



From the Queen City to the Steel City: The Journey from College to a Ph.D.

By Noelle Cornelio '15

Noelle took a road trip through Central California, including a stop in Napa Valley, before joining her Ph.D. program.

The Levine Scholars Program enabled me to pursue my goals without hurdles. In fact, if my college experience was a race, the Levine Scholarship not only removed the hurdles, but paid my registration fee and gave me the most supportive, lightweight shoes on the market. As with anything, college is what you make of it, but thanks to the support of mentors across the Queen City and the freedom to achieve without financial burdens, I could accomplish a lot. Within four years, I founded a sorority chapter for women in the sciences, organized a silent art auction for the Levine Children's Hospital, worked in a leukemia lab, pursued majors in biology and economics with a minor in mathematics, interned in the Himalayan Mountains, and presented my research at conferences around the world. With all my academic and extracurricular activities, graduation day arrived relatively quickly.

After graduating from UNC Charlotte in the spring of 2015 I wanted to pursue a Ph.D. that focused on the intersection of healthcare and economics, but I was overwhelmed by the number of options. Therefore, I decided to find a job that illuminated different areas of research and would allow me to bypass a master's degree. A few weeks after graduation, I moved to Bethesda, MD where I worked at Pharmerit International, a pharmacoeconomic consulting

company. At Pharmerit, I built economic models, conducted systematic literature reviews and performed network meta-analyses for new and existing pharmaceutical products. After work, I would prepare for the GRE and schedule countless conversations with graduate students, professors and industry professionals to help me chart my educational future. After two years in Bethesda, I finally set my heart on a program and moved to Pittsburgh, PA to start my Ph.D. I am now studying health services research and policy within the Department of Health Policy and Management (HPM) at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health.

In my first two years at Pitt, I will take classes in economics, programming, public health, statistics and health policy. The research being performed, like the course schedule, is highly multidisciplinary with faculty engaged in a myriad of innovative projects. I am currently working under Dr. Lindsay Sabik, an associate professor within the HPM department. Our project is focused on the different eligibility pathways low-income, community-dwelling seniors can use to dually enroll in Medicare and Medicaid. This project will eventually lead to a detailed state-by-state dataset and an understanding of how health policy affects this high cost and poor health outcome population. In exchange

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for working on this project, my tuition is paid and I receive a stipend. As all Levine Scholars know, it does not get much better than getting paid to achieve your goals and follow your passions. Within this academic year, I will begin my own research projects that will likely be based on my collective experiences. However, when I first moved to Steel City, everything was unfamiliar. So I asked a few senior Ph.D. students about their academic journeys, their favorite places to eat and everything in between. Getting advice helps me think about my experiences in different ways and allows me to quickly move forward. Looking back, I only have a few words of advice to current Levine scholars. Regardless of whether your

interests delve deep into one discipline or sweep across multiple subjects, remember to network at conferences and internships, always have at least three personal goals and stay humble and help others along your journey.

The Levine Scholars Program's continued growth in size and recognition is not surprising considering the talent the program attracts. I look forward to the periodic alumni updates and newsletters to see how current and past scholars are staking their claim. If any of you 49ers are in Pittsburgh within the next half-decade, please reach out!



From left to right: Noelle on top of Mt. Washington in Pittsburgh, PA. Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Schenley Park, Pittsburgh, PA. Noelle in front of the "Hopscotch Bridge" in Washington D.C.. Before joining her PhD program, Noelle took a road trip through central California which included a stop in front of a giant Sequoia. Noelle at a Pharmert International event.

BASSMASTER COLLEGE SERIES

By Noah Shaver '20

Coming into college last year as a freshman with no friends outside of the Levine Program was nerve racking. I feared that the only involvement I would have in college would be within the program and that my hobbies from high school would dissipate. But then, I found the bass fishing team. After going to a few interest meetings and fishing my first club tournament with them, I knew that I had found a place at UNC Charlotte that allowed me to enjoy my previous hobbies in the next stage of my education.

For a few months, I fished small tournaments that the club hosted on local lakes, but when the spring semester rolled around, it was time to test my skills on some of the most complex fisheries in the country against some of the best fishermen in the world. The goal of the regional tournaments is to qualify for the national championship, which is hosted by an organization called Bassmaster. After missing qualification at the Eastern Regional on Cherokee Lake in Tennessee, I had a last chance opportunity at the Wildcard on Lay Lake in Alabama. This lake was set up perfectly for my type of fishing, which is shallow grass and boat docks. Over my three days of practice I found plenty of fish in the grass; unfortunately, six inches of rain flooded the grass leaving me with no options. As the tournament started I was still figuring out a pattern and was lucky enough to be sitting in ninth place on the final day. There is not a feeling comparable to competing on the final day of a highly regarded event, and I was letting it all soak in. Idling out from the boat ramp knowing you are in

UNC Charlotte Bass Fishing Team members Noah Shaver (left) and Ben Hager hold up their fish from Day 1 of the Bassmaster College Series Wildcard on Lay Lake.



Noah and Ben fish on Stump Lake, a lake that is a part of the Bemidji Chain of Lakes. The few bass that they could catch came from this lake.



a position to do well, hearing your name called while you walk across a stage in front of a crowd of people, and feeling the weight lifted off your shoulders when you get the first bite is what we, as college anglers, live for.

At the end of the day we finished 13th, sending us to the National Championship in Bemidji, Minnesota. Bemidji was around 22 hours from my house and was the longest road trip that I have ever taken. After driving through eight states and making a few pit stops, we arrived at a lake we thought was going to be great for bass fishing. We thought wrong. The fishing was tough and we ended up placing around the middle of the pack, but the experience of the event is something I will never forget. At a tournament of this scale, you meet fellow college anglers from California to Canada and elite series professionals that you watch on TV. Bemidji may not have been kind to us, but I would go again in a heartbeat. Like they say, there is always next year!

MY NEW HOME

By Andrea Badillo-Perez '21

In August, I had to say goodbye to everything I knew. I was born in and have lived all of my life in Puerto Rico. This island has always been my home, my world. I grew up going to the beach every week and eating arroz con habichuelas every night. I grew up in an incredibly loud house of five with two sisters who stuck to me like glue. Saturdays were for soccer games with my dad and Sundays were for church with my grandparents, even more arroz con habichuelas, card games and endless laughter. I never really noticed how family-oriented I was until it was time to say goodbye.

That has undoubtedly been the hardest part of my transition to UNC Charlotte and North Carolina. Now more than ever, I miss my precious island with painful passion. But even though I had to leave the only home I knew, I am starting to create a new one here in Charlotte. The transition has not been easy, but that is not to say I am not exactly where I should be. Being accepted into the Levine Scholars Program has been my greatest achievement. I have been told by my parents since my first day of high school: "Get a full-ride scholarship or stay in Puerto Rico." That is exactly what I repeated verbatim to my school counselor when I had my first meeting with him during junior year. Then, he introduced me to this scholarship from a school that, frankly, had never crossed my mind before. It was everything I wanted for my future, as if someone combined all of my utmost aspirations towards a college education into one.



Top: Andrea and fellow Levine Scholars Megan and Marika at their first 49ers football game.

Bottom: Andrea and fellow Levine Scholars Sarah and Chiamaka at UNC Charlotte Center City.



Once I read Yolanda Coleman's email about my acceptance that March 1, 2017, I felt like I was ready to climb on top of the world! I felt like this opportunity was a ladder waiting for me, waiting to lead me towards the rest of my life.

Now, as I finally begin my ascent, the hardships are allowing me to grow and to actively appreciate

the beautiful campus of UNC Charlotte, the eccentric city life of Charlotte, my new classes, and, most importantly, the friends I have made within the program, who are rapidly becoming family. Even though I miss Puerto Rico, I welcome this exciting reality, and I cannot wait for what is yet to come.

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

By Reggie Harper '20

This past summer I worked with the United Service Organizations (USO) of North Carolina. Thanks to the Levine Scholars Program's partnership with this organization, I was given the opportunity to interact with a specific demographic that I do not have the chance to interact with on a regular basis. My time with this organization was very well spent, as I gained a wealth of knowledge, experience and relationships that otherwise may not have been afforded to me. Working with the USO of NC allowed me the opportunity to show our service members my appreciation, and looking back, this organization was the perfect fit for what I wanted to accomplish. I so enjoyed my time there that I have continued to volunteer with them while enrolled in classes this semester and plan on doing so from now on.

As sophomore Levine Scholars, we have been focused on making a difference in our own community. While some of my classmates

have already begun to go abroad, I have not yet and am still in the "own community" stage. These service members are in our own backyard, and are often overlooked. Obviously they are not the only demographic that is overlooked, but it is a pretty large and important one. I believe that despite the politically charged era in which we live, it is important that we give these members the support and affirmation they deserve for sacrificing their lives for our freedom.

Nonprofits are essential for change. These are organizations that dedicate their entire existence to their mission and do so much to alleviate the issues of our society. However, these nonprofits are naught without good people behind them. Without the manpower to perform necessary tasks, these nonprofits would fail. I learned this firsthand by being able to participate in each role while working with the USO of NC. Going forward, I would recommend this organization to anyone who wants to show their gratitude to their service members, has military ties, or simply wants to make a difference in someone's life. You would be surprised what a simple 'hello' and a smile could do.



Left: Reggie, Center Coordinator Darius Crisp, and a fellow volunteer promoting the ongoing partnership with Pepsi during the month of May.

Right: Reggie and a fellow volunteer with the USO of NC Mobile center promoting the organization at the Knights Memorial Day game on May 29.



SHANGHAI: A Unique Program, A Unique Experience

By Lazar Trifunovic '19

After over 30 hours of grueling travel, my sluggish feet touched ground in the city of Shanghai carrying along a very jet-lagged body. Three months of planning, endless calls to the consulate and thousands of dollars later had finally culminated into this moment, and to celebrate, all I wanted to do was sleep.

However, as anyone who loves traveling knows, the excitement of finally making my trip across the world caught up to me and sleep was a thought of the past. After an enlightening lesson in Chinese traffic during our more-exciting-than-expected taxi ride, our study abroad group had reached our home for the month, a guest hotel in the center of East China Normal University's (ECNU) campus. We quickly dropped our bags, grabbed our cards and cash, and dashed – our first expedition was set to start in less than an hour.

The study abroad program in Shanghai was an intense, cross-disciplinary course that provided an unbelievable opportunity to not only learn in a unique setting, but also in a unique style. Course lectures, which covered a diversity of topics from public health to environmental sustainability, were followed by expeditions and visits to sites of relevance.

For example, when discussing public health in China, our lesson plan focused on the aging elderly population due to the One Child Policy, which was not formally phased out until two years ago in October 2015. After exploring the effects the policy had on age distribution, we explored the effects that these shifts could have on economics as well as on the care provided to the aging population in Shanghai. To provide a complete experience, we were not only able to visit an elderly care center in Shanghai, but also able to interact directly with residents and caretakers – allowing students to get their questions answered from a primary source. These trips not only provided a wealth of information, but it provided the unique opportunity to tie in an experience to a lesson, making it exceptionally memorable and impactful.

Also, due to the amazing work of the Levine Scholars Program and various UNC Charlotte faculty and staff, our study abroad program was able to work closely with a variety of ECNU faculty during our time in Shanghai. Throughout our daily lessons, we were directly assisted and taught by Dr. Lin, a professor of Urban Studies, who was not only able to provide a vast knowledge of the built infrastructure of Shanghai, but also able to comment on the effects and impacts associated with the development of Shanghai and China across various periods of time. The amount of knowledge and guidance provided by the ECNU faculty, as well as the graduate students who assisted our program, were invaluable and made this international experience worthwhile and incredibly memorable.

In addition to the support provided to our daily lessons, the relationships fostered by the faculty provided students the



Picture of the Shanghai skyline taken by Lazar.



Zhouzhuang Water Town, one of the most famous water townships in China.



Lazar catching a break in a bamboo forest.

opportunity to conduct independent studies with various professors researching a variety of topics. The research included studies of bike share systems, controlling eutrophication and harmful algal blooms, bio-cement, and even bio-remediation technologies and biomimetics.

These connections provided me the ability to work closely with Dr. Xuechu Chen, who studies and applies technologies to restore wetlands and protect drinking water resources from blue-green algal blooms. Under his guidance and with full access to his research and results, I was able to complete a comprehensive case study comparing the policy, strategy and operation mechanisms of controlling harmful algal blooms for Lake Erie and Taihu Lake. Although an imposing and seemingly impossible task at first, it was quickly approachable with Dr. Chen's in depth lessons and assistance.

With all that being said, we still had plenty of time to explore in the afternoons as well as the weekends. Whether it was visiting Shanghai Disney, shopping in street markets bustling with stalls or taste testing unknown foods, there was always an exciting way to use my free time.

When it came time to leave Shanghai it was a bitter-sweet moment. I was excited to return to the familiarity of home, however, I was leaving the home and community I had become a part of during my time there. My last night was spent around a table with close friends, cold drinks and warm feelings. Even after a month, I could not help but find myself wishing for just a little more time in Shanghai.

From Passion to Projects

By Erica Cherian '18



Erica "hanging out" with the Cancer Genome statue, in honor of St. Jude's work on sequencing cancer genes.

When I submitted the application for the Pediatric Oncology Education (POE) program back in January of this year, I genuinely never thought that I would be offered a position at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital; so much so, that I even made plans to volunteer at a free clinic in Charlotte during the summer. I vividly remember saying, "Yes, I will totally be able to help out this summer! Even if, on the off chance, I get the St. Jude program, Tennessee and Charlotte are, like, one inch apart on maps!" Hindsight certainly is 20/20, as later, I discovered that it is actually a 10-hour drive from Charlotte to Memphis, Tennessee. Somehow, I did manage to juggle both of these experiences in the course of one summer!

Throughout my college career, I have been working toward becoming a physician. Specifically, I would like to work on reducing healthcare disparities. Service has been a huge part of my life as a Levine Scholar, as I worked at the Charlotte Community Health Clinic my freshman year, and for the past year, I have been working at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Clinic. Many of the patients are uninsured, undocumented and struggle

with chronic illnesses that need to be controlled; the clinic helps them do just that. There are free clinics in the area, but there are many obstacles to receiving treatment at a full-time clinic; Our Lady of Guadalupe Clinic attends to those who cannot overcome these barriers. This has been incredibly rewarding work, as every time, I walk away knowing that people who otherwise would not have had access to healthcare, were able to receive treatment. Over this past summer, the director took maternity leave, and I was incredibly honored when she asked me to take on some of her roles while she was gone. Of course, I immediately agreed to help out; what I did not account for was the fact that I would actually be selected for the POE Research program at St. Jude.

Research has also been an important aspect of my college career, as I worked on a novel cancer immunotherapy project at UNC Charlotte in Dr. Pinku Mukherjee's lab. However, one of the first things that ever caught my interest within the field of science was vaccination. I never quite understood why there seemed to be so much controversy surrounding such an important preventative measure. At St. Jude's, I worked on a universal influenza vaccine project, which further improved my understanding of how and why vaccines work. This is important work for the hospital because due to their treatments, the children are often highly immunocompromised, which means their bodies are unable to fend off infections. Therefore, vaccine research can do a lot of preventative work for both the patients, and their families, who could unintentionally expose patients to these diseases. The truly unique aspect of St. Jude for me though, was the fact that it is a research hospital, where patients never received a bill. Being surrounded by these incredibly brave kids, and even getting to know some of them through volunteering, was a uniquely motivational experience. It reminded me why research is so important, and what I am ultimately working towards. From my time at St. Jude, I was humbled and astounded by the work that people do every day and the strength of the patients and their families.



From left: Erica in typical full-body protective research gear; jokingly referred to as the Ghostbuster's suit. St. Jude's was named the number one pediatric oncology hospital in the US this past summer.

Trafficking is not welcome here – NOT IN MY CITY.

By Erin Coggins '18 and Sydney Welch '19



Sydney Welch and Erin Coggins--the founders of Not In My City Project

This July, Sydney Welch '19 and I (Erin Coggins '18) launched Not In My City Project, our civic engagement project designed to engage and mobilize college students in the anti-trafficking movement. We do this by training students to organize and implement awareness events and to package and promote products that raise money specifically for direct services for survivors provided by a local anti-trafficking agency, Present Age Ministries.

There are an estimated 150,000-300,000 youth at risk for commercial sexual exploitation every year in the United States. North Carolina is consistently in the top 15 states for human trafficking, with the Queen City topping the charts in North Carolina every single year. The average age for entry into the sex trade is 13 years old, and the average lifespan of victims after they have entered "the life" is only seven years. Only 2% of victims are ever rescued.

These realities are not okay with us. We both began our internships with Present Age Ministries (PAM) during our respective freshman years, and we both find ourselves unable to part with the work that is being done in our city.

Through our internships, we have been empowered by the staff of PAM and the Levine Scholars Program to pursue academic studies and international experiences that will better inform our practice and influence in the world of human trafficking. Between the two of us, we have visited and served so many corners of the world, through studying the effects of globalization on human trafficking in Shanghai, China and training nonprofit staff to implement anti-trafficking services in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. We have seen red light districts in Mumbai, India and served in safe homes in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. But still, our hearts and influence remain in Charlotte (for now).

From top left:
 Sydney and Erin with
 some of the first wearers
 of the Freedom tees.
 The Emma tee,
 which features the Charlotte
 skyline on the front.
 Sydney and Erin with two of the
 Rep Team members while
 raising awareness at a club on
 UNC Charlotte's campus.



We began to recognize this gap between service providers who are doing groundbreaking work but need volunteers, and college students who have enough passion to move a mountain but need an outlet to do so. Not In My City Project exists to fill that gap.

We create t-shirts and train advocates because the girls we serve are worth it, and college students truly have the ability to change the culture. We have found that college students are dedicated to their studies and to the world around them. They take action when necessary and challenge how things are with new ideas of how they should be. We have found that facing the reality of abuse, exploitation and trafficking in Charlotte is no different.

So far, we have trained seven people to host their own awareness events and four people to promote and package products. At the end of September, 193 people had heard about the issue of sex trafficking in Charlotte through awareness events and over \$2,000 has been donated to direct services for survivors, and we are just getting started!

Our favorite thing has been to watch our volunteer teams step up and serve our city. We get to train advocates and then watch as they answer questions about trafficking in Charlotte, pass out information about serving with us, and assist students in promoting our freedom tees. We watch them talk excitedly about the work we are doing to change our city and how survivors in our community benefit from the direct services provided by Present Age Ministries. They have taken ownership of the solution and encouraged each other constantly, which makes me cry happy tears if I think about

it for too long. We also get to see the behind the scenes work and the direct impact this project has on the girls served by Present Age Ministries. We have hard work and long days, but I am convinced we have the best seat in the house.

Our project aims to mobilize college students but the fight does not end there. If we can train college students on human trafficking now and provide creative avenues for service, freedom's reach is absolutely endless. We will see a movement of teachers, police officers, business people, lawyers, engineers, nurses, social workers, dancers and architects advocating for freedom. We will see people educating their coworkers. We will see people identifying risk factors and reporting warning signs. We will see people advocating for our girls. We will see freedom and redemption and change. We will see a new city. We will see people who have stood to say "trafficking is not welcome here – not in my city."

WANT MORE INFORMATION?
YEAH, YOU DO!



www.notinmycityproject.com



@notinmycityproject



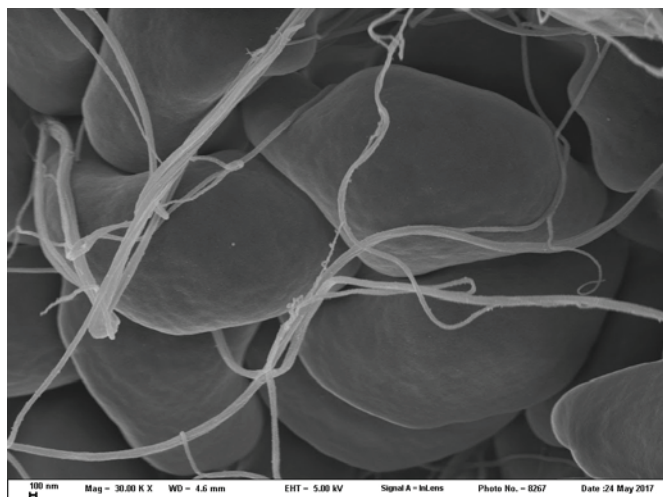
Not In My City Project

A BLOODY GOOD EXPERIENCE

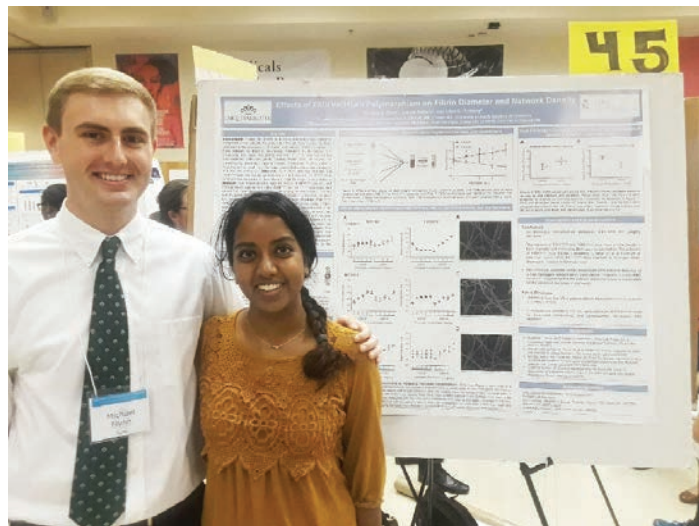
By Seth Flynn '19

This summer, I spent 10 weeks as a research fellow at UNC Chapel Hill in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. My internship was funded by the National Science Foundation, through the Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) program sponsored annually by Chapel Hill's medical school. Although I had a bit of prior research experience from UNC Charlotte's Biology and Chemistry departments, SURE marked my first publishable lab research and individual poster presentation.

Coincidentally, my UNC Charlotte quantitative chemical analysis project investigating the concentration of acetylsalicylic acid in various brands of aspirin helped me land a spot in my top choice summer lab. Dr. Alisa Wolberg, world-renowned in the field of thrombosis and hemostasis, told me at our first meeting that my previous work with aspirin was instrumental in my acceptance. Take my advice: when applying for summer research programs, mention anything and everything you have done in the lab because you never know what technique or unique experience a prospective Principal Investigator (PI) is looking for.



An image of a blood clot at 30,000X magnification under the scanning electron microscope.



Seth and his graduate student mentor, Sravya Kattula, in front of his poster at the summer research symposium.

I spent five weeks analyzing blood clots with a scanning electron microscope (SEM) and measuring the density and diameters of fibrin in the clots. With the SEM, it was possible to see individual red blood cells in crisp detail. We called the SEM room “the cave” because it was hidden in a secluded corner of the building’s basement. On the wall was a quote from a UNC Ophthalmologist, saying “Every time I sit down with the SEM, it is like sitting down with God.” Even though I captured over 2,000 images in the pitch-black room, I never once grew bored or lost my initial sense of awe at what I was observing. My measurements culminated in several figures that will be submitted for publication once my graduate student mentor, Sravya Kattula, finishes her manuscript.

In the second half of the summer, nearly the entire Wolberg Lab (excluding the undergraduates and the lab manager) attended the International Society of Thrombosis and Hemostasis conference in Berlin, Germany for three weeks. During this time, I was charged with developing new clot retraction assays to assess the effects of various platelet inhibitors on red blood cell retention. This is where my aspirin-dissolving skills came in handy (it is less soluble than you might imagine and isolating the active ingredient from the fillers is quite a process). Using aspirin as my standard, I tested three other commercial drugs. The coolest part? I used my own blood (and the blood of the other undergrads) in my experiments! The results I obtained will be incorporated into the Wolberg Lab’s next grant proposal. SURE bolstered my appreciation for research, strengthened my independent scientific ability, and helped me make lasting connections.

HONDA Internship

By Larry Lardieri '18

This summer I began a six month internship with Honda R&D Americas as a design engineer. Honda R&D Americas is the American branch of Honda that is responsible for creating many of the cars you see on the road, from the Accord to the Odyssey. They also create a whole range of products from marine motors, to jet engines, to power equipment. My division, located between Greensboro and Durham, is responsible for the design and testing of power equipment and small engines, ranging from lawn mowers to snow blowers.

The facility itself is a secure building separated into two parts, the first of which is a design floor, where theories collide, ideas are conjured and models are made. The second part is the test shop, where models made on the design floor are created and run through a series of strenuous tests to ensure that the best model makes its way to the factory across the street and eventually to the customer.

As a design engineering intern, I came in with little solid modeling experience. With the high expectation of delivery from management, my first month or so was definitely trial by fire. In that month and the months to follow, I took the deep dive into Honda's operation and like a sponge, absorbed everything they had to offer me. The challenging nature of product development presented many obstacles in terms of design skills, physics knowledge and simulation ability. Grappling with these sorts of problems, occasionally for weeks at a time, could be very strenuous. Luckily, the depth of the problems, my interest in the subject matter, and enthusiastic and technical support from the fifteen or so engineers on the floor sustained me. While most of my time was spent in that problem-solving space, a significant chunk was also spent in the test shop, where I would fabricate and fit prototype parts I designed onto machines to be tested in the field. One of my favorite themes of the job was that day to day, I never had just one thing I was working on.



Larry ready to work at his internship.

Due to how many different products Honda creates and maintains, it is close to impossible to get pigeon-holed into one specific area. Speaking to the veteran engineers on both the design and test sides, this is what kept the job and their careers fresh to them.

They seemed to enjoy their work, as the R&D company culture mimicked that of many West Coast tech companies that encourage creativity and promote a positive work-life balance. A favorite part of that I saw was if someone had an idea that they wanted to create and test to gauge feasibility - however wild and outside the box - they could drop what they were doing and work on it. Encouraging that sort of creativity is a big part of why I have had such a positive experience there and why I believe they make some of the most innovative products on the market.

THREE WEEKS *in the* WIND RIVER RANGE

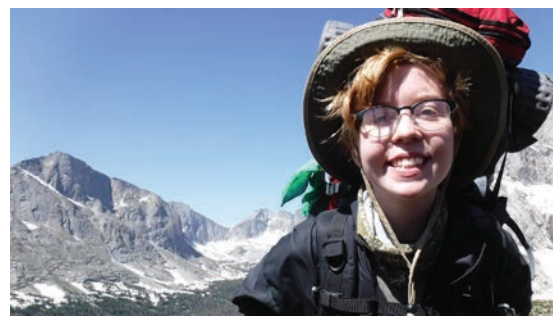
By Nikolai Mather '21

Every student at Finalist Program received the same advice: bring as many baby wipes as you can carry. But all the baby wipes in the world could not have prepared me for the Wind River Range.

Our expedition began with a bang: we spotted a brown bear about fifty feet from us right in the middle of our first dinner together. In spite of that terrifying first day, the rest of our trip was anything but anticlimactic; we scaled boulder fields, climbed steep peaks, flagged down helicopters, crossed rivers and made back-country calzones. We spent an afternoon doing yoga by an icy lake, then jumped in for a pre-dinner swim. We made coffee for cowboys and cowgirls and helped them load up their pack horses. And when lightning struck, we crouched under the trees on our butt-matts and waited out the storm.

NOLS was difficult. We suffered blisters, mosquito bites, fevers, chronic pain and dehydration. We missed our families, our friends, our significant others and our pets. But every moment was like a bizarre celebration of life. One day, my Independent Study Group Expedition group got lost and ended up hiking a total of fourteen miles. We ended the day crouched around a tiny camp stove eating smoked salmon on bland camp crackers. But we were giggling, joking, sharing headlamps and smiling. Though we were dead tired, we had walked over half a marathon – some off-trail – with fifty pounds on each of our backs, we had accomplished something

Nikolai in front of Lizard Head Peak.



The Wind River Range group.



that none of us thought we could have done.

I have nothing but pride for my team. There is nobody I would rather spend three weeks in the boonies with, and I am so grateful we made it through together. Baby wipes have nothing on us.

Adventures in the Wild

By Dmitry Tereshenko '21

NOLS was truly a wonderful and rewarding experience full of obstacles, challenges, and wondrous scenery. As we progressed through our expedition, I gradually felt myself becoming closer with the other members of my cohort. I went out with strangers and came back with a family. During our expedition, I named some of the most memorable days: THE COLD DAY, The Long Day, The Bloody Day, The Mud-well Day and The Lost Day. Despite enduring challenging moments and less than ideal situations, I can proudly say that I successfully thrived in the wilderness with some of my best friends.

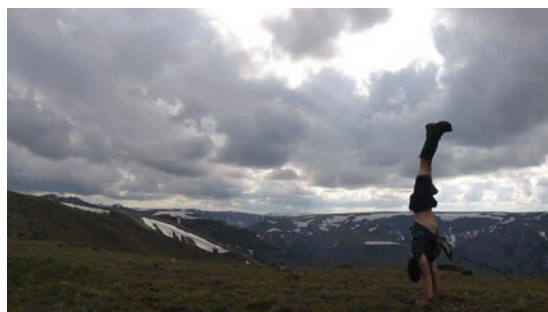
I have many powerful memories and unique stories that I share only with those in the Levine cohort. There were many difficult

days...days where I was cold, days I never had dry feet, days I was constantly aggravated, and days I sat in the rain for what felt like hours. There were days we never made it to the finishing point. But there were also days we summited mountains, had snowball fights, laughed until our sides hurt and saw breathtaking scenery.

On that final morning of our expedition, as we inched our way towards the bus, I was struck by simultaneous feelings of relief, gratitude and accomplishment. We made it. My time in the Absaroka Mountain Range was a time of self-exploration, physical challenge, emotional growth and adventure. In short, I adored my time in the Wyoming wilderness and would go back in a heartbeat.



Independent Study Group Expedition Group Number Two hugging the wilderness boundary sign after being rescued by the other team.



A classic Dmitry handstand picture taken after the group's first summit.

Around the World

James Budday '16

Madeira, Portugal

James Budday is on the island of Madeira, Portugal working towards his master's degree in Human-Computer Interaction. He and a group of other students are making an exhibit for the Electricity Museum there to teach high school students and tourists about renewable energies.



Maria Cruzat '20

Santiago, Chile

Maria Cruzat started her sophomore year in Santiago, Chile to study Spanish and expand her knowledge on Latin America. One of her favorite parts about studying abroad is experiencing the world through fresh eyes. Studying abroad offered her the opportunity to gain a wider perspective of cultures while preparing for international development work.



Caroline Fowle '17

San Antonio, TX

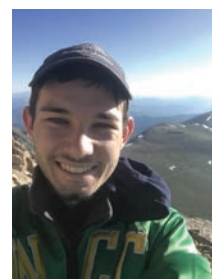
Caroline Fowle is back to school! Upon graduation from UNC Charlotte, she spent the summer teaching English and ESL at an elementary school in Houston. This fall, she began her first year of teaching at the Young Women's Leadership Academy in San Antonio, TX as a Teach for America corps member.



James Parkhill '16

Denver, CO

Since moving to Denver, CO in May 2017, James continues to work as a transportation planner and engineer with Atkins Global. He is excited to pursue his various interests in Denver ranging from transit and bike planning to special education, and he is happy to report that he commutes exclusively by foot and train to work. James is also taking advocacy classes through Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition to become more involved outside of the office.



The Levine Scholars Program

The Levine Scholars Program is a four-year scholarship that includes full tuition, room, board and four summer experiences, including study abroad, which will develop leadership skills and social awareness. In 2010, the inaugural class of Levine Scholars

enrolled at UNC Charlotte and approximately 20 scholarships are awarded to high school seniors every year. The Levine Scholarship is valued at \$105,000 for in-state students and \$155,000 for out-of-state students over four years.



Class of 2021

Levine Scholars are talented high school seniors from across the United States whose accomplishments epitomize the values of philanthropists Sandra and Leon Levine, including a demonstrated commitment to community service, intellectual curiosity and the capacity for ethical leadership. Through community engagement, mentoring relationships with civic and business leaders in Charlotte, and a rigorous academic program, Levine Scholars develop the characteristics necessary to produce positive change in the communities in which they live and work. Scholars are able to turn their community service interest into actions with community service grants of \$8,000 to support their work in the community.

It is this unique connection to Charlotte – its resources, leaders and challenges – that differentiates this program from other scholarships of its kind. The program is specifically designed to expose Levine Scholars to the urban culture of a thriving city and to engage them in service to address needs of the citizens of Charlotte.