

2018-2019 VOL. 2

EXCHANGE



Niner Nation Remembers
Community Finds Ways To Heal


UNC CHARLOTTE
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences




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About the Cover:

Visitors to the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens placed river stones -- with healing words written on them -- along the gardens' paths following the tragic events of April 30, 2019, when an armed individual opened fire in a UNC Charlotte classroom.

Dear Alumni & Friends,

All academics are storytellers; we create meaning from the data in our disciplines, whether it is textual analysis, a mathematical theorem, or the scientific method. We critically examine the data before us, select those pieces that will work with our hypothesis, order them appropriately, and create the correct vehicle for delivery – lecture notes or scholarly paper, email message or web content. Creation of knowledge, in any of the disciplines in a college of liberal arts and sciences, requires a leap of imagination into another world and the ability to make sense of the data we have.

But the appalling events of April 30 challenge this enterprise. The random, pointless violence of that evening, resulting in the death of two students and the wounding of four others, stunts storytelling and impedes our storytelling capacities. Non-sense, not sense, is our takeaway.

With this exception – the human connections that college faculty, staff, and students have found with each other are the way back to a world that has meaning. Several days after April 30, I sat down for a meal with four colleagues, and one immediately asked, “So where were you? What did you do?” We spent the next two hours sharing our experiences and learning from each other. “We are from UNC Charlotte,” we told the server, when we hugged each other.

I used to walk across campus, living in my own internal reality, thinking about my next meeting or chewing over a work problem. I don’t do that now, even though it is more than a month after the tragedy. Now I look at the people I pass and smile. I sometimes give the southern “hey.” Connecting with a stranger as we pass each other on this campus is one small way to re-tell the story and to reclaim our campus as a community of learners all.

In a letter I sent to the college on May 2, I asked that we stop and remember our shared values and use them to help UNC Charlotte heal, and find meaning and purpose again, at a moment when none was apparent. Now, in every connection we make with each other and with our students, we are doing just that. We are connecting the dots. We weave stories and make sense.

In this issue of *Exchange*, we have compiled a brief chronicle of stories about our students, faculty, and staff. In these vignettes, we make our way back to meaning. &



Nancy A. Gutierrez

DEAN NANCY A. GUTIERREZ
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

“The human connections that college faculty, staff, and students have found with each other are the way back to a world that has meaning.”

NINER NATION REMEMBERS

COMMUNITY FINDS WAYS TO HEAL

Since April 30, when an individual opened fire in a UNC Charlotte classroom, people have continued to come together to seek a path forward.

Members of the College community have responded by gathering in small and larger conversations, sharing thoughts and memories, and gaining comfort. Students organized a vigil on May 1, with over 7,500 students and other members of the community gathering in Halton Arena.

Students, faculty, staff, family members, alumni and friends joined together at commencement ceremonies less than two weeks later, to support the campus community and honor the two students who died, Reed Parlier and Riley Howell, and the four students who were injured, Rami Alramadhan, Sean DeHart, Emily Houpt, and Drew Pescaro.

When Emily Houpt crossed the stage at the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' commencement on May 11 to receive her degree in international studies, the crowd of thousands gathered in Halton Arena stood and applauded. Howell's family also attended the College commencement to receive a Degree in Memoriam on his behalf; Howell was pursuing a degree in environmental science.

Chancellor Philip L. Dubois established The Niner Nation Remembrance Commission, to determine how to best memorialize the victims and remember the tragedy that occurred on April 30, a day that will forever be part of UNC Charlotte's history. People have left memorials on the steps of the building where events occurred and elsewhere.

Others have processed their thoughts in written form, whether on social media, in newspaper postings or privately. One month after the events, Barbara Presnell, a senior lecturer in the University Writing Program, wrote a reflection piece in "The Dispatch", the newspaper in Lexington, N.C.

"We've all taught the students, whether they were shot, injured, or scared for their lives," she reflects. "They sit in my classroom, they struggle with assignments, they worry about grades and debt. Until now, they didn't worry about their lives ... We must keep asking the hard questions. We must not forget."

Emily Houpt (center) accepts her diploma, as Dean Nancy A. Gutierrez and Chancellor Philip L. Dubois join her on stage.

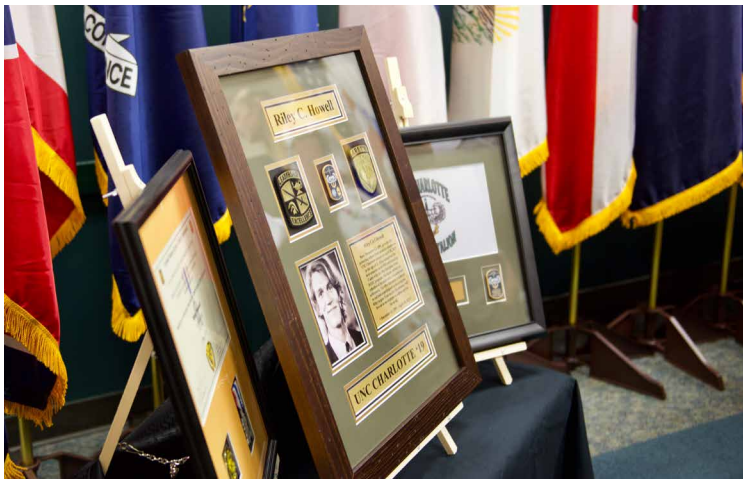


CAMPUS COMMUNITY SEES ACTS OF COURAGE

As the campus community has reflected upon the events of April 30, stories of courage and compassion have been revealed. Faculty, staff, students and friends responded – and continue to respond – in ways that have put others' needs ahead of their own.

As the NinerAlert messages came across people's phones and computers, many worked together to secure the spaces where they were gathered, whether in classrooms, offices, or meeting spaces. Some had gone through active shooting training on campus or elsewhere.

Stories continue to come out about people who sought to protect each other, comfort each other, encourage each other – or simply “be there” for each other. Here are a handful of those stories. We will continue to find ways to tell, and honor, those actions.



The Army ROTC, 49er Battalion posthumously awarded the ROTC Medal For Heroism to Riley Howell.

UNC CHARLOTTE ROTC HONORS RILEY HOWELL

The actions of student Riley Howell are credited with saving lives and allowing police time to capture the gunman. He posthumously received the ROTC Medal For Heroism and dedication of his life and sacrifice to the ROTC Memorial Wall in Memorial Hall on the UNC Charlotte campus during a ceremony on May 11. “He protected his fellow classmates by tackling the suspect and using his body as a human shield,” the ROTC award summary states. “His actions that day left him mortally wounded, but he saved an undeterminable amount of lives.”

Howell demonstrated the values of the U.S. Army “by showing a high level of integrity, honor, and selfless service on that fateful day,” the citation states.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department also bestowed its first-ever Civilian Medal of Valor posthumously to Howell. Members of his family attended the annual CMPD Awards Ceremony, Wednesday, May 15, to accept the honor.

CMPD Chief Kerr Putney said Howell was owed a “huge debt of gratitude.” He authorized the creation of the highest honor the department can give to a public citizen, the Civilian Medal of Valor.



Sgt. Rick Gundacker, center, honored Cadet Eric Dippold, left, for his heroic actions on April 30. Also pictured is Chief Jeff Baker.

POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY HONORS CADET

UNC Charlotte Police and Public Safety's annual awards ceremony, held on May 17 in conjunction with National Police Week, held new meaning this year after the events of April 30.

First came a moment of silence in memory of the two students who died in shootings that occurred that day, Reed Parlier and Riley Howell, and in honor of the four students injured in the attack, Rami Alramadhan, Sean DeHart, Emily Houpt, and Drew Pescara.

Then came the awards ceremony, during which the Medal of Valor, the highest honor awarded to a police officer, was presented to Sgt. Rick Gundacker. Gundacker, a retired NYPD detective, was the first officer to respond to the shootings in Kennedy, immediately taking the suspect into custody and rendering aid to the victims.

Gundacker presented a certificate of appreciation to student Eric Dippold, an ROTC cadet who had in the early days after the events remained an unsung hero.

Dippold arrived at the classroom in Kennedy shortly after Gundacker did. He arrived with his hands held in the air and began helping the victims, removing his shirt to use as bandages and helping to secure the suspect, Gundacker says.

“He risked his own safety by coming to that classroom with only one thing on his mind, and that was to help fellow students and law enforcement in their mission,” Gundacker says.

STUDENTS USE WHAT THEY LEARNED IN CLASS

Students in one of Krystion Obie-Nelson's American Studies classes focused on American culture, included a look at the incidence of shootings on campuses, as part of their study of the complexity of American culture. They learned about safety procedures and responses to such acts. When the NinerAlert messages came across their phones and computers, students later told Obie-Nelson they were able to apply what they learned in class.

“I just wanted to send you an email to say thank you so much.... because of you I knew exactly what to do in this situation,” one student wrote. “We didn't have any cords so I took charge and had everyone tie their back packs together and hook them on each door handle. I cannot thank you enough, your instruction secured our room and could have saved many lives if the shooter had entered Fretwell.”

STUDENTS COME TOGETHER TO BOND, PUSH FORWARD

The last day of April was a Tuesday. It was the final day of spring classes at UNC Charlotte.

Early in the day, public relations majors Isabella Davis, Jordan Estabrook, Taylor Maness, and Samantha McLean met to review their group project for Tiffany Gallicano's public relations strategy class.

They were finishing strong, coming into the final project with top grades. For their final exam, they would walk Gallicano through their plan for a campaign for weighted gloves for people with health concerns, and they knew all their campaign components were spot-on.

Feeling ready for their exam later that week, they scattered for late-afternoon classes and other activities.

Then came the NinerAlerts. They, like others who are part of the UNC Charlotte community, learned of a shooter on campus. They stayed connected with the outside world through texts and phone calls. Some of them hunkered down in locked, dark classrooms, waiting for the all clear.

Later that week, when they learned that the university would allow students to skip their finals, this team knew that option was not for them. For them, moving forward meant finishing what they had started.

"Professor Gallicano is one of those professors that has such a genuine passion for what she does in the public relations field, as well as for teaching her students," Maness says. "So we, in a way, felt indebted to her for giving us so much knowledge and so much time and being so caring with us."

They also wanted to hear her professional feedback. Perhaps just as much, they needed to connect with her and with each other.

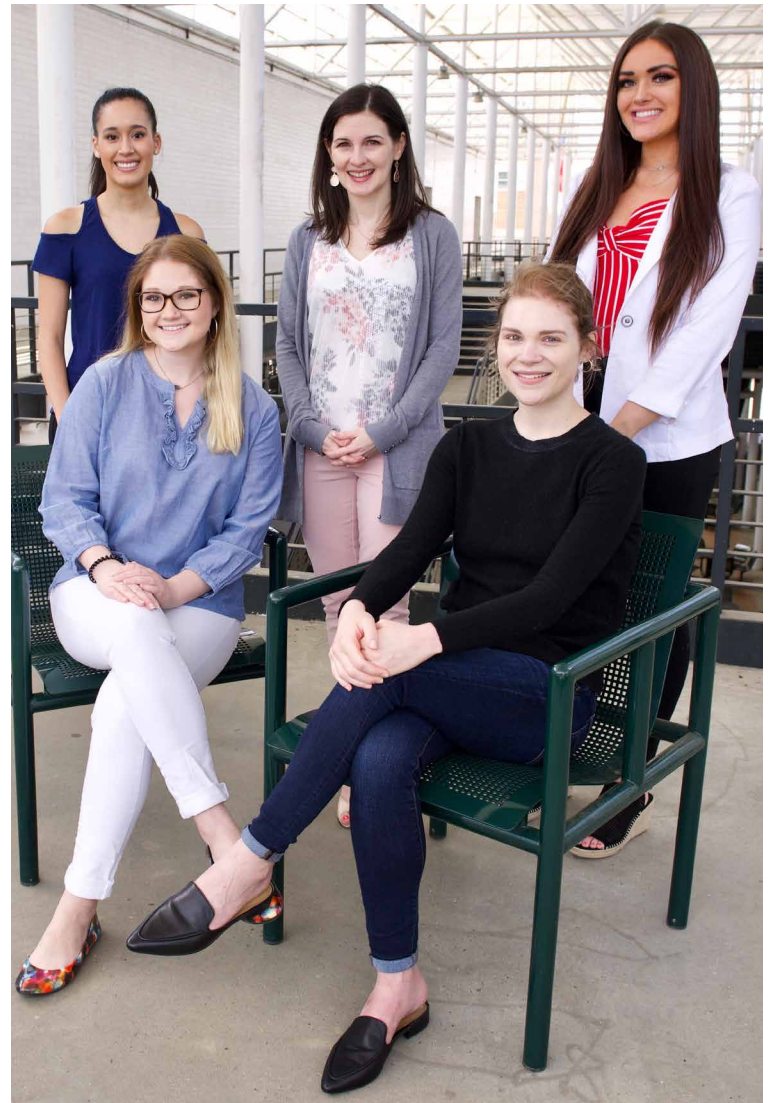
"I had a team of students who decided despite the trauma they had been through, their commitment to their education was so overpowering that they did the work anyway," Gallicano says. "That inspired me. We all need a light in this time of tragedy, and we need something to help us heal."

The students have found comfort in staying connected with each other and others from the campus community. "You can't explain what it feels like to be in a situation like this," Davis says. "You just have to experience it."

McLean describes how she felt when she first saw her classmates when they came to campus to meet with Gallicano.

"I live by myself, and I hadn't really left my apartment," she says, looking at her teammates. "And, I hadn't really been sleeping. We stepped out of the meeting, and you guys asked me how I was doing, and I started crying." That moment ended with a healing hug.

"We have all the students that are united together," Estabrook says. "But in a strange way, you almost feel alone, and sometimes you need a specific student or specific group of students to make that Niner Nation a little tighter. Within Niner Nation are communities. And this is a little community, and I don't want this to stop. This is a long road to healing."



The class group has formed a community. Shown are Samantha McLean, and Taylor Maness (front row, left to right) and Jordan Estabrook, Professor Tiffany Gallicano, and Isabella Davis (back row, left to right).

"I HAD A TEAM OF STUDENTS WHO DECIDED DESPITE THE TRAUMA THEY HAD BEEN THROUGH, THEIR COMMITMENT TO THEIR EDUCATION WAS SO OVERPOWERING THAT THEY DID THE WORK ANYWAY. THAT INSPIRED ME. WE ALL NEED A LIGHT IN THIS TIME OF TRAGEDY, AND WE NEED SOMETHING TO HELP US HEAL."

— TIFFANY GALLICANO

COMMUNITY SEEKS RENEWAL IN BOTANICAL GARDENS

Community members who sought solace in the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens after the tragic events of April 30 found a humble table at the entrance to the Susie Harwood Gardens. There, stacked, were smooth gray, white and brown stones and black markers for people to leave messages, artwork, memories, and prayers.

Over the following weeks, the stones were tucked along the Botanical Gardens' paths, sending their messages forward in a collective way. The Botanical Gardens staff have now gathered and stored the stones, which will be used in a more permanent commemoration in the future.

"Like the rest of campus, we are all deeply troubled by what happened and wanted to do something besides just being here," Botanical Gardens Director Jeff Gillman says. "The remembrance stones were our answer, and we are happy that we can be a part of the healing process."

Individuals and groups came to the Botanical Gardens to find refuge and to connect. Deborah Thomas, chair of the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, emailed and invited class members to join together the Botanical Gardens for an informal and optional meeting, she says.

"The Botanical Gardens were an important part of the healing process for me, for my class, and I am sure others," Thomas says. "My class was in lockdown together the evening of the tragedy. Afterwards, although finals were optional and they had submitted much of their work, I thought it would be nice to offer an opportunity to get together on our finals night. Many of us met at the gazebo, had a casual dialog about class, and chatted about the upcoming summer." Several students also left stones along the path and told her the activity was calming and touching.

Assistant Director Amy Tipton provides more insights into how the concept came about and how the community reacted.

WHAT LED TO THIS IDEA?

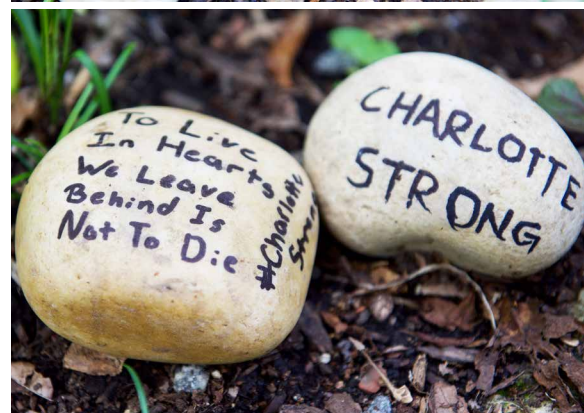
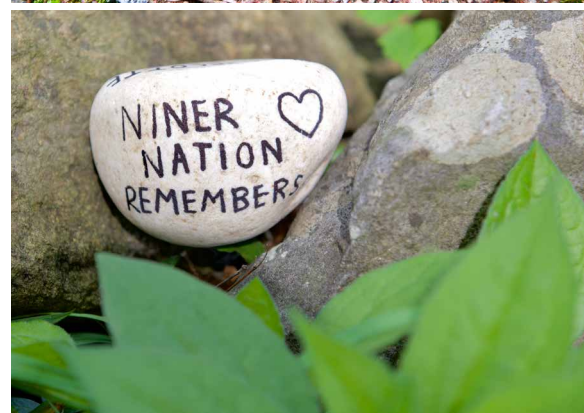
We had originally planned a spring concert and festivities to celebrate May Day, to occur the day after the shootings. Given the circumstance and the joyous nature of the concert planned, we decided to cancel the concert. As a result, the staff had conversations about the different aspects of the Gardens. The Gardens offers a place of joy and beauty as well as a place of refuge and contemplation. We recognized that the Gardens have great potential for healing and wanted to organize a project to welcome the UNC Charlotte community to use the Gardens as a resource to assist with healing.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO OFFER THE STONES AS A REMEMBRANCE CONCEPT?

We chose to use river stones as the medium for the interactive project, as many cultures around the world use stone(s) to memorialize people, mark events, and exhibit faith – such as tombstones, cairns, and inuksuk. In addition, we felt that the stones would have provide a very personal and tactile experience – selecting "your" stone, feeling its weight and texture, contemplating text or an image, embellishing the stone, and placing it along a path. We worked out the details of the project over the course of the next few days, and started it on the Monday following the tragedy.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE ROLE OF THE BOTANICAL GARDENS AS THE UNC CHARLOTTE COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO PROCESS AND GRIEVE?

Envisioned as a very private, personal act, we found that the embellishment and placement of the stones unexpectedly created a larger experience of knowing that we are all part of a caring, united UNC Charlotte community. I personally found that in addition to the process of embellishing the stone, the act of walking through the Gardens to select a location to place it added to the healing experience. Finding so many others' stones along the paths gave me a sense of how many individuals were affected by the tragedy. We hope that the Gardens can continue to contribute to the healing process.





TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Honorees Use Unique And Interactive Methods To Engage Students

Award recipients Jennifer Munroe (from left), Lane Rhodes, and Sarah Pollock celebrate with Dean Nancy A. Gutierrez.

The three recipients of this year's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' Excellence in Teaching Awards find innovative ways to challenge and engage students, including research opportunities, interactive lectures, and real-time projects.

In recognition of their exceptional teaching, Jennifer Munroe, Sarah Pollock and Lane Rhodes have received the Excellence in Teaching Awards for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Munroe, a professor of English, has received the Integration of Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award. Pollock, a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, has received the Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Full-Time Lecturer. Rhodes, an adjunct faculty member in the Department of English, has received the Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Part-Time Faculty Member. They received their awards at a college celebration on April 22 in the Halton Reading Room in J. Murrey Atkins Library.

Integration Of Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award

Since her arrival at UNC Charlotte in 2004, Munroe has built an impressive research record in the areas of Shakespeare studies, early modern literature, and ecocriticism, including several monographs and essay collections. She has taught undergraduate and graduate courses on these topics for English, Liberal Studies, the Honors Program

and Women's and Gender Studies. Munroe's scholarly investment in ecofeminism and ecological literary studies shape her approach to teaching and the content of her courses at all levels.

"I approach what happens in my classroom (and out) not simply as related to my research; my research stems from a curiosity that I have about ecological and literary questions that I aim to help my students find their own way of asking," Munroe says. "And in so doing, my students literally become active researchers and co-producers of knowledge in their own right."

In particular, she has involved her students in research that led to a co-authored book, *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory*, with Rebecca Laroche, and to an ongoing digital humanities initiative dedicated to the creation of a public-access database of early modern manuscript recipes in partnership with the Folger Shakespeare Library. She has taken her advanced class students there to workshops related to her courses and to conduct their own original archival research.

"It is her ability to spark enthusiasm in her students while building a research tool that will revitalize the field that makes Dr. Munroe's teaching so transformative," says Hillary Nunn, a professor of English at the University of Akron and a colleague of Munroe's on the steering committee of the Early Modern Recipes Online Collective. "I cannot think of a scholar who better exemplifies the benefits – to students and to the field more broadly – of involving undergraduates in cutting edge research."

Finalists for the Integration of Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award were Kirill Afonin, an associate professor in the Department of Chemistry and Didier Dréau, an associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences.

Chemistry Department Chair Pinku Mukherjee describes Afonin as one of UNC Charlotte's top researchers. "He is also an effective mentor for students in his research group, and he has developed an innovative course that truly engages students in research and the generation of new knowledge," Mukherjee says. "Kirill sets the bar for the integration of cutting-edge research and undergraduate education."

Dréau has taught a wide range of courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Many of his courses feature hands-on training of undergraduate students within laboratory settings. Much of his own research, and his laboratory experiences, are highly productive and externally funded, with him generating \$1.7 million in funding. His research, which has resulted in more than 60 peer-reviewed publications, is described as inter-disciplinary, consistent, impactful, and impressive.

Award For Outstanding Teaching By A Full-Time Lecturer

Sarah Pollock joined the faculty as a full-time lecturer in the Department of Sociology in fall 2015. She teaches sociology courses that address gender, human sexuality, as well as quantitative analysis. Pollock says she thinks that "...teaching is more than helping students learn the material; it's about developing their critical thinking skills, broadening their perspectives, and challenging them to grow intellectually, morally, and socially."

Pollock's peers and Sociology Department chair Stephanie Moller commend Pollock for her effective teaching.

"Dr. Pollock is in her fourth year on the UNC Charlotte faculty, and she has already left a lasting mark on the department and student culture," Moller says. "She is clearly committed to helping our students become thoughtful and critical sociologists. Dr. Pollock is dedicated to finding innovative strategies to reach her students and keep them engaged, and she is willing to reflect on those strategies to assess what does and does not work."

Pollock uses innovative and effective strategies in the classroom that keep her students engaged. Her teaching style pushes students through the stages of learning.

As one example, Pollock revised one of her courses to further develop students' reading comprehension skills, moving away from reading notes to journal assignments. The new approach enables students to come to class better prepared. They can focus on the main arguments of the readings, and can cultivate their ability to synthesize and apply what they are learning. Class discussions are more nuanced and productive, and students' depth of understanding has improved, as shown by essay questions.

Finalists for the Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Full-Time Lecturer were Tuan Cao, a full-time lecturer in the Biology Department, and Paloma Fernandez Sanchez, a full-time Spanish lecturer in the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies.

Cao is described as an innovative and dedicated teacher. In one

class, he has students volunteer with community organizations to apply their biological knowledge in real-life situations and gain a commitment to outreach and service to others. Since 2016, students have contributed almost 3,000 hours of service to nonprofit organizations such as Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation, Carolina Raptor Center and TreesCharlotte.

Three key components of Sanchez's teaching philosophy include connecting the course's student learning objectives with her student's own professional goals, emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion through her lectures and classroom activities, and establishing a collaborative and active learning environment. She says that learning another language helps students embrace the importance of sociopolitical and cultural perceptions that are part of other communities as well as their own.

Award For Outstanding Teaching By A Part-Time Faculty Member

Lane Rhodes has worked as an adjunct lecturer in the Department of English since spring 2016. She teaches the Introduction to Technical Communication course most frequently, and she also teaches a liberal studies course with the theme of literature and culture and an American Studies Program course that focuses on protest music throughout American history. Rhodes earned her master's degree in English from UNC Charlotte and her bachelor's degree in piano performance from UNC Chapel Hill.

She spent close to 25 years working in development and communications work in a variety of professional environments and draws on this background to help students grasp how class assignments relate to real-life work situations. "I want students to be confident that what we work on in class matters, is relevant, and will increase their awareness and success beyond the university experience," she says.

In one of her classes, a literature and culture course, she focuses on the connections between literature and music. She has her students in this course read stories and novels about musicians and helps them understand the connection between music and storytelling. Her experience in teaching this course has led her to develop and teach an American Studies course on protest music throughout American literature.

"The broadest foundation of my teaching philosophy is the notion that all of life IS interdisciplinary, and in every class, I stress the importance of connecting seemingly disparate ideas," she says.

The finalist for the Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Part-Time Faculty Member is Andrew Goff, an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences. Goff believes that creating a lasting impression is vital for cultivating a learning environment. He promotes an open, discussion-based format in his lectures and uses polling and response-type activities to gauge their understanding and retention of the material. He also invites students to join him for creek cleanups in and around local creeks, making connections with them outside the classroom. &

Words: **Mary Ellen Frizzell and Banita Brown** | Image: **Lynn Roberson**

CIVIC EATS



Foodways Help Create More Informed Citizens

Being an informed citizen in a democracy requires more than access to information and the capability to act upon it. Citizenship also necessitates understanding the people who make, and will be affected by, community decisions.

The Civic Eats project seeks to help create a better informed Charlotte citizenry through a focus on the connective potential of foodways – or why we eat, what we eat, and what it means.

Research suggests that shared food experiences may promote a number of civic values including inclusivity, participation, and democracy. By staging a workshop where participants explore the foodways of Charlotte's different cultural communities, we seek to foster increased trust and acceptance of diversity that residents consider when making civic decisions.

Food serves as a universal communicator. Charlotte, as an economically immobile and racially divided city, needs to find more ways for conversation. Food experiences provide more approachable methods to explore commonalities and perhaps improve relationships.

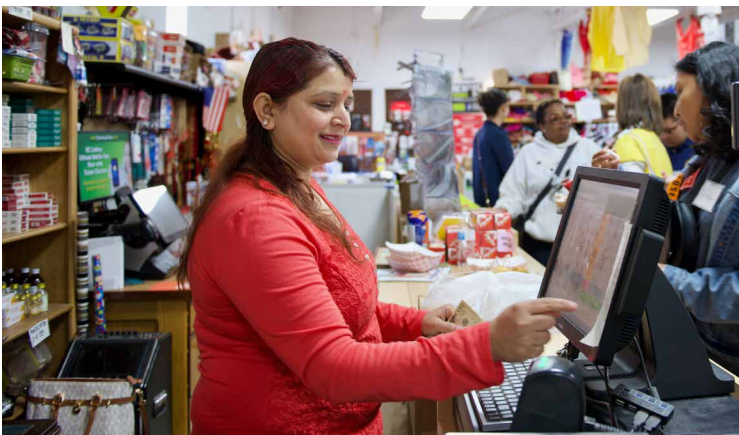
Becoming more food literate strengthens communities, helping create a citizenry better able to relate to each other. Using foodways as part of citizenship education goes beyond learning history and government to teaching cooperation and community. Civic Eats, a partnership between UNC Charlotte's Center for the Study of the New South and Central Piedmont

Community College, builds upon the concept of food literacy through application in civic contexts.

Food has also been described as a “potent heuristic device” for Western education. It is a lens of inquiry that is universal and less politicized than some other perspectives. It allows for the interrogation of numerous humanities questions, including history, power, human agency, and culture, helping in the pursuit of creating knowledge. The project uses food as a lens to investigate the complexities and commonalities of being a citizen in today's Charlotte, helping to provide new ways to think about the relationship between our values and viewpoints. &

These words are an edited version drawn from project organizers' application to the North Carolina Humanities Council, which has provided funding for the community-engaged research. Conference organizers are Ashli Stokes, a UNC Charlotte faculty member, and Melissa Vrana of Central Piedmont Community College. Others involved with executing the workshop include Nicole Peterson and Conseulo Salas, who are faculty at UNC Charlotte; Richard Kugelmann and John LaTour of CPCC's Hospitality Education program; Charlotte historian Tom Hanchett; Steven Alvarez of St. John's University; UNC Charlotte and CPCC students; and leaders from the Charlotte community. Read more: go.uncc.edu/food_research

Words: **Ashli Stokes** | Images: **Lynn Roberson**



Opposite page: Students share food they prepared together. Clockwise on this page from upper left: Community member Nadine Ford talks with workshop organizer Melissa Vrana of Central Piedmont Community College. Izzat Freitekh, owner of La Shish Kabob, shares food with guests. Ashli Stokes shares baklava. Meena Chamlagai of Rohan Grocery welcomes workshop participants.

Cancer Research

Students Learn, Contribute
Through Collaboration



Priyanka Grover's pancreatic cancer research at UNC Charlotte has led to an opportunity to work with young leaders from around the world.



Katherine Holtzman is studying whether an anti-inflammatory drug can be combined with existing cancer treatments for greater success.



Shayan Nazari has received a fellowship with the Graduate Partnerships Program at the NIH.



Graduate student Nitika is studying molecular and cellular biology and aims to eventually run her own lab.

Priyanka Grover's pancreatic cancer research at UNC Charlotte is paving her way from North Carolina to Cambridge, Massachusetts. This summer, Grover has headed to the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard to work on a more efficient drug discovery process to benefit cancer patients.

Named a 2019 Leader of Tomorrow in biotechnology, Grover is participating in the Institute's GapSummit 2019, a student-operated biotechnology leadership forum designed to tackle challenges facing the bioeconomy and solicit innovative solutions to address those challenges. Her participation comes just weeks after she completed her doctoral degree in biology.

Grover is among team members brainstorming ideas to address weaknesses in biotechnology. This highly selective summit of only 100 people from around the world has Grover mixing with the best and brightest future and current leaders in biotechnology, including those from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation (NSF).

Grover's team, comprising students from Harvard, Johns Hopkins and Cambridge universities, will consider how to create a more efficient drug discovery process, presenting its idea to venture capitalists and leaders in industry and academia. If her team wins, it will get funding to pursue its idea.

"I would like to go into equity research to push for more capital expenditures on biotech companies that focus on immunotherapy for oncology," says Grover, whose specialty is molecular and cellular biology. "I believe this is where our biggest breakthrough is going to come for generations in regard to cancer research."

Grover is driven by her desire to solve complex puzzles. Pancreatic cancer, which is hard to detect early, is a particularly deadly disease that scientists are trying to address. More than 56,000 people will be diagnosed with the cancer this year, and more than 45,000 will die, according to the American Cancer Society.

Grover is just one example of student researchers at UNC Charlotte who benefit from an intimate research environment and nurturing and talented faculty.

Another doctoral student, Shayan Nazari, has received a fellowship with the prestigious Graduate Partnership Program at the NIH. As part of the Office of Intramural Training &

Education, Nazari has a rare opportunity to complete her dissertation work there, while collaborating with like-minded scientists from across the country. Nazari was one of 450 elite graduate researchers nationwide selected for the GPP this year.

Nazari's study aims to provide better understanding of how the density of mammary tissue affects breast cancer growth. According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight women in America will develop breast cancer in their lifetimes.

"An important risk factor that is understudied but gaining attention is the presence of mammographic dense tissue in the breast," Nazari says. "Half the women in the United States actually have high levels of mammographic dense tissue, which poses two major problems. It increases the risk for developing cancer by 4 to 6 times; and it can mask the cancer, making it hard to detect through standard screening and therefore goes undetected until it is too late."

The lab she joined is studying the extracellular matrix in disease, the complex three-dimensional, or 3D, microenvironment in tissue structure that plays a key role in the development of many cancers, including breast cancer. Her work uses 3D cell culture and imaging to analyze cancer cell signaling and behavior in mammographic dense tissue, with a goal of discovering ways to prevent and treat breast cancer.

Third-year graduate student Nitika wants to follow the lead of her mentor, Andrew Truman, an assistant professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, after working alongside him for years. She is studying molecular and cellular biology, and she aims to eventually run her own lab. She is already on her way through training other graduate students in CRISPR technology – the process of changing an organism's DNA. She was the first UNC Charlotte student to successfully complete experiments using this technology, Truman says.

Then there is Katherine Holtzman, whose research is inspired by a family friend who died from breast cancer. Her upcoming study of mice is to determine whether an anti-inflammatory drug can be combined with existing cancer treatments to more successfully treat the disease. Holtzman is conducting this study with Didier Dréau, an associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences.

Students who choose UNC Charlotte embrace these intensive research opportunities that their mentors set before them. Their work also receives support from a growing list of funders, including federal agencies such as the NIH and NSF.

"Our student researchers are very much appreciated by the University's principal investigators," says Pinku Mukherjee, the Irwin Belk Endowed Professor of Cancer Research and chair of the Department of Biological Sciences. "It's not unusual for students to have a substantial role on their mentors' best research projects."

For these graduate students, that certainly has been the case. Grover, for example, has worked alongside Mukherjee in her lab, while also coaching undergraduates who periodically work with her. She majored in international business at Virginia Commonwealth University and minored in biology, and chose UNC Charlotte with encouragement from a family friend who was familiar with Mukherjee's research in breast and pancreatic cancers.

She first joined Mukherjee's lab as a volunteer, and in 2014, she applied and was accepted to the Ph.D. program in biological sciences. Her work centers on how the protein MUC-1, found on the surface of pancreatic cancer cells, plays a role in cancer signaling.

After receiving a one-year research assistantship grant from the Graduate School, she landed an NIH Graduate Summer Opportunity to Advance Research Program internship last summer. Her internship proved to be the key to unlocking the door at the National Laboratory.

"My NIH experience has shaped and solidified a goal of having my own research laboratory one day," she says. "This now seems more attainable because of the training and the support I am receiving, especially in my current laboratory. Here, I really get to be the scientist I want to be due to the outstanding mentorship I've received from my main research advisor and the scientists and fellows with whom I work side-by-side and learn from every day." &

Words: **Jonnelle Davis with Brian White** |

Images: **Kat Lawrence and Courtesy of Shayan Nazari**

Learn more: **inside.uncc.edu**

BUILDING CULTURE



Harry Gilliard accompanied American University students to Havana, Cuba in March, to study the intersections of culture, religion, history, and economics.

FULBRIGHT GIVES ALUMNUS OPPORTUNITY TO GROW COMMUNITY

Stories build culture by preserving traditions and teaching future generations, UNC Charlotte alumnus Harry Gilliard says. Gilliard's stories set their first roots in Sandridge, South Carolina, a rural Lowcountry crossroads community.

"I arrived in college with little cultural competency," says Gilliard, a first-generation college student whose roommate was of Indian heritage. "However, as I talked with my roommate about my life as a Southern Black man and listened to his stories, I began to learn what it meant to come from a different background. Through these experiences, I began to appreciate the benefits and power of difference, and how it can unite more than divide, which subsequently increased my belief in a shared dignity for all people."

Gilliard will take with him this foundational belief in the positive potential of diversity, as he heads to Brazil in 2020 through a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. Gilliard completed his bachelor's degree in meteorology in 2011 at UNC Charlotte, where he was active in the Student Organization of Meteorology (STORM), the Building Educational Strengths and Talents (BEST) initiative, the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program, and the Voices of Eden Gospel Choir.

He earned his master's degree in education in 2015 from Louisiana State University, and participated in a summer service program in Colombia and Ecuador. He has just accepted a role as associate project director for the Chimborazo, Ecuador project with

Amigos de las Americas, following a stint as program coordinator for the Center for Community Engagement and Service at American University. While in Brazil with his Fulbright, he plans to promote intercultural exchange and camaraderie as he has done while leading language exchange activities in Washington, D.C.

"Incorporating African American music when discussing culture, grammar, and U.S. history will allow me to share my background and perspectives in the classroom," he says. "By discussing videos, reading articles, and listening to music, I can create interactive activities focused on leadership, diversity, and community engagement, just as I do through my work in higher education."

Gilliard's goals for the teaching assistantship include creating a positive environment for students to learn English. He wants his Brazilian students to feel comfortable asking questions about other cultures and countries and for them to engage in service learning, to help them create their own stories of their lives.

"Stories have shaped my identity as an educator by providing me with a meaning and purpose," he says. "The Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship Program will provide an opportunity to be a cultural ambassador and present my identity while learning from Brazilians who present theirs." &

Words: **Lynn Roberson** | Images: **Courtesy of Harry Gilliard**

FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR TO BUILD CULTURAL BRIDGES WITH WORDS, EXPERIENCES

Growing up in the tiny mountain town of Hayesville, N.C., the community library became Misty Morin's refuge, and books became her window to the wider world.

Morin, a Martin Scholar, earned bachelor's degrees in English and Spanish from UNC Charlotte in May. She has been accepted into two master's programs in linguistics and she eventually plans to earn a doctoral degree.

For now, though, the next destination in her life's journey is Spain, where she will share her love of language through a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, teaching English to students in La Rioja in the city of Logroño at the C.P.C. Santa María school from September until June 2020.

them with knowledge that can radically redefine the way they think."

While in Spain with her Fulbright, she plans to engage her students and their parents in active reading and writing through events at libraries or community centers. She will draw upon her own personal experiences with writing, which started in that small town library and her hometown school.

"Not only did I devour every piece of literature I could get my hands on, but I also began to tell stories of my own," she writes. "My pen never stopped moving and creating. Writing essays, school play narrations, short stories, and poems, I could not keep up with the thoughts echoing in my mind. For the first time in my life, I felt as though people wanted to hear what I had to say."

Morin was a member of the executive board of the University Honors Program, and a member of the English honors society, Sigma Tau Delta. She pursued departmental honors in Spanish, and was a member of the UNC Charlotte speech team. &

Words: **Lynn Roberson** | Image: **Courtesy of Misty Morin**

LOVE OF LANGUAGE

"Growing up, books were so important to me," Morin says. "I read all the time. It's really important to me that kids have this outlet and this opportunity to experience different parts of the world through literature. Reading about distant places and different cultures really opens your eyes. It's a way to set your hopes higher and hope that you can one day be a part of that world."

As the first person in her family to attend college, Morin has embraced opportunities to step into that broader world.

A semester-long Spanish language intensive program melded her desire to experience the world first-hand with her interests in language acquisition. While in Spain, she taught English at a local elementary school once a week, working with the youngest students, who had limited knowledge of the English language. She was tasked with the creation of engaging activities that centered on the first steps of language acquisition.

When she returned to Charlotte, she worked with Freedom School Partners, a program focused on empowerment through literacy.

"During the summer we poured our hearts into the books we read together," she writes in her Fulbright application. "Through literature and the activities I orchestrated that centered around it, my scholars gained exposure to perspectives of others in the world around them, the skills to empathize and show compassion in the face of adversity, and the ability to use these lessons to lessen the grief in the world."

Studying Spanish taught her how transformative it can be to master a language.

"Now a whole new world of literature and culture has become accessible to me whereas previously I lacked the freedom and understanding to enjoy it fully," she writes. "Giving children the power of language, and consequently the stories enveloped by it, supplies



Misty Morin graduated in May 2019 with a double major in English and Spanish. With her Fulbright, she will teach English to students in Spain.

NEXT LEVEL STEM

Team Creates Innovative Science Kit, Using Discovery Process

When Michael Walter stepped on stage this spring for a “Stand Up Science” show featuring scientists and comedians, he placed a small plastic box at his feet.

During his talk about renewable energy, the UNC Charlotte chemistry professor scooped up and spotlighted items from the box. He used them to highlight his pitch to bring science to life in school classrooms through science kits he and colleagues have developed.

Walter and other team members have refined their pitch about the science kit through months of work with the Ventureprise Launch NSF I-Corps program at UNC Charlotte. Over the previous five years, Walter had worked on the kit, driven by a desire to bring science to school classrooms in a compelling way.

He included his university students in outreach, and he obtained Camille & Henry Dreyfus Foundation Inc. funding to work with a Cabarrus County high school teacher on its design and to host teachers at workshops where he gave each teacher a kit.

Yet, he still needed a way to bring the kit to a bigger stage.

Now, through the Ventureprise program and its funding from the National Science Foundation, this team has joined other faculty, students and staff at UNC Charlotte who are learning to take a “Lab to Market” entrepreneurial approach to test the commercial possibilities of their ideas and research. The goal is to get out of the university setting into the broader world to forge ideas. The teams receive

funding, training, and coaching to pursue their goals.

“I-Corps has had us dig in deep to try to figure out what is really valuable about what we are offering,” Walter says. “In the beginning, we thought that it was all about what’s in the box. We now realize it’s not about what’s in the kit. It’s more about what value it will offer the high school science teachers.”

That value comes in many forms, says team member and UNC Charlotte alumna Meesha Kaushal, who completed her doctoral degree in nanoscale science in May. Time, convenience, affordability, versatility, compactness, integration of contemporary scientific practices, and a way for teachers to gain professional development stand out as assets of the kit.

“I did not know when we started this project that we actually were providing a teacher recertification tool,” Kaushal says. “That’s something you learn when you go through this program, and you dig deeper into the layers. It’s thinking from a whole different level.”

Kaushal and Walter started at the regional I-Corps level, participating in over six weeks of entrepreneurial seminars and programming.

After determining the kits could be commercially viable, they successfully competed for a national I-Corps Team Award. A \$50,000 grant has provided financial support for immersive training and even more extensive customer research and discovery throughout the





Michael Walter and Meesha Kaushal are members of the Next Level STEM team.

country. They have documented insights from 111 interviews with potential customers, partners and competitors. They have worked closely with their I-Corps mentor and business entrepreneur, Laura Smailes, who is Ventureprise's assistant director.

Their discovery process suggests they should form a company, rather than a non-profit, and they want to conduct pilot workshops as another next step. They are determining business partners; their discovery process suggests that higher education institutions and nonprofits focused on secondary education are good options.

The process they have gone through has also refined how they think about their teaching and research, with a stronger emphasis on real-world problems.

"For all my research, the real need has been cheap, carbon-free, solar photovoltaic technology," Walter says. "We need that for the world. But, what's the real problem we are addressing, if we want to bring it to market?" With the skills they have honed through the immersion process, he is confident the team can better answer that question. &

THE PITCH

"Our team has developed a High School STEM education Kit that eliminates the need for functional lab space, reduces lab preparation time by up to 50%, and combines professional development hours with teacher recertification. The kit implements real world applications and hands-on experiments around flexible electronic materials (OLEDs, polymer solar cells, and chemical sensors) while teaching fundamental chemistry and physics that meet state/national science standards."

LEADING THE WAY

Ventureprise Partners With LEADS

This year brought something new for the teams participating in the Ventureprise Launch NSF I-Corps Program at UNC Charlotte. For the first time, the customer discovery teams included students from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' LEADS program.

Adding these students to the mix has brought fresh perspectives to the entrepreneurial teams. It also has pushed the LEADS students to trust their ability to influence business decisions in a big way.

"Ventureprise adds a critical experiential element to the student's classroom experience in my Entrepreneurial Leadership in Action class. They learn about the "business of business" and – even more important – they learn a great deal about themselves as leaders," says adjunct faculty member Henry Doss. "The collaboration is a great example of groups working together to create a breakthrough learning experience for UNC Charlotte students."

The LEADS students work collaboratively with other students and faculty on the teams to gain exposure to early-stage business and leadership experience. The opportunities include leading teams, conducting hands-on consumer research, developing products, and creating pitches, Doss says.

Generally, the LEADS program helps students in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences grow into creative problem solvers, imaginative leaders, and engaged citizens who are well-prepared for their future careers. Students have access to unique programming that complements their majors, special events, and a variety of hands-on experiences to enhance their personal and professional development – such as the I-Corps experience.

With funding from the National Science Foundation, students and professors involved in the Ventureprise program look for commercial opportunities for their research or business idea. Each team is composed of an entrepreneurial lead (student), one academic lead (faculty member), and one student from the LEADS program. The spring 2019 cohort of 11 teams brought the total number of teams over the years to 100.

For LEADS students, the new opportunity pushed them to gain new skills. "I gained a better understanding of the business process and strategic ways to find your customer base," says Elijah Acosta, a LEADS student who is majoring in political science.

Acosta's reflections, and those of other LEADS students, is a sign of success for Laura Smailes, Ventureprise assistant director.

"We want CLAS students to understand that they are able to contribute ideas that solve problems in their communities," Smailes says. "We want to expose them to entrepreneurship in a way that is engaging and will show them how to use their degrees in a way to capture opportunities." &

Words: **Madison Brewington** | Learn More: entrepreneurship.uncc.edu



SCIENCE MEETS ART

DOCTORAL STUDENT FORMS BONDS THROUGH CHEMISTRY, DANCE

Margaret Kocherga's Instagram comes alive through the vivid photos and videos she posts, illustrating her life as a student in the Nanoscale Science Ph.D. Program at UNC Charlotte.

Her posts show Kocherga conducting experiments, presenting at conferences on STEM topics, leading chemistry workshops with audiences of all ages, collaborating with colleagues, teaching college labs, slogging through late-night homework – and dancing.

She even occasionally shows up en pointe around campus wearing a lab coat – all in the interest of debunking stereotypes about scientists and artists.

While her social media posts illustrate diverse settings, activities and even wardrobe choices, a closer look reveals consistent threads. Her story is one of a young scientist and artist who is making connections and encouraging others; discovering and sharing knowledge; and keeping a sharp eye on a dizzying array of daily tasks.

One thing Kocherga emphasizes through her posts is that mistakes, rejections, and setbacks happen to us all.

on people, so that's one thing I want to show, that not everything gets done. I want to show that there are a lot of things that work out well, such as in my research projects, and then some things don't work, and I don't get results for a month, and I'm frustrated."

For chemistry Professor Thomas Schmedake, who mentors Kocherga in his lab, her focus on pushing forward through adversity is a great strength.

"The two qualities I value most in Margaret as a scientist are her incredible perseverance and versatility," Schmedake says "She has demonstrated an exceptional capacity for both, as she has propelled the development of our research program from the concept phase, through proof-of-concept, to the brink of commercialization." Kocherga is a critical element in a research collaboration that has brought together:

- Synthesis and modeling breakthroughs from the Schmedake lab,
- Developments in organic electronic device fabrication from Michael Walter's chemistry lab,
- Expertise in thin-film and device characterization and engineering from Yong Zhang's lab in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in The William States Lee College of Engineering, and
- Physics and optical science expertise from Tino Hofmann and others.

WEATHERING SETBACKS

"There is often a perfectionism stigma, in which people feel like things must be perfect," she says. "It puts a lot of mental pressure

“Margaret is the truly exceptional graduate student who is able to leverage the expertise of these groups to achieve an interdisciplinary breakthrough in the field of organic electronics, which her recent manuscript in *Chemical Communications* highlights,” Schmedake says.

A dozen UNC Charlotte faculty and students from diverse disciplines are collaborators on the project and authors on the paper, with Kocherga as lead author. The team is synthesizing silicon complexes for electron transport and electroluminescence applications, to enhance operational lifetimes, increase device efficiency, and lower device costs.

One potential use for these stable, non-toxic, and lightweight materials is for bendable health-monitoring wearable devices. Use in cellular phones and computers are other potential applications.

“This was a significant research paper because we demonstrated we can make these new compounds, and we’ve shown the compounds can be applied in the area of light-emitting diodes,” Kocherga says. “We’ve shown that we can get a pixel that lights up and produces light.”

Life lately has been a whirlwind for Kocherga. In one new initiative, she is participating in UNC Charlotte’s Ventureprise Launch NSF I-Corps program as an entrepreneurial lead, exploring the commercial viability of the team’s research. Kocherga conducted 70 interviews with potential customers, funders and competitors as part of the discovery process.

In May she received the award for best oral presentation by a student at the 50th North American Silicon Symposium in Columbia,

S.C., and she took a first place at the UNC Charlotte Graduate Research Symposium. Earlier in 2019, she earned the Younger Chemists Committee Leadership Development Award from the American Chemical Society.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

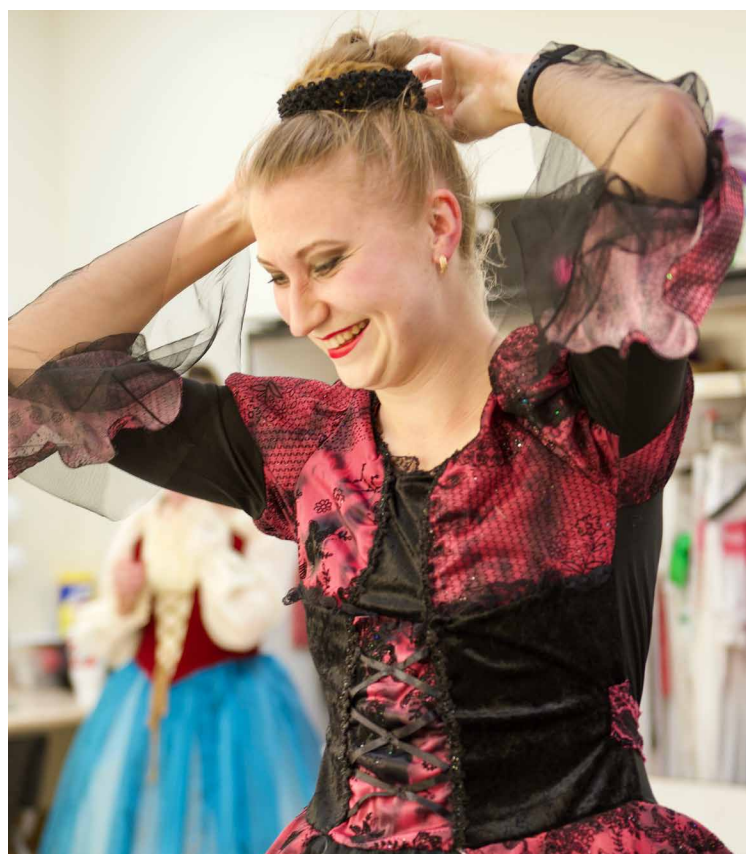
Along with her research, Kocherga makes time to engage the community in science. The National Science Foundation supports her work with Schmedake and the Charlotte Teachers Institute to build the capacity of 8th grade science classroom teachers, students, and parents at James Martin Middle School.

“Margaret recruited a team of volunteers at UNC Charlotte, including undergraduate and graduate students, to deliver hands-on science demonstrations at a parents’ night at the middle school,” says CTI Executive Director Scott Gartlan. “Margaret gave these parents and students a chance to experience science together in exciting, engaging ways. The students and teachers also visited UNC Charlotte labs to conduct experiments related to their 8th grade curriculum, and they started a first-ever science club at the school.” Kocherga and Schmedake spent time at the school as well.

Kocherga is a long-time leader with UNC Charlotte’s Science and Technology, a public science event hosted by science and technology faculty, staff and students as part of the North Carolina Science Festival. Her popular Colors of Chemistry workshop gives children and families a chance to experience hands-on science.



Margaret Kocherga demonstrates a scientific instrument.



Dance requires precision, creativity.

Continued page 18



Margaret Kocherga's Colors of Chemistry workshop is always popular.

SHARED ATTRIBUTES

She also squeezes in time to dance and to teach dance, and she fields questions from students and parents about how science and the arts interrelate. The ability to deal with unexpected results and setbacks serves scientists and artists well, as do spontaneity, creativity, and communication skills, she tells them.

"In both fields, you have to make quick decisions," she says. "You have to think fast, in a sometimes high-stress environment. I must be precise with science, just as I must with dance. I must have a great memory in science, just as I must in dance."

Kocherga developed her love of dance as a child at her mother's dance studio in Ukraine. When she was 15, her family moved to Charlotte, and she continued dancing professionally. Soon after, she tore her ACL, making her dream of a professional career as a dancer more difficult.

After finishing high school at age 16, she enrolled at Central Piedmont Community

College. There she met chemistry instructor Michelle Esancy, and with Esancy's encouragement, she began to see a career in STEM as an option. As she prepared to transfer to UNC Charlotte for her junior year, she found a place in Daniel Rabinovich's chemistry lab. Soon after, she was chosen for the intensive Charlotte Research Scholar undergraduate experience, researching the toxicity of mercury in biological systems. Those experiences inspired her to pursue her doctoral degree and deepen her research.

"One main thing I've learned from my mentors is to always try things," she says. "Don't be close-minded. Don't be afraid to try things you don't know. Always have an open mind, and listen to others. That's something I have learned – listen to everything and everybody, and then decide what's the best for you. You can't confine yourself to a box. You have to go out there and explore." &

Words and Images: **Lynn Roberson** |
Kocherga's Instagram:
@margaret_kocherga



Kocherga plays the Wicked Stepmother in Gaston Dance Theatre's "Cinderella."

Cutting Edge Science

Modern Space To Enable Collaborative Research And Teaching

Nanoscale Science doctoral students offered a quick science experiment at the celebration, sending green goo high into the air.

On May 31, 2019, UNC Charlotte broke ground at the corner of Craver Road and Mary Alexander Road for a new campus facility that, when complete, will reshape the way the sciences are taught and studied at North Carolina's urban research university.

The celebratory event was shared by University leaders and faculty, staff, students, alumni, public officials, community partners, and friends, including many from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

"This one-stop-shop for our chemistry, biology and physics programs is an indisputable necessity," says Chancellor Philip L. Dubois. "Skyrocketing regional employer demand for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) professionals - compounded by enrollment that has nearly tripled since the 1984 opening of our existing science facility - requires a state-of-the-art solution, which this new building provides."

The celebration represented the fulfillment of a commitment made in 2016 with the passage of Connect NC, a \$2 billion infrastructure bond designated in large part to support the rapid growth of the state's public colleges and universities.

Despite the 130,000 square feet of flexible classrooms and laboratories that will be available when the building opens in 2021, space will immediately be at a premium. Additional funding proposals totaling \$45 million currently are being considered by the North Carolina General Assembly to renovate the Burson and Cameron academic buildings.


"UNC Charlotte's student population likely will surpass 30,000 for the first time this fall; approximately half have declared or will declare a STEM major," says Provost Joan Lorden. "Our ability to prepare students for work and continuous learning across their lifetimes depends upon our capacity to provide challenging classroom and laboratory experiences in a problem-oriented, 21st-century learning environment. With well-designed teaching, learning and research spaces that promote innovative interdisciplinary collaboration, UNC Charlotte will continue to attract top-notch faculty and students as we make a distinctive impact in STEM fields."

The flexibility of the new science building, designed for interdisciplinary research and collaboration, is expected to be a

leading factor in the continued readiness of undergraduate and graduate students.

"We intend to build on what makes UNC Charlotte inherently different from other leading institutions - getting undergraduate students involved in research very early in their college experience," says Rick Tankersley, vice chancellor for research and economic development. "In fact, the opportunity to do meaningful research at all levels opens discovery and learning, which helps build critical skills and makes students very attractive to potential employers."

Faculty understand the value of collaboration among various fields, how it might influence their students' perceptions of science, and the ways collaboration at UNC Charlotte attracts students and advances scientific inquiry.

"Prospective students will see not only leading-edge facilities, which are available at a lot of institutions, but a new and modern approach to science - an amazing environment for learning," says Juan Vivero-Escoto, associate professor of chemistry. 

Words: **Susan Messina** | Image: **Ryan Honeyman**



PERSONALLY SPEAKING SERIES

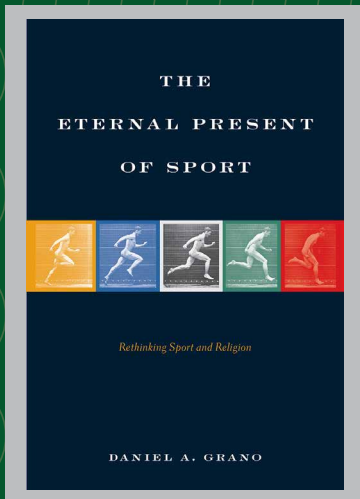
AUTHORS SERIES UNCOVERS STORIES BEHIND THE BOOKS

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and its partners in fall 2019 kick off the 10th season of Personally Speaking, introducing published scholars from the College to the community through conversations about their books.

The first of four author presentations, set for Sept. 24, invites us to rethink sports and religion, while the second, on Nov. 12, is a how-to guide to making meetings both bearable and productive. Early 2020 dates will be announced later, and will offer a new look at Shakespeare's

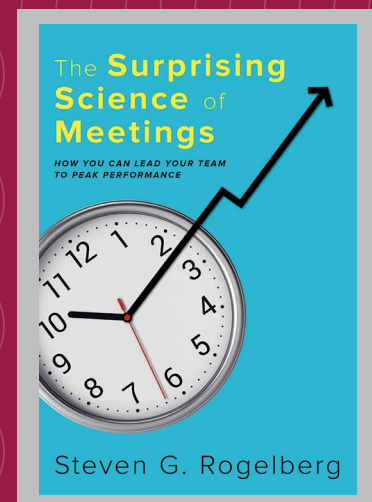
works through feminist eyes and a stage-setting primer on Charlotte's hosting of the 2020 Republican National Convention. The public is invited to join the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and its partners, J. Murrey Atkins Library and UNC Charlotte Center City, for education, entertainment and challenges. &

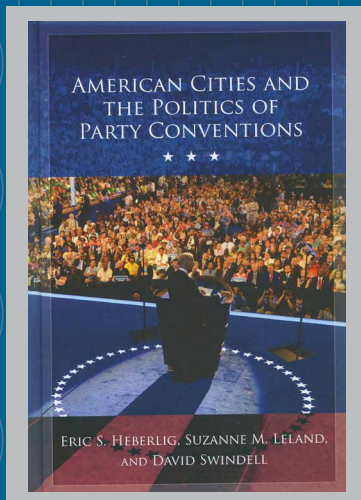
Words: **Susan Jetton** | Learn More: clas.uncc.edu/ps



The Eternal Present of Sport considers the importance of religious images and ideas in contemporary sport controversies including performance enhancement, the head trauma crisis, and pay-for-play in collegiate athletics. Many people believe that sport is “religious” insofar as it provides an escape from politics. Author Dan Grano pushes back against this assumption, arguing instead that religion is a source of crisis and change in sport. Grano examines issues of transcendence, “legacy” - such as “greatest ever” or “all-time” - and “witnessing” through instant replay, all of which undermine institutional authority. He reflects on elite athletes representing especially powerful embodiments of religious and social conflict around issues relating to gender, sexuality, ability doping, traumatic brain injury and institutional greed. *The Eternal Present of Sport* received the 2018 Outstanding Book of the Year Award from the National Communication Association's Communication and Sport Division.

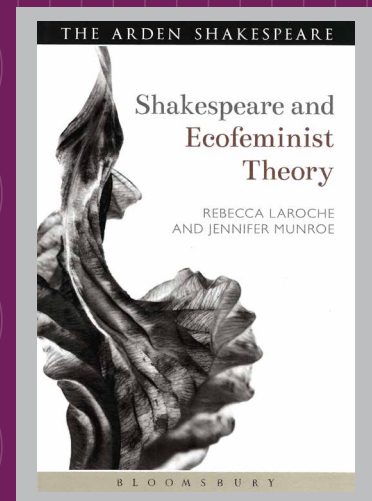
A recent estimate suggests employees endure a staggering 55 million meetings a day in the United States. Yet the tremendous time-investment yields only modest returns. No organization of human beings is immune from all-too-common meeting gripes: Failure to engage, inadvertent encouragement of participants to tune out, and blatant disregard for participants' time. Most companies and leaders view poor meetings as an inevitable cost of doing business, but now researchers clearly understand key drivers that make meetings successful. In *The Surprising Science of Meetings*, Chancellor's Professor Steven Rogelberg draws from extensive research including interviews with more than 5,000 employees across industries to share proven practices and techniques that can help managers and employees enhance the quality of their meetings. *The Washington Post* named the book one of 10 leadership books to watch for in 2019 and *Business Insider* named it one of 14 business books everyone will be reading in 2019.





On the eve of the 2020 Republican National Convention in Charlotte, Suzanne Leland's *American Cities and the Politics of Party Conventions* examines decisions by American cities to bid on and host one of the quadrennial major political party conventions. With co-authors Eric Heberlig of UNC Charlotte and Arizona State University's David Swindell, Leland examines the planning that goes into the decision to bid on a convention and the logistical efforts necessary for those that actually win. The authors explore possible benefits associated with hosting such mega events - the political fortunes of local leaders, citizens' satisfaction with being in the national limelight, economic impacts they may or may not accrue to the host town, and the marketing value of being the political capital of the world's attention for four days. The book provides a unique behind-the-scenes look at day-to-day operations of political convention-hosting through extensive interviews with those responsible for Charlotte's hosting of the 2012 Democratic National Convention.

Ecofeminism has been an important field of theory in philosophy and environmental studies for decades. It takes as its primary concern the way the relationship between the human and nonhuman is both material and cultural, but it also investigates how this relationship is inherently entangled with questions of gender equity and social justice. Jennifer Munroe's *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory* engagingly establishes a history of ecofeminist scholarship relevant to early modern studies, and it provides a clear overview of this rich field of philosophical inquiry. Through fresh, detailed readings of Shakespeare's poetry and drama, this book is a wholly original study articulating the ways in which we can better understand the world of Shakespeare's plays and the relationships between men, women, animals, and plants that we see in them. The book is co-written by Munroe and Rebecca Laroche of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

SERIES

SERIES SHARES KNOWLEDGE, SPARKS CONVERSATIONS

A decade ago, when suggesting the creation of the Personally Speaking published authors series, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Advisory Council members expressed strong interest in connecting the college to Charlotte.

“By showcasing the publications of our faculty, this series will make the intellectual work of our faculty available to the wider community,” they wrote. “It will show that UNC Charlotte contributes in exciting

and conscientious ways to the production of knowledge, as well as to important social, political and ethical conversations. Our city should know that their hunger for ideas can be sated on our campus.”

The 2019-2020 series marks the 10th anniversary of Personally Speaking. Since its beginning, these talks have brought together thousands of people from campus and the broader community to share ideas, knowledge and conversation.

2019-2020

- Dan Grano, *The Eternal Present of Sport*
- Steven Rogelberg, *The Surprising Science of Meetings: How You Can Lead Your Team To Peak Performance*
- Jennifer Munroe, *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory*
- Suzanne Leland, *American Cities and the Politics of Party Conventions*

2018-2019

- David Goldfield, *The Gifted Generation When Government Was Good*
- Mary Layton Atkinson, *Combative Politics: The Media and Public Perceptions of Lawmaking*
- Janaka Bowman Lewis, *Freedom Narratives of African American Women: A Study of 19th Century Writings*
- Karen L. Cox, *Goat Castle: A True Story of Murder, Race, and the Gothic South*
- Bryn Chancellor, *Sycamore*

2017-2018

- Ashli Quesinberry-Stokes, *Consuming Identity: The Role of Food in Redefining the South*
- Paula Gallant Eckard, *Thomas Wolfe and Lost Children in Southern Literature*
- John Cox, *To Kill A People: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*
- Christopher Cameron, *To Plead Our Own Cause: African Americans in Massachusetts and the Making of the Antislavery Movement*

2016-2017

- Lawrence G. Calhoun and Richard G. Tedeschi, *Posttraumatic Growth in Clinical Practice*
- Alan Rauch, *Dolphin*
- Julia Marie Robinson, *Race, Religion and the Pulpit: Rev. Robert L. Bradby and the Making of Urban Detroit*
- Peter Thorsheim, *Waste Into Weapons: Recycling in Britain During the Second World War*

2015-2016

- Jürgen Buchenau, *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule Since the Late Nineteenth Century*
- Shannon Sullivan, *Good White People: The Problem with Middle-Class White Anti-Racism*
- Jeffrey B. Leak, *Visible Man: The Life of Henry Dumas*
- Eric S. Heberlig, *Congressional Parties, Institutional Ambition, and the Financing of Majority Control*

2014-2015

- Scott T. Fitzgerald, *Middle Class Meltdown in America: Causes, Consequences, and Remedies*
- James D. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity*
- John David Smith, *Lincoln and the U.S. Colored Troops*
- Paula T. Connolly, *Slavery in American Children's Literature, 1790-2010*

2013-2014

- Jonathan Marks, *Why I Am Not a Scientist: Anthropology and Modern Knowledge*
- Aimee Parkison, *The Innocent Party*
- Allison Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France, 1600-1715: Seditious Frivolity*
- Martha Kropf, *Helping America Vote: The Limits of Election Reform*

2012-2013

- Richard W. Leeman, *The Teleological Discourse of Barack Obama*
- Kent L. Brintnall, *Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-in-Pain as Redemptive Figure*
- Joyce Dalsheim, *Unsettling Gaza: Secular Liberalism, Radical Religion, and the Israeli Settlement Project*
- Tanure Ojaide, *The Beauty I Have Seen: A Trilogy*

2011-2012

- Ann González, *Resistance and Survival: Children's Narrative From Central America and the Caribbean*
- Robin James, *The Conjectural Body: Gender, Race, and the Philosophy of Music*
- Cheryl D. Hicks, *Talk with You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935*
- Christine S. Davis, *Death: The Beginning of a Relationship*

2010-2011

- Christine Haynes, *Lost Illusions: The Politics of Publishing in Nineteenth-Century France*
- Larry Mellichamp and Paula Gross, *Bizarre Botanicals: How to Grow String-of-Hearts, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Panda Ginger, and Other Weird and Wonderful Plants*
- Tony E. Jackson, *The Technology of the Novel: Writing and Narrative in British Fiction*
- Sean McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies: Class in American Religion and Religious Studies*

News Briefs

1

German Studies, Japanese Studies
Rank Among Top In Nation In Graduates



UNC Charlotte's German Studies and Japanese Studies are number two and four, respectively, in the nation when it comes to awarding undergraduate degrees.

The Chronicle of Higher Education published the rankings earlier this year, in an analysis of U.S. Department of Education data for the 2016-2017 academic year. The report considered public and private institutions that confer bachelor's degrees in foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics, including first and second majors.

The national rankings speak to a concerted effort by faculty, staff, students and partners of the Department of Languages and Culture Studies to ensure that what students are learning is not only challenging, but also relevant, said Ann Gonzalez, chair of the department.

"We have paid close attention to what our students need to be successful in an increasingly global world, and our focus has paid off in more students enrolling and graduating from our programs," Gonzalez said. For example, in addition to classroom learning, the department focuses on study

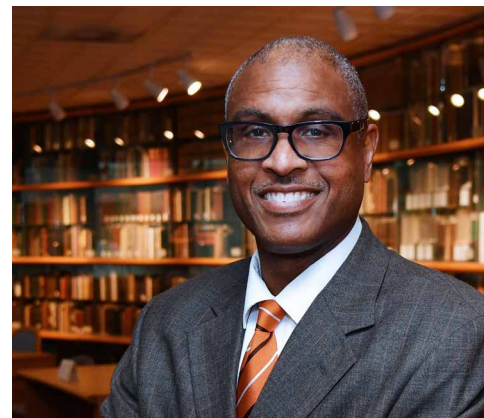
abroad and internship opportunities, and expansion of the ability for students to double major, such as through a partnership with the Lee College of Engineering. Faculty closely mentor students, while partners such as the German Language and Culture Foundation offer scholarships.

Overall, the report listed UNC Charlotte's programs in the top 3.5% – or 32 out of 926 institutions that were ranked – for undergraduate degrees awarded. The German major is in the top 1% of the 260 programs that were ranked among German language programs, while the Japanese major is in the top 5% of the 85 programs that were considered. In addition to German and Japanese, UNC Charlotte offers a Spanish undergraduate major, which ranks 21 out of 771 considered, and a French undergraduate major, which ranks 93 out of 465 considered.

The rankings are even higher when considered from a statewide perspective. UNC Charlotte's German, Japanese and Spanish majors ranks first among North Carolina institutions that were included, and French ranks fourth.

2

Jeffrey Leak Named
ACE Fellow, As One
Of Select Few Chosen



UNC Charlotte professor Jeffrey Leak has been named an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow for the 2019-20 academic year, as one of 39 individuals selected nationwide for this prestigious professional development opportunity.

Established in 1965, the ACE Fellows program is designed to strengthen institutions and leadership in American higher education by identifying and preparing faculty and staff for senior positions in college and university administration through its distinctive and intensive nominator-driven, cohort-based mentorship model. Fellows are selected through a rigorous process after nomination by their institution's leader.

Leak joined the UNC Charlotte faculty in 1998 and is faculty in the departments of English and Africana Studies. During his University tenure, he has served in a number of capacities, including director of the Center for the Study of the New South and president of the faculty. In 2016, Leak was part of the inaugural class of Emerging Leaders for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Currently, he is faculty representative to the NCAA and faculty fellow for the Martin Scholars Program in the Honors College.

A graduate of Campbell University, Leak completed a master's degree from the University of Delaware and a Ph.D. from Emory University. He has authored numerous publications, including "Visible Man: The Life of Henry Dumas" and "Racial Myths and Masculinity in African American Literature."

ACE mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. As the major coordinating body for all the nation's higher education institutions, ACE represents more than 1,700 college and university presidents and related associations.

3

Political Science, Sociology Major Named Newman Civic Fellow



Yesika Sorto Andino, a junior political science and sociology major from Charlotte, is among the 262 students selected for Campus Compact's 2019-20 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows.

Campus Compact is a Boston-based nonprofit organization that is working to advance the public purposes of higher education. The Newman Civic Fellowship is a one-year experience that emphasizes personal, professional and civic growth for student leaders who demonstrate an interest in solving public problems.

Andino is a Levine Scholar who has done community-engaged volunteerism and research with organizations providing educational, health, legal and financial resources to immigrant and refugee populations, such as the International House, Latin American Coalition, and ourBRIDGE For Kids, an after-school program providing educational and socio-emotional support for refugee and immigrant students.

Fellows receive access to a variety of learning and networking opportunities and access to apply for exclusive scholarship and post-graduate opportunities. Campus Compact supports institutions in fulfilling their public purposes by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility.



4

MPA Program Ranks In Top 20% Of Public Affairs Programs Nationwide

UNC Charlotte's nationally accredited Gerald G. Fox Master of Public Administration program has been ranked in the top 20% of 285 public affairs programs nationwide that were included in *U.S. News & World Report* 2020 Best Graduate Schools rankings, released on March 12.

The UNC Charlotte program ranked #60 nationally, with or ahead of much larger public affairs programs that were part of the rankings. The program also has achieved national specialty area rankings, including #16 in local government management, #22 in urban policy, and #27 in public finance and budgeting.

"These national rankings speak to our program's focus on providing students access to talented faculty who value high quality teaching, research and community outreach, and to staff who are committed to supporting our students," said MPA Director Tom Barth. "We also are blessed with a community of practitioners at every organizational level who work closely with the program to provide students with opportunities to expand their learning."

UNC Charlotte's MPA program, which is part of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, offers a strong education in core management and leadership competencies. It also features concentrated areas of study in urban management and policy, nonprofit management, emergency management, public finance, and arts administration.

5

Student Receives Award For Global Education Focus



Maria Garcia, who is majoring in International Studies, French and German, was named the 2019 Student International Education Award recipient by the UNC Charlotte Office of International Programs.

The award recognizes an individual for outstanding contributions to and involvement in areas such as a study abroad experience, involvement in internationally focused clubs, work and volunteer experiences with the Office of International Programs or other globally focused co-curricular activities.

In addition to her classroom studies, Garcia studied abroad in Lyon, France, and Berlin. During her time in Germany, she served as a student blogger and Snapchatter for the American Institute for Foreign Study Program and shared her experiences to encourage others to study abroad.

Additionally, she served as an overseas ambassador for Diversity Abroad; she wrote articles and represented the organization on social media as an advocate for intercultural exchange.

She also served as a peer advisor for the Office of Education Abroad and as a conversation partner for the English Language Training Institute. As an undergraduate research assistant, she worked in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration on various projects.

As a Charlotte Community Scholar, Garcia works with an immigration attorney in Charlotte to meet various local immigration needs. Her native languages are English and Spanish. In addition, she has studied French, German and Portuguese.



Communication Studies Professor Studies Data, Cyber Governance In BRICS Countries



In work that holds the potential to influence the development of the Internet, UNC Charlotte's Min Jiang has joined colleagues from around the world to study personal data regulation and cybersecurity governance in the countries known as BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

"I am drawn to the CyberBRICS work because of its importance, ambition, and potential impact," says Jiang, an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies. "How BRICS countries approach data protection and cybersecurity can critically shape the future contours of the Internet."

Jiang was one of a handful of scholars chosen to receive inaugural CyberBRICS Fellowships as part of the FGV DIREITO RIO'S Fellows in Rio Initiative, and she is spending five months in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at the world-renowned FGV Law School.

BRICS countries are home to almost 50 percent of the world's population and almost 40 percent of existing Internet users. Their digital policies have direct and profound impact on the world's population, technology, economy, and geopolitics.

The CyberBRICS initiative has three main goals: to map existing regulations, to identify best practices, and to develop policy suggestions in the areas of personal data regulation and cybersecurity governance in the BRICS. CyberBRICS seeks to provide valuable – and so far inexistent – insights on BRICS digital policies, based on rigorously collected evidence that can be used by researchers, regulators, and businesses.

The team anticipates publishing a book, with chapters produced by the various team members. They also are giving talks, teaching classes, participating in conferences, coaching students, engaging in collaborative research with FGV Law School professors, and working on individual projects. Jiang is also continuing her work on a book tentatively titled *China vs. Information*.



Psychological Science Professor Lauded For Innovation With Students In Community-Centered Research, Teaching

James Cook, a professor in the Department of Psychological Science at UNC Charlotte, has received the 2019 Outstanding Educator Award, a top award given by the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), Division 27 of the American Psychological Association.

The Outstanding Educator Award recognizes an SCRA member who has made exemplary and innovative contributions to the education of students about community psychology and community research and action.

The award recognizes Cook's long-standing and far-reaching contributions to community psychology and community research and action through education. These include scholarly contributions to understanding the building of campus and community partnerships, and teaching a variety of community psychology-related courses at the graduate and undergraduate level. Cook will officially receive his award in late June at the organization's biennial conference in Chicago.

"This is just a great honor to have my colleague Ryan Kilmer and our students nominate me, and then to have my national colleagues recognize the work that we have done to build a strong program here at UNC Charlotte," Cook said. "This is clearly a recognition of the collective efforts of our students and faculty. It's so great to have the spotlight put on our program again."

Students commented about the powerful and collaborative experiences they gain working with Cook, setting them on the path for success and preparing them to work for social change. Particularly noteworthy, the selection committee said, is the impact he has had on students who have gone on to practice community psychology in a range of settings. Letters of support also spoke about his "learning-while-doing" approach and his long history of facilitating class projects that benefit both students and community partners in meaningful ways.

In addition to his coordination of the Community Psychology Training Program at the Ph.D. and M.A. levels, Cook created and has continuously coordinated the Community Psychology Learning Community for transfer students, to help them learn about community psychology and develop a strong sense of community at UNC Charlotte.

Cook leads the Community Psychology Research Lab at UNC Charlotte, along with colleagues Ryan Kilmer, Victoria Scott and Andrew Case. To learn more about the work of the Community Psychology Research Lab: go.uncc.edu/community_psychology

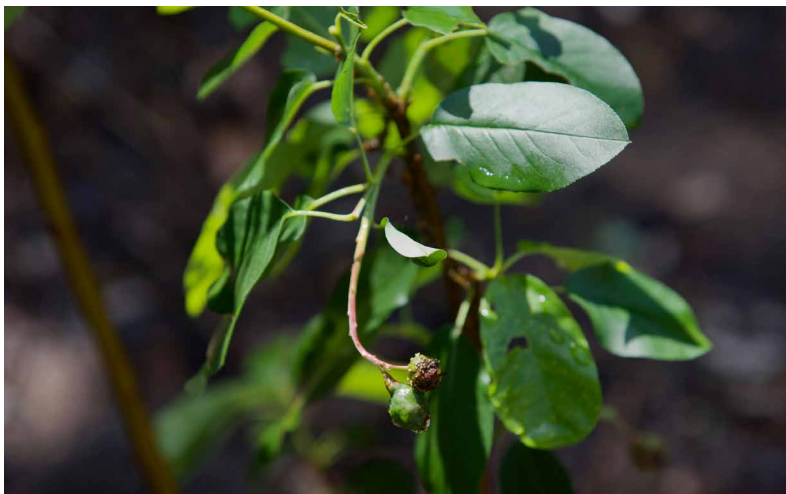




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NATIVE FRUITS ORCHARD

A new small orchard in the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens features native fruit species, such as blueberry, serviceberry, and muscadine grapes. The new garden, located near the Mellichamp Native Terrace, provides an opportunity to consider plant diversity and the native ecosystem. The community supported the effort through a crowdfunding campaign.

Learn more: gardens.uncc.edu

Images: **Lynn Roberson**