

A photograph of graduates in black gowns and caps, throwing their caps into the air. They are wearing various international stoles, including the flag of Uruguay. The scene is outdoors with a city skyline in the background. The image has a teal color overlay.

# **LEVINE SCHOLARS** **ANNUAL REPORT 2023**



“We hope that the Levine Scholars will engage in lives of learning, service, and leadership while completing their education at UNC Charlotte and will keep their ties to the region long after their graduation. We understand that this opportunity is the first of its kind for UNC Charlotte, an institution that has become and will continue to be a driving force providing exceptional educational opportunities in our region.”

- Leon and Sandra Levine



## LEVINE SCHOLARS ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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# FROM OUR DIRECTORS

## *The Levine Scholars Program Begins a New Chapter*



One of the exciting benefits in preparing this Annual Report is the formal invitation to reflect on the past year. It has been an exciting time for the program. New staff members have joined the team, the ninth cohort of Scholars has graduated, and we have traversed the first change in leadership at the Director level. As is the custom, the graduating Class of 2023 is moving in multiple directions, joining previous alumni as they venture to various geographic locations, pursuing a wide range of professional and postgraduate opportunities. The 20 incoming Scholars are as impressive as ever — interested in a host of areas of study and looking forward to making their contribution to the program, the University, and beyond.

Over the past thirteen years, the Levine Scholars Program (LSP) has developed a culture of giving back and making a difference in the various communities of which we are a part. There are legacy projects, civic engagement partnerships, international study and service experiences, alternative spring break trips, new student organizations, and exciting undergraduate research — the list goes on. The three pillars of the program: intellectual curiosity, civic engagement, and ethical leadership, form a strong foundation upon which Scholars build their individual undergraduate experiences and achievements. The support from The Leon Levine Foundation and colleagues across the UNC Charlotte campus have been a constant, uplifting the potential each Scholar brings to the program as well as the limitless possibilities a community of Scholars represents.

And so, even in years as dynamic as this one has been, the promise and progress of the Levine Scholarship remains. As Dr. Diane Zablotsky returns to the Sociology Department as a full-time faculty member, and Dr. Heather Smith changes roles from Faculty Fellow to Faculty Director, the essence of the program — the current and former Scholars — remains focused, energized, and excited for the future.

A change in Director offers a new opportunity to both of us, for the first time working as colleagues across campus instead of across the hall. As LSP has proven, time and time again, relationships like ours will endure, and we look forward to the exciting new chapter the coming year offers.

Go Niners,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diane Zablotsky".

Diane Zablotsky, Ph.D.  
Inaugural Faculty Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Heather Smith".

Heather Smith, Ph.D.  
Incoming Faculty Director





# ***A LEGACY*** **LIVES ON**

Together with his wife, Sandra, Leon Levine taught us that the greatest gift is that of giving back to our community. The term “philanthropist” certainly describes the generosity for which he is well-known, but he participated in so much more than the act of just writing checks. From an initial \$7.4 million gift establishing the Levine Scholars Program in 2009, it was clear that the Levines were choosing — through The Leon Levine Foundation — to also invest in the lives of the Scholars. Mr. and Mrs. Levine set a new standard by getting to know and mentor the students, creating a familial partnership in which the Scholars feel supported to fully immerse themselves in the pillars of intellectual curiosity, civic engagement, and ethical leadership.



By establishing the transformative Levine Scholars Program, the Levines invested in the hearts and minds of hundreds of students, empowering them to make a difference in their Charlotte and campus communities. With commitments to build and sustain the program, totaling approximately \$30 million to date, we are able to welcome 20 new Levine Scholars to campus each year. This group of future leaders will continue to impact their communities, following the Levine's example, for generations to come.

After Mr. Levine's death in April 2023, Levine Scholars and alumni shared letters of condolence, almost every one including the words, "changed my life." UNC Charlotte is both grateful for, and proud of, the life-changing legacy Mr. Levine leaves behind. Together with the campus community, LSP mourns his passing.

"Mr. and Mrs. Levine changed my life. As the first class of Levine Scholars, they gave us opportunities that I would have never otherwise had. Everything I do today is because of the initial investment they made in my education and guidance they provided in those four years. I am eternally grateful."

- Caroline Neill '14



"Mr. Levine's generosity made possible a remarkable collegiate experience, punctuated by the freedom to pursue any academic interest, support to explore philanthropic pursuits, and a community of lifelong friends and mentors. I am consistently reminded of how fortunate we all were to share in the Levine program."

- Vincent Cahill '17





# *The State of the* **PROGRAM**

**Recruitment:** The Levine Scholars Program (LSP) enrolls 20 students annually, providing the necessary tools, resources, and community of support to prepare them for lives of visionary leadership and positive social impact.

**Leadership School/Summer 1:** The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) expedition is a time of transition for the students as they experience the wilderness as a team and develop leadership skills while preparing to enter college. NOLS has been a part of the program since its inception and has launched each class of incoming Scholars.

**Civic Internship/Summer 2:** During their second summer in the program, Levine Scholars stay in the Charlotte community, engaging in nonprofit internships.

**Professional Internship/Summer 3:** Levine Scholars spend their third summer completing a pre-professional internship beyond the local community.

**Study Abroad/Summer 4:** In their fourth summer, Levine Scholars have studied, interned, and worked abroad in a variety of ways on six continents and in 60 countries.

**On Campus:** Day-to-day, Levine Scholars are thought-leaders across the disciplinary system. Scholars are engaged in a wide range of research endeavors and are involved in a plethora of student organizations, activities, and initiatives.

**Alumni Network:** LSP has a proud network of 160 Program Alumni. Many have gone on to pursue Graduate/Professional Studies in programs at Columbia University, Duke University, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, NYU, University of Oxford, Princeton University, Stanford University, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Pennsylvania, and many more.

The four-year scholarship covers full tuition, room, board, books, mandatory fees, an \$8,000 service grant, and funding for four summer experiences. Beyond the financial award, Scholars also benefit from:

- Professional networking
- Personalized mentorship
- Professional development funding
- Immersion in civic social, cultural, and athletic events
- Spring break and May service trips
- Social, cultural, and athletic events





# The Class of 2027 BY THE NUMBERS

For the first time since the pandemic, 76 finalists traveled from 14 states to participate in finalist weekend in-person, on campus. Ultimately, 20 students were selected to make up the incoming class of Scholars:

**71%**

In State

**29%**

Out of State

**9**

States represented

**2,200**

Nominations

**67**

Finalist Program participants

## Entering:

Belk College of Business - 2

William States Lee College of Engineering - 3

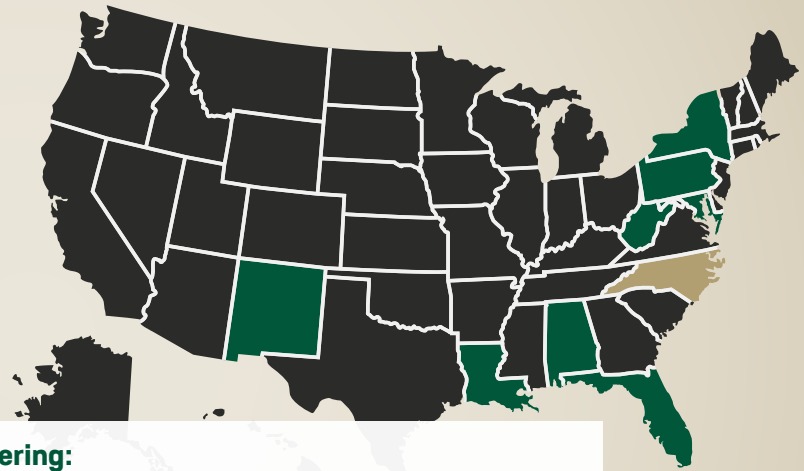
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences - 8

College of Health & Human Services - 2

College of Computing and Informatics - 3

University College - 1

Cato College of Education - 1



“It’s a joy to see intellect and passion come together. The Levine Scholars Program gives direction to students’ capacities and reminds them — and the campus — that an education is about more than a career, job, or money. It is also about leveraging the experience beyond campus and elevating those around us. As an educator, I applaud the importance that Leon and Sandra Levine placed on community and connecting education to it. It felt good and right to be back on campus [for Finalist Program this year]. I’ve been a part of the application review process, campus interviews, and panel discussions, and I’m always amazed at what emerges when we sit together but gets overlooked on paper.”

- Bruce Taylor

Professor & Program Director Reading Education M.Ed. Program





# Community IMPACT

Collectively, Levine Scholars have contributed nearly 800 hours of community service a month within the greater Charlotte region.

"The Levine Scholars Program has been a long-standing supporter of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Charlotte since its opening in 2016. The Levine Scholars Program helps us to embrace families of sick or injured children by providing a monthly delicious meal of comfort. Scholars take the time out of their busy schedules to generously prepare, cook, and serve a meal to our guest families. We are thankful for the Levine Scholars Program's support of the House!"

- Darrell McGill  
Corporate Relations Manager,  
Ronald McDonald House  
Charities of Greater Charlotte



**55**  
**TOTAL UNIQUE NONPROFIT**  
**INTERNSHIP PARTNERS**

**70**  
**CUMULATIVE CIVIC**  
**ENGAGEMENT PARTNERS**

## NONPROFIT INTERNSHIPS - CLASS OF 2023

American Red Cross Charlotte  
Metro Area  
The Bulb  
Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency  
Catawba Lands Conservatory  
Charlotte Community Health Clinic  
Charlotte Mecklenburg County  
Food Policy Council  
Church World Services  
Discovery Place Museum  
Down Syndrome Association of  
Greater Charlotte  
Dream on 3  
Freedom School Partners  
Habitat for Humanity

Harvey B. Gantt Center  
International House  
Make-A-Wish  
Mecklenburg County  
Health Department  
Opera Carolina  
ourBRIDGE for Kids  
Ronald McDonald House  
Safe Alliance  
Sports Biz Careers







“As a Levine Scholar, I was able to pursue internships, research experiences, and civic engagement work that I otherwise would not have even known existed. I could push the limits and craft my college experience into one in which I was able to choose what piqued my interests while also learning more about the Charlotte community.”

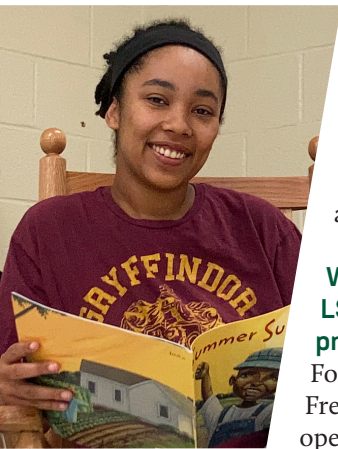
- Madison Snyder '23

“During the summer of 2021, I worked at Kino Border Initiative. It was located at the border of Arizona and Mexico in a city called Nogales. In this work, I developed a leadership style and an attitude towards service which I have taken with me to this day. Giving back to the community that my family is a part of and developing an awareness around advocacy was incredible. My exposure to Mexico was also helpful, especially considering that I am moving there to work with the Peace Corps as a Climate Change Awareness and Action Facilitator.”

- Xavier Gomez '23



# LSP Alumni PROFILES



## Faith Frayman '20

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Teacher

### What have you been up to since graduation?

Since graduating I have been employed as an elementary school teacher in CMS, teaching both first and fourth grades.

### What organizations did you work with for your LSP nonprofit internship and civic engagement project?

For my nonprofit and civic engagement I worked with Freedom School Partners, a reading program that opens doors for literacy education for at-risk youth.

### Did your experiences with LSP impact your choice to work in public education after graduation?

I had always known I wanted to be a teacher; however, my nonprofit internship work and the time I spent volunteering with Tan Kap Vini (TKV) through the Levine Scholars Program helped me solidify that my heart is in working with Title I communities. Furthermore, working with Freedom School Partners during my time with LSP really increased my love of literature and my desire to encourage a passion for reading within my own students.

### How else does your current role relate to your LSP experience?

The Levine Scholars Program encourages leadership; this has continued into my work experience. As a second year teacher, I have been able to step up quite a bit in leading my team this year as a co-grade level chair. The skills I learned for time management, organization, and even grant writing have been imperative to my ability to succeed as a grade chair.

## 2023 ALUMNI COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Kaitlyn Worley  
Jefferson Cooper  
Jenny Jessen

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

James Parkhill  
Chloe Thorup  
Morgan Flitt

### PROGRAMS & OUTREACH

Dmitry Tereshenko  
Caitlin V. Downs  
Laura Outlaw  
Caroline Fowle  
Maria Cruzat  
Kevin Caldwell

### TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS

Robert Lankford  
Isabel Fee  
James Budday  
Scott Christensen  
Christian Chavis

### GOVERNANCE & NOMINATING

Jenny Jessen  
Kailey Schmidt  
Kevin Caldwell

### FINANCE & DEVELOPMENT

Megan Woody  
Katie Finch  
Mendes  
Bridgitt Ku

### STUDENT LIAISON

Eli Elk '26

## Jon Wainwright '14

Manufacturing Engineer,  
Windsor Windows & Doors

### Tell us about your role and responsibilities at your current job?

Primarily, I'm involved with the design or purchase of machinery and fixtures that we use to make windows and doors. My days are normally split between design work and 3D modeling at my desk, building or fabricating new equipment, and troubleshooting machines on the plant floor. I'm also the engineering representative on the safety committee



and help with improving the overall safety of our plant.

### What inspires you to give back to UNC Charlotte and LSP?

The Levine Scholars Program offered depth to my undergraduate experience through learning opportunities beyond the typical

undergraduate programming. Now it is my turn to give back to the program and school that gave me so much. I want to help current Scholars grow in their love of the university and their gratefulness for the opportunities they have been given, and help to select future Scholars who will share these values.

### Your company provided internships for UNC Charlotte Engineering students this year. Tell us more.

Windsor sponsored an engineering senior design project. A team of 6 students was tasked with improving the ergonomics of a process that we have for some of our hurricane rated doors. The senior design team came to our plant and we showed them our current process and gave them some constraints. They came up with a design and prototype for a device and delivered it to us at the end of the project.





### **Beth Kingaby '19**

Government Relations Manager  
Arts & Science Council

#### **What is working in the nonprofit sector like?**

A few components of my role include managing community members who have volunteered on our advisory council and arts advocacy groups. It's trying to effect change through storytelling. Additionally, I manage all of our government funding, grant applications, and reporting.

#### **Did your nonprofit experience as a Levine Scholar influence you to pursue a career in nonprofits?**

My nonprofit internship and civic engagement project were conducted through the same nonprofit, Time Out Youth, Charlotte Mecklenburg's premiere nonprofit for LGBTQ+ youth. Fellow Levine Scholars and I created a programming series called "Get Your Life." We designed a curriculum that created a safe environment to learn some of the adulting skills that we are so often assumed to innately know — things like managing finances, how to apply for jobs or for school, how to navigate insurance and health care. My time working with the organization was powerful; it was absolutely a turning point in realizing that working with nonprofits and directly serving my neighbors and fellow community members was something that I wanted to do long-term.

#### **Anything else you'd like to add?**

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of cultural equity and how it relates to my work. Much of the coursework I took while getting my Master of Public Administration degree at UNC Charlotte with concentrations in nonprofit management and arts administration taught me that in the space of cultural equity, fear of conflict is a tenant and tool of white supremacy. Anti-racism requires one to not be afraid of conflict, because often conflict is necessary to effect necessary change.

## **RECENT ALUMNI COUNCIL INITIATIVES**

Quarterly newsletter

Online membership portal ([www.levinealumni.com](http://www.levinealumni.com))

Mentorship program for alumni and current Scholars

Alumni panels for current Scholars

Partnership with LSP to represent alumni interests at the annual LSP finalist weekend

Virtual social gatherings for LSP alumni

Niner Nation Gives Ambassadors

## **The Levine Alumni Council**

The Levine Alumni Council (LAC) is a vibrant and engaged community of Levine Scholars Program (LSP) alumni that promotes and empowers close ties among LSP alumni, LSP current Scholars and the Charlotte community. The LAC partners closely with current Scholars, LSP staff, and Charlotte University leaders to create meaningful opportunities for LSP alumni.

Founded in 2020 with ten alumni, the LAC has evolved into a 20-member Council composed of members spanning four time zones and almost all LSP alumni cohorts! Membership on the Council is volunteer-based, and the eagerness of alumni to join the Council and donate significant time/energy to the LAC is a testament to the positive impact of the LSP experience.

The full Council comes together virtually every quarter to discuss LAC vision and goals, ongoing programs and initiatives, and to connect as a group. We often invite a guest speaker to quarterly meetings to share current Scholar, University, Foundation, and/or community updates. The LAC operates through six committees which own specific goals and have developed into highly functioning teams within the LAC.

The LAC has grown into a reliable champion for LSP alumni interests and is eager to continue launching and expanding meaningful, fulfilling, and generous initiatives for years to come!



### **Kaitlyn Worley '16**

LAC President



### **Laura Outlaw '14**

Outgoing LAC President  
Current Programs and  
Outreach Committee Chair

# Meet THE LSP TEAM



**Heather Smith, Ph.D.**

Incoming Faculty Director

"As the LSP Faculty Director, I provide oversight to the program as a whole. I take particular delight in helping Scholars embrace the myriad opportunities available to them through the scholarship and translate those into rewarding undergraduate experiences and robust postgraduate plans."



**Zack Newsome**

Associate Director

"I love being a resource for prospective Scholars and their families and representing the program and the University."



**Tiffany Wilson**

Coordinator of Scholar Support and Initiatives

"I provide holistic student support services to Levine Scholars, and I enjoy seeing Scholars achieve their goals."



**Misty Morin**

Assistant Director of Alumni Engagement and Communications

"Strengthening alumni connections and spearheading departmental communications brings me great joy."



**Carlette Smith**

Business Services Coordinator

"It is my pleasure to make sure each Scholar takes full advantage of the opportunities available by supporting their civic engagement projects, summer allocations, and ensuring scholarship awards are properly posted."



**Tonderai Mushipe**

University Program Associate

"I cherish working directly with the Scholars on their civic engagement activities and getting them acclimated to various socio-economic issues in the Charlotte area."



"Leon and Sandra Levine have been stalwart supporters of UNC Charlotte. Through their generosity, hundreds of Levine Scholars have had the opportunity to pursue excellence in the classroom, while giving back to the community around them."

- Sharon L. Gaber  
Chancellor, UNC Charlotte