

NO LONGER “*undecided*”

By Crista Cali '22



Clinic in South Africa delivers service to local residents

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” We have all been faced with this quintessential existential question. The person asking certainly deserves an answer that confirms your place of importance and reason for being in the universe, right? I was first asked this question when I was 10 years old during a Career Fair in elementary school. As I filed into the gym after recess with my fellow sweaty fifth graders, some of whom were still in an argument over who had won the final game of four square, we were greeted with an array of job possibilities including overly eager fire fighters, police officers, auto mechanics, cosmetologists and the mayor. We sat down on the cool concrete gym floor and listened dutifully as they read their prepared speeches describing a day in their life. Afterwards, we visited their displays and that is when the mayor approached me and asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I pondered the question for a moment, took a deep breath, and confidently answered, “I don’t know.”

Throughout middle school and high school this question took residence in the “Undecided” file in my brain. I would take it out occasionally, contemplate it, and file it back. This was particularly true when filling out the application for UNC Charlotte. My mouse paused for a moment when I was faced with the “Choose A Major” section of the application and ultimately chose, “Undeclared.” Although I didn’t know at the time exactly what my

contribution to the world would be, I did know after many career interest inventories taken with my high school counselor and many conversations with family and friends, that working with children was the common denominator. I have always enjoyed working with children. Looking back, some of my favorite memories were working in the church nursery, volunteering as a coach for 4-H’s sci-girls, tutoring at Boys and Girls Club, and being a reading buddy to younger students. In fact, my second grade teacher told my mom after observing me tutoring younger students, that I would make a great teacher one day. This comment made its way into my “Undecided” file a few weeks into my Freshman year and I began rolling around the idea of becoming a teacher.

With the support of the Levine Scholars Program, I continued to explore the idea through an elementary educational focused study abroad program in Stellenbosch, South Africa. During my time in South Africa, I learned about the different school systems, studied the area and culture, and taught in a second grade class. On the second to last day of the trip we took a tour through Kayamandi, an impoverished township. We briefly stopped at a doctor’s office in the middle of the township. I was devastated to learn that the adults and children in the community that were seeking medical care would line up hours before the clinic opens and still might not be seen by the nurse or doctor due to time constraints and limited staffing. It was at that moment that a seed was planted about

continued

working with children in a medical capacity. Over the next few weeks, I kept thinking about what it would be like to be a nurse. I reached out to people I knew in the medical field, I did job shadowing, I researched possibilities. By the end of the summer, I felt with great confidence that my calling was not to work in a classroom with children, but I was meant to help children with their medical needs. I vowed to return as a volunteer to South Africa one day to help with the crisis in medical care. This realization brought peace and joy. I returned in the Fall to UNC Charlotte with a clear purpose in mind. I was no longer "Undecided."

Since that time, the years have flown by. With the support of the Levine Scholarship, I have had opportunities to continue my love of helping children as I worked toward my nursing degree. In the Summer of 2019, I had the privilege of interning with a nonprofit called Dream on 3. This nonprofit makes sports dreams come true for children with life altering conditions. I was incredibly moved by the work of this nonprofit and wanted to continue my partnership with them as I returned to campus. After many conversations with the Dream on 3 staff and Levine Scholars Program, I decided to start the first UNC Charlotte Collegiate Dream Team! We were

able to fundraise, support, and send an eighth grade boy with Down Syndrome on his sports dream to meet the Cincinnati Reds Baseball Team! It was an honor to be a part of making his dream come true.

Through the philosophy of the Levine Scholars Program to engage deeply in communities, I have found other ways to support children during my time at UNC Charlotte. My search led me to be

an active volunteer for Inheritance of Hope which is a nonprofit that serves families facing the loss of a parent with a terminal illness. The signature offering of Inheritance of Hope are Legacy Retreats. Legacy Retreats are an all expenses paid trip for families to different destinations like Orlando, FL or New York City. During the Legacy Retreats, families gain tools to deal with these incredibly hard times, new friendships from volunteers and other families, and life-long memories. I recently served on a Legacy Retreat from March 3rd to March 7th. During the Legacy Retreat, I had the opportunity to serve Tesla and Harbor Davis. Tesla was diagnosed with ALS in 2018. She is a loving, supportive mother to Harbor and a powerful advocate for individuals with ALS. My role as a volunteer was to provide hope, assist Tesla with medical needs and be one of Harbor's best friends.

It has been amazing these past four years how my path and purpose to work with children has just fallen into place. For one of my clinical experiences this past semester, I had the opportunity to observe in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Atrium Health University City. I was so inspired by how the nurses genuinely cared for each infant. I immediately knew that day that I wanted to be a NICU nurse. My dream came true when I received a call from Novant Health a couple of weeks ago asking me if I would like to accept a position as a NICU nurse at Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center! I was overflowing with joy as I gave a resounding "Yes!". As a future NICU nurse, I will have the opportunity to significantly impact a child's future. I will be able to build relationships with parents and see the growth of their infants. I know that being a NICU nurse is a huge responsibility, but I believe I am right where I am supposed to be!

In a few weeks, I will walk across the stage with a degree that will allow me to care for newborn babies, our most precious resources. Because of the Levine Scholarship, I am also now ready to keep my vow to return to South Africa as a medical volunteer. My journey at UNC Charlotte has come full circle. I knew entering the university that my journey in life would begin and end with children. With the help of the Levine Scholarship Foundation and the amazing faculty at UNC Charlotte, my path in working with children has been decided and declared! I now know what I want to be when I grow up!



(top) Crista teaches a group of children about different cells that make up our body.
 (bottom left) UNC Charlotte students attend Stellenbosch University in South Africa during a program on education.
 (bottom right) The Collegiate Dream Team at UNC Charlotte spends a sports filled day with a dream recipient.

The ourBRIDGE Way

By Brenda Morales Flores '24



Brenda Morales Flores prepares for a wonderful start to the day at OurBridgeforKids. OurBridge for Kids uses children's creativity, interns like Brenda, and their full time staff to explore new concepts, journey to new places, and to create a warm and inviting space. (Photo Credit to OurBridge for Kids)

ourBRIDGE for KIDS is a nonprofit organization that supports the immigrant and refugee community of Charlotte, NC, by offering afterschool and summer programs. As an Elementary Education major and someone who loves to work with children, I was initially drawn to pick ourBRIDGE as my nonprofit summer internship site last year for the experience of interacting directly with kids. However, what really drove me to choose it over other education centered organizations was its dedication to supporting immigrant and refugee families not only through academic support, but through so many other means as well. This includes, but is definitely not limited to, adult English learner classes, vaccine information events, year-round cultural events, donation drives, and meal distributions during the pandemic. The best way I can illustrate what ourBRIDGE does, is through their four core values: Love, Education, Respect, and Diversity, or LERD for short. These values are truly at the core of everything they do, a fact I noticed on my first day interning there and everyday of volunteering there since.

Being a first-generation American myself made me appreciative of the support ourBRIDGE offers, as I was able to witness all the work they do with the immigrant and refugee community throughout last summer and this school year. On my first day, I was tasked with surveying Spanish-speaking parents about their thoughts of ourBRIDGE, and the overwhelming amount of enthusiastic responses I received reminded me of my own parents and how much they would have loved to have an organization like this for our family. From watching the Bridge Kids learn about the universe, the continents, North Carolina, etc, to helping them cook yummy dishes from other countries or kayak for the first time, I truly appreciated the opportunity to be a part of those memorable experiences. Every morning, no matter how early, I woke up excited to spend the day

helping the Bridge Kids with their daily activities, playing rugby with them during outside time, or simply chatting with them about the most random topics. There truly is no dull moment at the ourBRIDGE center. The elementary students never fail to make me laugh with their impressions of whatever video has gone viral that week, or their entertaining stories of school from that day. The middle school students, who I was only with during the summer, always amazed me with their maturity and hard-working attitudes, but also made me so happy seeing their childlike qualities shine through during a game of hide-and-seek. This is one of the many aspects I love about ourBRIDGE: they provide a space for these kids to just be kids. All of these fun activities may seem trivial to some, but having the opportunity to artistically express themselves, play sports with other kids their age, or try out recreational activities like kayaking, can sometimes be a luxury to kids whose parents are not familiar with how getting them involved in such things works. My mom has said to me many times that if she had known how or had the time to sign me up for volleyball at a young age, she would have, seeing how much I enjoyed it after first playing it in high school. Coincidentally, kayaking with the Bridge Kids was also my first time kayaking and I loved it so much, I did it for the rest of the summer after. These experiences and many more are too often robbed from immigrant children for circumstances beyond their control. Luckily, ourBRIDGE does not let Bridge Kids miss out on the fun of being a kid, they in fact emphasize the importance of art in their curriculum and free play through their programs!

The immigrant and refugee experience in the United States comes with the common challenges many people know about: language barriers or securing financial stability after such a drastic relocation. What most people don't see, and what often goes unaddressed, however, are the social-emotional and acculturation challenges that affect these communities. For these reasons, I was glad to see that

continued

ourBRIDGE prepares their staff and volunteers to create a loving and supportive environment for all kids. During the summer, I joined the staff for their Child-Teacher Relationship Training, which taught us how to respond to the behaviors and emotions of kids in an understanding way and form a supportive relationship with them. I was then invited to take part in their Trauma Informed Care Training, an imperative part of working with immigrant and refugee children who all come from different life experiences. These skills are very evidently used in the classrooms, as I have watched the staff work toward reassuring their kids of how loved and strong they are. Likewise, they fervently teach the kids to be kind, to show love and respect for others and their environment, to simply be good people, and do things “the ourBRIDGE way,” as they often say. Without a doubt, the ourBRIDGE staff make the center a safe and welcoming space for everyone.

All this is to say, I really love ourBRIDGE for KIDS. Not only do I love spending time with and supporting the amazing Bridge Kids, who always manage to teach me something new and put a smile on my face, I also appreciate the ability to reflect on my identity as the daughter of immigrant parents. Through these kids, I get to see the strengths and the challenges that come with this identity, the similarities and the differences in our stories, and the beauty of being a part of this community. Reminiscing on my own experiences growing up motivates me to continue showing up for these kids, to hopefully support them in any way I can and how I know younger me would have appreciated, and how I hope to continue doing so for my own future students. As this semester comes to an end, just like last summer, I will leave the ourBRIDGE center with an abundance of fun new memories, and look forward to making many more the next time I return.

ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK: JUSTICE IN SELMA

By Annabeth Jones '25

I woke up at 6 AM on the Monday starting my first Spring Break of my undergraduate career, and lugged my suitcase across campus in the dark to board a van with 12 people I had just met through the UNC Charlotte Alternative Service Break program. I had heard about ASB and the Justice in Selma program, and the idea of spending my break getting to know a place of such historic significance through service was too great of an opportunity to pass up.

7 hours later, the Edmund Pettus Bridge comes into view, shortly followed by a McDonald's billboard that reads, "Welcome to Historic Semla." The site of a monumental civil rights struggle, now marked by a billboard from a billion-dollar fast-food company.

Driving into the city, Selma struck me as a place of historic significance now falling into a state of disrepair—cracked statues of civil rights leaders line the street and buildings with walls that crumble down into the Alabama river below.

Selma is a deeply unequal city. According to Ahjahnae LaQuer from Bridging Selma, a project by Morgan State University and West Virginia University, the average white resident makes \$41,448 a year, whereas the average black resident makes \$19,591. Similarly, the unemployment rate for white men is 3.8 percent, compared to the staggering 18.8 percent for black men. I thought of these statistics and crumbling houses and the McDonald's billboards as I fell asleep that night.

The next day we went to the Selma Center for Nonviolence. The center was established on the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, a march for voting rights that was met with a brutal police crackdown. The nonviolence training was led by Drew Glover and Carolyn Vassar Pickett. First, we learned about conflict. There are four major types of conflict: pathway, mutually exclusive, distributive, and value conflicts. Conflict is a part of everyday life.



UNC Charlotte's Alternative Spring Break Group stands with Civil Rights Activist Lynda Blackmon Lowery

Martin Luther King Junior's theory of nonviolence implemented many concepts from political theory and philosophy. There are many theories of nonviolence and how it can be applied in political movements. For MLK Jr., nonviolence is not merely a negative peace, but rather the creation of community through radical love.

MLK Jr. applied Hegelian dialectics to his theory of nonviolence. Hegelian dialectics is a way of approaching contradiction through

identifying the opposing sides as the thesis and antithesis and synthesizing them through analysis to reach a truth. Dialectics can be applied to non-violence or negative peace and violence. There is a difference between hyphenated non-violence and non-hyphenated nonviolence, in that the hyphenated version is passive or a cease-fire of sorts while nonviolence all as one word is active and addresses the root causes of violence. Non-violence is the thesis, violence is the antithesis, and through analysis and understanding, we can reach nonviolence.

We can not solve the problem of institutional racism with hate. Hate is the root of the problem of racism. MLK Jr. was a proponent of the idea that hating someone is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. The beloved community can be created through reconciliation. Healing relationships will heal the community, and maybe one day heal society.

Feeling hopeful, we left the Selma Center to work at the local food bank for a few hours, packing Cheez-its for food insecure residents, before we would return to our place for dinner and bed.

I spent the majority of the following day volunteering at the community thrift store, sorting through dusty clothing and household items. This store was a center for the community. I saw moms with children picking out toys, I saw a young couple buying decorations for their new home, and I saw how much people relied on each other.

Just a few buildings down the street is the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute, a place where we would spend the rest of our afternoon. On our walk there, we came across community organizer Queen E Jackson, who was getting ready for a voting rights march the next day. She handed us signs and fliers about the event reading “black voters matter.” She told us about growing up in Selma and the continual struggle her community faces. Then she asked us if we would like to sing with her, and of course, we said yes. She led us in a call and response song she would lead at marches. I knew this memory would stay with me for a long time.

Bright and early the next morning we piled in the van and headed for the Selma Community Garden. There, we were met by Drew and his small dog, Courage. The garden had several fields and a greenhouse with a variety of vegetables growing in it. For the next few hours we would be tilling the fields and preparing for Spring planting. It was hard work under the Alabama sun, but seeing the results of our labor made it one of the most rewarding activities we had done.

The community garden is incredibly important to this community. Not only does the garden provide people with fresh produce, but also teaches them how to cook it and incorporate these foods into their regular diets.

For the rest of the afternoon, we met with Lynda Blackmon Lowery, the youngest participant at the 1965 voting rights march. Lowery had been jailed nine times before her 15th birthday for participating in protests for voting rights. At the age of 15, Lowery joined in the march for voting rights alongside MLK

and John Lewis. She was attacked on Bloody Sunday at the young age of 15, and to this day she has the scars to prove it. She told us that this experience profoundly shaped her. She was scared to continue, but when the second attempt at the march began, she was at the front and ready to fight for her rights.

Lowery has been through so much hardship. She was jailed as an innocent child, something no one should have to go through. And yet, through these struggles she remained resilient. I was struck by how funny Mrs. Lowery was. She told us about her experience in jail, but also about her favorite show, Bridgerton, and her excitement about meeting then President Obama.

When asked for her advice to young people who want to make a change, she told us, “Take your heart back. When this experience hits you, you’ll know what to do with it.”



The Selma Community Garden continues to thrive with the hard work of local community members and volunteers.



*(left) UNC Charlotte students stand in the parking lot of the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute
(right) Say Cheez! Students pack Cheez-Its and other snacks at a local food bank.*



STUDY ABROAD

¡VAMOS A ESPAÑA!

By Karsyn Koon '24



Karsyn is all smiles as she explores Granada, Spain including The Alhambra, a historical Islamic palace and fortress.

Two years ago, I would have never imagined myself going to school in Spain and visiting other countries in my free time. The pandemic made travel seem impossible. Despite my long-standing dream of spending a semester in another country, I had allowed myself to believe I wouldn't leave the U.S. for some time. The application process for study abroad seemed surreal. Flying from North Carolina to Granada felt like a dream. Even now, I have moments where I pause on my way to classes and think "Wow, I'm in Europe!" Studying abroad has been one of the best decisions I have ever made!

I am a current second-year Levine scholar majoring in Spanish, Political Science, and Criminal Justice with a minor in International Studies. While these subjects are generally conducive for a semester abroad, I have met people with an endless variety of majors and minors. Studying abroad is not exclusive and there are always programs one can fit into their schedule (sometimes you may have to get a little creative, but never think you can't study abroad because of your major). My program is located in Granada, Spain, and lasts from late January to late May. I study at the Centro de Lenguas Modernas supported by the University of Granada. My classes include two Spanish language courses, culture and civilization of Spain, Islamic culture in Spain, and history of the European Union. I was able to choose these classes

to best compliment my credit load with UNC Charlotte. Some friends of mine are taking biology classes taught in Spanish while others are enjoying their time in art subjects. Sure, courses being taught entirely in Spanish are tough, but I can already feel my language abilities growing.

In addition to the university, I decided to go with a homestay instead of a residency. I have been studying Spanish for over eight years and knew living with a Spanish family would go a long way in improving my fluency. My host family is amazing, we are a wonderful fit! I have a roommate also from the U.S., and between the two of us, we are able to effectively communicate with the family and learn detailed aspects of the local culture. Not to mention the host mother's cooking is absolutely divine. My only complaint thus far is that I discovered I deeply dislike calamari. Honestly, a homestay was the perfect choice for me; I probably wouldn't have survived this long without them!

Travel-wise, there are endless possibilities at my disposal. Up til now I have only been visiting different cities in Spain (Barcelona, Madrid, and Sevilla, to name a few) and have been having a blast! There is so much to see and do just within this country, I feel almost stressed trying to fit everything into one semester. For Semana Santa, my parents flew to Spain and we went around to some of the most famous parts of the country. In a couple of weeks, I am going to southern France and northern Italy. Toward the end of the semester, I have the chance to travel to Portugal. Even with all of these plans, I know I do not have enough time to do everything I want to (at least while still attending classes and maintaining my GPA!). This experience has helped me realize that the world is so much larger than I expected and I want to travel it all.

In short, I am already so thankful for the lessons my semester abroad has taught me. There are not enough words to describe how impactful an experience like this can be. There is quite a difference between going on vacation somewhere and actually living there, and the latter allows you genuine knowledge and insight into the different cultures of the world. While I miss the comforts and people of home, I hate to think about this semester coming to an end. To anyone on the fence about committing to a semester studying abroad, I have to push you toward going abroad, even if it seems scary and overwhelming at times. These are truly some of the best days of my life, and I hope more people get to experience an amazing study abroad as I have too!



Karsyn Koon and Madison Snyder, both studying abroad in different programs in Spain for the semester, meet up for a day at the beach in Almuñécar.

Karsyn enjoys touring Gibraltar with friends and resting with the Barbary Macaques, Europe's only wild monkey.

Karsyn explores Barcelona with other students, taking in the architecture, sights, and creating lifelong memories.

MAKING UNC CHARLOTTE GREENER ONE PROPOSAL AT A TIME



Olivia and Jacob stand ready to graduate from UNC Charlotte, knowing they have left Charlotte a greener space.

When paying your tuition, you'll notice there is a long list of assorted fees that come along with it. You may never learn what many of them go towards, but we can tell you about one: the Student Green Fee. It's only \$1 each semester, but pool that among 30,000 students and you have a fund totaling \$60,000 a year. This funding is overseen by STUDENTS. These students make up a committee called the Charlotte Green Initiative, who collectively yield the enormous power of voting on sustainability related grants for campus. Students, faculty, staff and any other member of the UNC Charlotte community have the opportunity to apply and receive funding for a project of their choosing.

We have served on the CGI committee for much of our time as students. Given that we both have backgrounds in Environmental Studies, we felt that CGI would be a good fit for us. Here is a brief introduction by the both of us (Olivia, followed by Jacob):

Olivia: I first learned about CGI from Dr. Z. I told her I was looking to get more involved in sustainability initiatives on campus

By Olivia Gregson '22 and Jacob Snyder '22

and she informed me that previous Levines had joined CGI. So, I decided to check it out.

I joined the committee the spring semester of my freshman year. After becoming a voting member I soon learned more about the incredible projects CGI has funded. I learned that thanks to the green fee we've got hammocks, water bottle fill up stations, bike racks, sunscreen dispensers and more. I also learned more about what criteria the committee looks for when voting. As I progressed through sophomore year I became the web designer and then fast forward to my senior year I became the Chair. It's been an awesome opportunity and I've learned countless things. I gather any proposals we receive and send out the weekly meeting agenda. I also run the meetings and recruit members.

Jacob: I joined CGI during the Spring of 2020, my sophomore year. I had heard about CGI through conversations with Olivia, and it sounded right up my alley. I served on the committee in-person for about a month before we had to go to virtual meetings due to COVID-19. During that time, I simply served as a voting member, providing input on all of the incoming proposals and figuring out how best to allocate our funding. In Fall 2021, as we were transitioning back into more consistent in-person meetings, I took on the role of Secretary. I write our weekly meeting minutes and send out emails to proposal writers about updates on their proposals.

Speaking of proposals, there are a number of projects that have been funded during our time on the committee, as well as many great projects before our time. Some are much more "visible" and have a clear every-day impact on students, and others are much more "behind the scenes". Some projects directly aim to reduce waste and make campus more sustainable, others aim to educate people and help change the culture relating to sustainability. One project that we like to "advertise" are the hammocks found around campus. They recently received quite the upgrade and should be more resistant to bad weather and general wear and tear. People love using them, especially during nice, warm days! Though, there are a fair share of students that will still utilize them during the colder months with hot cocoa or coffee by their side. As reusable water bottles have become more common (yay!), water bottle refill stations next to drinking fountains have been implemented all throughout campus. Less plastic waste is always a plus! We fund many of the Adopt-A-Spots found on campus. We also aim to regularly educate UNC Charlotte's students directly through tabling and sustainability related events, as well as the occasional sticker and sign across campus reminding people about sustainable practices (think of the "Remember, these come from trees" stickers on the paper towel dispensers in restrooms throughout campus). A major project spearheaded by a couple CGI members was the purchasing of low temp freezers for



Water bottle refill stations and weather resistant hammocks are just a few examples of what Jacob and Olivia have helped put into place during their time at Charlotte.

Through CGI, any club, organization, or department across campus you can "Adopt-A-Spot" and make a difference in keeping our campus clean and green!



the biology department. The department was using older models that were extremely draining on energy, the new ones reduced consumption by 70%. That has a huge impact on energy and fossil fuel consumption. This is just a small snapshot of the types of projects funded, but should give you a good idea of the wide range of ways sustainability can be improved throughout campus!

The process of submitting a proposal is relatively simple. There are two different proposal forms on our website: one for “small grant proposals” (under \$500) and one for “large grant proposals” (over \$500). The major distinction is that for large grant proposals you need to establish a campus partner, which can be any staffed department on campus. The purpose of the partnership is to ensure that someone on campus has agreed to help with the maintenance of whatever is being installed. For example, the proposal for the sunscreen dispenser installed by the pool at UREC, listed UREC staff as their partner, with the understanding that they would refill and maintain the station.

One reason that many UNC Charlotte students don’t currently know about CGI is because the committee has had trouble keeping established members over time. With changing schedules every semester, it is understandably difficult for some members to commit multiple semesters as their priorities change. The two of us have worked on recruiting members over the two plus years we have been on the committee. During our senior year, this is the first time in years that CGI has had a full set of voting members (11 members). Many of the new members are very passionate about sustainability and helping the university, so we are hopeful that the committee will stay just as active after we graduate. And now that the committee is more active, we hope to be able to recruit more consulting members which will have first priority to become voting members once those spots open up (and many spots will open up for Fall 2022 since a number of us are graduating). We hope that the current first and second year members will continue to take CGI in the right direction after we have worked so hard to really get it “running” again. Social media advertising (check out our Instagram page, currently @cltgreeninitiative), more frequent tabling events, and more prolific projects are all ways that we hope the general UNC Charlotte community becomes more aware of this essential student-run committee. We are confident that we set up a good base for CGI for the years after we graduate, and we are always happy to gain the perspective from other students and scholars, should they be interested in picking up where we left off, as well as seeing all the new initiatives and projects that are sure to come in the future!



IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY TO (*Teach Others How To*) SAVE LIVES

By Kevin Tan 22', Rachel Hayes 22', and Yara Mahmoud 22'

Kevin: The idea came to me in May of 2020 – amidst the civil rights shockwaves reverberating around the country, I was sitting at home, pondering how I could address existing health disparities illuminated by recent events and the pandemic. I stumbled upon an article about inequity in CPR training and was particularly struck by a line stating that the difference between life or death could quite literally be determined by which side of the street you collapsed on—individuals in Black or low-income neighborhoods are significantly less likely to receive CPR from bystanders. Minorities consistently have the highest incidence rates of cardiac arrest and consequently sudden cardiac death, yet also have the lowest rates of CPR training, a deadly combination. A clear unmet need, I began to conceptualize an idea for the civic engagement grant we have access to as Levine Scholars, and started laying the groundwork for what would eventually become Heart to Heart (H2H), a community-based initiative to expand CPR training access for traditionally undertrained populations. To bring this project to life, we connected with the Keith Family YMCA, the perfect community partner with a longstanding history of empowering, strengthening, and making the broader community happier and healthier. Born from my love of teaching and great appreciation of first aid which was cultivated from my experience in EMS, I established H2H with the explicit goal of promoting health equity—two individuals living just a few blocks apart should not have the vast discrepancies in life expectancy that we see in some parts of the country. H2H's mission is to not only empower underserved populations by teaching them how to save a life, but to also work toward eliminating barriers to access through the provision of cost-free American Heart Association certifications, subsidized transportation to the classes, and childcare at the Y.

Rachel: Whether or not we realize it, each and every person has a space that they claim. However, it is what we do with the spaces we inhabit that can make a huge impact on the world. When I first moved to Charlotte four years ago before my freshman year of college, I knew I wanted to do something to make the local community a better place but had no idea how to do so. One day Kevin reached out to me about a novel idea he had to provide free CPR training classes to community members. Doing some research, we discovered that many neighborhoods in Charlotte are still quite segregated; there are many parts of the city that have communities mainly composed of one demographic. From this, we recognized just how beneficial providing CPR training to these populations could be. We then reached out to Yara who ardently shared the vision Kevin and I saw for the greater Charlotte community, officially giving way to the founding of H2H.

Yara: When I first accepted the offer to be a part of the Levine Scholars Program, the notion of coming up with an idea and implementing an entire civic engagement project sounded extremely daunting. I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to do, but knew



I wanted to have it revolve around healthcare as it is a critically important issue that affects everyone in the community. When Kevin and Rachel approached me during my junior year about H2H, I was instantly hooked. The project idea was not only about a topic that I had interest in, but more importantly, also positively impacted vulnerable communities in Charlotte. The process of launching our first H2H session was very time consuming and involved a lot of work on the backend. I greatly appreciated the constant communication between my team members and Levine staff members, which was an important element that made this possible. I've really enjoyed the time spent with my team members on this project. Overall, I feel like all of our efforts on this project have been a success and am genuinely proud that the project seems to have benefited a large portion of the community around Charlotte. I am excited for the initiative to continue after my team members and I graduate and hope that the new scholars leading H2H will take it to even greater heights.

Kevin: Leading these classes allowed me to exercise my passion for teaching in a new capacity and to think through each operational decision intentionally from multiple lenses (instructor, participant, host site, etc). For instance, in thinking through the training from the participants' perspectives, we wanted to make training more comfortable and realistic for people of color, so we purchased manikins with darker skin tones. To increase the visibility of the initiative in the community, we provided participants with H2H branded t-shirts and stickers. And in order to effectively reach the target populations, we met them where they were—this involved outreach to local congregations, schools, and other minority-serving nonprofits. In the first session we held, I



Kevin, Rachel, and Yara work with community members on life-saving skills, teaching individuals how to properly administer CPR through their initiative Heart to Heart.

spoke with M, a young black mother. In between practicing chest compressions, M disclosed that a few years ago, she suffered a freak kitchen accident that left her with extensive burns and nerve damage. Having to rely on a home care assistant for a few months, M told me that she was hoping to pay it forward and start her own home care service, and that being CPR-certified was a necessary step. Recently laid off, she was short on funds—she emphasized how this opportunity was a key catalyst in getting her dream off the ground. Hearing her story was so gratifying; I was ecstatic that H2H was already making a meaningful impact in the lives of others. We have hosted multiple (over 10!) classes now—my absolute favorite part of it all has been talking to participants and hearing their varied, but similar motivations for wanting to learn CPR. I was extremely proud to see participants leaving our classes with a distinct sense of confidence and excitement to spread the word about the initiative to family and friends. I was thrilled to see individuals from all backgrounds, both young and old, register for our classes, bound by a singular desire to be prepared to save a life. Through founding H2H, I have learned so much about what it takes to implement a successful community-based initiative and being an educator within the community, preparing me to be a civically-engaged future physician. I am truly so grateful for the opportunity to bring our vision to life with the LSP civic engagement grant and am extremely thankful for Rachel and Yara's help in bringing this project to fruition. This and other formative experiences have made it apparent to me that outstanding clinicians are dedicated to not only providing superb care to their patients, but also addressing issues outside the confines of the doctor's office. As I take my next steps to medical school, I want to continue to embody these principles, connecting with my community in meaningful ways and speaking up for those not heard.

SEOUL: FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

By Zoe Ziegler '24
and Patrick Deegan '24



The doors at Changdeokgung Palace may be small, but Zoe said they were just her size!

Have you ever wanted to visit a country with mountains in the middle of cities, panoramic ocean views, cherry blossoms, amazing food, and a bureaucratic system so complicated you can't order packages without a government issued ID card that takes over two months to get? Welcome to South Korea! All jokes aside, our experiences so far have been truly incredible and we'd like to share with you just a little bit about our time here, because sharing everything would take much more than just this article.

We began our journey to Seoul, South Korea in February with a pretty rocky start that included flight cancellations and a ten day quarantine in a hotel that had no wifi connection. But after going through some tribulations and lots of Covid tests, we were finally free and able to explore the city. If anything, bonding experiences like waiting for two hours at the district clinic to register our vaccine cards made the freedom to see what Seoul has to offer even sweeter. While we have traveled the city together and had many fun adventures, we have many different stories to share about the city from our own perspectives. Patrick's from up in the clouds, and Zoe's from a little closer to the ground.

From Below: Zoe's Experience

After moving to Charlotte, I thought I had experienced what life in a big city is like, but stepping into Seoul, a city of almost 10 million people, was dizzying. The streets are lined with thin, towering buildings that seem to never end. During my first month in the city, I was able to

hike up Namsan Mountain and see the city from Seoul Tower, which gave the full picture of the awesome, yet slightly overwhelming expanse of the city.

Once I started getting used to the massiveness of the city and could navigate the subway system, a whole world of amazing places to visit, new foods to try, and people to meet opened up to me. That's not to say Patrick and I haven't gotten lost many times in our stay here. We got so lost one day that we somehow stumbled upon a dress rehearsal for Seoul Fashion Week while trying to find a doughnut shop. Albeit accidental, this experience just goes to show how many cool things are going on all across the city at any moment. While in the city I have visited Palaces, hiked mountains, and been to a cafe that has real sheep you can pet! I was also able to take a weekend trip to the seaside town of Busan and enjoy some of the warmer weather.

Along with these fun outings, some of my favorite memories here have been right on campus at Korea University. I was able to join a ballroom dance club and am learning how to Cha-Cha while making new friends, and I enjoy walking to class every day and seeing the cherry blossoms bloom around campus. My Korean class has also been a great way to make new friends from all around the world and learn the basics to communicate in everyday life here in Korea. In South Korea for anyone who is looking to have a meaningful experience, regardless of your major.



Patrick and Zoe explore many different cities, foods, sights, and smells in South Korea. From the Cherry Blossoms at Seoul Forest, to the Gamcheon Culture Village, Walking through Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, and eating delicious meals there is always so much to explore!

From Above: Patrick's Experience

When telling people about this study abroad experience before leaving, I would very commonly receive two questions. First, “Oh, do you speak Korean?”. Short answer, no. Long answer, also no, but trying to learn at least a little. Secondly, people would ask, “Why did you choose South Korea?” In all honesty, before arriving here I didn’t have a particularly good answer to this question. The world was opening up somewhat from the COVID-19 pandemic, travel was possible, and I wanted to take every opportunity I could while it was available. I had heard a little about Korea and it seemed like an interesting place, and Zoe was planning her study abroad in South Korea as well. It’s always nice to have a good friend in an incredibly new environment. Since arriving, I have experienced a number of things which, had I known about prior to arriving, I would have given as the reasoning for my choice.

Firstly, I love the massive size of Seoul. While the number of people can be overwhelming, it is the best opportunity to meet lots of people and just about anything you could want to do is only a short subway ride away! As Zoe mentioned, we’ve definitely been lost more than a few times on public transportation, but even when lost you’re bound to run into something fun to do. Another surprising part of Seoul is just how clean and pretty the city itself is. My only experience with a city even close to the same size is New York, which I wouldn’t associate with

cleanliness. However, here there is minimal litter, streets are lined with cherry blossom trees, and, as mentioned in the intro, mountains in the center of buildings.

Another great part of this experience is that Korea University pairs each exchange student with a KUBA (Korea University Buddy Assistant) who you can hang out with and have them show you around. I love my buddy Jiyong! We get dinner with other buddy groups and it’s a really great time. I tried Gopchang (intestines) for the first time with them. Overall, while I do hit my head on various parts of the city quite frequently, I wouldn’t trade this experience for the world.

Even though we have already had many amazing experiences while studying here in Seoul, we are looking forward to more adventures during the rest of the semester. We can’t wait to share the rest of our stories after the conclusion of our program, although we will definitely be sad that it’s over. And, even though we are only about half way through, we would both highly recommend studying in South Korea for anyone who is looking to have a meaningful experience, regardless of your major.

PERFORMING ARTS IN CHARLOTTE: *An Opportunity for Enrichment*

By DJ Cook '25

I love the performing arts; I grew up going to local community theater productions, took theater classes in middle school, and helped with tech for the spring musical in high school. I always found ways to surround myself with music and theatrical experiences. One of my favorite aspects of going to school at UNC Charlotte is having easy access to the rich performing arts hub found in uptown. Charlotte is a major city in the southern United States; thus many Broadway touring shows and musicians stop in the city as they traverse the nation. Charlotte is also home to many other venues and art forms such as the Charlotte Ballet and the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.

As Levine Scholars, we have the opportunity to attend a handful of performing arts events each semester. The Levine Foundation provides tickets for nearly thirty various events throughout the academic year. Each Levine Scholar has the opportunity to attend about four events. They are led by Dr. Mike Richardson (whom we all endearingly call “Dr. Mike”), and often include a meal before the show. As Dr. Mike said when he introduced us to these events, “Sandra and Leon Levine strongly believe that a thriving arts and culture community is essential to Charlotte’s growth and prosperity.” Thus, the Levines excitedly extended the opportunity for us Scholars to experience these events as well.

There is a wide variety of shows and venues we have the opportunity to experience through these cultural events. These include local college productions through Central Piedmont Community College, music productions at the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, community theater productions through Theatre Charlotte, dance productions at the Charlotte Ballet, smaller shows at the Booth Playhouse, and even large-scale, Broadway touring shows through Blumenthal Performing Arts.

These cultural events are an amazing opportunity to build connections with Dr. Mike, other Levine Scholars, and alumni. I love talking with other scholars at the pre-show dinners, especially those from other cohorts I wouldn’t otherwise know. These events are a great way to slow down, take a break from academics, and catch up with peers you haven’t seen in a while.

The cultural events are also an excellent chance to be exposed to more of the city we call home. I remember attending a theater show with Dr. Mike and other Scholars back in September and realizing this was my first experience in the heart of the city of Charlotte at night, and how alive the city seemed to be. The shows themselves are captivating, and I love simultaneously experiencing the same show with so many people. Afterward, we often go in small groups to get ice cream and discuss what we just watched.

Through this initiative, I’ve had the opportunity to attend four shows thus far. First, I saw the *Fantasticks* at Theatre Charlotte. This occurred at a small but long-running community theater. Next, I saw *Potted Potter* at the Booth Playhouse, which was an international touring comedy show. Then, I attended *Rent* at the Belk Theater, the 25th anniversary tour of a Broadway production at the largest Blumenthal Performing Arts venue. Most recently, I watched *Innovative 1970!* at the Charlotte Ballet. This occurred

*(Top) DJ smiles with excitement before he gets to work as the spotlight caller for Charlotte’s production of *Pippin*. (Bottom) A behind-the-scenes look at DJ’s desk space- setup with all of the cues, screens, timesheets, and an intermission snack- for the evening performance.*



at the Center for Dance, which is a smaller, intimate venue, in a rehearsal-style space. Other significant events other scholars have had the opportunity to attend this year include *The Empire Strikes Back* at the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, *Wicked* at Ovens Auditorium, and *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Belk Theater. Still to come this spring is major international headliner *Hamilton*.

Beyond the social aspect, these cultural events hold a special place in my heart because of my involvement in the Theater department at UNC Charlotte. I am primarily a lighting technician and have been involved with nearly every dance and theater production on campus this academic year. I have learned an immense amount about what goes into the technical aspect of theater productions that the average attendee never sees.

The work that I do day-to-day makes attending these large scale professional productions in uptown Charlotte especially meaningful. For example, I saw the Charlotte Ballet show right after working on the running crew for the UNC Charlotte Fall Dance Concert. It was fascinating to see a show of the same caliber from the audience’s perspective. When I saw *Rent* at the Belk Theater, I was in awe of the technical aspects of the show. I got excited when I recognized some of the same lighting equipment as we use on campus. I would challenge myself to figure out how they made a particular effect happen, and admire the lighting design of the show.

Currently, I am in the midst of working on the big spring musical here on campus: *Pippin*. I am the assistant stage manager for spotlights. I have also helped with hanging, focusing, and cueing the lights for the show. The process we use and the equipment we have is very similar to that of professional theaters. I plan to stay involved with the theater community on campus and in uptown even after my four years here at Charlotte. I am forever thankful for the exposure I’ve had to many of these events and productions in uptown through the Levine cultural events, and look forward to attending many more of these events in the years to come.

GLOBAL ENGINEERING BRIGADES

By Joysan Osteen '24

Global Engineering Brigades at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte is a secular, international student-operated volunteer organization whose mission is to provide sustainable development to underserved communities throughout the world in hopes of reducing inequality. Global Engineering Brigades collaborates with other sister chapters, such as Global Medical Brigades, Global Dental Brigades, and Global Legal Empowerment Brigades, at our and other distinguished universities to meet the needs of impoverished rural communities in a holistic manner. Global Engineering Brigades focuses on water and sanitation infrastructure while other chapters focus on economic development and sustainable health systems in order to collectively promote long-term sustainability and greater longevity of independent stability. It is a primary goal of the Global Brigades organization to implement aid in the least invasive way possible, eventually leading to a relationship of impact monitoring.

Our team at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte recruits student volunteers and professionals to design and implement clean water projects in a variety of Honduran, Panamanian, and Nicaraguan communities. We spend an extensive amount of time and effort each year fundraising for our end-of-year trip, referred to as a brigade. A few fundraisers we have facilitated include our Winter Chipotle fundraiser and Spectrum Stadium volunteer shifts. A brigade provides our organization the opportunity to spend seven to ten days in the target community educating both young children and community leaders on the importance of clean water, implementing our clean water infrastructure designs, and interacting with the culture and demographic of the community. Additionally, brigading affords us the opportunity to navigate outreach and aid without encouraging the ideals of white saviorism, which often inflicts more harm than growth.

I first heard about Global Brigades from a friend involved in another chapter and became enthused by the potential of an engineering-focused branch. I thought it would be an amazing opportunity to use the privilege of my ongoing engineering education to give back to the world by providing complex engineering solutions to modern-day issues related to sustainable development. I co-founded GEB in March 2021 and have spent the Fall of 2021 and Spring of 2022 establishing our student organization, planning for our 2023 brigade, and creating engagement opportunities for UNC Charlotte's engineering students.

While I believe engagement with foreign communities is essential, I also know the importance of fostering our own Charlotte community. One of our first opportunities to do so was the creation of an informational video containing advice from our members to incoming engineering students. Additionally, our engineering students and club members have interacted with Charlotte's youth and promoted STEM education. In collaboration with College Mentors for Kids, we educated children on the function, role, and distinguishing factors of solar energy through an interactive solar-oven building project. Using our solar-ovens, we got to end the evening feasting on s'mores! Global Engineering Brigades has also expanded our mission to be a platform of education, professional development, and networking for our members. This year, we featured distinguished speakers and professors from our very own College of Engineering, including Dr. James Amburgey, who spoke with our members about the importance of clean water, opportunities in civil engineering research, and the realities of entering the engineering discipline. As president, I am proud of the progress our club has made in its one year and look forward to seeing how we grow in the years ahead, especially as we prepare for our first brigade!

Children from the local Charlotte community participated in the UNC Charlotte Global Brigades first Solar Oven Building Project, teaching children fun STEM lessons, and ending with everyone's very own S'mores treat!



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.

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.



Levine Scholars Group Photo Fall 2021. Classes of '22, '23, '24, and '25.