

Levine Connection



UNC CHARLOTTE
The Levine Scholars Program

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The Internship By Brandon Nixon

When people ask about my summer and I say that I interned with Google, the question that immediately ensues is "Was it like the movie?" I spent my summer eating gourmet food, riding colorful bicycles, and playing basketball and retro arcade games.

No, but really...

I spent this summer working at Google's global headquarters in Mountain View, California. I was part of the Building Opportunities for Leadership & Development (BOLD) Internship Program, an 11-week internship. While at Google, I worked on the People Operations Programs + Communications team (Google's own version of human resources) and was exposed to various departments within the company. I also enjoyed the assorted perks of Google's culture, ranging from micro-kitchens on each floor to the shuttle buses that picked me up from my apartment complex and dropped me off at work.

If you walked into my workspace, it would not be long until you heard the singing of a catchy song or jingle followed by the laughter of the entire cube. My team was super silly at times, but we always accomplished our tasks. I considered my manager to be like a second mom. The best part about working with her, and the rest of my team, was that they genuinely cared about me and wanted to see me succeed in my role as an intern.

I worked on two major projects and various miscellaneous tasks. My first project involved delivering a Googley, compelling, well-written Great Place to Work (GPTW) Application, which will determine Google's ranking amongst the best



California life



Brandon's first day at Google headquarters



Brandon fully enjoying the extracurricular activities at Google

places to work in the United States. The second portion of my internship involved conducting general research about human resource trends and discovering the five most popular human resource topics to be used in Google's HR open sourcing efforts.

When I was not working, I traveled all over Northern California. I visited San Francisco, Oakland, the boardwalk and beach in Santa Cruz, and more. I fostered meaningful friendships with my fellow interns from universities across the nation. I was able to adopt a carefree West Coast attitude while I resided in Santa Clara, California, which was actually quite refreshing.

As many internship programs require, I was asked to present on my entire internship experience. Preparing my final presentation allowed me to reflect on my summer at Google.

I guess you could say it was something like the movie.

Chasing Curiosity

By Jaden Barney

During sophomore year of high school, I picked up a flyer labeled "Girls of Steel: Join Robotics Today!" With most of my time spent practicing the piano, the notion of a robotics team was foreign but intriguing to me. I was entirely out of my realm of comfort. I didn't know the difference between Phillips and Flat head screwdrivers, I had never used a power drill, and certainly had never touched a robot.



A selfie with Donna Brazile

But I was curious. When I joined the Girls of Steel, my curiosity was kindled even further. I discovered that designing mechanical parts fascinated me, and that the machine shop felt like home. Picking up a single flyer eventually led me to where I am now: a Mechanical Engineering student at UNC Charlotte.

Albert Einstein once said: "I have no talents. I am only passionately curious." As I went into the uncharted territory of college, I was determined to live this motto to the fullest, letting my curiosity fuel me to new discoveries.

Last March, I received a mass email blast about scholarship opportunities for young women interested in computing to attend the National Center for Women in Information Technology (NCWIT) Summit conference in California that May. On a whim, I decided to fill out the application, with four motivations: Chelsea Clinton was a keynote speaker at the conference, it was an all-expenses paid trip to California, it was an opportunity to discuss issues affecting women in computing, and I was simply curious about all that I could learn from the amazing professionals and students attending the Summit.

My curiosity paid off – the week after the semester ended, I hopped on a plane for an eight-hour coast-swapping trip from Charlotte, North Carolina to Newport Beach, California.

The moment my feet touched California ground, it was a world of firsts. My first visit to California started with my first ever taxi-cab ride, which dropped me off at the hotel just in time to catch the beginning of the three-day woman-driven powerhouse of networking, idea-sharing, and computing. As student ambassador for the Aspirations in Computing program run by NCWIT, my schedule was booked. I interacted with professionals and students in the education-based NCWIT network

sessions, listened to compelling speeches by Chelsea Clinton and Donna Brazile, and dined with Bloomberg and Apple! The NCWIT Summit provided real opportunities to discuss and hear about the raw issues at hand for inclusion of women in computing with people who have the power to change the industry. The visibility and palpable strength and durability of women who carved their places in the computing realm sent me back to Charlotte feeling empowered to change the culture of engineering and computing.



NCWIT Summit time!



Coding in California comes with palm trees



Chelsea Clinton

Johnson & Johnson: From Intern to Offer

By Bethany Hyde

I cannot remember when I first heard of Johnson & Johnson (J&J). I feel like my life has always been subtly supported by household brands such as BandAid, Tylenol, and Neutrogena. My perspective changed completely when I connected with a J&J recruiter and heard about opportunities available in their Information Technology Services Department. As a Systems Engineering and French double major, I had been looking for a way to merge my technical training with an interest in international business. I knew J&J's global nature would provide me with opportunities to utilize and expand my Systems Engineering background while interacting with international partners.

This summer I interned in the Cyber Security Investigations group under Information Technology Services. After intensive training in powerful security-specific software, I began to assist in cases. All of the sudden, I had become the IT version of Sherlock Holmes! I was cracking codes, tracking down gaps in our system, and following up on intelligence leads. The weeks flew by as my team protected pharmaceutical formulas from external (and internal) threats.

One of the aspects I loved about interning at J&J was the emphasis on networking and getting a clear perspective of all employee levels – from entry-level to high-level management positions. I gained invaluable knowledge and advice from one-on-one meetings with managers, directors, and vice presidents.

At the conclusion of my internship, my manager recommended me for an interview with the Information Technology Leadership Development Program (ITLDP). ITLDP is a two-year rotational full-time position that focuses on developing upcoming leaders in IT and providing a diverse range of experiences. Approximately 25 interns were invited to the interview day, competing for 10 extended offers.



Johnson & Johnson summer interns



Bethany's Johnson & Johnson manager, Roy Rodriguez

My J&J interview in New Jersey was an all-day affair with two panel interviews, a networking lunch, and a technology-based case study. Although the interview process was lengthy, it was definitely worth the time and energy I invested. Words cannot express how excited I was when I received the call with an offer to join the 2015 ITLDP. Being employed before graduation is actually quite liberating. I will finish my college degree, while savoring and completely enjoying these last months of student life before entering the professional world. Then, I will move on to life's next great adventure near the Big Apple!

Hong Kong: Lychee, Buddha, and Louis Vuitton

By James Parkhill

How is Japan?" was the most common question I received from friends and family while I interned in Hong Kong this summer. Of course, Hong Kong is (kind of) part of China rather than Japan, but this constant query emphasized the mysteriousness of this great city for many Americans.

When I first arrived in Hong Kong, the density of the city amazed me. There were no parking lots, fields, or even wide roads. Yet towering, emerald mountains surrounded the city, pristine in comparison to the forest of skyscrapers. The next surprise was my studio apartment in Wan Chai. It seemed smaller than my car. I could not imagine living there for two entire months, especially with all the noise from the city blaring into my room.

Yet soon I found myself at home among the crowds outside my tiny abode. Hong Kong is a city of life and color – to me, Hong Kong is the New York City of the Orient. There you could find the best Indian, Japanese, Thai, Turkish, Cantonese, and Mongolian food, or any mixture thereof. I also found contemporary mega-churches, ancient temples, beautiful mosques, and even a tower for the Church of Latter-day Saints. I made friends with a Burmese guy who was raised in London and now performs stand-up comedy in Hong Kong. I also befriended a Polish girl who was raised in Ireland and worked at JP Morgan HK. Restaurants provided chopsticks with forks, and the subway made announcements in Cantonese and English. Hong Kong is a city of endless possibilities. Sometimes these cultural combinations were less than appealing; one night the horrible sound of "Don't Stop Believing" remixed as electronic dance music (EDM) greeted my ears. Another time I realized the dessert I had purchased was an unholy mishmash of durian fruit and hard-boiled egg.

Looking back on my trip to Hong Kong, my experience was richer than I could have imagined when I boarded the plane in Charlotte. (The trip was also longer than I could have comprehended: over 24 hours of travel.) I visited a giant Buddha, experienced a mix of Portuguese and Chinese culture in Macau, and rode in an Aston Martin through the mountain roads of Hong Kong. I saw the Hong Kong Philharmonic, went to at least 15 different markets, and learned how to order my favorite dishes in Cantonese. I even ventured north to Shenzhen, China to go lychee picking. (Lychees look kind of like grapes when you peel them and have a lemony taste.) On top of all of these astounding tourist experiences, not to mention the consistently amazing scenery,

I had the opportunity to intern with a structural engineering consulting firm.

My projects ranged from modeling a staircase for Louis Vuitton to working on structural calculations and AutoCAD for Apple, Prudential, HSBC, and even the Gagosian Gallery HK. These opportunities exposed me to the engineering industry in a way I could not have imagined. Of course, there were some obstacles during my amazing internship: the computer I used only had Microsoft Excel and Word in Mandarin characters, and normal office hours in HK are from 9:00 AM to 6:30 or even 8:00 PM. Despite these difficulties, I learned and benefited enormously during my time at the engineering firm.



Lychee tree in Shenzhen



The Tian Tan Buddha

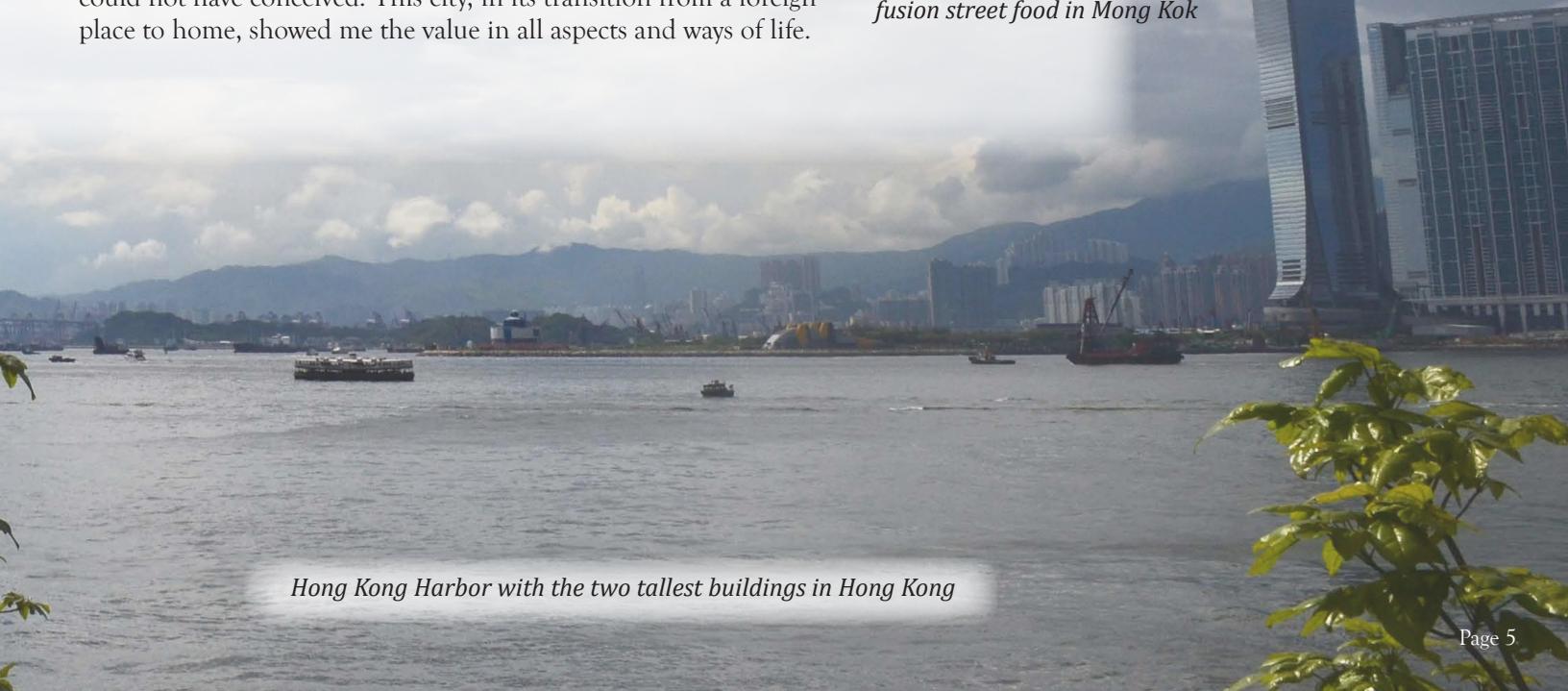
Hong Kong gave me cultural and professional lessons to last a lifetime. However, I hope this only serves to mark the beginning of my international experiences. Hong Kong showed me a world where everyone takes the subway or walks, and where mass car ownership simply does not exist. Hong Kong showed me new mindsets and mixtures of cultures that I could not have conceived. This city, in its transition from a foreign place to home, showed me the value in all aspects and ways of life.



My office in Wan Chai



Enjoying Japanese-American fusion street food in Mong Kok



Hong Kong Harbor with the two tallest buildings in Hong Kong

UNC Charlotte Community Garden

By Kevin Rodengen

Nearly two years ago, when I started this project, I honestly could not have told you the difference between a tomato plant and a pepper plant. I was by no means a gardener. To become a gardener, you first need a garden.

The summer after my freshman year, the Levine Scholars Program connected me with Friendship Gardens, a local nonprofit that helps build gardens and teaches communities how to grow food. It was incredible to spend my summer outside and away from a desk. Coincidentally, a fellow Levine Scholar and good friend, Jake Emerson, interned with another local nonprofit, Sow Much Good, whose mission is to tackle the food desert crisis through urban agriculture. Together, both inspired and ready to take action, we started on a path towards building the first student-led community garden at UNC Charlotte.

Through funds provided by the Levine Scholars Civic Engagement Grant, the garden was created to give students the opportunity to learn how to grow their own healthy food. We aim to demonstrate, teach and share all things about gardening and ways to grow sustainably as a community. We are arranging many of our meetings to include speakers who can educate us on various topics pertaining to gardening and growing food. Hammocks and picnic tables in the space are attracting students to hang out there, and in turn they will have the chance to learn about gardening.

The future of the space includes the installment of handicap accessible pathways and raised garden beds, a pergola, and a solar-powered drip irrigation system. We have joined forces with other Levine Scholars on the project to assist in the establishment of these current and future phases. Now that our garden is finally in the ground, the possibilities range as far as student initiative and creativity will allow.

Establishing this project and working to see it come to fruition has taught me so much about leadership, patience, organization, and garden puns. The fruits of my labor are so delicious, to say the least. I have spread my roots in Charlotte through this project and branched out within this great community on multiple levels. I cannot wait to return to the space after graduating to sweetly remember all of the love (and sweat) we all put into creating such a wonderful addition to our campus.



Prep work in the greenhouse



Beginning construction



Garden organizers, Kevin Rodengen and Jake Emerson



Pouring soil



Planting the last of the vegetables!



Noelle Cornelio



Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam

The Netherlands in November

By Noelle Cornelio

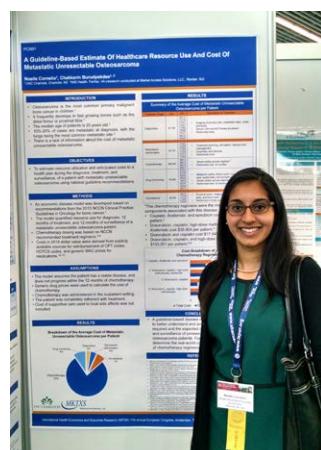
Since I was eight years old, I aspired to go to medical school directly after college. However, during my junior year at UNC Charlotte, I gradually fell into a state of panic when I decided to pursue a different career path. What was I going to do with my life if being a physician was not in my future? I had been so fixated on my childhood dream that I didn't know what other careers were open to me with a double major in biology and economics.

After consulting with various mentors and professors at UNC Charlotte, I was introduced to the field of health economics. From the name of this field, it seemed like the perfect synthesis of my degrees and an ideal combination of my passion for healthcare and business. I became more enthusiastic after learning about the field, and sought to find a professionally enriching internship for my last summer as a college student.

Networking with faculty led to an opportunity back home in central New Jersey with a 12-week health economics internship at Market Access Solutions, LLC (MKTXS). MKTXS is a firm that partners with healthcare companies to facilitate optimal pricing of healthcare products for global access. During my fourth week on the job, I traveled to Montreal in Quebec, Canada for the annual meeting of the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR). The meeting consisted of three large plenary sessions, multiple panels and forums discussing the field, dozens of businesses exhibiting their research, and a host of companies and graduate schools tabling at the event. As one of the youngest attendees participating in the conference, I worked on my networking skills, learned about new concepts, and most importantly, gained a better understanding of the international field of health economics.

Before leaving for Montreal, I began working on an independent assignment using a national guideline to estimate the resources used and the cost of being diagnosed and treated for metastatic, unresectable osteosarcoma. My supervisor encouraged me to finish the project and submit an abstract for acceptance at the ISPOR European Congress held in the Netherlands. I was extremely eager about this opportunity and after returning from Canada, I was even more excited. Three weeks after submitting my work, I received an acceptance email and quickly made plans to travel to the Netherlands to present my research!

My internship with MKTXS helped transform my vague idea of health economics into a field in which I want to earn a Ph.D. As a result, I'm extremely grateful for this summer experience through the Levine Scholars Program; it not only allowed me to grow personally and professionally, but led to an incredible opportunity to present my research at ISPOR.



Research poster presented at ISPOR



Amsterdam canal



*Ms. Kim Smith, Health Director,
Columbus County Health Department*



*Dr. Don Jonas, Executive Director,
Care Ring*

Exploring Urban and Rural Access to Healthcare

By Bailey Allen

This summer I pursued my interests in healthcare and medicine through two different internships in North Carolina: one in an urban setting and the other in a rural location. The first internship took place at Care Ring in Charlotte, NC and the second at the Columbus County Health Department in my hometown of Whiteville, NC.

At Care Ring, I worked closely alongside the Physicians Reach Out (PRO) program, whose mission is to provide medical treatment for individuals with very low income and no health insurance. PRO tasked me with recruiting physicians, specifically dentists, in the Charlotte area to offer their services on a volunteer basis. The five weeks I worked with PRO enabled me to collaborate with numerous dentists and eventually gain the support of the Charlotte Dental Society for patients seeking services from Care Ring. This experience increased my awareness of the vast number of individuals in the Charlotte area that live in poverty and are unable to afford basic medical treatment. With over one million residents in Mecklenburg County, one of the main barriers to accessing healthcare is the sheer number of people in need of treatment. Demand far exceeds the supply that is available, which forces many families to make difficult decisions in regards to seeking medical services.

The remainder of my summer was spent working at the Columbus County Health Department. During this internship, I interacted with residents of Columbus County to broaden my knowledge of the common needs of the public, and to learn how to remain adaptable when unexpected situations arise. I was fortunate to travel with staff to aid in public education classes, observe vaccine administration, and even attend a state health directors' meeting in Raleigh. My experiences taught me that Columbus County is much different than Mecklenburg, both in size and in areas of need. One of the main barriers to citizens of Columbus County is the issue of transportation. Columbus County is one of the geographically largest counties in North Carolina, and it is difficult for unemployed individuals to make transportation arrangements to attend routine medical examinations. Lifestyle factors such as poor diet and lack of exercise also attribute to the startling fact that Columbus County has been consistently ranked the worst North Carolina county in projected health outcomes each year since 2010.

The experience gained from my summer internships equipped me with a strong foundational knowledge and understanding of the needs in both rural and urban areas in North Carolina that I plan to use to raise awareness about the necessity of healthcare reformation. With my childhood passion guiding me and the support and resources of the Levine Scholars Program, I am committed to finding ways to increase accessibility to healthcare in the city of Charlotte, as well as all of North Carolina.

Top 5 Surprises Moving to Charlotte from Rural Minnesota

By Gabriella Kroska

Joining the Levine Scholars Program has certainly been an adventure – an amazingly wonderful adventure, but no doubt an adventure. My journey began this past August when I drove over 1,300 miles from my small hometown of Pierz, Minnesota to the sprawling metropolis of Charlotte, North Carolina. After settling in to life at UNC Charlotte, I quickly found myself noting the differences between my childhood home and the place that had become my new home. A few of my observations included:

Summer (weather) Doesn't End When School Starts

In Pierz, summer is over when the school year starts. Not just the 'freedom' of summer, but summer itself really is over. Generally, Minnesotans can expect frost anytime in September. Needless to say, I was taken by surprise when I found out that 70 and 80 degree temperatures last well into October in Charlotte, and that anything less is abnormal! Over the last several months, I have found it quite strange to be going to class every day when the weather is what I am used to for summer vacation.

Garden Club — Fall Growing Season?!

During my first semester on campus, I joined the Garden Club and assisted with the Levine Class of 2015 Legacy Project. I joined the Build Day Committee to help prepare for building the garden, which consisted of making the beds, filling them with soil, mulching around them, and planting the vegetation. I had never heard of such a thing as planting seeds in the fall and harvesting the produce a few months later!

No Perkins (in Charlotte)

I was surprised to find that no one in Charlotte seemed to know what I was talking about when I mentioned Perkins, a family style restaurant and bakery. Perkins served as the local hangout for me and my high school friends; it was a place we would frequent for almost any occasion including late nights following one of our school performances or after



Enjoying the warm winter in Charlotte

prom. In Minnesota, Perkins was the typical high school hangout when you just didn't know what else to do.

Rush Hour Traffic

In rural Minnesota, the only time I expected a backup in traffic was during spring and fall when farmers used the roads to move some of their equipment. I dealt with rush hour when travelling to another city occasionally; however, rush hour was not something that was a part of my daily life. In Charlotte, I have to actively plan around it if I don't want to be caught in traffic!



A typical drive in Minnesota

Close Proximity

I grew up 15 miles from the nearest town. Any time I wanted groceries, gas, or to do something recreational, I had to plan in advance. A trip into town would take at least 45 minutes and more often no less than an hour. Forgetting the milk could be a costly, not to mention timely, mistake! At home, the closest Walmart was over 30 miles away and the closest Starbucks was over an hour away! I've definitely been enjoying the convenience of everything being close by.



Dealing with heaps of snow in the driveway at home!

As I wrap up my first semester and reflect on the decision I made to move to North Carolina, I know without a doubt that

this is the perfect place for me. Although it has been an adjustment, and I will freely admit that I am still in the habit of reaching for my jacket even when it is 70 degrees outside, I love Charlotte. In fact, I am considering making it a more permanent home following my graduation three and a half years from now!

Life after LSP

By Christina Neitzey, Levine Alumna '14

After an amazing four years at UNC Charlotte and a relaxing summer in the Queen City, I packed up my car and headed west on I-40. Destination: Stanford Law School. A cross-country road trip is on everyone's bucket list, and I was lucky to have my mom along for an awesome journey from coast to coast.

I am now several months into my first year of law school. Stanford is definitely living up to its reputation as notoriously tough, but fantastic professors and classmates, as well as the sunny California weather, alleviate stress from the heavy workload and foreign material that characterize this first year. The positive, energizing environment of learning keeps me constantly motivated, even when I am trudging through my casebooks late at night. I am making an effort to limit my extracurricular activities this year so I leave sufficient time for my enormous course

load, but when I take a break, you can find me hiking through redwood forests, cheering on Stanford's football team (though I will always be a Charlotte 49er at heart), or exploring San Francisco. I am also involved with the community through two pro bono volunteer projects run through the law school – one involves assisting legal permanent residents of the United States to become naturalized citizens, and the other project is concerned with helping veterans obtain the benefits they are entitled to but often have trouble accessing.

I reflect often on the ways in which the Levine Scholars Program and UNC Charlotte have shaped my future. They are numerous, including not just the substantive opportunities that equipped me with the skills to be successful in pursuing my goals, but also the abstract values that give



With friends at a Stanford football game



Some time on the beach is a must!



Enjoying the outdoors with friends

integrity of purpose to the decisions I make on a daily basis. Put simply (in the words of Minor Myers, Jr.), the Levine Scholars Program taught me to “[g]o into the world and do well. But more importantly, [to] go into the world and do good.”

This is the first and most significant lesson that was instilled in me during my time at UNC Charlotte. It is one that Mr. and Mrs. Levine exemplify and that bears a priceless, central role in the Levine Scholars Program.

I am eternally grateful to the people who helped shape the person I have become and continue to guide me today, especially to those who are part of my UNC Charlotte family: the Levine Scholars Program faculty and staff, Mr. and Mrs. Levine, my classmates, my faculty and alumni mentors, and many others. To the school that became home, the friends who became family, and the incredible people I crossed paths with along the way – thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will carry a piece of you with me always.



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 \$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 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 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.

