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UNC Charlotte Publication

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UNC Charlotte Dance Marathon 2013: Creating a Niner Tradition

By Celia Karp

On November 15, 2013, nearly a year after our first planning meeting, UNC Charlotte Dance Marathon finally arrived. In the early morning hours before the marathon's 7PM kickoff, students from the Levine Scholars Program and Dance Marathon planning committees gathered in the Student Union to set the scenes for the 12-hour dance event. From designing the floor plan, preparing meals and snacks, to orchestrating entertainment acts, and organizing event logistics, these dedicated students came together to create an unforgettable night of philanthropy and fun for the UNC Charlotte student body and greater Charlotte community.



Inspired by the impact of other universities' dance marathons, UNC Charlotte Dance Marathon connected more than 1,000 UNC Charlotte students in the mission to raise funds "For The Kids" (FTK) at Levine Children's Hospital, our local Children's Miracle Network hospital. Through these students' collaboration and commitment to the

cause, the inaugural UNC Charlotte Dance Marathon was a huge success, raising more than \$35,000 FTK.

Coordinating 12 hours of entertainment, food, music, lighting, technology, and volunteer power, including emcees and student organizers for additional non-dance activities, was no easy task. The students involved in planning Dance Marathon devoted countless hours engaging in weekly committee and leadership team meetings, participating in fundraising events on and off campus, and leading presentations for diverse UNC Charlotte student organizations like athletic teams, academic and extracurricular clubs, and fraternities and sororities. Raising awareness of Dance Marathon and educating fellow UNC Charlotte students about the cause was fundamental to garnering campus-wide support for the event's first year. After months of envisioning what UNC Charlotte's first-ever Dance Marathon would be like, standing on-stage



Four members of the Dance Marathon Leadership Team (left to right) Caitlin Vaverek, Laura Outlaw, Christina Neitzey, and Celia Karp

with families whose children were treated at Levine Children's Hospital, feeling the energy and enthusiasm of the student dancers, and discovering that Dance Marathon had raised so much money for such an important cause was inspiring and established UNC Charlotte Dance Marathon as a welcomed, new Niner tradition.

Since I first became part of the Niner family in 2010, I quickly learned that UNC Charlotte is always open to change and creativity. On this rapidly growing campus, students are encouraged to initiate new projects, launch new clubs, and continually redefine what it means to be a Niner. As a graduating Levine Scholar, it was so exciting to help launch a new Niner organization and make this idea for a school-wide philanthropy event that is connected to the greater Charlotte community, come to fruition. More than the



Levine students posing in the photo booth at Dance Marathon

excitement of the event itself, the support and teamwork from all the Levine Scholars created an incredible network of volunteers and participants, which enabled the organization to experience great success. With the new Dance Marathon leadership team already in place for Dance Marathon 2014, the Executive Board of Dance Marathon 2013 looks forward to continuing to raise awareness of this important cause, strengthen the organization, increase the number of involved students, and make a positive impact on the Levine Children's Hospital and Charlotte community.

“...the real world beckons...”

Four Years On By Vrushab Gowda

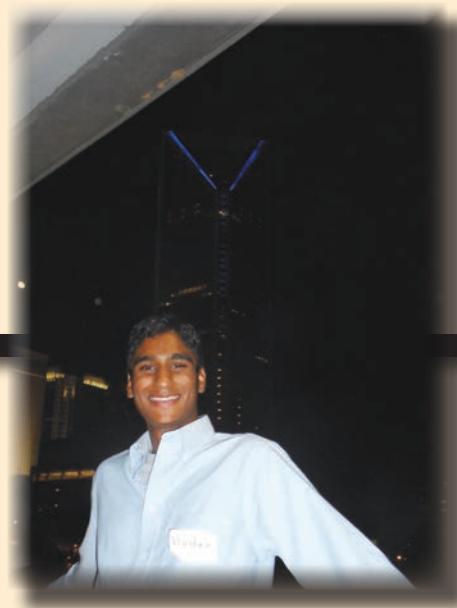
As seniors, we're finally in the moment of time we once thought was so distant: Spring 2014. Our own Finalists' Weekend, Wyoming experience, and first move-in to Witherspoon passed us by four years ago – a fact hard to digest. I find myself grudgingly accepting the cliché that time in college really does fly by.

These past few years have been an exhilarating journey that has taken me up and down the Eastern Seaboard and across the Atlantic. I lived in D.C., Boston, and London; studied at Georgetown University and the London School of Economics; and worked with world-class researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital and the House of Lords in the United Kingdom. I had the good fortune to meet all sorts of interesting people and would not trade these experiences for anything.

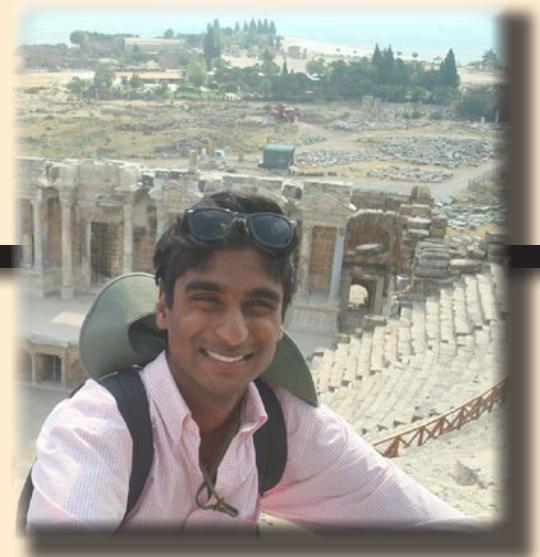
I would never have imagined doing any of this when I first arrived on campus. Thinking back to the beginning of freshman year, apprehension is the first word that flashes through my mind. I had never really spent much time away from my family, let alone lived in a state 600 miles away from my home in New Jersey. I thought I was lost. What time was I supposed to wake up in the morning? How was I supposed to fold my clothes? How many energy drinks in a day are healthy?

These past four years, I have cultivated a much more acute sense of direction, independence, and willingness to try new things. Trial and error, inspiring professors, and a supportive group of friends can be credited with bringing about this change.

It is a strange feeling to think about how little time I have left at UNC Charlotte. So much has happened during these four years and I will always be indebted to the Levine Scholars Program for overseeing my personal development. But graduation is just around the corner and “the real world” beckons. I am excited to begin the medical school admissions process and start the next chapter in my life. Before then, I anticipate catching up on all of the sleep debt I've accumulated throughout college. I would not be where I am today without my fellow scholars and the mentors of the program, and for that, I will always be so grateful.



First tour of Charlotte – September 2010



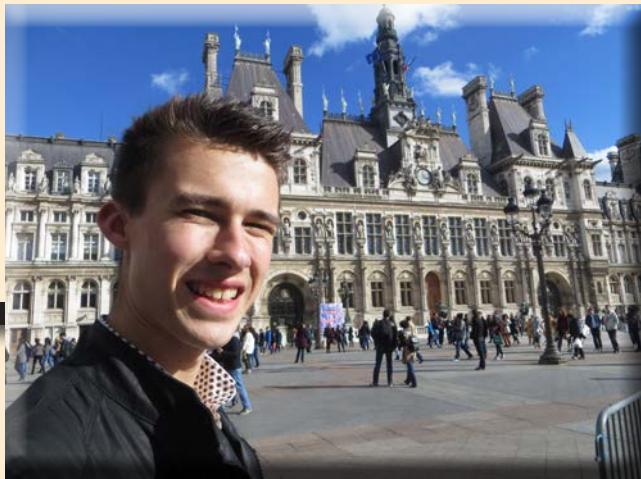
Among Roman ruins in southwest Turkey – July 2013



Levine Senior Retreat – March 2014



Levine Class of 2014



*City of Brussels
from the Palace
of Justice*

Casey preparing to participate in an interactive flash mob in a square near the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris

A Model United Nations Out-of-This-Country Experience

By Casey Aldridge

The first time I ever flew on a plane was last summer for the National Outdoor Leadership School expedition when my fellow Levine peers and I traveled to Wyoming. Not only was it my first flight, but it was also the first time I had left the East Coast. I soon came to realize that although my travels began with my departure to Wyoming last July, that's certainly not where they would end during my freshman year at UNC Charlotte.

Thanks to the Levine Scholars Program's commitment to support and encourage global learning and experiences abroad, I am writing this from Paris, France, at the end of a nine-day venture to Europe with UNC Charlotte's Model United Nations (UN) team. I have just completed an indescribable week in Brussels, Belgium, where I represented the Republic of Poland in the mock World Health Organization at the Harvard World Model UN conference, one of the largest and most prestigious Model UN competitions in the world.

The process of traveling from Belgium and France as my first-ever international experience was not a Levine Program function, but without the program, my trip might not have been possible. I had to prove my delegate skills at a conference in Atlanta, where I earned "Best Delegate" for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization as Brazil. For the past couple of months, I have been reading hundreds of documents on the Polish government and on health disparities in modern-day society, cramming for the week I have just completed.

As I pack to come back to Charlotte, I am confident that my first international experience was one of the greatest weeks of my life. My first trip abroad allowed me to develop close friendships with students from all over the world. I had a chance to simulate international diplomacy in depth. However, most of all, I've been able to explore new nations. Travel provides such depth to an education; perspective – whether it is towards politics, art, environmental studies, or other areas of study – is all about comparison.

As a political science major minoring in history, being in Brussels, the "capital of Europe," and in Paris, the home of the Paris Commune and multiple French Revolutions, was an experience beyond words. I will never forget this week – my first experience abroad and WorldMUN conference – and I am excited to continue exploring the world, as I haven't been able to before.



Casey, pictured a quarter of the way back on the right, joins the rest of the World Health Organization Committee for a photo in the Hall of Mirrors in Egmont Palace, the site for Harvard WorldMUN 2014

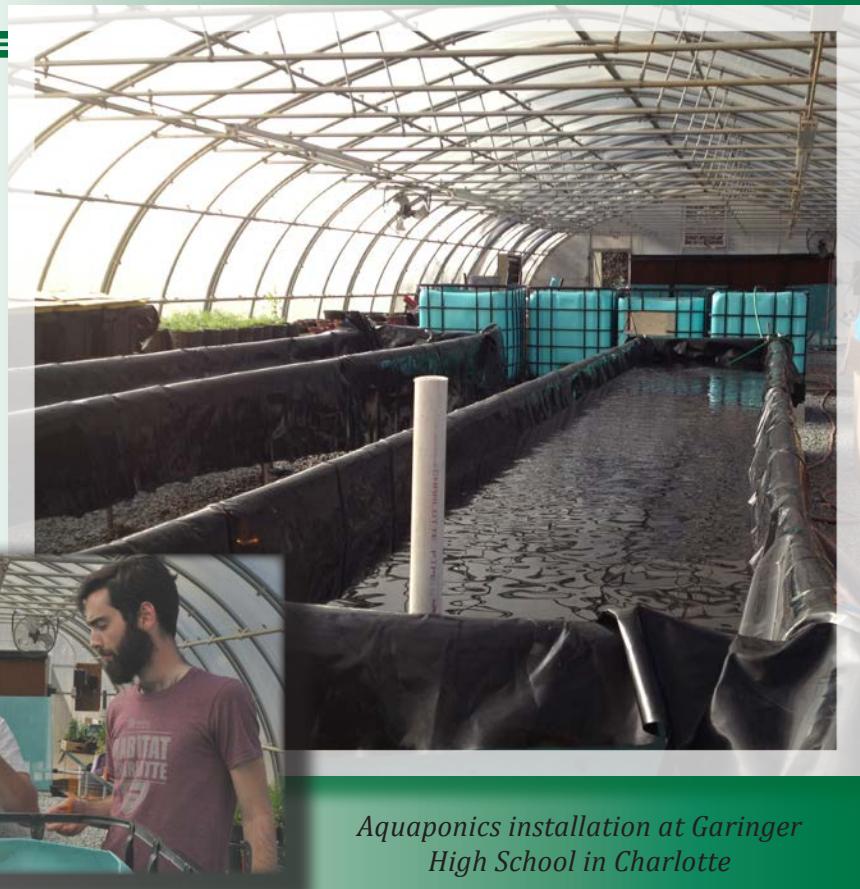
What's Growing On?

By Jacob Huffman

I first learned about Aquaponics in a shoe factory on Chicago's South Side. Well, it was once a shoe factory. It's now an urban farm, physics lab, and batting cage operated by Chicago State University (CSU). During an internship with CSU in the summer of 2012, I worked as a volunteer at the facility alongside some very inspiring local leaders in Chicago's food rights efforts. Though my time in Chicago was relatively brief, what I learned there started me on the path I'm now on to becoming a professional in sustainable agriculture and food systems studies.

When I returned home from CSU, I met the folks from 100 Gardens, a non-profit corporation here in Charlotte focused on outreach through education in Aquaponics. Since last fall, alongside the other leaders at the Garinger High School Friendship Gardens Urban Farm, they have been showing me the ropes in Aquaponics construction, greenhouse maintenance, and the tricks to farming beside a high school baseball field. Since September we have repaired the greenhouse systems, built a 4,000-liter Aquaponics lab and a worm-composting bay, and seeded hundreds of herbs and vegetables for the garden and farm outside. The produce grown at The Farm will be used in the kitchens at Friendship Trays, the umbrella organization for Friendship Gardens. It will also be sold through a Community Supported Agriculture network, and used in cooking classes at the high school.

Education is central to the vision at The Farm. On site students learn about topics ranging from language to micro nutrition and soil science in the greenhouse, and take in some



Aquaponics installation at Garinger High School in Charlotte

fresh air spreading leaf mulch and taking care of the crops with us outside. We all have different expectations as to what the students will take away from their experience at The Farm. My hope is that they are left with an impression of what it means to care for themselves and give back to the Earth at the same time through the cultivation of food.

Equally important is the productivity offered by the Aquaponics lab and the industrial scale greenhouse. From our four 1,000-liter tanks we can harvest 75 Tilapia apiece, on a rotation of about 6 to 8 weeks. During their lifecycle they produce nutrient rich waste which is filtered by hydroponic grow beds giving us 250 servings of greens per week. This food will support food security in our community by giving over 700 residents in food insecure neighborhoods good, healthy meals every week, delivered by the hands of Friendship Trays volunteers.

On March 14, we turned the system on for the first time. Amidst the hum of cooling fans and the buzz of power tools came the sweet sound of water hitting water, the sound of my first Aquaponics system working like a charm. It was high fives all around, and the biggest grins you've ever seen. We're really excited to be a part of a big movement in sustainable agriculture sweeping the country from here to Chicago, and the whole world. We're especially excited about what this farm will mean to our city's own urban agriculture and sustainability efforts.

There's nothing like being there and seeing these things happen. Let's get growing folks!



100 Gardens site at Garinger High School



Chloe with a few of her peers in the School of Nursing at UNC Charlotte

Clinicals and Care Plans: UNC Charlotte's School of Nursing

By Chloe Rodengen

Receiving the congratulatory email on my acceptance to UNC Charlotte's School of Nursing was one of the most exciting moments of my life. The feeling of knowing that you've moved one step closer to reaching your goal is truly wonderful. Since competition to gain acceptance into the School of Nursing is fierce, with only 50 students being admitted each semester, it has been an honor to study alongside some of the hardest-working students on campus.

A day in the life of a nursing student goes something like this: On Mondays and Wednesdays, I usually hit the snooze button no less than three or four times when the alarm goes off at 4:30am, before getting up and heading to clinical at a hospital site. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays allow me to feel a little more human when I get up at 6:30am for an 8am class on campus. At my clinical sites, while under the supervision of my clinical instructor, I have the amazing opportunity to shadow nurses and provide assistance in patient care at local hospitals. Each semester in the nursing program provides a new experience at a different hospital. Some of the units we rotate through include geriatrics, pediatrics, maternity, medical-surgery, operating room, emergency department, and psychiatry. It is so valuable for me to have a hands-on learning experience, as it makes the material learned in class easier to apply in real life situations. It also increases my confidence in caring for actual patients instead of just practicing in the classroom setting.

After a long day at clinical, I complete my shift by writing a detailed care plan for the patient I assisted that

entails a plan of action for nurses to follow during the patient's time at the hospital. Writing care plans and serving in the hospital provides great practice for what I will actually do as a registered nurse following graduation. And, in case my fellow peers and I need to brush up on some of our nursing skills throughout the semester, we can always utilize the state of the art simulation lab in the College of Health and Human Services. The lab is available to all nursing students to practice the skills taught in the classroom.

Despite the many hours spent in the library studying and the early morning clinicals, I am unbelievably grateful for the School of Nursing at UNC Charlotte and the opportunity to follow my dream of becoming a nurse.



A Silent Night of *Phantom of the Opera*: For The Kids

By Austin Philemon

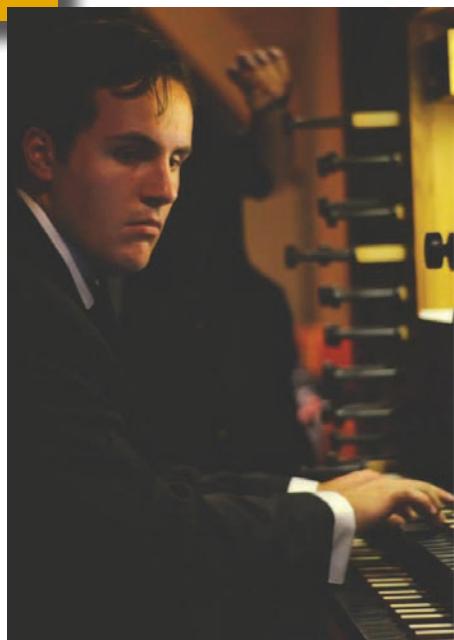
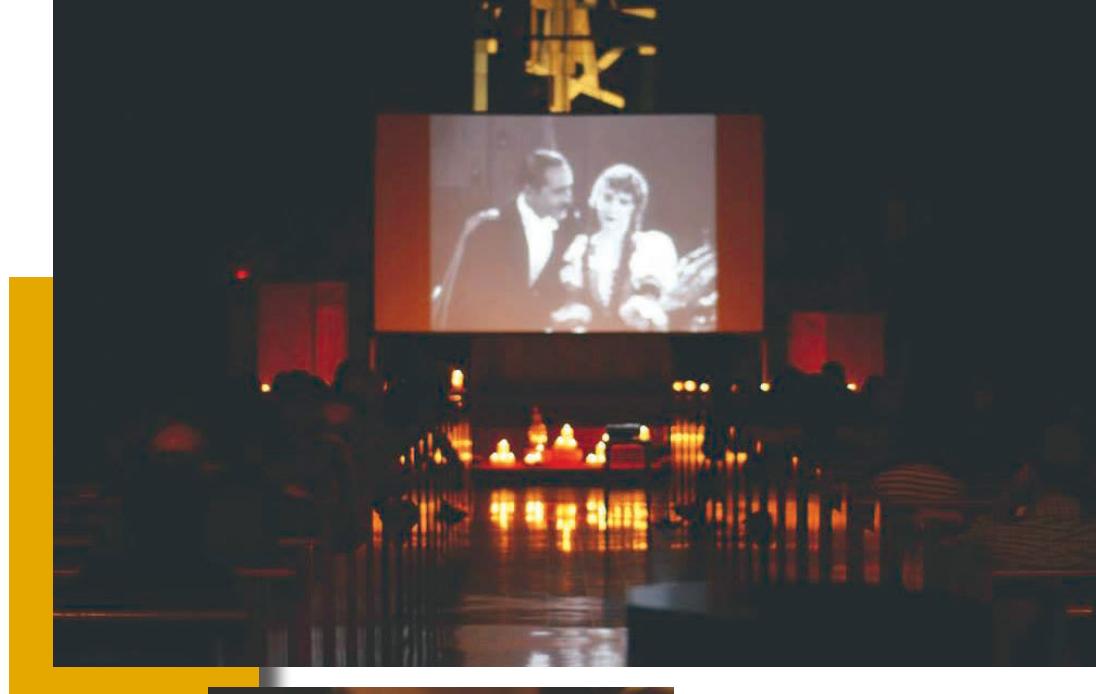
When one thinks of their first Halloween in college, they might imagine ridiculous costumes, a plethora of sugar, and a late night. Instead, I spent the evening at St. John's Episcopal Church amidst roaring organ pipes, with a masked figure behind me on the Silver Screen.

Last Halloween, as a Dance Marathon fundraiser for Levine Children's Hospital, I had the privilege of accompanying the 1925 silent film *The Phantom of the Opera* with fellow UNC Charlotte music students Idunn Lohne, Tyler Goehring, Kyle Melton, and Joey Gilewicz. Imagine this scenario: Levine Scholars dressed in black running around collecting tickets from patrons entering St. John's Episcopal Church to see the massive pipe organ and a 14-foot movie screen surrounded by more than 50 glowing candles and lanterns.

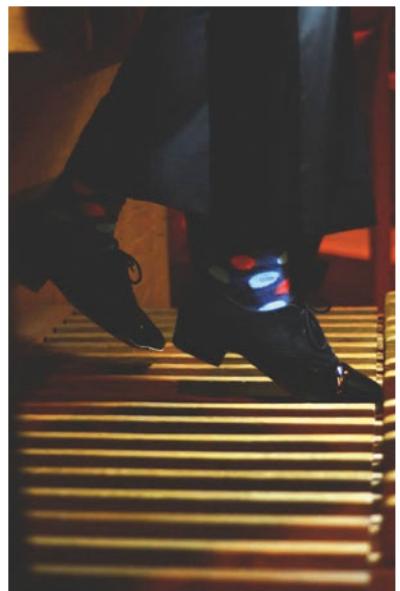
In addition to raising almost \$2,000 for Dance Marathon, the event provided an opportunity for me to bring the dying art of the silent movie to life. I wrote, arranged, and improvised an accompaniment, applying many of my studies as an organ performance major to "real life" use. The idea for the event originally came about when a friend of mine was telling a story and I happened to be sitting at the piano and started improvising a soundtrack to her story. A few other music students joined in, and after 45 minutes of the fun, we decided we had to do something with it. It wasn't until a few days later that I realized a connection between this and the possibility of a fundraiser for Dance Marathon.



UNC Charlotte freshman violin performance major, Idunn Lohne



Austin playing the pipe organ at St. John's Episcopal Church



I set to work immediately in planning the two-hour score, which was a combination of pre-written concert pieces and improvisation to weave them all together and create a story. Since my best ideas always come to me at the last possible moment, I only had three weeks to rehearse the show with the other musicians after working out all the musical details during my fall break. After spending many hours at the organ with a laptop repeating movie scenes over and over, we managed to create a spectacular event that not only raised funds for a great cause, but also introduced and connected people through an art form they may not have experienced before. After all, we were doing it "For The Kids" (FTK).



Kyle Melton and Joey Gilewicz, both junior vocal performance majors at UNC Charlotte

1,747 Miles of Serendipity

By Christie Koehler

I remember sitting on the tarmac for an extra hour, waiting for my plane to Costa Rica to refuel, and thinking, "What have I done?" The worries that I had managed to suppress suddenly surfaced, and I began asking myself why I thought going 1,747 miles away from Charlotte, North Carolina, by myself was such a great idea.

I stepped off that plane six hours later in San José, Costa Rica, still a bundle of nerves, and was taken to my homestay family where I was welcomed with a kiss on the cheek, freshly ground coffee, and, shortly thereafter, enough food to feed three people.

Since that first day in Costa Rica, I have attended a local carnival, waded through water up to my neck in a cave, come face to face with a tarantula, experienced a 5.6 earthquake, swam beneath a waterfall, hiked in a rainforest, ziplined, bungee jumped from the highest height in Latin America, visited active volcanoes, relaxed on beaches by the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean, and, of course, studied!

There were times in Costa Rica that were misadventures. Up until the last month, things were going perfectly in the country of 'pura vida,' the slogan of Costa Rica that signifies a worry-free life. My health was good, I was traveling every weekend, and I had plans to volunteer.

That is, those were my plans until I ended up spending all of the next night hugging the toilet and fighting a 101-degree fever. Turns out, after a weekend excursion to the Caribbean shore with my tropical medicine class, 17 of us ended up battling some kind of stomach infection that lasted the better part of three days. I have never wanted to be home as badly as I did during that time. I learned a lot from this experience. I learned to trust the friends I have made. They went above and beyond to make sure I was comfortable - buying me Gatorade, bringing me ice packs, and cracking jokes to keep my spirits up. I learned that I can fully take care of myself, even when sick. Although this experience was less than ideal, as my oldest brother likes to say, "It wouldn't be a proper foreign country experience without a good old-fashioned illness."

Months have passed since I stepped off that plane in Costa Rica, and I now know why going 1,747 miles away from Charlotte was a good idea. My life has been enriched in ways I will continue to realize upon my return to the United States. I have been challenged academically, physically, and emotionally by my experiences and conversations, and I return to Charlotte with a new sense of independence, an appreciation for different cultures, and a sense of wanderlust. ¡Pura vida, mae!



The Life of a Philosophy Major in a Biology Laboratory

By Brandon Nixon

Socrates? White laboratory coat? Aristotle? Protective eyewear? Huh?

Though I am currently a philosophy major, I aspire to attend a prominent medical school in preparation of becoming a distinguished doctor of medicine. My goal is to perform reconstructive plastic surgery for children with birth defects and victims of unfortunate circumstance, while incorporating clinical research into my career. I have come to the realization that the work towards my ultimate career goal begins now.

This academic year, I have spent several months as a team member in Dr. Mark G. Clemens' biology research laboratory, with two graduate students and a post-baccalaureate student, researching microcirculation in the liver. My role in Dr. Clemens' laboratory as an undergraduate sophomore is to offer help wherever it may be needed and



Brandon conducting research in Dr. Mark Clemens' biology lab

to learn as much as possible.

I perform procedures including creating solutions, culturing cells, conducting protein

assays, carrying out protocols, and shadowing Dr. Clemens and the graduate students in conducting studies to broaden the scope of my immediate skills. My work has continued through the spring semester towards a collaborative project concerning the conditions of sepsis, a potentially fatal whole body inflammation. The hope is that our current research will contribute to larger efforts in developing a treatment for this systemic inflammation.



The connections that exist between my philosophy and pre-medicine coursework lie in both environments' abilities to stimulate creativity and encourage critical thinking. I am positively pressured to be innovative in my thought process, whether it is during a group discussion in ethical theory or a laboratory meeting discussing the role of microparticles in sepsis. Philosophy can be defined as the study of general and fundamental problems, while the aim of most laboratory

research is to arrive at a procedure that will provide some sort of solution to a problem. I realize that the problem-solving skills from both environments can be applied to anything that I aspire to do.



I guess being a philosophy major conducting biology research isn't as random as one may think.



Jasmine with a cyclist from ASAP and some of the handcycles used for Cycle to the Sea

Service Grant for Cycle to the Sea

By Jasmine Patterson

One of my favorite parts of the Levine Scholars Program is the access students have to an \$8,000 service grant. With this service grant, Levine Scholars can choose to create or contribute to a project to better the Charlotte community. I chose to partner with Adaptive Sports and Adventure Programs (ASAP) for my service project.

ASAP offers sports and recreation opportunities to youth and adults with physical disabilities. As a student-athlete on the UNC Charlotte track and field team, I understand the importance of an active lifestyle. I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to live actively and experience the great satisfaction that comes from the physical and mental challenge of sports. ASAP offers opportunities to participate in many sports, including tennis, water skiing, snow skiing, swimming, golf, rugby, power soccer, and handcycling.

My service grant was directed towards the funding of ASAP's annual Cycle to the Sea event. From April 24 to April 26, 2014, athletes with disabilities handcycled from

Monroe, NC to North Myrtle Beach, SC. Over the course of three days, these athletes covered an incredible 180 miles. Cycle to the Sea is one of the largest fundraisers for the program, so its success is crucial for the operation of all of ASAP's endeavors. My service project allowed me to be involved in this year's Cycle to the Sea from beginning to end. I assisted with the planning process and worked with the athletes during the event as they embarked on their adventure. My grant also helped fund the purchase of a handcycle, allowing a new rider the opportunity to participate this year and will stay with ASAP to provide a handcycle for future riders.

I'm so grateful to be able to contribute to ASAP and the Cycle to the Sea event. The athletes are enormously inspiring and are a true testament to the perseverance of the human spirit in the face of adversity. I encourage everyone to visit the following links to learn more about ASAP and Cycle to the Sea: <http://www.carolinashealthcare.org/carolinas-rehab-asap> and <http://www.carolinashealthcare.org/carolinas-rehab-cycle-to-the-sea>.



Sunday's reception and dinner at the Levine Finalist Program



On the Flip Side

By Addison Goff

Exciting yet nerve-wracking, encouraging but intimidating, Finalist Weekend is sure to elicit an array of emotions from any prospective scholar. The memory is still vivid for me, having been there only just last year. This year, however, I was able to experience these emotions from a new perspective. Focused less on the competitive aspect of it, I was able to fully appreciate what a celebration full of promise it is, highlighting the accomplishments of current scholars while discovering upcoming talent that will become the future of the Levine Scholars Program.



Celia Karp and Jefferson Cooper at the finalist dinner



Caitlin Vaverek engaging the guests at her dinner table in conversation

At dinner on Sunday evening, the weekend kicks off as the finalists are welcomed to UNC Charlotte by Levine Scholars Program staff and students, university faculty and staff, and members of the Charlotte community. The night is filled with conversation and questions – not to mention delicious food – as anxious finalists learn about the many great aspects of the program.

This intimate time to freely talk with the people sitting at your table is one of my favorite parts of the weekend.

Monday is a whirlwind as the prospective scholars take part in various activities from sunrise to sunset, including housing and campus tours; student and parent panels; information sessions on the Levine Scholars Program, National Outdoor Leadership School, and UNC Charlotte; and individual and group interviews. As the day comes to an end, the current scholars have the opportunity to get to know many of the

finalists during the student social. This is a time to loosen your tie a little bit (maybe even literally) while participating in fun-filled activities. After saying farewell and wishing the finalists good luck, I realized that the weekend goes just as quickly as it seems to come.

Finalist Weekend encouraged me to reflect on the past year, thinking about where I was then in comparison to where I am now. It is hard to believe that an entire year can pass so quickly. While Finalist Weekends may come and go, the new group of scholars welcomed into the program are what make each and every year special. I look forward to meeting and getting to know the incoming class in a few short months!

“*My students
are brilliant!*”



Student Teaching

By Caitlin Vaverek

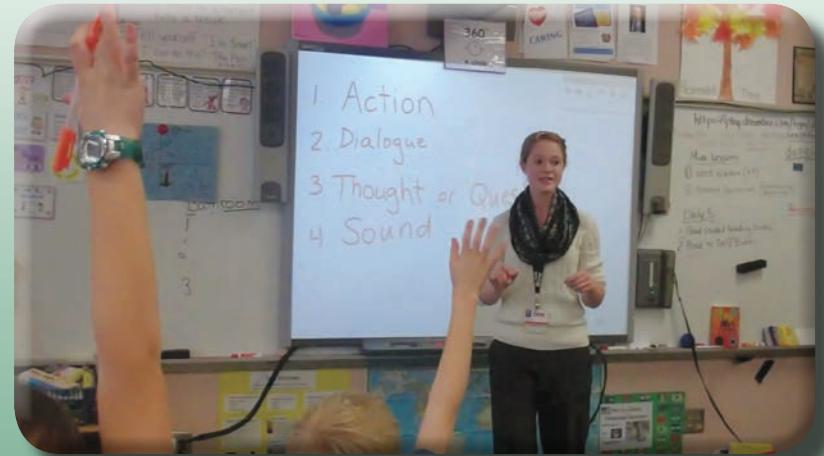
During the fall of my sophomore year at UNC Charlotte, immediately following my acceptance into the College of Education, I remember attending a seminar about Student Teaching. As part of a yearlong internship, senior education majors of all levels are placed in a classroom where they complete different assignments throughout the year, including a full-time student teaching experience that involves taking over the role of the classroom teacher for three to four weeks.

I remember feeling so overwhelmed thinking that in only two years I would be responsible for teaching an entire classroom of students all by myself. So, I pushed that thought to the back of my mind and worked hard writing lesson plans, learning different strategies of classroom management, and balancing a full load of both elementary and special education classes for my double major.

Now, flash forward two and a half years. I am currently in the middle of my Student Teaching semester at Smithfield Elementary School in Charlotte, surrounded every day by 26 extremely energetic nine and ten-year olds. While I’m only with my “little munchkins” for eight weeks before I move on to my Special Education placement, I am having a blast teaching full-time in the classroom. We keep busy throughout the day learning about how to solve long division problems, how to compose our own personal narratives, and how to read and discuss questions that arise from different genres of literature. We explore landforms



Caitlin works with students in small groups to help them better understand how to write entertaining beginnings for their personal narratives



After working at different learning stations, Caitlin reviews the students' best answers with the rest of the class

and their impact on the surface of the earth through experiments, and we debate the positive and negative implications of North Carolina’s role in the America Revolution. My students are brilliant!

It would be an understatement to say that I love my future profession. I love that I have the chance to teach these amazing students and potentially ignite a passion in some particular subject area. I love working together with the other members of my fourth-grade team to plan instruction that will meet the diverse needs of all the students in our classes. And I love waking up every morning, knowing that when I get to school, I will be met with (mostly) smiling faces and an exciting day ahead.

I am so thankful to have this opportunity to teach in Charlotte at Smithfield Elementary School. I know that in just a few months, I will be ready to take on the role of a real classroom teacher, thanks in part to my Student Teaching experience this semester.



UNC CHARLOTTE

The Levine Scholars Program
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The Levine Scholars Program

The Levine Scholars Program is a four-year scholarship that includes full tuition, room and board, a new laptop computer and four summer experiences, including an international experience, which will develop leadership skills and social awareness. In 2010, the inaugural class of Levine Scholars enrolled at UNC Charlotte and an additional 15 scholarships are awarded to high school seniors every year. The Levine Scholarship is valued at \$90,000 for in-state students and \$140,000 for out-of-state students over four years.

Levine Scholars are talented high school seniors from around 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



Congratulations Graduates!

Levine Class of 2014

Front row (left to right): Sam McClenney, Anna Bawtinhimer Laughman, Jon Wainwright, Laura Outlaw, Vrushab Gowda, Jasmine Patterson, Jacob Huffman, and Caitlin Vaverek

Second row (left to right): Caroline Brewer, Christina Neitzey, Cassidy Schulte, Celia Karp, and Evan Danchenka

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.