GOld STANdARd AThleTiCS
Q&A with Athletics Director Mike Hill—and the reason he loves social media

SACRed GROUnD
The Pride of Niner Nation Marching Band represents the U.S. and UNC Charlotte at D-Day Commemoration
Making an impact, thoughtfully

It’s one thing to have within our ranks 1,200 scholarly experts to teach our students and build our research enterprise. At UNC Charlotte, we attract the brightest professors to our University and our city.

But what sets apart the academics of our University is something very special. It’s the rich experiences that come as our faculty members increasingly frame research and teaching around solving the challenges within our surrounding communities and throughout the state. Asking what the problems are and how we can contribute sets a powerful example for our students. It’s at the heart of why, for many years now, UNC Charlotte has been growing in its reputation of relevant service.

Since 2008, the University has held the Carnegie Foundation’s classification as a community-engaged university. Community engagement is central to our mission and, therefore, evident in the decisions and planning that affect our programmatic and physical growth. We continue to deepen the scope of community engagement across all parts of the University, in activities that involve students, faculty and staff. This is more than just a commitment; it is an institutional strategic priority.

Earlier this year, we completed UNC Charlotte’s first Civic Action Plan. It provides a strong strategic framework in which we will assess community needs and opportunities, organize our resources and, in particular, bring about interdisciplinary solutions to address the cultural, economic, educational, environmental, health and social needs of our regional community. The plan was developed in conjunction with our membership in NC Campus Compact. That’s our state’s chapter of a nationwide organization of civic-minded universities focused on improving the quality of life for all citizens.

We formally rolled out the University’s Civic Action Plan and introduced Tamara Johnson, the director of the office that will support it, at an event at UNC Charlotte Center City on Nov. 7. Johnson will work with colleagues across our faculty and staff to connect and highlight many existing programs, and also to articulate our collective impact within the context of the special community-engaged universities throughout the nation.

For instance, University City—the area of Charlotte surrounding our main campus—is home to a population of 45,000 people and exhibits the highest rates of poverty-related illness and risk of early death in all of Mecklenburg County. The University is providing leadership in coordinating and integrating the work of six area agencies, and we will continue to focus the power of our own research and volunteering to make positive impacts on the quality of life in University City.

Within the Civic Action Plan is a set of guidelines—49 of them, to be precise—aimed at shaping the university-wide approach to engagement and helping direct more of our efforts toward community engagement zones. The guidelines were developed after surveying the extended University community about ways in which we can take community engagement to the next level.

Among numerous additional examples of community connections, a meaningful innovation can be found within the highly competitive Bonner Leaders program. That’s our campus chapter of a national program focused on fostering future leaders in engagement beginning in the freshman year. Our Bonner Leaders will carry out their community volunteering with agencies carefully selected not only because of their diverse missions, but also because they do their work all along the light rail. This underscores the value of public transit as it takes advantage of our new connection through the Blue Line extension and the two stations that serve the main campus.

We want our students to understand through engagement experiences at UNC Charlotte that they are prepared to fulfill lifelong opportunities to make positive differences within their communities. And, given that more than 70 percent of our alumni live and work within the greater Charlotte region, our efforts to develop this framework around civic action will grow exponentially in its significance.

The feature articles within this edition of the University magazine provide a snapshot—one in what could easily be a gallery of snapshots—of the array of impacts UNC Charlotte is making on our city and our region. Please also read our Civic Action Plan, available at campuscompact.uncc.edu, and learn even more about Campus Compact at compact.org.

Philip L. Dubois
Chancellor
Solutions based on regionally relevant research

As North Carolina’s urban research university, UNC Charlotte prioritizes making an impact on the city of Charlotte and its surrounding region. This edition takes a focused look at ways the University is affecting education and classroom effectiveness, sustainable business and entrepreneurship, accessibility to health and human services, and smart and satisfying growth.

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Editor's Note: Cover image from the Spring 2018 edition was taken by Wade Bruton.
News Briefs

Hotel and Conference Center to attract academic symposia and other events to University City

For years, UNC Charlotte leaders have envisioned a conference center and hotel on the University’s main campus. The institution’s exponential growth, coupled with light rail’s arrival and a burgeoning University City, marks now as the time for that to be realized. The recently approved conference center will offer 24,000 square feet of space to support symposia of up to 500 participants, with a hotel that includes 226 guest rooms.

According to Chancellor Philip L. Dubois, the conference center will allow the University to attract research symposia and academic conferences that the city currently is unable to accommodate. Adding first-class conference space to University City, Charlotte’s second-largest employment hub, will create business for the city and nearby hotels and retailers. Within the first seven years, projections indicate the hotel and conference center will generate nearly $9 million in city, county and state taxes, with net proceeds producing $7 million in the first five years. This makes available funds the UNC Charlotte Foundation can use for additional scholarships and to address other high-priority needs of the University.

The University successfully sought support from the city of Charlotte to assist in underwriting the cost of the complex. In August, the Charlotte City Council voted unanimously to invest $8 million toward the completion of the project, funding that makes possible a more technologically sophisticated conference space normally available in a hotel of similar size.

“This facility will serve as a new front door to the University, providing a welcoming space for generations of 49ers and Charlotteans,” said Niles Sorensen, president of the UNC Charlotte Foundation, which will fund the majority of the project. “We’ve been planning this for a long time and are eager for it to bring new opportunities for our faculty and alumni to connect to the larger community.”

The UNC Charlotte Foundation will own the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center at UNC Charlotte; Sage Hospitality of Denver, Colorado, will operate the facility. Plans call for the complex to be located adjacent to the J.W. Clay/UNC Charlotte Station for the CATS Blue Line light rail, which will provide symposia and conference attendees access to the cultural, recreational and culinary amenities at Center City via a short 22-minute train ride.

“With the University’s needs with those of the community to ensure we create something that complements the vision for University City,” added Sorensen.

Beth Crigler to lead University fundraising

Beth Crigler, CFRE, has joined the UNC Charlotte Division of University Advancement as associate vice chancellor for University development. In this role, she will provide strategic vision to oversee fundraising efforts, including EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte, which to date has raised $164 million.

Most recently, Crigler was senior director of principal and leadership gifts for the Novant Health Foundation. As a 20-year development professional, she has led numerous capital campaigns raising more than $130 million for charitable organizations in the Charlotte community. During her career, she has provided leadership for several nonprofit organizations including Charlotte Latin School, the U.S. National Whitewater Center, Sharon Towers and the Cabarrus County Boys and Girls Club.

“Beth’s energy and experience will make both an immediate and long-term impact on UNC Charlotte’s fundraising efforts,” said Niles Sorensen, vice chancellor for the Division of University Advancement.

A graduate of the University of South Carolina, Crigler serves on the Board of Directors of Charlotte Mecklenburg Housing Partnership and Camp Debbie Lou, a family camp for children with cancer that she helped found.

Beth Crigler
University’s 24th doctoral program to boost marketability of civil engineers

A new program, a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering, will provide doctoral-level education for students seeking civil engineering careers in practice, research and academia. Scheduled to launch in fall 2019, it is UNC Charlotte’s 24th doctoral program.

“We are all aware of the reports on the poor condition of much of the nation’s infrastructure and the need for improvement in bridges, roads and other major public resources,” said Joan Lorden, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. “Through this program, UNC Charlotte will help meet the nation’s and the region’s demand for graduates equipped to address these problems. We will also graduate students ready to support major regional industries such as the energy industry.”

The Ph.D. in Civil Engineering program, which will be located in the Energy Production and Infrastructure Center (EPIC) building, will fulfill the state’s mandate for EPIC to drive innovation. EPIC was designed to supply highly trained engineers and increase research capacity to meet the demands of the energy industry and regional economic development goals.

EPIC will be the home of the new Ph.D. program in civil engineering.

The American Society of Civil Engineering (ASCE), the primary professional organization for civil engineers, now views a master’s degree as the profession’s entry-level degree requirement. With jobs in the industry expected to increase by 20 percent over the next decade, greater numbers of engineers are expected to complete doctoral programs to distinguish themselves in the market.

Partnership aims toward Charlotte becoming a leading healthy city

UNC Charlotte and Charlotte-based predictive analytics software company Tresata recently announced a partnership designed to make Charlotte one of the world’s healthiest cities by 2025. This goal will be met using advanced data analytics to empower the local community with actionable knowledge and advancing health entrepreneurship.

Through this partnership, faculty and students have access to Tresata’s next generation data management and monetization systems as well as a launch pad for budding entrepreneurs to build analytical applications powered by Tresata’s advanced analytics operating system. Tresata plans to invest upward of $2 million in supporting these efforts.

Focused initially on the financial-technology sector, Tresata expanded its interests in recent years to include the health care and retail markets. The company, sparked by the community’s significant public health and economic mobility challenges, decided to take on issues important to the local community.

Foundational to this partnership is the talent of the faculty, staff and students from the UNC Charlotte College of Health and Human Services (CHHS). CHHS recently launched the Academy for Population Health Innovation (APHI), a partnership between Mecklenburg County and UNC Charlotte established to enhance community public health through academic partnerships and use of informatics and analytics. As part of the agreement, UNC Charlotte gains access to select Tresata software products effectively used in the management and monetization of insights from health care data.
Laser focus: Biomedical optics research

UNC Charlotte researchers in the Department of Physics and Optical Science are working to transform treatment options for kidney and bladder stones, a painful medical condition whose incidence is increasing due to obesity, diabetes, dietary factors and even climate change.

The research is exploring less-invasive surgical options, ideally that lead to reduced recovery time, fewer complications, and reduced costs for patients and the health care system.

With little innovation for nearly 30 years in laser technology for kidney stone treatment, Nathaniel Fried’s lab in the Department of Physics and Optical Science represents one of only a few academic labs in the world studying ways to introduce new technology for breaking them up. The work of the lab aims to allow the miniaturization of the optical fiber delivery system, and possibly the endoscope used inside the body.

‘World-changing’ research considers the future of math education

Mathematics research by one Cato College of Education professor is among the scientific findings from 2017 with potential to change the world, according to publishing giant Springer Nature.

Associate professor Michelle Stephan co-authored the paper, “What Mathematics Education May Prepare Students for the Society of the Future,” which was recognized by Springer’s Change the World, One Article at a Time initiative. The research offers a discussion on the math instruction students need to engage in a society evolving in response to technology and digitalization.

According to Stephan and her co-authors, math has a growing role to play in an increasingly digitized society in part because it is integral to what computers do.

This represents a shift from teaching students skills that directly compete with what computers do best and toward those that complement them, particularly in the context of the modern workplace. Students should still know how to compute, but more emphasis should be placed on understanding concepts and solving realistic problems, Stephan said.
Cato College reimagines teacher preparation

For the second year in a row, the Cato College of Education’s Teacher Education Institute (TEI) aimed to reimagine the way students majoring in education are molded into effective teachers. The institute continued to develop a shared understanding of critical teaching practices for teacher-candidates.

UNC Charlotte faculty and clinical educators focused on developing the skills to coach future teachers in three key areas: facilitating whole group discussion, setting up and managing small group work and eliciting and interpreting student thinking.

The institutes have been planned and facilitated in close collaboration with Deans for Impact, a nonprofit organization with a mission to improve student-learning outcomes by changing the way America prepares its teachers. Cato College of Education Dean Ellen McIntyre is a member of the organization.

Clinical educators stated the model emerging from the institute allows them to feel more engaged with the process of instructing teacher-candidates. The two-year pilot program is funded by a grant of more than $230,000 from the Belk Foundation and backed by the in-kind support of the Cato College of Education.

TEI organizers have scheduled a series of “get-togethers” throughout the academic year to reinforce the lessons from the summer sessions, allowing participants to discuss implementation in content specific groups.

Ultimately, Cato College of Education leaders anticipate the dialogue advanced through TEI will change the way future teachers are trained for their first years in the classroom. Feedback from 2017 teacher-candidates participants suggests a trend in that direction. (See page 15 for more.)

App focuses on colon cancer screening

Through a grant from the National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute, Jennifer Troyer, health economist at UNC Charlotte and interim dean of the College of Health and Human Services, worked with researchers at Wake Forest University, UNC Chapel Hill and University of Texas to examine how digital technology can be used to increase the likelihood that patients order a colorectal screening procedure.

Here’s how it works. At an annual check up, a patient receives an iPad before seeing the doctor, which provides the ability to self-order a screening test for colorectal cancer. The patient clicks a button to order the test, similar to shopping online—leaving time to discuss other health questions with the doctor, whose time is limited.

“Detecting colorectal cancer early can save health care costs and lives,” said Troyer. Screening for colorectal cancer reduces mortality, yet more than one-third of Americans over the age of 50 are unscreened. Meanwhile, colon cancer remains the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.

“We found that patients in the group who used the digital intervention were twice as likely as the control group to order a colorectal screening test, resulting in cost savings for the doctor who has limited time with each patient,” Troyer said. “Colorectal cancer is treatable in the early stages, yet many people put off getting a test or don’t talk with their doctor about screening. A self-order with this technology provides an immediate, direct action for patients to take the step they might be delaying. Such digital health interventions can improve health care delivery while lowering operational costs.”

The researchers found that self-orders via digital technology also might make an impact on other types of health screenings, which can result in earlier detection of a variety of health issues.
Belk College launches first M.S. in Management

The Belk College’s Master of Science in Management program (management.uncc.edu)—the first of its kind in the UNC System—launched its inaugural class this summer. With the support of corporate leaders in Charlotte, the program boosts the business acumen of non-business students to meet the rising demand for well-rounded business professionals entering the workforce.

Taught at UNC Charlotte Center City, students will earn a master’s degree after 10 months of full-time study. This fast-track program delivers business fundamentals and develops graduates who are prepared to solve complex issues, evaluate and sell ideas, and lead teams across a wide variety of functions and industries.

The program fills a critical gap for recent college graduates who seek a professional career, yet lack a business foundation. It provides an alternative to an MBA program, which typically requires prior work experience, and allows students to add relevant business acumen to their resumes.

Architecture team wins top prizes in design competition

Two teams from the School of Architecture have won top awards in the 2017-18 Steel Design Student Competition hosted by the American Institute of Steel Construction and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

The UNC Charlotte teams won first and third place in the “Affordable Housing” category. Both teams were inspired by the Leading on Opportunity Task Force recommendations to address Charlotte’s economic mobility crisis.

Students Nathalie Altamirano and Austin Vandepoll, under the direction of professor Marc Manack, won first place for the project “Balloonite,” an experimental project that uses inflatable steel technology. The modular, brightly colored structure, which could be made entirely from recycled steel, is designed to be quick to fabricate and sustainable, with a “cool” factor that the team said “could help Charlotte move past the affordable housing stigma.”

Students Arturo Lujan, Pedro Pinera-Rodriguez and Ryan Smith, under the direction of professors Chris Jarrett and Peter Wong, won third place for the project “Pressing Matters of Affordability.” Their proposal for a mixed-income housing complex in a former industrial zone reimagines steel as a softer, smoother material created by pressure forming metal via stamping and tooling processes that are common to automotive and other industrial manufacturing.
CCI earns multiple NSF funding awards

The College of Computing and Informatics (CCI), the fastest-growing college in the UNC System, has earned funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for three separate projects.

Assistant Professor Xinghua “Mindy” Shi, Department of Bioinformatics and Genomics, has earned a National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award—a five-year continuing grant totaling nearly $600,000—for “Integrative Approaches to Uncovering Complex Genotype-Phenotype Relationships in High Dimensional Genomics Data.” With the award, Shi becomes the seventh faculty member from CCI to be recognized by the NSF or Department of Energy (DOE) with a CAREER award for junior faculty.

Shi’s project will speed the realization of the promise envisioned for big data genomics by establishing a new paradigm that exploits the gamut of genomic datasets. The purpose is to better understand biology and combining robust statistical modeling and rigorous computational approaches toward predictive modeling of genomics data.

Assistant Professor of Bioinformatics Way Sung was awarded a $670,000 grant for “The Evolution and Reprogramming of DNA Replication Fidelity.” The goal of his work is to reprogram cells to enhance their ability to repair and resist DNA mutations and extend cellular longevity, increase cellular health and reduce cancer formation.

Finally, a collaboration featuring Mohsen Dorodchi, Roslyn Mickelson and Bojan Cukic was awarded a $1 million grant for the iPass project, an innovative approach to improving success in computer science (CS) for students from underrepresented populations. In addition to funding 15 scholarships, iPass will provide mentoring, tutoring and student-centered activities to ensure the program’s students remain engaged and on track. The project will redevelop the standard CS curricula by inserting topics that are tied to students’ interests. iPass Fellows will be selected from a pool of eligible economically disadvantaged, female, underserved minority, rural and first-generation students.

Engineering professor receives 2018 Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence

Lee College of Engineering’s Tony Schmitz is the 2018 Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence recipient. A professor of mechanical engineering and engineering science, Schmitz has taught 10 different courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels and has become known for investing significant time in his students.

Schmitz, who has been with the University since 2011, believes his role is to “train decision makers, not problem solvers.” An example of his self-described, innovative pedagogy is a junior-level design course in which he tells students, “Design requires creativity, and there is not just one correct answer.”

Other finalists for the award were Robert Cox, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering; Celine Latulipe, professor of software and information systems; Heather Perry, associate professor of history; and Drew Polly professor of reading and elementary education.

In 2014, Schmitz became associate chair for graduate programs and began revising the Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Science Department’s master’s degree non-thesis option. Since then, the department has seen almost a 70 percent increase in graduate enrollment, which Department Chair Scott Smith attributes to Schmitz’s “innovative approach to graduate education and his ability to inspire graduate students.”

Schmitz’s other teaching and research awards include the 2017 North American Manufacturing Research Institution of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers David Dornfeld Manufacturing Vision Award, UNC Charlotte’s 2013 Lee College of Engineering Undergraduate Award in Teaching Excellence and the 2010 North American Manufacturing Research Institute/Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) Outstanding Paper.

Known as the “pigskin professor,” Schmitz developed an Emmy-winning video series in collaboration with NBC Learn, the National Football League and the National Science Foundation titled “The Science of NFL Football.” Prior to joining UNC Charlotte, Schmitz was a member of the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at the University of Florida.
Tesh Ramey ‘10, arts education specialist in the College of Arts + Architecture, attended college debt-free, thanks to her father, which allowed her to pursue a career as a K-12 music educator.

But Ramey knows few students have that same luxury. That is why she established an Arts Education Endowment to fund an annual scholarship for a student pursuing K-12 licensure in Art, Music, Dance or Theatre.

“The Arts are essential to the achievement of all K-12 students,” said Ramey, who earned her M.Ed. in curriculum and supervision from UNC Charlotte. “My hope is these funds will support students earning licensure in the arts so they may begin their teaching careers debt-free.”

Ramey believes in giving back, and encourages others to do the same.

“UNC Charlotte is a state leader in serving first-generation students and preparing future teachers,” she said. “There is no better way to improve the world around you than to help someone be the first in their family to earn a degree, and on top of that, become a teacher.”
As North Carolina’s urban research university, UNC Charlotte focuses on research and programs designed to make a measurable and noticeable impact on the city of Charlotte and the surrounding region. By applying data-gathering, analysis and application expertise where needs are great, UNC Charlotte and its many partners are discovering solutions to complex problems—and improving the outlook for individuals, families and communities. While the work of UNC Charlotte researchers covers a wide spectrum of topics, a focused look is offered here on ways the University is making an impact in schools as well as on sustainable entrepreneurship, accessibility to health and human services and smart and satisfying growth.
School and classroom effectiveness

As teachers and school leaders find ways to do more with less, they are required to demonstrate their effectiveness in measurable educational outcomes for their students. UNC Charlotte is regarded as a national leader in preparing teachers who are qualified to meet the needs of students regardless of their backgrounds—and committed to the profession. Faculty members conduct cutting-edge research in all areas of K-12 education, much of which is being applied in school districts and schools to increase the chances of student success—and making a difference for children and families.
Estralla, known to her family and friends as “Star,” a rising second-grader at Merry Oaks Elementary School in Charlotte, is enjoying a summer camp different from the kind you might remember. At 10 a.m., she enters a classroom wearing her backpack, a ponytail and a smile. Star heads straight for Brittany Anderson, a licensed teacher from Windsor Park Elementary School and her instructor for the next hour. They begin with practice on letter sounds. From there, Anderson and Star work on phonemic awareness activities, breaking words into three parts with the help of a simple visual cue. Star reads a series of words by sounding out the word, then reading it fast—“j-o-g/jog!” She is expected to move quickly, but every misstep is corrected. As Anderson and other instructors prompt responses, a cacophony of tiny voices crackle and echo against the walls. Campers lean across tables. Hands wave in the air. Celebratory high fives are exchanged.

The group is making its way through a scripted program called Sound Partners, a proven intervention designed to help children get better at phonics and beginning reading. This kind of one-on-one instruction isn’t feasible in typical K-12 classrooms, but it’s exactly what Star needs to get back on track with her literacy skills.

“Some students need more explicit instruction, opportunities to respond and repetitive practice than is
often possible in a general education classroom,” said Assistant Professor Kristen Beach, lead researcher on a Cato College of Education study of this new approach to summer break designed specifically for struggling readers.

Star and 59 other second- and third-graders are attending five weeks of free, daylong camp designed to help them improve their reading while enjoying the fun and games of traditional summer camps. The specially selected students from three Title I east Charlotte elementary schools (Windsor Park, Merry Oaks and Winterfield) receive two hours of intensive one-on-one or small group reading instruction every day. Now in its third year, the camp is part of a UNC Charlotte effort to address the city’s early literacy shortcomings. And new peer-reviewed research by Cato College of Education faculty reveals the program helps at-risk readers avoid falling behind during the summer, and gives many a significant leg up.

“Our initial findings indicate that we prevented the common phenomenon of the ‘summer slide’—that is, the tendency for students to not only stop advancing but experience a decline in reading skills during the summer months. It also appears that rising third-graders improved in reading comprehension, and that rising second-graders improved on early literacy skills,” Beach said.

Most strikingly, the group found that in 2016 and 2017, rising third-graders made an equivalent of approximately 11-weeks growth in oral reading fluency during the course of the camp.

“One of my daughters has really struggled with reading,” said Carlos Morales, who has two children attending the camp. “I’ve noticed a big improvement in her reading ability. We’re moving into chapter books now, which is something we wouldn’t have even considered trying before.”

The significance of such growth is hard to overstate. Nothing predicts school success better than third-grade reading. Ninety-six percent of students who read proficiently by third grade will graduate on time; those who don’t are four times more likely to drop out of high school. Currently, only 39 percent of Charlotte third-graders read proficiently.

Students from affluent backgrounds, who generally test higher in reading, also often have more school-like summer opportunities than those from lower-income or limited English households, leaving the latter more at risk of the summer slide. A 2007 study found that by ninth grade, more than half the gap in reading comprehension between middle- and low-income students is attributable to differences accumulated in elementary school, making the summer learning loss particularly insidious over those years.

Back at camp, students are working hard to dodge the summer slide and grow as readers. For her second hour of reading instruction, Star sits with Betty, her Active Reading partner.

“What book would you like me to read today?” Betty asks. Star chooses one titled “Sloppy Joe.” Betty points to the title and asks, “Do you know what this says?”

Star squints and sounds out, “Sl…op…” “Sloppy!”


Betty reads the book aloud, pointing to words, inviting Star’s comments and asking questions. Betty defines words as they read together and offers observations. Then, it’s Star’s turn. Her reading is slow and laborious at first but nearly errorless. As she reads, she sounds more and more fluent. This sort of lesson is called dialogic reading or “Active Reading,” and studies confirm its strong impact on listening comprehension and vocabulary development.

Betty and her fellow 21 reading partners are residents of Aldersgate, a Charlotte retirement community with a service-oriented outlook. The residents have been trained in Active Reading and collaborate with the campers for an hour each day.

“It’s been a very rewarding process. I’ve seen my student really enjoying reading and taking initiative to learn,” said one volunteer.

Active Reading was developed by Read Charlotte, a community initiative to improve children’s literacy from birth to third grade. The ultimate goal is to double the number of Charlotte third-graders reading proficiently so 8 of 10 are on grade level.

For the last 15 minutes of literacy instruction, Star participates in a repeated reading fluency program called “HELPs,” an intervention developed by researchers at North Carolina State University. She sits with her tutor, a trained UNC Charlotte education student, and reads the same short passage up to three times. They clarify mistakes and try again when Star hesitates until she meets personally tailored goals.
Swinging Open the Schoolhouse Doors
New Model Unites Clinical and Classroom Training to Produce Better Educators

In an educational environment steadying itself against turbulence, finding and keeping qualified teachers is a challenge for schools across the country. With studies identifying teacher turnover as a damper on student achievement, policymakers and K-12 schools are searching for strategies to push back. As a long-established partner with local school systems, leaders at UNC Charlotte's Cato College of Education are honing a training model that promises to prepare great teachers who stay with the profession.

The 2018 Teacher Education Institute (TEI 18), which drew 75 participants from UNC Charlotte and local school systems, continued the work of developing a shared understanding of critical practices for teacher candidates.

Education faculty and clinical educators (the K-12 teachers who host education students) spent much of the three daylong sessions developing their skills coaching future teachers in three key areas: facilitating whole group discussion, setting up and managing small group work, and eliciting and interpreting student thinking.

“We all have the same end goal in mind: to create and support effective new teachers that stay in this profession,” said Debra Diegmann, student teaching supervisor at the Cato College of Education, who co-led TEI 18. “This work allows us to collaborate on the same playing field to discuss, practice and reflect on best practices to support our student candidates.”

TEI 18 topics included issues like facing the fears of feedback, with participants reviewing videos of clinical educators and teacher candidates and engaging in small group and larger discussions.

The institutes are planned and facilitated in close collaboration with Deans for Impact, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve student-learning outcomes by changing the way America prepares its teachers.

“This year’s TEI really looked at continuing to shift toward a coaching model,” said Patrick Kennedy, a third-grade teacher at Crown Point Elementary School in Charlotte. “Teacher candidates have a lot to think about and now they are able to receive feedback in the moment, and they have consistently told me they find that helpful.”

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Selected text and photography republished with permission of EdNC. Ellen McIntyre is dean, Cato College of Education, and Wills Cityt is director of communications, Cato College of Education. Special thanks to UNC Charlotte faculty members Jean Vintinner and Bill Anderson and CMS teacher David Flores for their efforts to organize and facilitate the reading camps.
Emily Francis leapt from her seat in the audience of “The Ellen Show” and made a run for the stage. Only after she was perched alongside Ellen DeGeneres did the 2016 Cabarrus County Schools Teacher of the Year realize that in her excitement, she hadn’t given the famous talk show host time to finish her introduction. But looking back at her journey—from a one-room shack in Guatemala, to a New York airport facing immigration authorities, to crossing the stage at UNC Charlotte to accept a graduate degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL)—it’s clear that Emily Francis had been racing toward a moment like this her entire life.

In the early 1990s, Francis and her family were among thousands of Guatemalan citizens living in poverty. Raising Emily and her four siblings alone, Francis’ mother struggled to get by. She sold produce in the local market, but it didn’t provide enough money to live on, even when Emily skipped school to help. So she made the painful decision to leave the family to try to find a new life for all of them in America.

“When you hear of the United States in our country, you hear a place where there’s an abundance of everything,” Francis said. “You hear another world, one of opportunities.”

With the limited money their mom could send back from her job in the United States, the siblings built a shack from plywood and cardboard, which they called home for an entire year. “We had a stove and one mattress big enough for all of us. Just the essentials.”

Thirteen-year-old Emily, who had always embraced school, took on the role of caregiver for her three sisters and little brother (then ages 3, 5, 9 and 11). Although she loved them deeply, she felt stuck. She worried that she’d never have a life of her own.

When Emily’s mother was able to send for them, the group began a long and winding journey to join her. Without money or knowledge to acquire a visa, Emily and two sisters were picked up by strangers who had been paid to take them to America. (The youngest siblings, who share a different father, stayed behind to try to enter the country legally.) After traveling through Mexico for two months, the sisters arrived in New York by plane.

“Of course, we were busted at the airport. The man who brought us was put in handcuffs,” Francis said. “We just knew we’d be sent back, never to see mom again.”

One alumna’s winding road to citizenship and classroom excellence

Emily Francis ‘10, uses lessons from her personal immigration journey to enhance her students’ education experience.

Guatemala to North Carolina

By WILLS CITTY

Guatemala to North Carolina

IMPACT Education
Before that could happen, their estranged grandmother arrived to claim the children. Because she had a green card, the girls left with her a few hours later and were eventually able to secure legal status. Soon, all five children were living with their mother in New York. Excited to be in America, Emily realized that as a 15-year-old with a sixth-grade education who spoke little English, it was time to get to work.

“I wanted to learn,” she said. “I wanted a high school diploma and to go to college. I wanted to be someone.”

Francis enrolled in school and took supplementary summer and night classes while working part time and helping at home. Within three years, she placed out of ESL and earned the credits to graduate. Though she had already taken photos in her cap and gown, Francis was tripped up three times by a statewide American history exam and didn’t receive a diploma.

“I walked out in tears, because I had failed. I didn’t know there were options besides taking the test again, and I didn’t know where to turn,” Francis said.

It took several more years to find a way forward. After relocating to North Carolina, she learned about GED programs and enrolled at Rockingham Community College, graduating in just a few months. While working toward an associate degree—and longing to be a teacher—Francis applied for part-time work with Cabarrus County Schools.

“I applied to be a custodian or to serve food; I only added teacher assistant because they asked for a third choice,” she said. “I thought there was no way in the world I would ever get the job.”

Francis believes that love for the classroom and an “intervention from on high” in the form of an instant connection with first grade English teacher Angie Power landed her the position. Power agrees.

“She seemed like someone who really, really wanted to be here. I wanted to work with someone with that desire.”

At first, Francis was both scholar and teacher at Mount Pleasant Elementary School, working on her own language skills while helping around the classroom.

“From the beginning, she was a natural with the kids. She knows how they feel, and they can see themselves in her,” Power said.

During the next eight years, she gained valuable experience as a teacher assistant, completed the associate degree, then a bachelor’s in Spanish and a graduate certificate and master’s in Teaching English as a Second Language from UNC Charlotte.

Emily’s dream of becoming a teacher was realized in 2012, when she was hired as the ESL instructor for W.M. Irvin Elementary School in Concord, North Carolina. Working with more than 70 English language learners and supporting classroom teachers, Francis uses her own experience to help the next generation of ESL students.

“When you put a kid in front of me, I don’t see just a target test score,” she said. “I see potential and a dream that wants to come true.”

She approaches each student individually. Francis speaks more Spanish to newcomers with limited proficiency and works one-on-one. For more advanced English language learners, she looks for ways to connect ESL instruction with what they’re learning in core classes.

While her interactions with students resonate over the course of the school day, some of Francis’ classroom magic begins after the final bell. Often dedicating unpaid personal time, she connects with parents and teachers to chip away at cultural divides that can hold students back. Her workshops for ESL parents focus on acclimating to the American educational system and uncovering opportunities for student support.

“I ask myself, ‘What didn’t my mother know that she needs to know?’ So we learn about understanding reading levels, test scores and how to support their kids in their education, to team up with teachers.”

“It was really hard for me and my son,” said Gema Bermudez, a parent of one of Francis’ former students. “Emily is special. She has taught me how to help him do better.”

Francis also holds cultural competence classes for fellow teachers and connects students through the Spanish Club and a Spanish spelling bee.

“Emily’s staff trainings are the best-attended meetings because everyone knows they’re going to learn something valuable. She’s helped us understand what it is like to come to this country with nothing but the dream to have a better life,” said Christina Herum, a lead teacher at Irvin.

In 2016, Cabarrus County Schools recognized her extraordinary efforts with its highest honor: the Teacher of the Year award. It was a surreal moment for Francis, who says at many points she would have laughed at the idea of becoming an award winner. Yet the award was only the beginning. Two years later, after a call from producers who saw her story on the pages of People magazine, Francis was sitting on stage with Ellen DeGeneres, whose show she had once watched to practice English. Before the taping was over, she would receive a $100,000 check from the Chobani Foundation in support of a program that helps feed hungry students at her school.

National headlines, talk shows, cheering crowds: it’s the kind of thing that can go to a person’s head. But Emily’s efforts to rise up are intimately connected with helping others do the same.

“Success has nothing to do with making headlines,” she said, fighting back tears. “The kind of success that makes me happy is being able to change someone’s life through the way education changed mine.”

Engage more with Emily’s story and how UNC Charlotte is reimagining teacher education: inside.uncc.edu/featured-stories.

Wills Citty is director of communications, Cato College of Education.
Business and entrepreneurship

A city and region are as strong as their economic opportunities. As the nation’s third-largest banking hub—and ranked by Forbes as among the top 10 cities for jobs, Charlotte offers exceptional opportunities to live and work—for qualified employees in the existing labor market as well as entrepreneurs. To provide business innovators ways to grow and test their ideas for sustainability—and become job creators, UNC Charlotte offers resources in the form of expertise, space and connection to the region’s vast network of business decision makers.
It began as a research project in 2005 as engineering professor Ivan Howitt met with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department to consider solving a very serious problem—detecting blockages in the 4,000-plus miles of sewer lines that serve hundreds of thousands of customers daily.

“I am an engineer who likes to solve real problems,” said Howitt, who specializes in researching wireless communications for industrial applications—think WiFi, Zigby and Bluetooth.

Between 2005 and 2007, Howitt began to develop a radio frequency (RF) method to inspect sewer lines and locate blockages. While he had limited success with RF, Howitt eventually realized that sound waves were more conducive to traveling through the water and sewer pipes.

This technological innovation would lead to the founding of the entrepreneurial startup InfoSense Inc., which has been on the Charlotte Business Journal’s list of fastest-growing private companies since 2015. InfoSense’s SL-RAT (sewer line rapid assessment tool) is a screening tool for municipal utilities to maintain their wastewater collection systems.

“Because I'm more of an inventor, it took me a while to realize that I'm willing to take on a lot of the roles of an entrepreneur,” said Howitt. “Entrepreneurs are excited (by their ideas), which was certainly the case for me. I was excited about solving a problem and seeing my invention used in the real world and in the marketplace.”

Given the commercial applications of his invention, Howitt decided to seek advice from UNC Charlotte colleagues in Ventureprise and its predecessor, the Ben Craig Center.

The Queen City’s Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Paul Wetenhall, executive director of Ventureprise, Charlotte’s longest-serving entrepreneur support organization, served as an important sounding board for Howitt. He provided advice on business startup strategies and connected Howitt with financial resources and potential executive leaders who could grow the business. Alex Churchill, current chief executive officer for InfoSense, is among those Howitt would meet through UNC Charlotte contacts.

Wetenhall’s expertise with grant funding for startups proved valuable as did other Ventureprise opportunities. “We helped Ivan apply for the NC IDEA seed grant program, and Ventureprise's Charlotte Venture Challenge provided him with coaching and mentor advice and actual practice on pitching his idea to the business community,” said Wetenhall. “It is important for a technology-based...
founder to become comfortable talking about customers, market size and the profit potential of a venture.”

UNC Charlotte has a long history of supporting Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s business startup community, starting with the Ben Craig Center Inc., a small business incubator, established in 1986. The center operated as a nonprofit corporation closely affiliated with and financially supported by the University.

In 2012, the center adopted the name Ventureprise to communicate its broader mission to build “a robust innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem.” The Ventureprise team now focuses its efforts primarily within the campus community to enable UNC Charlotte to help power the region’s innovation and entrepreneurship development. Operations moved into the PORTAL Building in February 2014 (see page 23).

Research drives innovation, and UNC Charlotte excels at converting its research into commercial outcomes. Although its amount of sponsored research is smaller than the national average for similar-sized institutions, sponsored research, which last year totaled a record $51 million, continues to grow. In fact, according to the Association of University Technology Managers, UNC Charlotte is among the nation’s top universities as measured by inventions, patents, startups and licenses.

“That is a strong selling point,” said Wetenhall. “So, let’s grow the research we conduct, which will lead to more commercial outcomes that will generate jobs and wealth for Charlotte.”

University research focuses on expanding knowledge, and infusing entrepreneurship broadly is beneficial, as it promotes interdisciplinary activity aimed at problem solving. Wetenhall said UNC Charlotte cancer researcher Pinku Mukherjee’s work is illustrative because researchers could build upon her investigations and scholarly work published. She took on a role as an entrepreneur in founding the biotechnology company OncoTab Inc. in 2011 (previously CanDiag Inc.). The company has an exclusive license to a patented technology platform that has successfully demonstrated diagnostic, imaging and therapeutic capabilities with breast, prostate and pancreatic cancers. It has won several awards including one from NCBiotech and the grand prize at the Charlotte Venture Challenge. Ventureprise’s annual competition focused on customer discovery and startup fundamentals.

“Dr. Mukherjee’s work is realizing value for people, and that is an important role for us to play as a University,” said Wetenhall. “Universities are complex, but we’re about understanding the world, developing solutions to problems and equipping students to be able to accomplish that.” From a business/community standpoint, a vibrant entrepreneurial sector leads to greater resilience and economic diversification.

“Entrepreneurship is fundamentally aligned with a democratic society, diffusing ownership. Plus entrepreneurial companies are ‘stickier.’ Multinational companies will move to optimize their outcomes, but typically, companies founded locally are going to stick here because their founders live here. They become a source of wealth creation, which leads to philanthropic activities that benefit the good of the community,” Wetenhall explained.

**Spurring startups**

Innovation and entrepreneurship are twin pillars that can transform institutions, businesses and organizations and communities. “They (innovation and entrepreneurship) will change students’ lives and support accelerated research growth at the University, which will have a substantive impact on the greater Charlotte region,” said Wetenhall. “Ultimately, we’d like 10 percent of our students every year to experience entrepreneurship in some fashion. Entrepreneurs identify problems and develop solutions, and they have the skills to execute the solutions, not only in the for-profit sector but through social entrepreneurship, too. Think Teach for America, where an entrepreneurial student saw a need—high-quality teachers for inner-city schools—and developed a method to recruit talent in a novel way.”

Ventureprise’s core programs serving UNC Charlotte students, faculty and staff include the National Science Foundation (NSF) I-Corps Program, 49er Foundry student business incubator and the annual Charlotte Venture Challenge.

The Ventureprise Launch NSF I-Corps Program is a six-week initiative that provides University innovators with commercialization advice, training and funding to identify potential customers. The 49er Foundry provides business advisory services, networking opportunities, an entrepreneurial learning community and an intensive, hands-on curriculum designed to enable students to learn about and launch scalable ventures. Student teams receive space in PORTAL, Charlotte Venture Challenge, the startup competition, this year featured finalist panel discussions and three categories; student, university research and innovation and community entrepreneurship; more than $20,000 was awarded to category winners.

An NC IDEA Foundation ecosystem grant also is funding the Ventureprise Launch customer discovery program to early-stage, innovation-driven startups in Charlotte and western North Carolina. The curriculum takes early stage entrepreneurs through customer discovery and business model generation activities modeled after the NSF I-Corps Program.

“Entrepreneurship has to be taught like nursing or the violin—it has to experiential. It can’t be a classroom-only activity. Just as a violinist must put the bow to the instrument, students should be part of the 49er Foundry or engaged as an intern talking to entrepreneurs,” said Wetenhall.

![Ivan Howitt (right) with Alex Churchill and George Selembo and the sewer rat.](image-url)
‘Entrepreneurs are everyday people’

Across campus, entrepreneurship is a topic of discussion by many college leaders and faculty members. From an academic standpoint, the Belk College of Business is at the forefront of teaching and researching entrepreneurship and innovation.

“Entrepreneurship is a foundational business skill that is woven and embedded into our programs, courses and departments,” said Steve Ott, dean of the Belk College of Business. As North Carolina’s urban business school, the Belk College engages in research that fosters business theory, policy and practice. The college is one of the largest business schools in the Carolinas with an enrollment of more than 4,700 undergraduate and graduate students, a faculty of 100-plus full-time professors and alumni totaling more than 30,000.

Justin Webb, Belk Distinguished Professor of Business Innovation, is a highly regarded researcher on entrepreneurship. Like Ventureprise’s Wetenhall, Webb believes educating entrepreneurs should be a balance of theory with practice.

“Entrepreneurs are everyday people, and research shows that for others to assume a role, they must have role models to follow,” said Webb. “We want our students to see entrepreneurs as individuals, so they can perceive themselves undertaking similar paths.”

To expose students to some of the region’s entrepreneurs, Webb has developed a novel course, “Entrepreneurial Decisions,” which started fall 2018 at UNC Charlotte Center City. Each week, two to four entrepreneurs visit the class to discuss key experiences and decisions they made with regard to their startups. Four of these classes are open to the Charlotte community, too, so members of the public will have a chance to learn from some of Charlotte’s top entrepreneurs and network with other entrepreneurs, UNC Charlotte students and alumni.

“To date, nearly 35 entrepreneurs have committed to attending one of the class sessions,” said Webb. “These are highly successful entrepreneurs, many who have received venture capital funding. Charlotte has a nascent entrepreneurial ecosystem, as well as a very vibrant community of entrepreneurs who are highly supportive of entrepreneurship.”

Powering up leaders, innovators across disciplines

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) is providing opportunities for its students to “power up” their liberal arts degrees through its LEADS (Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Applied Development Skills) Program. Designed for undergraduate majors in the college, LEADS is centered on project-based learning that demonstrates entrepreneurial thinking and leadership skills that prospective employers seek.

Shawn Long, senior associate dean for academic affairs in CLAS, said LEADS allows CLAS majors to take ownership of their work to illustrate how they solve problems through critical thinking and problem-solving.

Saprex founder Bob Goulet credits his experience with Ventureprise as pivotal to his company’s success.

Saprex Advanced Solutions, founded in 2009 and based in Gastonia, recently was ranked no. 324 on the INC 500 list of fastest-growing private companies in the United States.

Founder Bob Goulet, who moved to Charlotte from Salt Lake City to start the venture, credits a large portion of his success to his association with Ventureprise.

“My vision was to create an applied research company in the area of high temperate materials. I had good connections with companies in the area that I would need to work with,” he said. “UNC Charlotte’s guidance was pivotal to keep Saprex alive and growing.”

In 2010, Saprex landed a research contract with a Lincoln, Nebraska, company to develop a new insulation system for exhausts on large diesel trucks. Goulet, who was working out of his basement, recognized he needed entrepreneurial guidance. He met Paul Wetenhall and learned about Ventureprise at a 2011 Charlotte Chamber event.

“My startup was working on a contract that would make it a tier-two supplier to one of the biggest truck builders in the world,” said Goulet. “Paul introduced me to individuals at Charlotte Research Institute, and I rented a small lab in Grigg Hall.”

Saprex’s exponential trajectory is a story of overcoming entrepreneurial challenges; the company moved its operations in 2017 to a 15,000-square-foot facility in Gastonia.

In addition to recognition by INC, Saprex received the JEC Global Innovation Award in Automotive Composites. The JEC Group is the largest composite organization in the world; it represents, promotes and helps develop composite markets by providing global and local networking and information services.

“Starting a company that originates as a tier-two supplier in the automotive sector and now has a 50 percent market share in North America brings a number of challenges,” said Goulet. “While Saprex is different from what I originally imagined, Ventureprise and Charlotte Research Institute were critical to helping me understand ways to approach entrepreneurship and the company to attain its level of success.”

(Continued on page 22.)
thinking, conduct research, analyze data and deliver results via written and oral presentations.

“Within an organization, the challenges are complex. Employers expect their employees to have a wide set of skills, such as those acquired through a liberal arts education,” said Long.

Twenty faculty fellows champion LEADS programming across the college, which also offers a fresh university experience. During their three-year commitment, fellows receive professional development designed to help students build and reflect LEADS competencies. CLAS has partnered with the University Career Center and University College to offer a second-semester freshman course “Exploring Pathways for Success.” During this one-hour, 10-week course, students explore entrepreneurial topics, including leadership, ethics, diversity and globalization, and they participate in service projects on campus. Six personal and career assessments are administered to help students uncover their strengths.

Starting spring 2019, CLAS is partnering with Ventureprise to offer an Innovation Leadership Lab in which teams of students will complete projects under the supervision of Ventureprise’s entrepreneur experts.

“UNC Charlotte helps to drive regional economic activity, and the University offers employers graduates with the underlying creativity, innovative thinking and communication skills that industries can leverage. The college is hiring forward-thinking faculty members to prepare our graduates to think about a changing world and how transformation affects the future,” Long stated.

Project-based learning is integral for the William States Lee College of Engineering. Its Senior Design Program brings students and industry partners together in a collaborative research environment. Engineering students develop critical skills while working in multidisciplinary teams to tackle problems in electrical, computer, mechanical, systems and civil engineering technologies.

Both Ventureprise’s Wetenhall and Belk College’s Webb emphasized the importance of experiential learning for students, such as the Senior Design Project and CLAS LEADS. With respect to liberal arts students, Wetenhall noted such students are “bright with communication and analytical skills, and through Ventureprise’s I-Corps Program, they can complement technologists, engineers and computer scientists. CLAS leaders identify with some parents’ concerns for the employment prospects of liberal arts majors. Entrepreneurship is how problems get solved. Maybe not all problems, but entrepreneurs are individuals willing to take risks and execute ideas.”

Read about one of UNC Charlotte’s alumni entrepreneurs, Calvin Brock, the Boxing Banker, at inside.uncc.edu/featured-stories.

Philip Brown is assistant director for internal communications, Office of University Communications.

Video Collaboratory moving toward commercialization

The award-winning Video Collaboratory is a web-based application designed for teamwork around video documents. It is the work of researchers in the College of Computing and Informatics and the College of Arts + Architecture: Celine Latulipe, Sybil Huskey, David Wilson and Vikash Singh.

Years in development, Video Collaboratory, the 2018 Blue Diamond Award recipient for Cool Innovation from the Charlotte Area Technology Collaborative, began as the National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded Dance Draw Project, which brought Latulipe, professor of software and information systems, and Huskey, professor of dance, together.

Developed to review and critique rehearsals/productions from multiple locations, Video Collaboratory offers solutions for other settings. Beyond simply viewing a recording, Video Collaboratory is equipped to allow co-workers or friends to mark up, analyze and discuss videos from anywhere.

Devin Collins, associate director of Ventureprise, is mentoring the research team behind Video Collaboratory (VC). He noted applications exist for the innovative technology in online education, corporate training and technical projects requiring teams to meet remotely worldwide. Collins worked with the VC team during its participation in the NSF I-Corps program. During this program, the team completed the customer discovery process, and Collins helped guide the team’s trajectory and decision making process.

“Very early on, Devin encouraged us to participate in the Charlotte Venture Challenge, which resulted in recognition and lasting network connections,” said Huskey. “He poses questions and hypotheticals while clarifying and contextualizing with caring candor, and he is consistently bringing funding and professional development opportunities to our

Ventureprise support is boosting the Video Collaboratory’s marketability.

attention. Also, he has made a variety of introductions that have proven valuable in the development of Video Collaboratory.”

Another example of University research with commercialization potential, Video Collaboratory provides a solution that a number of industries can utilize.

“Entrepreneurship becomes a bridge between UNC Charlotte research/scholarship and the public commercial marketplace where citizens can benefit from products and services that are created and incubated in the University,” Huskey stated. “Connecting higher education to the greater community can create employment, infuse money into the local and state economies and create dynamic opportunities for faculty and students.”

(Continued from page 21.)
Business alum Chris Moxley strikes gold with Queen City pride

704 Shop, a Charlotte-based lifestyle brand that blends fresh designs and classic imagery with modern graphics for a contemporary look, is an entrepreneurial venture started by three former college roommates, Chris Moxley ’03, Jerri Shephard ’14 and Scott Wooten.

Focusing on its motto “stay close to home,” 704 Shop celebrates the spirit of Charlotte. Primarily an online retailer, 704 Shop has opened a brick-and-mortar location at 1616 Camden Road, Suite 140 within walking distance of the CATS Blue Line East/West Station.

Moxley, a compliance associate with TIAA in addition to part owner of the 704 Shop, is a native of Charlotte. He earned bachelor’s degrees in international business and Spanish from the University and believes Belk College of Business provided him the necessary tools to analyze financial situations and communicate with a high level of business acumen. Through internships, he was exposed to how successful businesses are structured.

“UNC Charlotte is uniquely positioned to act as a catalyst for startups,” said Moxley. “Interaction among experienced faculty and staff and talented students, combined with cutting-edge facilities can help spur innovation that otherwise may be delayed or never occur.”

He noted that Ventureprise and Charlotte Research Institute continue to create dialogue and exchange around entrepreneurship and innovation, which benefits the broader community. Entrepreneurs often make significant contributions to the community in the form of jobs, innovation, art, culture and civic service, Moxley stated, adding exposing more students to entrepreneurship, leadership and business development skills would be beneficial.

“Charlotte has an incredibly inclusive entrepreneurial environment—if you’re persistent and compelling, you can usually get a meeting with the person you want. Be prepared to be patient; just as Rome wasn’t built in a day, neither is a strong foundation for a business,” said Moxley.

Moxley recently made a gift to EXPONENTIAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte to create the Jaylen C. Moxley Scholarship for Academic Excellence. It is named for his 11-year-old son. He hopes his gift will encourage other alumni to make gifts of their own to UNC Charlotte.

“Many of us have our degrees to thank for opening doors in our personal and professional lives,” he said.

PORTAL: Powering innovation and entrepreneurship

The PORTAL building, which opened in February 2014, demonstrates UNC Charlotte’s commitment to foster partnerships with private industry. Designed to stimulate business growth and job creation along with promoting research and innovation and supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the Charlotte region, PORTAL is a venue where entrepreneurs can collaborate with peers, faculty members and students to harness the power of a research university to plan strategies that lead to business success.

The Partnership, Outreach and Research to Accelerate Learning (PORTAL) facility has more than 90,000 square feet of floor space dedicated to business innovation and partnership with front door access to the exceptional resources, facilities and academic talent of the University’s 1,000-acre campus. Its Charlotte Research Institute location affords easy access via the LYNX Blue Line light rail stop at the J.W. Clay/UNC Charlotte Station, as well as from I-85 and I-485.

Business tenant offices and suites start at about 200 square feet and are expandable. There are community gathering spaces—including glass, enclosed meeting rooms located on two atrium transecting bridges—that facilitate networking and idea exchange. Contemporary laboratory space can be leased as well; lab sizes range from 325 to 800 square feet and are available in several buildings across the UNC Charlotte campus.

For more information about PORTAL, contact Chip Yensan (lyensan@uncc.edu, 704-687-8283) or Clay Andrews (wandrew4@uncc.edu, 704-687-8234).
For organizations that provide essential health and human services to people whose resources are limited, it’s vital to understand the areas of greatest need among the populations they serve—and capture data that can inform effective planning and decision making. UNC Charlotte researchers and students from a number of disciplines are helping community organizations that deliver family, health care, mental health, wellness, job training and other important services to view their work through a data-driven lens. Relatedly, the College of Computing and Informatics is integrating innovation, ethics and equity into all its programs for the purpose of developing responsible and compassionate technology professionals.
As part of an effort to expand access to a wide array of essential services for underserved populations in Mecklenburg County, UNC Charlotte has joined a local nonprofit organization serving lower-income Latinos to amplify and expand the group’s impact. Last spring, UNC Charlotte and the Camino Community Center officially dedicated The Communiversity at Camino, bringing UNC Charlotte faculty, staff, students and resources to the organization that has provided comprehensive services to the immigrant Charlotte community since 2004 and serves more than 20,000 people annually.

Through a one-stop-shop approach, Camino offers direct patient physical and mental health care, nutrition and physical activity programs, job training and small business support, homeless support, English as a Second Language (ESL) and a community thrift store and food pantry. During the past three years, UNC Charlotte faculty, staff and students have played a growing role at Camino under the leadership of Mark DeHaven, director of the UNC Charlotte Academy for Research on Community Health, Engagement and Services (ARCHES).

From 2010 to 2015, the Hispanic population in Mecklenburg County grew 14.8 percent, bringing Hispanics to 12.7 percent of the total population. Today, many immigrants still struggle to find services.

Currently, 22 students and 10 faculty members

**It Starts at Home**

**Aligned missions turn the page for underserved populations in University City**

**BY WILLS CITTY**
are engaged in permanent programs through Communiversity, with more expected in coming semesters. Communiversity features current and planned contributions from five different UNC Charlotte colleges including programs from social work, kinesiology, counseling, languages and cultural studies, dance, computing, Bonner Leaders, public health, geography and health psychology.

“By combining the missions and expertise of the College of Health and Human Services and Camino, the Communiversity is developing a unique care delivery system and training resource for the city of Charlotte as well as a best-practices model for improving the health of Latino and other vulnerable populations in North Carolina and communities across the nation,” said DeHaven, who also is the Dean W. Colvard Distinguished Professor of Public Health Sciences.

Students and faculty are involved with the program in a variety of impactful ways. Using a donation from BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina, kinesiology graduate student Anna Tart helped establish weekly exercise programming and renovate and secure equipment for a gym. Roger Suclupe, clinical assistant professor of social work and co-director of Communiversity, has established a class called “Social Work Practice with Latino Communities,” which meets at Camino regularly.

“Through this collaborative and experiential approach, students gain the ability to practice social work through a culturally inclusive lens,” Suclupe said. “These issues are important for students to become aware of because the Latinx population continues to increase while access to services continues to be a barrier,” he added.

Communiversity also has developed Tu No Estas Solo (You are not alone), a mental health program staffed by UNC Charlotte students with faculty supervision. In 2017, the program served 116 individuals through the efforts of six student interns who provide either direct or indirect clinical services. Two contribute to health program follow-up and community outreach. In an industry where no-shows are common, 70 percent of scheduled appointments were kept; 66 percent of clients completed their prescribed treatment where dropping out after the first session is the norm; symptoms of anxiety and depression improved noticeably and a majority of the client backlog disappeared.

The Communiversity, whose goals align with the Charlotte Opportunity Task Force, particularly in regard to improving social mobility among specific Charlotte populations, as well as the UCity Action Plan and UNC Charlotte Action Plan, will implement a data-driven approach for measuring outcomes. Findings will be disseminated to policymakers nationwide.

The program has received local support from Foundation for the Carolinas, United Way and ARCHES, the UNC Charlotte research academy. Gregg Phipps, who represents the University City area on the Charlotte City Council, said leveraging partnerships in this way has allowed the program to flourish.

“I’ve been involved with Camino for several years, and in my wildest dreams, I couldn’t have imagined it would grow to this level,” he said.

Suclupe, the UNC Charlotte social work professor, said the Communiversity has yet to reach its potential.

“UNC Charlotte has the opportunity to become a leader among academic institutes across North Carolina by addressing the needs of these communities by connecting resources, building relationships, establishing community trust and becoming proactive social justice advocates,” he said.

Wills Citty is director of communications, College of Health and Human Services.
Across North Carolina, employers are searching for talent to fill tech positions that number as high as 17,000 at any given time—the majority of them in Charlotte, followed by Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill.

As new startups emerge and established companies seek new markets for expansion, workforce technology preparedness and a robust university talent pipeline are among their highest priorities. At UNC Charlotte, the College of Computing and Informatics (CCI) is singularly committed to preparing students to meet the dynamic demands of technology employers through an academic culture that emphasizes innovation, ethics and equity.

“CCI’s curriculum is designed to help students understand the responsibility—and often the ethical dilemmas—associated with technology’s transformative power,” said Fatma Mili, CCI’s dean. “We are delivering thoughtful and forward-thinking computing talent equipped to meet the tech and human demands of this region’s and the country’s growing technology sector.”

Daniel Ramos, pursuing a master’s degree in data science and business analytics, is experiencing through the classroom, extracurriculars and an extended internship how CCI’s core principals are shaping his approach to technology and his career choices.

“CCI faculty are curious and extremely encouraging,” he said. “More than once, I’ve asked for input in regard to the application of best practices related to my internship, and my professors are always willing to take time to explain and offer guidance.”

A summer 2018 internship with South End-based SentryOne, a leading provider of service and technology monitoring solutions, has extended into the current fall semester. An intern in the Data Science Department—which consists entirely of alumni of CCI’s Data Science and Business Analytics program—Ramos feels a sense of pride knowing that a young and fast-growing company like SentryOne recognizes the program’s value and gives it “a stamp of approval” by recruiting and hiring its students and graduates.

Applying big data to solve big problems

Through hackathons, 24-36 hour lock-in events where teams of tech experts work together to find solutions to business, community or social issues through the application of data science, Ramos and his classmates are gaining an understanding of the power and promise of big data. Given a problem and a data set, teams compete by using their analytical skills; writing code; or creating apps, websites or other technologies toward resolutions.

For example, at this spring’s annual Teradata 2018 Data Challenge, where UNC Charlotte teams historically have placed high, Ramos and his teammates found data-backed solutions to a nonprofit organization’s need to create awareness for and increase participation in a national charity bike-a-thon campaign. At a similar event, his team created an app to alert Charlotte drivers about traffic hotspots and areas to avoid while commuting.

“The potential for using data for social good is tremendous,” said Ramos, who is a student member on the Data Science and Business Analytics advisory board. “CCI challenges students to apply what we’re learning toward making a difference.”

The right place at the right time

CCI is fast becoming a first choice for Charlotte businesses seeking top talent. With collaborative research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, access to high-quality internships and the Business Partners program, relationships between students and the business community are often forged long before students graduate.

“The bond between CCI and the city of Charlotte is symbiotic,” said Mili. “There is no great city without a world-class research university and no great research institution without a city and community valuing and supporting it.”

As Ramos heads toward graduating in spring 2019, he knows that his career will be rooted in Charlotte, named recently by CompTIA’s 2018 Tech Town Index as the number-one city for IT professionals.

“Eyes light up when I tell people about data science and data analytics; the opportunities are certainly here,” he said. “I’m in the right place at the right time.”
Emerald green signs dot the street corners in The Renaissance, a redeveloped community in west Charlotte, marking Innovation Drive, New Renaissance Way, Achievement Lane, Ascension Way and Triumph Drive. The signs do more than direct travelers. They serve as symbols of hope in a community working to improve residents’ access to quality housing, education, health, wellness and—above all—opportunity, through a powerful cradle-to-career approach.

The Renaissance, with funding from the Charlotte Housing Authority and other supporters, focuses on factors that research shows can make an impact on people’s economic mobility. New mixed-income housing replaced a public housing complex; Renaissance West STEAM Academy and the Howard Levine Child Development Center are central to the community’s revitalization; and access to career and wellness resources and other resources are making a difference in residents’ lives.

Important to this community effort is a core team of UNC Charlotte faculty members, graduate students and alumni affiliated with the Community Psychology Research Lab. Team members work closely on data collection and evaluation, in collaboration with the Renaissance West Community Initiative (RWCI).

The partnership with The Renaissance community is just one example of the collaborative nature of the UNC Charlotte lab. Every year for close to two decades, the lab has collaborated with up to a dozen Charlotte-area agencies and community organizations.

“Our aim is to enhance the capacity of agencies,

Data Driven

Community Psychology Research Lab helps partners connect numbers to outcomes

BY LYNN ROBERSON
programs and systems to track meaningful data that informs their decision-making and guides what they can do with their resources,” said Ryan Kilmer, a professor in the Department of Psychological Science. “As a bottom line, we want our work to benefit the services and supports for kids and families.”

Leading the lab with Kilmer are department colleagues and community psychologists Jim Cook, Victoria Scott and Andrew Case. The lab is staffed by advanced graduate students who work with agencies at no cost, as part of their coursework. Some students are hired as graduate assistants for more long-term work, and some go on to take full-time evaluation and leadership roles within the organizations. Undergraduate students participate through a learning community and as research scholars.

With each community collaboration, team members focus on capacity building and sustainability. They concentrate particularly on the issues of early childhood education, mental health, public housing, child welfare and integrated primary and behavioral health care.

“We’re working at a systems level rather than an individual one—and with multiple organizations at a community level,” said Cook. “Understanding systems complexity is a huge part of this work and includes knowing how they operate and understanding dynamic settings, multiple actors and ambiguity. It takes patience and persistence to comprehend that impact takes time.”

Partnership Perspective

With the Council for Children’s Rights, lab team members have worked for years with multi-agency teams to address issues related to child custody, mental health, social services and juvenile justice.

“They have provided advice and guidance to us, as we have undertaken and developed a data and research policy practice within our agency that informs our individual advocacy and provides us with the basis to make systemic and institutional changes in the community,” said Bob Simmons, executive director of the Council for Children’s Rights. “This really has a big impact on the ability of children and their families to take advantage of opportunities in the community.”

Agencies know they need to gather and analyze data, but sometimes lack knowledge or resources to do so. Or they require a broader understanding of how to connect data to outcomes identified as important.

One longstanding partnership connected to economic mobility is the team’s work, led by Cook and Kilmer, with the publicly funded Pre-K program in Charlotte, particularly the Bright Beginnings program. The early childhood education programs serve 4-year-olds who have experienced disadvantage. In close partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the team helped measure impact, clarify goals, develop measures and processes, and pilot observation tools, before issuing a public report on the program in 2013-14.

Since that time, the lab has obtained funding from the Institute of Education Sciences to assist the program’s ability to collect, manage and use data, and develop innovative strategies. Now, data is being used to enhance the coaching given to teachers to help them be more effective.

Respect Builds Trust

In addition to sharing information about collecting, analyzing and applying data to drive outcomes, lab team members bring immense knowledge of academic literature, a history of obtaining funding to support the work, and a record of national and state awards that recognize their impact. Yet, they do not see themselves as having all the answers.

“This is about relationships, partnerships and building trust,” Kilmer said. “I might know about applied research and evaluation, but our partners are the experts on their families and their kids. They know best about their organizational dynamics and the people they serve. We have to appreciate the strengths, capacity and expertise they bring to the table and communicate effectively about mutually beneficial objectives.”

Victoria Scott continued, “It’s important to take time to understand the context of the organization. We understand the importance of readiness for particular steps. Our program does well in training students to

Relationships Bring About Results

UNC Charlotte’s Community Psychology Lab partners with agencies serving Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to broaden their capacity to gather, analyze and interpret data relevant to the people and communities they serve. Current and past partners, several with students and alumni holding leadership positions, include:

- Charlotte Bilingual School
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Pre-K, Bright Beginnings
- A Child’s Place
- Circle de Luz
- City of Charlotte
- Communities in Schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg
- Community Culinary School of Charlotte
- Council for Children’s Rights
- The Males Place
- McColl Center for Art + Innovation
- MeckCARES
- Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services
- ParentVOICE
- Renaissance West Community Initiative
- Teen Health Connection
- Thompson Child and Family Focus
- United Way of Central Carolinas
listen intentionally, and to identify these markers, and being able to converse with organizations in a way that matches their readiness.”

In its work with The Renaissance in West Charlotte, the UNC Charlotte team collaborates with Building Uplifted Families project manager Monica Thomas. “The data and evaluation team from UNC Charlotte is essential to making sure we stay on track, because we are interested in sustainability,” Thomas said.

Thomas leads a team of professionals known as life navigators, who work with The Renaissance community residents as they access information, education, and life planning services, and as they advocate for themselves. Funded by a national grant from The BUILD Health Challenge and by two local health care systems, Building Uplifted Families includes Novant Health, Atrium Health and Mecklenburg County Public Health.

Scott leads the data and evaluation efforts along with Michael Dulin, director for the Academy of Population Health Innovation in UNC Charlotte’s College of Health and Human Services.

“The ultimate aim of the initiative is to improve social mobility and the access to opportunity in The Renaissance community,” Scott said. “Two health care systems that have traditionally been competitors locally are working hand-in-hand, along with a host of other organizations, to link Renaissance residents to resources.”

In concrete terms, the UNC Charlotte collaborators worked with RWCI staff to create a customized data management system, which allows life navigators to input and also dig into data to better understand the needs of residents of The Renaissance. They are also using the data to provide detailed updates to funders and other stakeholders.

“Our relationship with the lab team members allows life navigators to have complete autonomy in what
they’re doing; they are there to support and guide us,” said Thomas. “They make recommendations, but we don’t feel as though it’s an academic study. Life navigators are experts, and the UNC Charlotte team helps us interpret the work. We don’t immediately see the beauty of it until the evaluation team shows us an automated picture of what the data are saying.”

Jackie Tynan ’16, who has joined RWCI as senior associate program officer, is an important collaborator. She earned a psychology master’s degree from UNC Charlotte and is now pursuing a doctoral degree in the community psychology training program within the health psychology doctoral program at UNC Charlotte.

“Nonprofit work is fast paced and leaves little time for a small organization like RWCI to focus on evaluation and outcomes,” she said. “Both of these, however, are critical to the success of any community organization. This partnership with UNC Charlotte allows us to do our work without missing out on measurements and reporting our outcomes.”

Growing Skills

In another partnership, UNC Charlotte’s Andrew Case works closely with The Males Place, a nonprofit whose mission is to provide comprehensive and prevention-based behavior health educational programming, mentoring and life skills training necessary for manhood development for African American boys ages 12 to 18.

“I bring a deep passion for working with marginalized communities, specifically people of color and communities of color, to create pathways to resources and better outcomes,” Case said. “Some of my work focuses on health disparities and how to reduce them.”

The Males Place addresses this issue through a community garden that provides a variety of crops to the local community. Young men who are part of The Males Place tend the garden as an opportunity to give back to the community and as a means to gain competency. “They gain a sense of confidence and self-worth as they develop into men,” said Case.

Case has worked with The Males Place to develop what is called a logic model. This tool is widely used to evaluate the effectiveness of a program, presenting a picture of how a program works, including its main components and how they relate to one another, and how they are related to outcomes.

Libby Safrit ’97, a leader at another agency partner, views the Community Psychology Research Lab from both a student and partner perspective. She earned a master’s degree in clinical/community psychology from UNC Charlotte and now is the executive director of Teen Health Connection.

“You can do phenomenal work. But if you don’t have the evaluation component—if you don’t have a way to systemically measure the real impact of those dollars—no matter how great your work is, you will not be able to sustain your funding, nor will you be able to sustain your work,” she said. “That is what the partnership gives you.”

Similarly, Virginia Covill ’16, research and evaluation director with Communities In Schools (CIS) of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, sees the work from both vantage points. She completed a Ph.D. in community health psychology while working with community partners as a graduate student.

“Equally important to those we serve are the skills each party brings to the table,” she said. “For participating nonprofits and agencies, it’s their high level of expertise. For UNC Charlotte, it’s knowledge of data and its application. Knowing we can trust implicitly that our University partner holds social justice in high regard and shares the same respect for the challenges faced by individuals in our community makes the collaboration productive.”

Lynn Roberson is director of communications, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

“THE ULTIMATE AIM OF THE INITIATIVE IS TO IMPROVE SOCIAL MOBILITY AND THE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY IN THE RENAISSANCE COMMUNITY.”

Victoria Scott
Charlotte’s changing landscape

With development dominating Charlotte’s residential and commercial real estate scenes, neighborhoods grapple with issues of gentrification and identity. During the process, community leaders and residents are eager to maintain or improve quality of life in terms of education and job accessibility, recreation, environmental aesthetics, among other factors. To this end, UNC Charlotte is helping to guide decision making through a project that sought the opinions of millennials—who are flocking to Charlotte in greater numbers than any other U.S. city—about what would make the Queen City a more satisfying place to live. At the same time, faculty, students and alumni are contributing in a number of creative ways to the city’s ever-expanding backdrop.
Augmented Reality

Mapping the past and present for effective urban planning

BY MEG WHALEN

Most people think of a map as a two-dimensional image, a paper to be folded or rolled, a screen to scroll across. But maps can be treasure chests of information—data about the past and the present that can help shape the future. Ming-Chun Lee, a professor in the Master of Urban Design program, is using augmented reality (AR) to make that information visible in new ways, even to someone who is not, as he describes himself, “a map person.”

“AR brings a third dimension to our experience of maps,” said Lee. “It can help people understand their neighborhood and then they can think about future actions.”

Last spring, Lee and fellow urban design professor Nadia Anderson created “Mapping (In) Equity in the Built Environment,” an interactive installation at the Projective Eye Gallery at UNC Charlotte Center City. The installation consisted of huge floor maps of Charlotte’s Cherry neighborhood, a historically African American neighborhood that has seen dramatic changes in the past decade. With augmented reality, delivered via an app devised by Ankit Kelkar, a graduate student in the College of Computing and Informatics, gallery visitors could view the maps through an iPad and see demographic changes to the area over time—increases in property values, for example, or the racial and economic makeup of the inhabitants.

A visitor from the city’s Planning, Design & Development Department saw the installation in March and asked Lee to bring it to the Charlotte Powerhouse Trolley Studio in SouthEnd, where it is on view now through the end of the year.

“Mapping (In) Equity in the Built Environment” is one of several projects through which Lee is exploring how augmented and virtual reality technology can help people think about urban design and its impact on their lives—actually “seeing” what new sidewalks, buildings or a green space might look like on their street. “We want to make sure a new design only brings good,” he said.

In July, Lee was named a fellow by the Knight Foundation to work with Niantic Inc., maker of the popular Pokémon-GO game, and several local community partners to develop new pathways for civic engagement using AR technology.

“People can use this technology to see the future,” he said. “It’s something to get really excited about.”

Meg Whalen is director of communications, College of Arts + Architecture.
For years, the Queen City has experienced one of the highest population growth rates in the country. New residents, many of whom are UNC Charlotte students who stay when they become alumni, come seeking opportunity. Their arrival contributes to the diversity and vibrancy that is transforming Charlotte into a world-class city with a rich story to tell.

While that story unfolds in a variety of ways, local artisans are using public art to create narratives that tell a story and shape how Charlotte appears.

Sharon Dowell '02, both a UNC Charlotte alumna and public artist, has established a strong presence in the Charlotte arts community. “I love public art; it has the ability to remove the intimidation factor associated with art that so many people in our society experience. Art in public spaces becomes embedded in one’s subconscious, a part of daily life that one embraces without even contemplating it,” she explained.

A native of Houston, Texas, Dowell has spent the past two decades in the Queen City. Since earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University in 2002, she, along with a handful of other alumni artists, have increasingly left their mark on the city through public art.

Armed with the belief that public art can shape a
city’s identity, Dowell often tries to make an impact by capturing the energy of a place while finding the beauty in overlooked spaces.

“Public art can be a lot of things but, most important, it should contribute to the cultural landscape of a city and work to enliven the space,” she said. “While it can be purely artistic, often it serves to communicate a social, political or popular message.”

Dowell’s work can be seen throughout Charlotte, including along the Charlotte Area Transit System’s LYNX Blue Line. Those pieces represent some of her most impactful work.

“I was fortunate to receive commissions for two projects along the light rail, the 25th Street Station and the corridor under the I-277 bridge—which provides a throughway for both the train and people to navigate in and out of Uptown Charlotte,” said Dowell. “Combined, these projects took eight years to complete and are definitely the most challenging, largest scale and highest impact projects I’ve done.

“Designing the bridge corridor was a lot of fun, not only because it was a huge space, but I was thinking about multiple perspectives—the pedestrians as well as the train passengers, and considering the amount of detail that was necessary and what it might look like,” she added.

In the end, Dowell created a vibrant and colorful piece titled “Halcyon Idyll” that aims to capture the relationship between man and nature. She said she hopes that both can coexist as the city continues to grow.

“We think of progress as buildings and skyscrapers, so I incorporated imagery of uptown construction intertwined with some vines and organic imagery,” she explained. “Prior to the light rail, this area was kind of forgotten, so it is nice to be a part of a project that is revitalizing a space.”

As Dowell continues to create public art throughout the city, she said the relationship with what is now her hometown is what she continues to cultivate and finds most rewarding.

“I’ve had the opportunity to interact with a variety of communities within Charlotte through the research I’ve conducted while working on my public art projects,” she said. “I’ve grown to love the city more as a result of my work, and I think that affinity is continually showcased through the work I do.

“As I learned more about the city, the more it is represented in my art,” she added. “What’s great is that ties back to the notion of public art’s ability to shape a city’s identity. It’s really exciting to contribute to the cultural landscape of a growing city, and I hope, even if just a little bit, my art is helping to write or reflect Charlotte’s story.”

Jared Moon is feature projects manager, Office of University Communications.
A studio of UNC Charlotte art students, led by professors Maja Godlewska and Erik Waterkotte, created a series of 10 public art murals for the new Arlo apartment building on West Morehead Street in Wesley Heights. Commissioned by ArchCo Residential, the students participated in a semester-long project to research, design and create the murals.

The themes and imagery in the murals reflect the history and geography of the Wesley Heights neighborhood. In preparation for their design, the students walked through the streets around the new apartment building, sketching and photographing sights, listening to sounds and getting a feel for the physical environment. They then studied old maps, images, postcards and other historical documents of the neighborhood that are held in the collections of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library’s Carolina Room and the University’s Atkins Library.

Working in teams, they translated their research into collaborative, poetic responses to the Wesley Heights area of Charlotte, past and present. On display in the neighborhood, the murals aim to connect with the community while highlighting the neighborhood’s identity as it experiences a revitalization.
Read more about the mural project at inside.uncc.edu/featured-stories.
How do Millennials want Charlotte to grow?
#ShapeCLT has a vision

BY MARY NEWSOM

In communities across the United States, people typically become interested in civic engagement when they buy property or have kids, which are not things many early 20-somethings do. As a result, when city plans include input from residents, the opinions and voices of older residents often resonate the loudest.

A class of fifth-year architecture students at UNC Charlotte wanted to see if they could change that. Their professor, Deb Ryan, who until July chaired the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, won a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to assist with #ShapeCLT, “A Vision for Charlotte. By Millennials. For Millennials.”

For much of the 2018 spring semester they studied other cities’ plans, looking at research on the role the millennial generation is playing in U.S. cities and seeking input from Charlotteans. Their totems (large blackboards inspired by artist Candy Chang’s “Before I Die” project) appeared throughout the city, at places such as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, a UNC Charlotte basketball game, breweries and elsewhere. The totems invited participants to answer the questions:

I wish CLT had more …
I wish CLT still had …
I (heart) CLT cuz …

In addition, they used Facebook, Instagram (@shapeclt) and the Twitter hashtag #shapeCLT to pull together hundreds of responses.

“It was an eye-opening experience,” said Robert Brooks, one of the graduate students involved. “We realized that a city cannot be designed in a bubble based on opinions of a committee closed off from the public. A city is in flux, full of life and diversity; #ShapeCLT embodied this.”

Their diagram of the most common answers for “I wish CLT had more …” showed “food, bars, music, parks” dominating the answers but with plenty of other responses, such as “diversity,” “cheap seafood,” “LGBTQ” and “unity/less divide.” Answers for “I wish CLT still had …” included “historic buildings,” “respect,” “Phat Burrito” and “the Bobcats.”

To explain the city’s context the students created a 38-page online book (shapeclt.org/our-history) looking at Charlotte history, starting with the area’s geographic features. It moves through the city’s founding along the Great Wagon Road, its textile mill history, the post-Civil War era of Jim Crow segregation, racial redlining of neighborhoods, urban renewal, the airport and light rail, sports, banks and cultural amenities.

The students described the Charlotte they envision in specific terms. Connected: “A connected city is characterized by physical and digital interactions.” Lively: “A lively city consists of streetlife, transparency, movement, sound, color and visual busyness.” Radically inclusive: “A welcoming city is home to a synergy of cultures that gives the spice of life and variety to the everyday.” Urgently innovative: “The innovative city is unafraid of radical change; tackling contemporary issues with urgency.” Eco-centric: “An eco-centric city cares for the well-being of the environment and the people who live in it.” Healthy: “A healthy city cares about the well-being of its citizens, ensuring the use of clean resources and practices.” Shared: “We value creative cooperation and fully support the sharing economy.” Unique: “A unique city is distinguished by its iconic architecture, history, geography and vibrant local culture.”

At semester’s end, the students gave final presentations to a jury of expert planners and architects and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission. The final plan was published in summer 2018 with the history section, a look at the city’s characteristics, 30 design ideas, before-and-after sketches and a discussion of the engagement process.

In her capacity with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, Ryan urged the City Council to pause its process to rewrite the city’s zoning and other land-use related ordinances and develop a comprehensive plan, updating the last one written in the 1970s. The city’s response was to issue a request for proposals to do so.

“As in all our work, we drop pebbles and make ripples, hoping they reach and influence decision-makers,” said Ryan. “My hope is that the students’ work can contribute to the process and the Millennials’ youthful and courageous perspective will find a place in Charlotte’s future vision.”

Mary Newsom, who retired this fall, joined UNC Charlotte’s Urban Institute in 2011 after a notable career as a journalist, including as columnist and editorial board member for The Charlotte Observer. Read more about The Urban Institute at ui.uncc.edu.
Pride of Niner Nation Marching Band represents U.S. at D-Day commemoration
What a year 2018 has been for UNC Charlotte’s Pride of Niner Nation Marching Band.

The date June 6 was transformational for the University’s marching band as its members represented the United States at the 74th D-Day commemoration ceremonies in Normandy, France. In all, 138 members of the band were able to make the trip overseas, which was made possible by donors and major funding from the UNC Charlotte Alumni Association and a lead gift from Gene ’73 and Vickie ’71 Johnson.

“I will never forget hiking down the path from the Normandy American Cemetery to Omaha Beach, then setting foot on that historic sand,” said Director of Bands Shawn Smith, who noted that the students’ expressions indicated they understood and felt the sacred nature of that place. “As the band members, dressed in full uniform, walked around alone and in small groups, I was in tears thinking that 74 years ago thousands of young men, the same age as my students and also in uniform, were dying on this very beach. That feeling will stay with me forever.”

In addition to performing at several notable venues, band members were able to connect to a key period in world history that led to the founding of UNC Charlotte. Along the way, they learned about the sacrifices of “The Greatest Generation” who served in World War II. UNC Charlotte is among the educational institutions founded in American cities at the conclusion of the
war to meet the demand for higher education fueled by the GI Bill, which gave veterans unprecedented access to trade schools, colleges and universities.

“The biggest takeaway from the Normandy trip was an overarching, universal connection that I felt to people when we were performing,” said Victoria Bracken, a senior communications studies major from Mooresville, North Carolina, who plays saxophone.

“There is a saying that music is a universal language, and I hadn’t understood what that means until this trip,” she said. “Our music broke boundaries, and it didn’t matter who our audience was; the energy and tone that we set when we played at the various performances was contagious.

“That extraordinary feeling of connecting to everyone at those places, whether it was somber and reflective at the cemeteries, or filled with joy and excitement parading through towns and performing at parks, is one I will always cherish,” Bracken said.

Chris Merida, a junior music major from Concord, North Carolina, came away from the trip with a better understanding about what World War II veterans sacrificed to win the war.

“Learning so much about our war history changed me,” said Merida, a drummer. “The world we have today exists thanks to our veterans. I believe that many of us take too many things for granted. I’m just thankful for the opportunities I have today.”

Another percussionist, junior music major Raven Pfeiffer, also from Mooresville, added: “Along with performing, my favorite part of the trip was being able to walk on Omaha Beach. I actually stood in the sand where many men gave their lives for their country. It was an extremely humbling experience that I wouldn’t trade for anything.”

Bracken said the trip provided important lessons for the University and the campus community.

“Our school was founded to help provide an education for those returning from war, a story that many on our campus don’t know,” she said. “It is important to embrace these roots to expand and continue to grow our story, and we were honored to be able to do that.”

“I find myself thinking more regularly how fortunate I am to have the security and safety of a free nation in a peaceful time,” said Emily Asbill, a rising senior political science major from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, who plays the clarinet. “Once-in-a-lifetime trips like this open your eyes to the things you see around you every day.”

The band’s trip to Normandy had a profound impact not only on the students who participated but on the UNC Charlotte community and the greater Charlotte region.

“I have received emails, phone calls and had personal conversations with people from all walks of life, some with University connections and others without, who have said how great it was to see UNC Charlotte engaged in such a meaningful project for our community and nation,” said Smith. “The documentary that the University produced (normandy.uncc.edu) touched so many people and brought to light the wonderful work of our University. This trip was important because of the University’s strong connection to veterans both in its founding and in its current work as a leading institution in serving our nation’s veterans.”

Paul Nowell is senior communications manager, Office of University Communications.

Band members entertained a local crowd at Jardin d’Acclimatation, a park in Paris.

“THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAY FROM THE NORMANDY TRIP WAS AN OVERARCHING, UNIVERSAL CONNECTION THAT I FELT TO PEOPLE WHEN WE WERE PERFORMING.”

Victoria Bracken

Fall 2018 | UNC CHARLOTTE magazine
When Jennifer Diers’ quest to support children from two continents is traced back to her own childhood, her efforts seem as inevitable as they are extraordinary. No matter where life has led, she has pursued her passion to help young people.

The story begins in Breda, Iowa, a farming town with fewer than 500 residents. Growing up in a small community, Diers watched neighbors help each other however and whenever they could. Even at an early age, she contributed to the process by babysitting for nearby families.

Diers and her three siblings learned by example at home as well. Their father, who served in the military, and their mother, who battled and beat cancer, taught them about sacrifice, service and overcoming obstacles.

After graduating from the University of Northern Iowa with a degree in finance, Diers landed a lucrative position in the mortgage industry in Minneapolis.

She said, “The salary was great, but something was missing.”

To fill that void, she signed up to volunteer at a homeless shelter. She felt an instant bond with the kids there. The connection was so strong that she changed careers. She left the mortgage industry and took an $8 per hour post at a high school—assisting students with learning disabilities and behavior disorders.

A year later, she moved to North Carolina to be with her future husband, Doug. In Charlotte, she continued working with adolescents—first as a crisis interventionist helping students from group home settings and then as a school teacher.

At night, she took classes at UNC Charlotte. The
faculty left a lasting impression.

She recalled, “One of my favorite professors was Richard White. He always set aside time for our questions. He demonstrated that great teachers are great listeners.”

In 2008, after earning a Master of Special Education with a focus on behavior disorders from UNC Charlotte and completing a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies at Iowa State University, Diers joined the Education Department at Central College. She and her husband—now with three young kids in tow—packed their bags for Pella, Iowa.

Diers fell in love with the town and the camaraderie among residents. She concluded, “Pella is the perfect place to raise a family.”

With an advanced degree, a challenging job, a caring community, a devoted spouse and loving children, Diers was perfectly content with her life. Until, one day, during a trip to Africa, her perspective changed forever.

She said, “I visited an orphanage in Sierra Leone. My world was rocked. The kids were no longer faraway faces on TV. I knew I’d never see life the same way.”

She was particularly affected by the condition of a child named Lucy. She wrote to Doug and insisted someone had to intervene.

The couple decided to be that someone and brought Lucy to the United States through a medical visa. In 2013, they officially adopted her. At first, Diers doubted her ability to help Lucy navigate the emotional roller coaster of relocating from an orphanage in West Africa to a family with three kids in central Iowa. The uncertainty was understandable, but Diers actually was as qualified as anyone could hope to be.

Quite ironically, the professor’s personal, academic and professional experiences—raised in Iowa with three siblings, volunteered with youth at a homeless shelter, worked with kids transitioning out of group home settings, studied special education and human development, taught subjects like child psychology—had prepared her for this exact challenge.

She acknowledged, “Looking back, I realized I had spent nearly 40 years preparing for a role I never dreamed would be mine.”

Diers has now made the 5,400-mile trek to Sierra Leone a dozen times. Along the way, she and her husband have welcomed four more kids from that same orphanage into their family. Some of the children have varying levels of learning differences, special needs and physical obstacles—from ADHD to quadriplegia.

Diers, who now serves as chair of Central’s Education Department, admits that raising her eight children while also juggling her professional responsibilities can be head-spinning.

She said, “My motto is ‘Be present.’ If I think about everything on my plate, it’s overwhelming. So, I focus on what’s in front of me—one child, one task at a time.”

At times, despite all she has done for others, Diers still questions the impact of her efforts on a planet with millions of people in need. In those moments, she takes comfort in Mother Teresa’s mantra: “If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.”

Indeed, the ripple effects of Diers’ decision to adopt have extended far beyond her four walls.

She said, “When our story spread around Pella, people showed up to help. It was amazing.”

The generosity has never ceased. Neighbors and colleagues have raised and donated money. Pella Regional Health Center has provided pro bono medical care. Central College has given her time off when needed. Her students have been a major source of support, too; from babysitting to tutoring to carpooling, the undergrads have lent a hand.

And therein lies the story’s sweetest irony. Diers’ decision to adopt children has required a lot of hours and energy, but it has not detracted from her work. It has enhanced it. Her example has inspired a generation of students to reconsider their purpose and potential.

Central College sophomore Parker Majerus said, “Before I came to college, I never seriously thought about adoption for my future family. Now, I hope to adopt one day. Jennifer Diers is the reason why.”

Parker is not alone. From Iowa to Minnesota to North Carolina to Africa and back, whether they are referring to their increased sense of hope for a bright future or their desire to assist other kids pursue their dreams, many young people have echoed those same six words: Jennifer Diers is the reason why.

Greg Forbes Siegman is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

“My motto is ‘be present.’ If I think about everything on my plate, it’s overwhelming. So, I focus on what’s in front of me—one child, one task at a time.”

Jennifer Diers
She dropped out of school, sold all of her stuff and went to New Delhi. Current UNC Charlotte nursing student Maggie Johnson was searching for a reset, alone in India, a place where one can go a thousand directions, but where routes aren’t always clearly defined. She arrived trying to find herself, and discovered what she was looking for by turning her gaze toward others.

As a 20-year-old business major at a western North Carolina university in 2015, Johnson was disenchanted. Her coursework didn’t interest her, and she knew a career in business wasn’t the right fit. Personal challenges were thickening the mire. So rather than slog on in the same direction, she charted a new way and discovered a hidden passion.

“Things that we would consider common knowledge about someone with CP or someone with a physical cognitive disability, aren’t really commonly known there,” Johnson said. “They also often don’t have the equipment needed for important therapies.”

She continued to support Sarvari at the daycare for the next few months, in the process learning more about children’s health in India and her own career aspirations. Johnson remembers one of the first moments she felt the emotional impact of working with kids.

“The other children were coloring in animals but with

[GLOBAL PROFILE]

Maggie Johnson prepares for an international career in nursing.
Sarvari’s limited strength, she wasn’t able to do much coloring on her own. So I took what she had colored and turned it into an origami swan. I made it fly around her. She laughed and giggled with joy. That’s when another girl came and grabbed the bird out of my hand, and I thought, ‘Oh, no they will fight over this.’ Then the girl started making the bird fly around Sarvari as well and tears almost came to my eyes.

“It was working with Sarvari that I realized that I wanted to be a nurse,” Johnson continued. “It came through to me that I needed to work with people in that kind of personal capacity. And I’ve always liked medicine, but I never really thought nursing would be a possibility for me.”

Yet the prospect became real for Johnson when, after applying from her temporary home in New Delhi, she received an acceptance letter from UNC Charlotte. She has spent the last two years back on campus learning the language and skills of the nursing profession and impressing her instructors in the process.

“She consistently tries to apply things I teach in class to her population of patients and families in India and brings a rare world view to the challenges nurses face,” said Peggy MacKay, a lecturer in the College of Health and Human Services School of Nursing. “Maggie is passionate and she has a true calling to this profession.”

All the while, Johnson was considering a return trip to New Delhi, but this time, she went bearing gifts. While researching organizations to work with during summer 2018, she discovered the New Delhi Children’s Hospital and Research Center (NDCHRC). A nonprofit organization dedicated to providing quality, affordable health care facilities to children, NDCHRC is the only organization of its kind in the country, and its services are sorely needed. India has the highest number of child deaths in the world, with an estimated 1.2 million deaths in 2015, according to NDCHRC. Johnson connected with the group’s CEO in October 2017 and was offered a role helping launch the Center for Hope and Healing, a new initiative that offers services to children with disabilities.

Working toward a goal

She knew the nonprofit would struggle to afford the therapeutic equipment needed to treat its patients—much isn’t available in India and items can be over 300 times more expensive to purchase from overseas. So Johnson set out to raise money to buy some herself, and she did it through that most timeless and grassroots of fundraising formats: the bake sale. Baking for up to eight hours most Friday nights during the academic year, Johnson would then set up shop at the Matthews, North Carolina, Farmer’s Market on Saturdays, telling her story and peddling cookies and cakes until she sold out.

And she kept selling out—over and over and over again. A goal of $1,000, which she once thought unattainable, was eclipsed, then doubled, until Johnson’s fundraiser netted more than $2,000.

“I got very emotional a couple of weeks in a row because there’s so many kind people, and it just blew my mind with how they felt about what I was doing. And I realized really quickly that people were very passionate about things that I was also passionate about,” she said.

With the money from the bake sale and an additional $1,000 from a GoFundMe campaign, Johnson purchased dozens of therapeutic tools, including tactile stimulation equipment and toys, walkers and therapy sensory swings and educational books. She arrived in India in mid-May with the gifts in tow. She collaborated with the team at NDCHRC through the summer to set up and open the Center for Hope and Healing, then returned for her senior year at UNC Charlotte in August.

“We are glad to have Maggie working with us,” said Pratyush Kumar, founder and CEO of NDCHRC. “Her knowledge of health care and passion to serve underprivileged children is going to be of great value for our organization to meet its goals. These innovative and highly valuable tools are going to be instrumental in transforming the lives of these uniquely abled children and they will be able to live a better life.”

Johnson said when she feels the pressure of a big exam or assignment, she reflects on where she’s been and where she is going.

“It’s stressful, but it’s almost exciting too because I know what I’m working toward. And I know how much I need this information to be able to do what I want to do,” said Johnson.

During the school year, Johnson will continue to work with NDCHRC as its international relations manager. She also is pursuing a Fulbright Scholarship to travel to India for another year, with hopes of then returning to UNC Charlotte for graduate school and ultimately working as a nurse practitioner in New Delhi indefinitely.

It’s an ambitious goal for the former business student who first crossed the Pacific with little in mind beyond finding something new. It’s also a reminder that one doesn’t always have to know the destination to be headed in the right direction. ●

*Wills Citty is director of communications, College of Health and Human Services.*
After your first few months in Charlotte, what are your impressions? The word that describes it best in my mind is energy. Charlotte is a city on the move, and UNC Charlotte is a university on the move. Charlotte is a place that has been a part of my life for a long time, and its change and growth over the past two decades mirrors that of the University. There’s an amazing amount of enthusiasm for the whole region and particularly this institution, which gives me a lot of hope that people will be inspired to support our Athletics Department and help us advance it to where we envision.

Through your outreach and community engagement, what are your initial thoughts of Niner Nation? Our fans are hungry for success. They love their school; no question about that. And they are ready to make some noise as a program. The enthusiasm is phenomenal, and the welcome has been amazing. People want to support the 49ers, and it’s our job to connect with them.

You are extremely active on social media. What is behind that philosophy? Social media is a tremendous tool. It’s so instantaneous. It gives me an opportunity to connect with fans in a way that makes them feel engaged authentically. If they have a question and I’m able to respond, we can avoid the development and sharing of misinformation. They might not always like or agree with my answer, but I think there’s a respect that comes when we pay attention. Fans are our customers, and we’re here to make their experiences the best possible. I want to connect with our fans and make sure they know we’re in their corner—and build the program they dream of.

Sports are competitive, and training is hard. Sports also are supposed to be fun.
Demonstrating to fans that we love this place at least as much as they do and that we want a program everyone is proud of is the ultimate goal. I want to have fun with our fans. It didn’t take long for me to fall in love with being a 49er as a part of this University and community.

**How do you describe your leadership style?**
Authentic, observant, communicative, caring and collaborative. It’s not about one person ever. It’s never about just the AD or head coach or another leader. To succeed in leading an organization, the people within it must believe you are invested in them for them to give their best. That’s how I’ve always led, and I’ll continue to do so here. People are what makes organizations successful, and people are what make this place special.

**How would those closest to you describe you?**
I think people who know me well would say I’m competitive, driven and compassionate. I hope they’d say that I’m fun. I love to live life. Life is short; I like to get out and experience it. People would also say father and husband, which are huge priorities in my life.

**What drives you?**
I have been blessed with—and worked hard for—incredible opportunities. Because of this, I’m obligated to do the best I can and continue to work really hard. I place an expectation on myself to give my very best both personally and professionally. I try to do that in all aspects of life.

I’m absolutely committed to this opportunity. It excites me beyond belief to be a part of a program with so much potential. So much joy comes from a program that is on the rise. There are legions of fans, alumni and donors, and members of the University community who dream of the same type of program that I do. That’s what drives me.

**What are your top priorities as AD?**
We are committed first to our student-athletes and their total development. That’s why we’re here. Also, we are here to engage our fans and alums and bring them to campus. It’s incumbent upon us to provide a tremendous game-day experience, whatever the event might be. I can assure our fans that we are driven to provide a program of excellence that is extraordinary and something to be proud of. A successful athletics program—not in just one or two sports but in multiple sports—the the sense of pride it can create for an institution and for alums and other fans is hard to describe. We are in this to be excellent. To be extraordinary. That is our standard, and it will be our mantra for a long time. It’s about excellence and providing a gold standard experience for our fans and student-athletes.

**What is important for 49er alumni to know?**
For 49er athletics to grow, we need to engage people on a deeper level and expand our resources. For alums who are not members of the 49er Club, we need you to join, whether at the $49 level or $4,900 level. Participation is key to building and sustaining a program that benefits the University and our fans. I ask everyone who reads this to understand that it takes some personal responsibility to support the athletics program that we all aspire to have at UNC Charlotte.

Tom Whitestone is associate athletic director for media relations.
‘We Got Next’

Ron Sanchez takes command of the court

BY TOM WHITESTONE
Ron Sanchez believes in people, the value of education and excellence. “I demand excellence,” said Sanchez, who was named the 49ers’ 11th head men’s basketball coach in April and is starting his first season. “And my players understand there are no shortcuts to achieving it.”

Sanchez comes to the 49ers from Virginia, where he served as associate head coach for the past three years. In all, he spent nine years at Virginia and a total of 15 alongside three-time National Coach of the Year Tony Bennett, including a stint at Washington State.

While at Virginia, the Cavaliers won 212 games (29 or more games in four of the past five seasons), three ACC regular-season titles and two ACC Tournament titles and earned an NCAA No. 1 seed in three of six appearances.

He knows something about excellence and the culture required to infuse an entire program.

“I’m asked all the time, ‘What is your style of play? Are you bringing the Virginia style of play here?’ More than anything, that ‘style’ is really a demand: Take care of the ball, play unselfishly, take great shots on offense, and don’t settle for bad offensive possessions.”

Sanchez knows the development of student-athletes doesn’t start and end when the whistle blows, and he wants his team to grow as campus leaders and community supporters as well as basketball players.

“It’s important that members of the basketball team are truly a part of the campus community,” Sanchez said. “That happens when players are approachable and respectful and carry themselves a certain way on campus. It’s about their relationships and connections with faculty and staff, and the activities we engage in to promote our team’s relationship with the campus.”

To that end, he sees the roles of coach and educator as one.

“It’s our responsibility to promote the definition of an athlete,” Sanchez pressed. “It’s OK to be an A student or the best student in the class in addition to being a really good basketball player. You can have a positive relationship with your coach, who is helping you develop as an athlete, and with your professors, who are helping you develop other areas of your life. As educators, it’s our job to make sure students understand the importance of relationships with other people in our campus community.”

An extension of that is through community service, a longstanding tradition with 49ers athletics.

“One of the things I learned as a student-athlete is how fortunate we are as individuals and a group,” Sanchez said. “Sometimes you take your talent for granted, and then you encounter someone who would love to be able to dribble, run and shoot, and can’t—but still loves the game. Our entire team will be participating in community outreach; I know from experience, they will enjoy it more than they realize.”

To complement his overall coaching strategy, Sanchez is leaning on 49ers basketball history by reaching out to former players. Joining his staff as director of player development is former 49ers-great and Charlotte native Byron Dinkins ’89, whose professional basketball career included time with the NBA and Europe’s Greek League.

“Byron represents a bridge between past and present,” Sanchez said. “I want alumni to know they have a connection here and former players to know they are forever a part of this basketball family.”

As Sanchez takes steps toward engaging the campus community, reaching out to greater Charlotte and uniting 49ers basketball of yesterday and today, he knows that building the culture he craves on the court is his top priority.

“There’s no easy way to build the program; it’s going to take some time to get it up and moving,” he said.

Value the basketball. Take quality shots. Play solid defense. Sanchez hopes these lessons from the court translate to those his team can use in life: Know your priorities. Understand excellence. Put in the work.

### 2018-19 Charlotte 49ers Men’s Basketball Schedule

#### DECEMBER

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>College of Charleston</td>
<td>Charleston, S.C.</td>
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<td>Wake Forest</td>
<td>Winston-Salem, N.C.</td>
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<td>USF</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>East Carolina</td>
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<td>22-25</td>
<td>Diamond Head Classic</td>
<td>Honolulu, Hawaii</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>TCU (ESPNU)</td>
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<td>Marshall*</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>FIU*</td>
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<td>Florida Atlantic*</td>
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<td>Southern Miss*</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Old Dominion*</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>UTSA*</td>
<td>San Antonio, Texas</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>UTEP*</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Rice*</td>
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<td>North Texas*</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Middle Tennessee*</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>UAB*</td>
<td>Birmingham, Ala.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Old Dominion*</td>
<td>Norfolk, Va.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>C-USA Flex Schedule</td>
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<td>28</td>
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#### MARCH

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<td>C-USA Flex Schedule</td>
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<td>13-16</td>
<td>Conference USA Tournament</td>
<td>Frisco, Texas</td>
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- **Home games** played in Halton Arena, Barnhardt Student Activity Center
- *Conference USA Games*
- **Information and tickets:** charlotte49ers.com
Student-athletes set community service record

BY TOM WHITESTONE

Charlotte 49ers student-athletes donated a record 5,000-plus hours of community service in the Charlotte area and surrounding communities during the 2017-18 academic year.

In large part, their hours assisted local charitable organizations, many of them directly benefiting children. These included Levine Children’s Hospital, elementary schools and presentations for Education Day and National Girls and Women in Sports Day.

“We are extremely proud of our student-athletes’ commitment to giving back to our community,” said Chris Everett, director of student-athlete development. “This will help open doors for more opportunities to meet our community’s needs.”

The 49ers’ service activities benefited the Epilepsy Stroll, YMCA Miracle League, Office of Disability Services, Miracle Network Dance Marathon, Habitat for Humanity, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Second Harvest Food Bank, Strokes for Spokes, Crisis Assistance Ministry, Project Life Movement, Down Syndrome Association, Dig Pink Breast Cancer Research, Greensboro Tornado Relief, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Community Blood Center of the Carolinas. Students also took mission trips to Guatemala and Haiti.

Included in the volunteer time are 2,105 hours from members of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and the SAAC Cares initiative. The 49ers softball team recorded the greatest number of volunteer hours with 1,178, followed by football with 712 and women’s track and field/cross country with 619. In addition, student-athletes collected 167 pounds of food, 148 pounds of clothing, 130 pounds of toiletries and $2,637.60 for various organizations and activities.

“Our goal is to build every year to continue making an impact on our community and uniting our student-athletes to help them grow,” said Everett. “As they create a legacy, they’ll be able to come back and see the effect of the initiatives—on their teams as well as the surrounding community.”
Recent Charlotte graduates Haley Pace and Martha Thomas, notable student-athletes for the 49ers’ softball and women’s soccer teams, were named Conference USA Scholar Athlete of the Year in their respective sports.

The C-USA Scholar Athlete of the Year Awards are presented to the top student-athletes in each conference-sponsored sport, determined by a vote of the league’s 14 Faculty Athletic Representatives (FAR). The award is based on academic achievement (GPA), athletic achievement and service.

Pace, from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is a back-to-back honoree of the Conference USA Scholar Athlete Award for softball.

“Haley has set the bar for 49ers softball,” said head softball coach Aimee DeVos.

Pace delivered a record-breaking career for the Niners on the field, starting every game during her four-year career and setting Charlotte standards for batting average, slugging percentage, hits, RBI and home runs. A two-time National Fastpitch Coaches Association All-Mideast Region selection and three-time CoSIDA Academic All-American, she earned first team honors in each of the past two years. In addition, she was picked as an All-Conference USA First Team choice as both a junior and senior for her on-the-field achievements, while earning All-Conference USA Academic Team accolades in each of her three eligible seasons. She graduated from the University with a 4.0 GPA and is the recipient of the 2018 Provost Student-Athlete Award as well as a post-graduate scholarship from UNC Charlotte’s Turner School of Accountancy.

“What an honor for her to wear the Charlotte uniform,” DeVos noted. “Thank you to Conference USA for recognizing a truly special student-athlete.”

Thomas, a Weston, Florida, native picked up the C-USA Scholar Athlete Award for women’s soccer.

“Martha is an outstanding representative of our women’s soccer program, the Athletics Department and our University,” said head women’s soccer coach John Cullen.

Thomas completed her Charlotte women’s soccer career as the program’s all-time leader in goals, points, shots and game-winning goals. She was voted to the Senior CLASS Award All-America First Team and named to the United Soccer Coaches All-Central Region Second team on a national scale, while becoming one of three players in UNC Charlotte history to receive multiple Conference USA Offensive Player of the Year recognitions, after being named recipient as a junior and senior.

“She is such a great talent and match winner—driven, passionate and extremely dedicated to the sport,” Cullen added. “More important, Martha is a terrific teammate and captain, and it is our honor to have coached her.”

Off the field, she was named to the United Soccer Coaches Scholar All-America Third Team, the first two-time winner in program history and was included on the All-Conference USA Academic First team for a third-straight season.
Chris Fuller directing external affairs

Chris Fuller has joined the Charlotte 49ers as deputy athletic director for external affairs. In this new position, Fuller, who served most recently in a similar capacity for Syracuse University, oversees 49ers marketing, media relations and ticket operations, which includes revenue generation, working closely with the 49er Club and managing partnerships with multimedia rights holder IMG College and ticket solutions provider IMG Learfield.

“Chris is truly a gold standard hire,” said Athletics Director Mike Hill. “He is nationally respected as one of the brightest minds in college athletics, and his commitment to Charlotte is enormous. As we align efforts in branding, marketing, communications and resource development, Chris’ leadership and experience will be invaluable.”

For more than 25 years, Fuller has worked on campuses at Syracuse, Tennessee and North Carolina and has served as vice president for collegiate marketing with Cavs/Gund Arena Company in Cleveland, Ohio, worked with college athletics support partners such as ACC Properties and the FANSonly website network and advised the Mid-American Conference as a consultant.

“I’m thrilled to join the team at Charlotte,” said Fuller. “I’m impressed with the leadership team of Chancellor Dubois and former AD Judy Rose as well as the entire program foundation in place. My wife, Lori and I are fired up to be part of the 49er family.”
THE POWER OF GIVING

Frenchie Wilson Brown ’91, an anti-money laundering analyst at Bank of America, credits UNC Charlotte with helping her realize the importance of paying it forward and helping others.

Brown is a fearless leader in the Charlotte community, working with many nonprofit organizations, including Dress for Success, the Girl Scouts, YWCA and Girl Talk. She serves on the UNC Charlotte Alumni Association Board of Directors and supports Exponential: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte.

“How can I live in a city in which my alma mater is located and not show support?” says Brown. “There are so many students that need help to not only get into college, but to remain and graduate. My gifts give these students hope and confidence that others are rooting and supporting their success.”

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.
Misty Cowan Hathcock ’85, ’91, ’92, ’96, ’04 and her mother, Linda Humble ’77, ’78, are passionate educators who share a genuine love for their alma mater, UNC Charlotte. They come from a family of educators. In fact, Hathcock is a fifth-generation teacher, and between them, they proudly hold all seven degrees from the Cato College of Education.

“My father always believed an education is the only thing that can never be taken away from you,” said Humble. “He made sure all four of his children had funds for a college education on a farmer’s income; when Misty was little, he instilled in her the importance of an education.”

The dynamic duo’s UNC Charlotte story started when Humble was earning her master’s and certificate of advanced study in educational leadership.
“My mom came here, and I came with her,” said Hathcock. “I would sit in the back of the classroom or in the hallway doing my homework.”

However, when it was time for Hathcock to go to college, she didn’t consider UNC Charlotte because she wanted to expand her horizons. She quickly realized there was no place quite like UNC Charlotte and transferred “home.” The rest is history, deeply rooted with the University.

Hathcock has been working for the Cato College of Education since 1998, serving in various roles, including director of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program, coordinator of the Teacher Education Learning Community and regional director of the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program. She recently accepted a position as the college’s first director of alumni affairs, to strengthen connections with its graduates.

Hathcock and Humble have been loyal volunteers and donors to the University. Both served as president of the Alumni Association and were inducted into UNC Charlotte Alumni Hall of Fame. Their first gift to UNC Charlotte was to name The Lee Family Kitchen in the Harris Alumni Center at Johnson Glen and their second gift was to name the boardroom in the center: The Hathcock-Humble Board Room.

Chressy Rayfield ‘20 (third from left) is the inaugural recipient of UNC Charlotte’s first endowed legacy scholarship. She celebrates with Ellen McIntyre, dean, Cato College of Education; Misty Hathcock ’85, ’91, ’92, ’96, ’04; Linda Humble ’77, ’78; Dolores Evans and Teresa Petty, associate dean for undergraduate programs, Cato College of Education.

“Our hope is this will encourage others to establish more legacy scholarships. Our dream is that we will be able to exponentially give the gift of an education to others.”

Last year, they decided it was time to make a gift to EXPOSITIONAL: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte. “We wanted to create a legacy and we wanted to help students fulfill their dreams,” said Hathcock. Added Humble, “We wanted to pay it forward and afford someone else the same opportunities we had.”

The Hathcock-Humble Legacy Scholarship in Education, the University’s first endowed legacy scholarship, will support undergraduate and graduate students in the Cato College of Education who are also legacy students. Hathcock’s aunt, Dolores Evans, was so inspired by her family members, that she is making an annual gift to the scholarship fund, enabling the scholarship to make an immediate and enduring impact.

Chressy Rayfield was the first recipient to receive the Hathcock-Humble Legacy Scholarship in Education in May 2018. The junior special education-adapted curriculum major, whose mother also graduated from UNC Charlotte, was honored and surprised to receive the special legacy scholarship.

“This scholarship has made an impact on my life by helping me to know that other educators are supporting me,” said Rayfield. “It has motivated and encouraged me to work harder to become a special educator who will touch the hearts and lives of the next generation and their loved ones.”

“We could not be more thrilled to have established the first legacy scholarship at UNC Charlotte,” said Humble. “Our hope is this will encourage others to do the same and establish more legacy scholarships. Our dream is that someday we will be able to exponentially give the gift of an education to others. This was our first step.”

Jennifer Howe is director of advancement communications, Office of University Communications.
1980s

Dede Dunst ’89 recently retired from Mitchell Community College after 33 years in early childhood education, where she served as program coordinator for the past 20 years. She earned a master’s degree in education from UNC Charlotte.

Brian Stallings ’99 joined Paciolan as managing director of performing arts. In this role, he will oversee business development and retention for Paciolan’s performing arts and theater business. Stallings joins Paciolan from SeatGeek where, as head of product planning, he helped lead product, strategy and sales initiatives for the SeatGeek Enterprise solution. He received bachelor’s degrees in computer science and math from UNC Charlotte.

R. Neil Stikeleather ’92, ’97 was recognized on the Forbes “Best-in-State Wealth Advisors” inaugural list, published in February 2018. He is a wealth management advisor with Bank of America Merrill Lynch and has been with Bank of America for 18 years. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science and master’s degree in criminal justice from UNC Charlotte.

2000s

John Behme ’09 was named vice president of business development and project delivery for ComplIntelligence. Behme brings more than 20 years of finance and accounting experience, combined with an extensive background in financial systems, business development and project delivery, to his new role. He earned a master’s degree in accounting from UNC Charlotte.

M.T. Tickerhoff ’94 was promoted to sergeant of the Greensboro Police Department. After joining the department in 1995, he was promoted to police officer II in 1996 and received his Advanced Law Enforcement Certification in 2001. He has held certifications as a General Instructor, Basic EMT, Specialized First Responder Instructor and Certified Specialized Diving Instructor. Tickerhoff earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from UNC Charlotte.

Arrica Canty ’01 was promoted to senior manager of care management for McBee. In this role, she’ll direct the daily monitoring of all aspects of care management client engagements. She has worked for McBee in various capacities since 2010, holding the previous role of clinical consultant. Canty earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing from UNC Charlotte.
Laura Clark ’02 was named president and CEO of United Way of Central Carolinas. She joined the United Way in 2016 as executive vice president and chief impact officer, and previously was CEO of the Renaissance West Community Initiative, a revitalization of the Renaissance neighborhood in west Charlotte. As director of the Larry King Center at the Council for Children’s Rights, she led research, planning and public policy efforts to solve systemic problems that affect children. She received a master’s degree in psychology from UNC Charlotte.

Bradley Fowler ’03 was named tax administrator for Catawba County. In this role, he will be responsible for planning, directing and administering the county’s comprehensive tax program. Fowler joins the Catawba County Tax Office from Durham County, where he served as assistant assessor. He earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from UNC Charlotte.

Tchernavia Montgomery ’08, ’09 joined Crisis Assistance Ministry as chief program officer. She will lead a team responsible for assisting individuals in financial crisis. She is a licensed clinical social worker with 14 years of experience in human services and behavioral health with previous roles at Atrium Health and the UNC Charlotte School of Social Work. Montgomery received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work from UNC Charlotte.

Anirudh Ravunniarath ’06 joined HN Capital Partners as managing director and global head of business development. Ravunniarath joins HN Capital from Carlson Capital LP where he was primarily responsible for client development across institutional and private banking clients. Before joining Carlson Capital, he worked at both Merrill Lynch and BlackRock. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Leanna Rice ’08, ’13 was appointed director of the African, Latino, Asian, Native American (ALANA) Center at Colgate University. Rice previously served as the campus adviser for the JED Foundation. She earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s degree in community counseling from UNC Charlotte.

Brian Schultz ’00 was named chief academic officer for Guilford County Schools. He previously served as chief academic officer for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Schultz was a former elementary school teacher and principal of the year in Cabarrus County. He earned a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.

Brian Dulin ’06, ’17 was named assistant principal at W.M. Irvin Elementary School. He is a North Carolina Principal Fellow from UNC Charlotte and served as a classroom teacher at Weddington Hills Elementary School from 2006 to 2016. He earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.

Kenny Taylor ’04 was named business services officer for Truliant Federal Credit Union. In this role, he will work with business owners in the Piedmont Triad to provide locally focused lending solutions. Taylor spent the last 12 years in the financial services industry at Wells Fargo and SunTrust Bank. He earned a bachelor’s degree in management from UNC Charlotte.

Richard Wells ’04, ’12 was named principal at Beverly Hills Elementary School. He served as assistant principal at Winecoff Elementary since 2014. He joined Cabarrus County Schools in 2011 as a principal intern at Harold E. Winkler Middle School. Wells was named the district’s 2017-18 Assistant Principal of the Year. He earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.

Meghan Frazier ’15 was named assistant principal at Mount Pleasant High School.

Tchernavia Montgomery "08, ’09 was appointed director of the African, Latino, Asian, Native American (ALANA) Center at Colgate University. Rice previously served as the campus adviser for the JED Foundation. She earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s degree in community counseling from UNC Charlotte.

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School. She served as assistant principal at Pitts School Road Elementary since 2016. She is a member of the North Carolina Principal Fellow Class 21 from UNC Charlotte. Frazier earned a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.

Danielle Lucas ’12 was named assistant principal at Royal Oaks Elementary School. Previously, she was an assistant principal at Charles E. Boger Elementary School and a classroom teacher at Carl A. Furr Elementary. She received a master’s degree in reading education from UNC Charlotte.

Guillermo Martinez ’13 was named manager of general marketing for Vitro Architectural Glass in Mexico. Martinez, who has spent his entire 14-year career with Vitro, oversees customer and channel marketing strategies, leads strategic marketing projects across the United States and Mexico and promotes the use of energy-efficient glass. He earned a master’s degree in business administration from UNC Charlotte.

Brian Palmer ’17 was named assistant principal at Rock Springs Elementary School in Lincoln County. He’s a National Board Certified Teacher and has spent 12 years teaching first grade in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. He earned a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.

April Raney ’14 was named assistant principal at Charles E. Boger Elementary School. She began her career as a classroom teacher at Mount Pleasant Elementary School in 2001 and also served as a principal intern at Rocky River Elementary School. She received a master’s degree in reading education from UNC Charlotte.

Melanie Raso ’13 was named principal at A.T. Allen Elementary School. She served as assistant principal at W.R. Odell Elementary since 2015. She joined Cabarrus County Schools in 2008 as a classroom teacher at Royal Oaks Elementary. She earned a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.

Andrew Whedbee ’11, ’17 was named assistant principal at Pitts School Road Elementary School. He served as a principal intern at Pitts School Road Elementary last year. He is a member of the North Carolina Principal Fellow Class 23 from UNC Charlotte. Whedbee earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education, a master’s degree in education and a master’s degree in school administration from UNC Charlotte.

THE POWER OF PLANNED GIVING

As a retired faculty member in the School of Nursing, Ann Newman ’78 can’t remember a time when she did not want to be a nurse. Both teaching and practicing nursing have given her a lifetime of satisfaction. This is why she made a planned gift to Exponential: The Campaign for UNC Charlotte to benefit the Nursing program.

“I was able to do more than I otherwise might have thought possible by making an estate gift to UNC Charlotte as opposed to a gift during my lifetime. My portfolio continues to grow and it is likely that my accumulated funds will result in a larger gift to the University.”

Contact the Office of Planned Giving today and let us help you explore ways to support UNC Charlotte that make sense for you and your loved ones, like Ann did.

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.
YOUR UNC CHARLOTTE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AT A GLANCE

137,000 Living Alumni

Class Year Distribution by Decade

5 ways you can be involved

1. Attend an event such as Homecoming and AlumNiner Weekend
2. Join the UNC Charlotte Virtual Alumni Book Club
3. Refer a future 49er
4. Connect with a regional network or affinity group
5. Hire a Niner

50s 60s 70s 80s 90s 00s 10s

218 843 10,404 17,050 26,253 34,372 47,273

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Niner Pride

Affinity Groups
- Black Alumni Chapter
- Young Alumni Chapter
- School of Nursing Alumni Chapter
- Legacy Alumni Network
- Bank of America Alumni Network

Regional Networks
- Atlanta Alumni Network
- Charleston Alumni Network
- Dallas Alumni Network
- Denver Alumni Network
- DC Alumni Network
- New York Alumni Network
- Triad Alumni Network
- Triangle Alumni Network

$27,336 Awarded in Scholarships (2018-2019 academic year)
decorated with the signatures of Chancellor Philip L. Dubois and hundreds of UNC Charlotte students, a white steel beam rests above what will be the indoor track of the University Recreation Center, currently under construction adjacent to the Popp Martin Student Union.

During the Day of Convocation on Aug. 20, the beam, which is expected to remain visible when the center opens in fall 2019, was signed by students along with members of University Recreation and the Division of Student Affairs. The event was held to provide students the chance to leave a permanent mark on the new facility.

The 148,000-square-foot University Recreation Center will feature indoor and outdoor swimming pools, multipurpose courts, group fitness studios, a cycling studio, an elevated running/walking track, multifloor cardio and strength training equipment, and a demonstration kitchen. Also, outdoor sand volleyball and basketball courts will be part of the center complex.

“This is the last major student life facility that UNC Charlotte must construct to properly serve a campus of our size,” said Dubois. “Maintaining personal health is essential for students to be successful in their academic work and for participating in student activities that build the organizational and leadership skills needed for success after completing their degrees.”
“The function of the university is ... above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.”
W.E.B. DU BOIS, The Souls of Black Folk

A Mission to Serve

BY ELIZABETH A. HARDIN

AT 6:30 A.M. ON MONDAY, AUG. 27, 2018, I found myself standing in the lobby of West Charlotte High School with volunteers preparing to welcome students to a new academic year.

West Charlotte has a long and distinguished history as the city’s second all-black high school. It thrived during segregation but also found national recognition as a desegregated school beginning in the 1970s. Following the 2001 court ruling declaring Mecklenburg “unitary,” West Charlotte resegregated and now, like many schools in our county, faces challenges: 99 percent of students are minorities and 98 percent are economically disadvantaged. I was invited to offer first-day words of encouragement and support by Tim Gibbs, president of the high school’s national alumni association and a 1983 graduate of UNC Charlotte. He and other West Charlotte alumni are committed to changing the outcomes for the school and its students.

Tim is a member of a community book study I lead that focuses on issues related to Charlotte’s low levels of economic mobility, which have been well documented in the Chetty Equality of Opportunity Project and other research. Despite Charlotte’s growth over the past several decades, new wealth has not “floated all boats.” Poverty in our city has become more acute and concentrated, often along racial lines. According to Chetty’s research, children born into the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution in Charlotte currently have only a slightly better than 4 percent chance of making it to the top 20 percent.

Our most recent book study was Pamela Grundy’s “Color and Character: West Charlotte High School and the Struggle Over Educational Equality.” A local story, “Color and Character” forced us to look in the mirror to ask how we can contribute to solutions in our community.

“Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis” author Robert Putnam hypothesizes educational attainment is the differentiating factor in economic mobility, and I agree. A college graduate is more likely to have better social outcomes in life, including lowered probability of incarceration or homelessness and higher probability of good health.

This is why I am inspired by the mission of The University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

I have worked in banking, consumer products, health care and K-12 reform. It is in higher education, however, where I have found my greatest satisfaction. Specifically, I work in public higher education because our institutions have the greatest capacity to align our individual and collective actions with our country’s highest aspirations, founded on the ideas of public service and accessibility.

UNC Charlotte was founded on the principle of serving those who had served this nation, welcoming 278 returning World War II veterans to classes at the Charlotte Center in 1946. Seventy-two years later, how we serve has evolved, as has whom we serve, but we remain committed to meeting the needs of our community.

As the state’s only urban research university, we work every day to find solutions to the sociological, scientific and economic issues we face. The Urban Institute is just one powerful example of how the work of the University is integrated into the work of the community through non-partisan research on issues around the region, both seen and unseen. Their recent work on homelessness and housing in Charlotte has been invaluable in understanding the severity of the problems, and it will equip local leaders to make data-driven decisions. Many area charities and outreach organizations that serve our poorest neighbors rely upon the institute’s research to guide their work.

The local and global problems we face as a society are challenging. Many will take generations to fix. However, I am encouraged by the good work taking place on our campus and the students we are educating. We are forming citizens who sustain themselves, their families, and their communities through productive employment. Our graduates can think critically, engage in civil discourse, and guide economic and political systems that are moral and inclusive.

I am confident UNC Charlotte excels in its mission to serve others by educating individuals who are deeply competent and rooted in a desire for a sustainable society. They will change Charlotte and the world.

Elizabeth Hardin, MBA, is UNC Charlotte’s vice chancellor for business affairs.
LARGEST-EVER CROWD FOR 49ERS FOOTBALL

On Sept. 8, a record crowd—19,151 football fans, including hundreds of alumni and enthusiastic tailgaters—cheered for the 49ers at Jerry Richardson Stadium as they faced the Appalachian State University Mountaineers. To meet the demand for tickets, 2,500 additional seats were installed temporarily, utilizing a flexible design feature of the stadium. For season statistics and news about all 49ers sports, visit charlotte49ers.com.

Photo by Wade Bruton