’t have time to mourn for him because I had to ensure the financial demands were taken care of for the services,” she said. “I remember thinking that day I will never go through this again. I wanted to ensure that when something catastrophic happened, CMPD employees had a resource to go to for financial assistance.”

Foster has never held a 9-to-5 job, and she most likely will never have one. Instead, she seldom takes vacations and often works on her birthday and holidays. But she has a career that allows her to see people in a different light, especially young people. Seeing young people find a way to contribute to society motivates Foster. “I love listening to their aspirations, dreams and desires on how they can change the world,” she said.

Her advice to young people and others who will listen is simple and comes from years of experience, “Do everything for the right reasons. Maintain momentum and do something bigger than yourself.”

Jenn Howe is the divisional communicator for University Advancement.
ALUMNI AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE
2018 ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARD RECIPIENTS

DISTINGUISHED YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD
Lauren Lowery (’09)
BA, English & Philosophy
DeAndrea Salvador (’12)
BS, Economics
Meghan Stamper (’08)
BA, Communication Studies

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD
Robert (Bob) Qutub (’88)
BS, Accounting
Charles (Terry) Shook (’76)
BA, Architecture

HONORARY ALUMNI AWARD
Judy Rose
Athletics Director
Betty Stancil (posthumous)
Alumni Affairs

THE POWER OF PLANNED GIVING

Your planned gift to UNC Charlotte opens doors of opportunity for students like Crystal. Crystal, along with 40% of new undergraduates at UNC Charlotte, are the first generation in their families to pursue a college degree.

Whether you’re interested in an IRA charitable rollover, a gift through your estate, or a gift that provides payments to you for life, the Office of Planned Giving can help. Contact us to explore ways to support UNC Charlotte that makes sense for you and your loved ones.

▶ Exponential: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte celebrates the dramatic trajectory of growth of our University and our 130,000 alumni. This campaign offers all of us — alumni, business leaders and the University community — the opportunity to shape a future that is even more exciting than our past.

The power of you makes it possible. Join us.
1970s

Elizabeth Austin (‘77) received a Women in Business Award from the Charlotte Business Journal. She is chief information officer of Curvature, where she leads the global information technology team as it continues to develop infrastructure, applications and scalable tools within Curvature’s rapidly growing base of global operations. She is responsible for performing ongoing management of all client-driven and mission-critical information systems. Austin earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

James Chapman (‘76) published the book “The Deep River Coalfield: Two Hundred Years of Mining in Chatham County, North Carolina,” which documents the history of coal mining along Deep River in piedmont North Carolina. He earned a bachelor’s degree in English from UNC Charlotte.

1980s

Susan DeVore (‘81) received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Charlotte Business Journal’s Women in Business Awards. DeVore is president and chief executive officer of Premier Inc., a leading health care improvement company. Under her leadership, Premier has built an industry-leading code of ethics, been named four times to InformationWeek’s 500 top technology innovators in the nation and won IBM’s CTO innovation award for advanced analytics in health care. Currently a member of the UNC Charlotte Board of Trustees, DeVore completed a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University.

David Harkey (‘85, ’87) was named president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI), both are traffic safety research organizations. Harkey has led the UNC Highway Safety Research Center since 2006 and has more than 30 years of experience in road safety research. He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering from UNC Charlotte.

Mary Hutchins (‘85) was awarded the Order of the Longleaf Pine. She recently retired with 30 years of service to the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools, spending her entire career at Walkertown Middle School. Hutchins earned a bachelor’s degree in intermediate education from UNC Charlotte.

Emily Lipe (‘88, ’94) was named superintendent of Davidson County School System. Lipe has been with Davidson County Schools for 27 years and previously served as interim superintendent and assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. She completed bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English from UNC Charlotte.

John Marshall (‘89, ’04) was named transportation planning manager of Hickory’s Business Development and Planning Division. In this role, he will conduct transportation planning studies, develop comprehensive transportation plans, prepare federal and state grants to receive funding in addition to gathering and analyzing data to provide recommendations for transportation projects. Marshall completed bachelor’s and master’s degrees in geography from UNC Charlotte.

Andrew Murray (‘89) is the United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina.
Carolina. As the top federal law officer in the district, Murray leads one of the busiest U.S. Attorney’s Offices in the country, currently employing approximately 80 federal prosecutors and staff, located in Charlotte and Asheville. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from UNC Charlotte.

Todd Shoe ('85) was named chief growth officer of C3HealthcareRX. In this role, he is responsible for sales and marketing functions and new business development efforts. He was most recently executive vice president of sales and marketing of HealthHelp. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Fred Steen ('87) was named to the Novant Health Rowan Medical Center Board of Directors for a three-year term. Currently a member of the Board of Review of Higher Appeals for Unemployment Benefits, Steen earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

1990s

Sam Boykin ('98) joined the Sacramento Business Journal as managing editor. He previously served as a freelance writer for several publications, including the Charlotte Business Journal. He’s written for national outlets such as USA Today, Men’s Journal and Scientific American. Boykin earned a bachelor’s degree in English from UNC Charlotte.

Charles Carter ('94) was named vice president of Construction Equipment Sales for Volvo Financial Services USA, where he is responsible for the construction equipment sales channel in the United States. Carter joined Volvo Financial Services in 2000 and previously served as vice president of credit and origination. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Cheryl Brown ('95) retired as director of human resources for the city of Charlotte after seven years in that role and 30 years of local government service. Brown and her business partners recently opened Heritage Barn, a wedding and conference center venue in Conover, North Carolina. She completed a master’s degree in public administration from UNC Charlotte.

Heather Caudill ('94) was promoted to senior vice president of relationship management at AvidXchange. Since beginning her career there in 2002, Caudill has worked in technical support and project management. She earned a bachelor’s degree in dance from UNC Charlotte.

Jonathan Eaton ('97) was named national supply chain management practice leader at Grant Thornton. In this role, Eaton will oversee the firm’s supply chain services offerings, including strategy and transformation, integrated demand and supply planning, strategic sourcing and procurement solutions, analytics and visibility solutions, as well as transportation and network optimization. He earned a master's degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Scott Evett ('94) was promoted to the rank of sergeant within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. He is now assigned to the Independence Division. Evett earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from UNC Charlotte.

Al Heggins ('99) was elected mayor of Salisbury, North Carolina. She is the first
African American woman elected to the council and to serve as the city’s mayor. She completed bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education from UNC Charlotte.

Todd Hightower (’96) joined Carolinas Hospital System as vice president of physician practices. Previously, he served as vice president of physician services at Highlands Health System. Hightower earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Imana Legette (’94, ’97) was named head of middle school at Episcopal Academy. She previously served as director of diversity and inclusion at William Penn Charter School and educational technology director at Charlotte Country Day School. She completed bachelor’s and master’s degrees in elementary education from UNC Charlotte.

Greg Randolph (’93) joined MobileIron as senior vice president of worldwide sales, where he is responsible for all company revenue and routes to market globally. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Karen Rieker (’92) was named director of finance and administration for the Miraval Group, a provider of wellness and mindfulness experiences recently acquired by the Hyatt Hotels Corporation. She has worked for Hyatt for nearly 26 years serving in a variety of roles in the finance, reservations and food and beverage departments. Previously, Rieker was the regional analyst for Hyatt’s Luxury and Lifestyle Region. She earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Michelle Stiles (’95) was named controller at Greensboro College and will be responsible for all accounting and reporting functions. A state-licensed real estate broker, Stiles previously worked with the Research Triangle Foundation of North Carolina. She completed a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Angelo DelliSanti (’08, ’13) is the 2017 Rowan-Salisbury Schools Principal of the Year. He previously served as assistant principal at Mooresville Middle School prior to becoming principal at Jesse C. Carson High School. He completed a bachelor’s degree in secondary education and a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte and is currently pursuing a doctorate in education from the University.

Adria Focht (’05) was named president and CEO of the Charlotte Museum of History. She previously served as director and curator of the Kings Mountain Historical Museum. Focht earned a bachelor’s degree in art from UNC Charlotte.

Bryant Kirkland (’08) was recently elected to the Southeast Region Building Commissioning Association’s (SERBCA) Board of Directors as secretary for the 2018 term. As a SERBCA board member and secretary, Kirkland is responsible for serving local members in the areas of education, networking, advocacy and administration. He earned a master’s degree in architecture from UNC Charlotte.

Damian Owens (’04, ’14) was promoted to the rank of division chief within the Charlotte Fire Department. In this role, he will be responsible for logistics within the division. Owens completed bachelor’s and master’s degrees in fire safety engineering technology from UNC Charlotte.

Michelle Plaisance (’09, ’13) has been promoted to associate professor of English at Greensboro College. She also is the director of the college’s graduate degree program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Plaisance completed a master’s degree and a doctorate in education from UNC Charlotte.

Richard Wells (’04, ’12) was named Cabarrus County Schools Assistant Principal of the Year. Wells joined Cabarrus County Schools in 2012 as assistant principal of instruction at C.C. Griffin Middle School and moved to Winecoff Elementary School as the assistant principal of instruction in 2014. He earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.
Want to submit a Class Note?  
If you’re a proud 49er alum and have exciting news, we want to know. Join the Alumni Association’s online community to submit news and to stay engaged with the University by visiting 49erAlumni.uncc.edu. Additionally, you can submit news via email to 49erAlumni@uncc.edu. Accompanying photos are encouraged.

_2010s_

**Bobbie Cavnar (’11)** received the 2018 National Education Association (NEA) Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, designating him as the nation’s top educator. He has taught English at South Point High School in Belmont since 2003. Cavnar was named the North Carolina Teacher of the Year for 2016-17. He earned a master’s degree in English from UNC Charlotte.

**Jesse Curtis (’16)** joined Leonard Automatics as design engineer, where he will focus on new product development. Curtis earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from UNC Charlotte.

**Tyler Gibson (’13)** signed with FC Cincinnati for the 2018 United Soccer League season. Previously, he played midfielder for the San Francisco Deltas, where he won a NASL championship. He played at UNC Charlotte from 2010-13, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in marketing.

**Evan Hodges (’16)** joined Coldwell Banker Commercial MECA as brokerage associate. Previously, he briefly co-founded and operated a digital marketing startup business. Hodges earned a bachelor’s degree in marketing from UNC Charlotte.

**Meghan LeFevers (’14)** was named 2018 North Carolina Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year by the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals’ Association. Serving as assistant principal at Bessemer City High School since 2014, LeFevers has spent much of her career working with students with disabilities and those who are at risk. She earned a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.
FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS,
Moore and Sanford Halls have been a campus home for thousands of 49ers. And while, alums across the decades have been changing the world, UNC Charlotte has evolved, too.

Growth continues, and a significant change involves the future of campus housing. After careful evaluation, University officials have determined the cost to renovate Moore and Sanford Halls is higher than building a single, modern facility. Moore Hall will be open for the fall 2018 semester and is scheduled for demolition in January 2019. Sanford Hall is expected to remain open through spring 2022 before being torn down that fall.

Undoubtedly countless alumni have cherished memories of friendships borne out of the close quarters of these two residence halls. The UNC Charlotte Alumni Association wants to hear about them. Visit the website 49eralumni.uncc.edu/MooreSanford to tell your story.
Helping seniors cross the finish line is program’s goal

BY JENN HOWE

The vast majority of students at UNC Charlotte receive financial aid every year. Many have remaining need, or unmet need, even after their aid packages are awarded. In other words, their financial aid awards plus what they can pay themselves isn’t enough to cover the full cost of attendance. Tina McEntire, associate provost for enrollment management, began looking at students with this remaining need, and it became apparent that many seniors experienced this situation for various reasons. When the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) issued a call for proposals to develop a completion grant program, McEntire thought UNC Charlotte could benefit from just such a program. She was right.
UNC Charlotte received the APLU grant in 2016 and an IES (Institute of Education Sciences) grant from the Department of Education in 2017 to fund the Gold Rush Grant Program.

The $1,500, one-time micro-grants are awarded to selected students who meet the following eligibility requirements: seniors within two semesters of graduating who have earned credit hours equal to or greater than 105 credits, are in good standing, have a GPA of 2.0 or higher, have a calculated unmet need of $1,500 or less, have never declined financial aid, are low income as defined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA; they are Pell-grant eligible) and are North Carolina residents.

“This grant helps students who are already so close that they can see the finish line before them,” said McEntire. “This grant not only provides students the funds to finish, but it also serves as a tangible reminder to students that we believe they have what it takes to earn a degree.”

The Gold Rush Grant was integral to John Strudel’s success during his senior year. “As the mechanical engineering program is traditionally a five-year endeavor, most students, including myself, run into antiquated financial aid limits which become the most significant barrier to graduation,” said Strudel. “When I can focus on my studies and not have to worry about how I will pay for my health care or my rent, I am able to learn to the best of my ability.”

In exchange for receiving a grant, students are required to complete two activities designed to either help them complete their degrees or help them prepare for their future. They can complete an online financial literacy module, meet with a career counselor, attend a workshop/job fair or develop a degree-completion plan approved by their advisor.

Bettina Oates participated in the online financial literacy modules and met with her advisor. “Meeting with my advisor to make sure I am graduating on my targeted graduation date was important to me,” recalled Oates. “I was able to make sure my credits were counted toward all of my classes in order to graduate on time. I also learned some important tips on studying and time management.”

Over four semesters so far, 334 Gold Rush Grants totaling $501,000 have been awarded, and the graduation rate for the fall 2016 cohort was 78 percent. The program and its success rate have gained the attention of UNC System President Margaret Spellings.

The program is in the process of expanding thanks to the UNC Charlotte Foundation, which recently voted to support the effort with a $1 million matching gift, providing the potential to offer financial aid to more of the 2,339 college seniors from North Carolina with unmet need.

“Many times when a donor gives money to the University, he or she often isn’t able to see an immediate impact from their donation,” said McEntire. “If donors give to the Gold Rush Grant program, they are able to witness students they helped cross the finish line to graduation within a year in most cases.”

**Note:** Help the UNC Charlotte Foundation offer more Gold Rush Grants by financially supporting EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte. Learn more at exponential.uncc.edu

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**Eligibility Requirements for Gold Rush Grants**

- Seniors within two semesters of graduating
- Earned credit hours equal to or greater than 105 credits
- Good standing
- GPA of 2.0 or higher
- Calculated unmet need of $1,500 or less
- Never declined financial aid
- Low income as defined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA; the applicant is Pell-grant eligible)
- North Carolina resident

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Jenn Howe is the divisional communicator for University Advancement.
UNC Charlotte’s collaborative research drives economic opportunities for the region

By Robert G. Wilhelm

Every day, the 33,000-plus people who comprise our campus community are thinking of new ideas that lead to medical therapies, creative performances and literature, reliable electricity, novel and efficient manufacture, safer transportation, better approaches for learning, secure information, and many other results.

When we research, we make new knowledge. We ask why things happen. We study and reconsider the world. And we imagine how the world might be different. Research is fundamental to UNC Charlotte’s mission; new knowledge and creative works shape the future of the University.

The power of our research comes from collaboration. While much of our creative effort begins with the ideas of a single person, the strength of our research results most often comes from the expertise and experience of many different people, organizations, and regions.

From its beginning, UNC Charlotte has aggressively engaged business and community partners in almost all aspects of University activity. Faculty members work on challenging problems motivated by our partners’ needs. Students put their knowledge into practice by testing it against our partners’ challenges. What our faculty and students learn through research and collaboration feeds back into UNC Charlotte’s modern, innovative academic programs.

This collaborative approach has been central to our success. The expertise and results we provide our partners have significant impacts on the social, cultural, and economic growth of our region. As a result, our students receive a distinctive educational experience that cannot be found anywhere else. Our long-standing collaborations with hundreds of companies and institutions enable UNC Charlotte to attract top faculty who desire to stay.

UNC Charlotte has decades of experience conducting community-based research to foster economic opportunity in and around the Queen City. The UNC Charlotte Opportunity Research Showcase on April 30 will highlight recent initiatives on early care and education, college and career readiness, social capital, and child and family stability. Shared work is a key to our collaborative success.

Responding to economic development goals for the region, UNC Charlotte has developed an internationally known group of faculty experts in advanced manufacturing and metrology. For nearly 30 years, these experts have worked closely with regional and national partners to change how sophisticated products like aircraft, power generation systems, automobiles, and electronics are manufactured. Students and faculty members regularly work at the Siemens site in Charlotte on process improvements for power plant manufacture. Our long partnership with the Boeing company has resulted in new approaches for defense aircraft manufacture that have brought more than $1 billion in efficiencies. Companies bring their most difficult challenges to our researchers and collaborate with us to create results that are most important to them.

Successful examples abound across disciplines. Our Energy Production and Infrastructure Center in the Lee College of Engineering engages dozens of companies in the electricity supply chain. With this approach, we bring the best minds to address important challenges in the energy industry. Our cybersecurity research consortium in the College of Computing and Informatics draws from the expertise of national and regional companies; it has created some of the best new approaches for information security. MAX: The Mobile Arts & Community Experience presents the arts in a mobile format that engages diverse communities and gives voice to artists and art groups around the region. A partnership between the Mecklenburg Public Health Department and the College of Health and Human Services is developing new approaches for public health delivery that are grounded in analytic techniques. Faculty members in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences have worked with partners in the region to establish a watershed observatory to guide the development of best conservation practices. The Childress Klein Center for Real Estate in the Belk College of Business tackles current real estate issues in the region while drawing expertise from the business community to inform both research and academic programs.

And these are just a glimpse into the rich, intertwined research community of UNC Charlotte and our collaborative partners. While some universities are characterized as isolated in an academic ivory tower, UNC Charlotte works intentionally with many different collaborators, points of view and sources of expertise. This approach is fundamental to our development as North Carolina’s urban research university.

Robert Wilhelm, Ph.D., is vice chancellor for research and economic development.

Bob Wilhelm has led UNC Charlotte’s Research and Economic Development since 2011.
CONNECT TO UNC CHARLOTTE BY LIGHT RAIL

It has never been easier to visit UNC Charlotte’s campus – to cheer on the 49ers; attend alumni events, concerts, theater performances or International Festival; visit the Botanical Gardens; and much more!

Information on how to take light rail (and purchase a ticket) to main campus – and catch a free Niner Transit bus upon arrival – or to UNC Charlotte Center City, is online: visit lightrail.edu/resources.