UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

A CELEBRATION OF SENIOR EXCELLENCE

LEADERSHIP IS A CHOICE
NOT A RANK.

Office of Student Leadership and Engagement
The Senior Medallion Award is the most prestigious award presented by the Division of Student Affairs on behalf of the university community. Awarded to approximately 25 graduating seniors each year, recipients must possess a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 and have distinguished themselves among their peers through exceptional contributions of academic achievement, leadership, service to others, affinity for UNCW and lasting impact on the university community.

This award is given to students who exemplify the Seahawk spirit, much like a member of the UNCW family whom we recently lost.

Known among generations of students as “VCPL,” Vice Chancellor Pat Leonard was a significant part of UNCW for 37 years until her death in June 2020. She was a self-described “ordinary person” who inspired extraordinary student experiences.

Early in her academic career, VC Leonard made the connection between student engagement and student success. She created traditions that have become ingrained in the university's culture, including the much-beloved Move-In event, where hundreds of campus and community volunteers help first-year students move into residence halls, and “Teal Tuesday,” a moniker for a day of the week dedicated to celebrating Seahawk spirit.

VC Leonard played an integral role in planning and managing 20 major construction and green space projects, including seven housing projects and nine student support buildings, as well as the Student Recreation Center, Fisher Student Center, Fisher Student Union, the Burney Center and the Warwick Center. Many buildings on this campus didn’t just spring up around her during her decades-long tenure. They sprang up because of her vision and her collaboration with others, and because of her fierce and unwavering commitment to giving UNCW students every possible opportunity to learn, grow, create their path and solidify their purpose.

During her time at UNCW, the university graduated 90 percent of its alumni. VC Leonard built one of the most prestigious divisions of student affairs in the country and was well-known among her peer professionals in student affairs, both in North Carolina and throughout higher education, as a collegial, thoughtful partner in so many meaningful endeavors.

With Seahawk pride, it is the university’s distinct joy to rename this accolade the Pat Leonard Senior Medallion Award.
PAT LEONARD
SENIOR MEDALLION AWARD

Dwayne Altman-Leach
Rosa Argueta
Kelly Arnold
Anna Auman
Sabrina Balent
Grace Barnett
Nicki D’Alessio
Emilia D’Anjolell
Ashlee Fleming
Nicole Fortoso
Margaret Hudson
Jacobi Loyd
Alexis Pean
Emma Pelfrey
Madison Poor
Brianna Ramirez
Breanna Reingold
Gabrielle Schmidt
Ian Shields
Brian Smith
Matthew Talone
Julianna Tresca
Gabrielle Turner
Marissa Vincent
Tatyana Williams

HOGGARD MEDAL
FOR ACHIEVEMENT

This medal, presented through the generosity of the late John T. Hoggard, is awarded annually to the graduating senior who, in the opinion of the faculty, has shown the most improvement during his or her years at the university. The award recognizes hard and honest endeavor which has resulted in great self-improvement. All facets of a student’s character and performance are taken into account.

Jacobi Loyd - recipient

RACHEL FREEMAN
SERVICE LEADERSHIP AWARD FINALISTS

The Rachel Freeman Service Leadership Award is presented to one member of the graduating senior class. The recipient must be in good standing with the university and be graduating in May or December with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.67. In addition, this graduating senior should have distinguished himself/herself in the following ways: recognized by peers, faculty and/or administration as a servant leader, passion in his/her commitment of service to others, sense of selflessness, commitment to and promotion of social justice, collaboration with others to enact social change, demonstrated commitment to bettering the lives of others.

Rosa Argueta
Jacobi Loyd - recipient
Brianna Ramirez

WILLIAM A. BRYAN
SENIOR LEADER AWARD FINALISTS

The William A. Bryan Senior Leader Award is presented to one member of the graduating senior class. The recipient must be in good standing with the university and be graduating in May or December with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00. In addition, this graduating senior should have distinguished himself/herself in the following ways: embodiment of ethics and integrity, demonstration of creativity, collaborative efforts with other students, organizations and/or departments, significant growth and development through his/her UNCW experience, showcase of success in academics, a history of breadth and/or depth in the practice of leadership, passion in his/her commitment of service to others, model representative of the university who demonstrates a lifelong affinity for UNCW, lasting impact on the university community.

Dwayne Altman-Leach
Brianna Ramirez - recipient
Gabrielle Schmidt
Dwayne Altman-Leach, graduating with a degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting, earned a 3.38 GPA. “Dwayne is the epitome of a well-rounded student, who participated in a number of activities, which culminated in him being asked to lead the initial cohort for Freedom Schools this past summer,” said Sean Palmer, Director of the Upperman African American Cultural Center.

Dwayne was actively engaged as a servant leader during his sophomore through senior years at UNCW. He served in several roles to benefit the UNCW community, which included National Pan-Hellenic Council President; President of the Omicron Theta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated; a peer mentor for the Excellence Project; an at-large senator within three Student Government Association committees; and involvement with the Coalition of Black Student Leaders and Black Student Action Group. Dwayne served as a Non-Profit Representative for Ruffalo Noel Levitz at King Hall, an Office Assistant at the Fisher Student Center and an Audit Intern at the Wilmington Housing Authority. Dwayne supported the local community through maintaining NPHC’s commitments to serving the students of D.C. Virgo; events included read-ins, sharing modified NPHC traditions (stomp out bullying, a step program), and virtual Zoom tutoring due to the pandemic. Dwayne received several awards during his time at UNCW, including seven academic scholarships (five of them accounting-related) and was a part of an award-winning fraternity chapter that earned both the Bradley Cup and the Vice Chancellor’s Cup for Academic Excellence. Dwayne received the Alpha Leonard Cortez Leadership award for highest male mentorship and service amongst all North Carolina Alpha Phi Alpha chapters.

After graduation, Dwayne will attend UNCW for the master’s in accounting program and hopes to obtain a challenging internship in tax accounting the summer before he begins his graduate program.

Dwayne describes his UNCW experience as:
“An opportunity, only if you choose to welcome it.”

Rosa Argueta, graduating with degrees in political science and Spanish, earned a 3.36 GPA. Jessica Aguilar, Program Assistant Translator in the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, wrote, “Rosa embodies the values of being a Seahawk leader by constantly creating diverse collaboration events through her connections, and she has strived in academic success through her perseverance and determination as a first-generation college student in her family.”

Rosa was actively engaged in representation and leadership development throughout her four years at UNCW. She worked as a resident assistant in Galloway Hall and as a desk receptionist in Centro Hispano; off campus, Rosa worked as a legal assistant at Sussman Law Firm in Charlotte, NC. Through Rosa’s work as a resident assistant, she won Resident Assistant of the Month, NACURH Regional Diversity Program of the Month and Campus Student Staff Member of the Month. In Centro Hispano, Rosa coordinated and administrated their Wall of Fame, which recognizes the graduating seniors who have been vocal and active members of Centro Hispano and its supporting clubs. She executed photo shoots and edited the photos, and she conducted interviews with the graduating seniors and recorded their experiences. Through her participation in Centro Hispano Embajadores, Rosa motivated young students to pursue a higher level of education and to positively impact their communities. As a MI CASA mentor, she encouraged the highest level of education for selected Hispanic high school sophomores who demonstrate promise, determination, discipline and need. Rosa studied abroad the summer of 2019 to Oaxaca, Mexico; she participated in the Southeastern Latinx Student Leadership Conference in 2019 and the Washington D. Seahawk program in 2020. Rosa was the recipient of the UNCW Laureate Award and the Excellence in Engagement Award in 2020.

After graduation, Rosa hopes to continue to help her family through hardship and work as a legal assistant at Sussman Law Firm for a year. Her goal is to apply to law school in fall 2022.

Rosa describes her UNCW experience as:
“UNCW helped me discover myself and my self-worth.”
Kelly Arnold, graduating with degrees in anthropology and history, earned a 4.0 GPA. Andrea Ingle, Assistant Director for Campus Activities and Involvement, wrote, “I can truly say that she is one of the most impressive students that I have supervised in my six years at UNCW.”

Throughout her four years at UNCW, Kelly actively worked to maintain a balance between her academic endeavors and her extracurricular activities. She served as an involvement specialist and the student manager for the Campus Activities and Involvement Center in Campus Life. Kelly was the president for the Anthropology Club and a co-founder of the “HawkTalks” event in Student Ambassadors. She was an active member of the Honors College and served as an Honors Mentor and was the first Honors Mentors coordinator. During spring 2020, Kelly studied abroad in Cusco, Peru, as part of an immersive language and culture program. Academically, Kelly pushed herself to get involved with historical and anthropological research in a variety of ways including documenting Sudanese artifacts for consideration in the Smithsonian museum collections and analyzing portions of the school’s archaeological collection, even producing a podcast episode alongside her peers. Kelly was a Wilmington Fellow, the student representative for the Honors College Advisory Board, and a member of Lambda Alpha—the National Anthropology Honors Society. Kelly spent her summers volunteering at archaeology digs and interning at George Washington’s Mount Vernon to gain experience in her field of study. Kelly was a recipient of the A. Farrell Teague Merit Scholarship, the Student Government Association Scholarship, the Friends of UNCW Scholarship, the Wilmington Women’s Club Scholarship, the Distinguished Engagement Award, and the Excellence in Engagement Award.

After graduation, Kelly will pursue a master’s degree in Public History at North Carolina State University.

Kelly describes her UNCW experience as: “A new adventure every day with incredible support from amazing people.”

Anna Auman, graduating with a degree in public health studies with a concentration in community health education, earned a 4.0 GPA. Caitlin Grindall, Residence Coordinator in Sandpiper Hall, wrote, “Anna embodies the values of patience, empathy, determination, attentiveness, adaptation, and intelligence.”

Anna was an integral part of campus and focused on personal growth as well as community development during her time at UNCW. Her freshman year, she joined the student feminist alliance and worked as a tutor at Winter Park Elementary School. She then went on to work as an engagement assistant for OSLE, and volunteered as a peer educator with CARE, advocating for survivors of interpersonal violence. During her final year, she served as a resident assistant in Sandpiper Hall securing “RA of the Month” accolades for November, and was an intern for Brigade Boys and Girls Club. She enjoyed participating in all of her campus leadership experiences and being a force of change at UNCW. In addition, she also focused a significant amount of time on personal development with certifications in QPR Suicide Prevention, LGBTQIA Safe Zone, Doing Gender, Mystand Mentor for interpersonal violence, and a bronze-level certificate in Emotionally Intelligent Leadership. She also attended the Elevate Leadership Summit and the Seahawk Leadership Conference for two years, and received the Distinguished Engagement Award.

After graduation, Anna will work in her community in public health and hopes to become a leader in the field.

Anna describes her UNCW experience as: “UNCW helped me find my future.”
Sabrina Balent, graduating with a degree in communication studies and leadership studies, earned a 3.7 GPA. Titus Adeleke, Assistant Dean of Students, wrote, “Sabrina has worked incredibly hard to act as a role model to her peers and consistently assist in their success. She is a model of professionalism and responsibility.”

Sabrina was involved in several areas of campus during her time at UNCW. She joined Alpha Xi Delta her freshman year, where she went on to hold multiple leadership positions including two executive roles: Panhellenic delegate and Finance and Operations vice president. She served as the Arts and Programs Intern for Campus Life, was an orientation leader for two years, and was a member of the Campus Conduct and Academic Honor Board. Sabrina was a desk receptionist for the Seahawk Crossing, a member of the National Residence Hall Honorary, and served as secretary for the communication studies honors fraternity Lambda Pi Eta. Sabrina most recently served as student body vice president and president of the Senate for the Student Government Association. Sabrina is proud to say that she has held a spot on the Dean’s List every semester she was eligible to do so.

After graduation, Sabrina will attend North Carolina State University to obtain her Masters in Higher Education Administration, and she will be working in the Talley Student Union as a graduate assistant working with NC State’s Student Centers.

Sabrina describes her UNCW experience as: “UNCW taught me that by loving others, I love myself.”

Grace Barnett, graduating with a degree in recreation therapy, earned a 3.932 GPA. Holly Smith, Assistant Director of Aquatics and Fitness, wrote, “Grace excels academically and has completed multiple practical and volunteer experiences to add to her skill set and demonstrate her passion and commitment of service to others. Grace is absolutely a model representative of the university and she has made a lasting impact on our community.”

During her four years at UNCW, Grace continually sought opportunities to volunteer and improve the lives of others. Her love of working with individuals with disabilities led her to start the Autism Society of North Carolina Campus Chapter to help connect and provide resources for individuals with autism at UNCW and within the Wilmington area. Grace volunteered with the Miracle League and the Special Olympics Swim Team of New Hanover County. During her recreation therapy coursework, Grace was a student activity facilitator at Lindsey College for Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities. During the summer of 2020, she completed an online recreation therapy practicum and facilitated virtual activities via Zoom and Facebook during COVID. Grace also took additional courses to receive an extra certification in Child Life, and she completed a Child Life Practicum at WakeMed Health in Raleigh during fall 2020. In her applied behavioral analysis minor, she completed fieldwork in a classroom for students with emotional and behavioral disorders and an activity-based learning lab. Grace has a passion for swimming, and worked as a lifeguard at the Student Recreation Center, where she eventually became a supervisor, certified instructor and program assistant her senior year. To make swim instruction accessible, she created a swim clinic program at UNCW. In 2019, she received the Aquatics Member of the Year award.

Grace was on the Dean’s List every semester she attended UNCW.

After graduation, Grace will complete a Child Life internship so she can be dually certified in recreation therapy and child life, and then work in a children’s hospital.

Grace describes her UNCW experience as: “UNCW showed me how I can make an impact.”
Nicki D’Alessio, graduating with degrees in communication studies and Spanish, earned a 3.9 GPA. Stefanie Norris, Director of Arts and Programs in Campus Life, wrote, “I have watched Nicki step up time after time through challenge and adversity. Nicki stepped up when her peers stepped back. She is a stronger, more decisive and dedicated leader now because she leaned into discomfort.”

During her time at UNCW, Nicki was very involved in the campus community, participating in several invaluable academic, leadership and service experiences. Nicki was a member of the Honors College and prestigious Wilmington Fellows, and she completed an interdisciplinary thesis during her senior year studying the effect of news consumption habits on perception of the North Carolina Latinx community. She was a Student Ambassador during all four years, proudly serving as the organization’s president during her senior year and leading the organization through its transition from a Registered Student Organization to an affiliated entity with the Division of University Advancement. Nicki also served as a resident assistant during her sophomore and junior years in Honors College freshman housing, mentoring first-year Honors students through their transition to college. She was a member of the Association for Campus Entertainment and served on the executive board as the vice president of marketing for the 2019-20 school year. Nicki completed an internship for course credit with Campus Life as a marketing specialist during the fall 2020 semester, and continued working for Campus Life during her final semester. Nicki received the Board of Trustees merit scholarship all four years and the Martha M. Duncan Leadership Scholarship for the 2020-21 academic year. Nicki studied abroad in Salamanca, Spain during the summer of 2019.

After graduation, Nicki hopes to return to Spain as an English teaching assistant before pursuing a career in branding and marketing.

Nicki describes her UNCW experience as:
“The experiences I had and relationships I formed at UNCW have helped me become the person I have always wanted to be, and I will carry them with me forever.”

Emilia D’Anjolell, graduating with a degree in communication studies, earned a 3.8 GPA. Kelly Wrobel, ACE program coordinator, wrote, “Emma is unquestionably one of the most diligent, hardworking, creative, dedicated, and dynamic student leaders I have worked with.”

Emilia quickly became involved on campus during her first semester at UNCW. She started by becoming a member of the Association for Campus Entertainment. Soon after joining, she was asked to be one of the Homecoming Court coordinators. She helped run Homecoming Week the following spring, and was awarded “Best PIT Crew Graduate” at the ACE Banquet that April for her efforts. Emilia worked for Transition Programs as an orientation leader for the 2018-19 orientation sessions. As a sophomore, she served on the executive board for ACE as the spirit chair. In the spring of 2019, Emilia was sponsored to attend the Elevate Leadership Summit, where she learned new leadership skills and ways to improve upon her existing strengths. During her junior year, Emilia served on the executive board for ACE as the activities chair and went on to became the vice president of membership as a senior. Emilia has had the honor of receiving the Distinguished Engagement award, the Excellence in Engagement award, a letter of distinction from the head of the Communication Department (Dr. Richard Olsen), and the opportunity to be on the 2021 Homecoming Court.

After graduation, Emilia plans to attend the University of Central Florida's graduate school for Higher Education and Student Personnel. She will be a graduate teaching assistant for UCF’s LEAD Scholars Program, and hopes this experience will give her the knowledge she needs so she can one day work at a university and help future students realize their full potential.

Emilia describes her UNCW experience as:
“UNCW has given me much more than an education; I have received many opportunities to grow not only as a leader but also as a human being and I will always be grateful for that.”
Ashlee Fleming, graduating with a degree in psychology, earned a 3.899 GPA. Sean Palmer, Director of the Upperman African American Cultural Center, said, “Ashlee is a gifted, behind-the-scenes leader who often steps up into the limelight because of know-how.”

Throughout her tenure at UNCW, Ashlee Fleming contributed to a multitude of organizations and activities academically, personally and professionally. Her restorative personality and extensive skill set made her a valuable asset to the Seahawk family. Her sophomore year she was the social chair for the Black Women’s Association, a co-founder for Cultures Unidos, a general body member of Black Student Union, and she became an Excellence Project Mentor through the Upperman African American Cultural Center. Her junior year she served as president for the Theta Iota Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the National Pan Hellenic Council’s parliamentarian, and she was initiated into Order of Omega. Ashlee strived to create inclusive and welcoming environments for marginalized groups on campus as well as develop healthy relationships with a variety of departments, offices and centers on campus. Aside from her extracurricular activities, she maintained academic excellence in her classes while completing her degree in psychology with added minors of English and leadership studies. Coming to campus as a freshman, she received a scholarship for being in the inaugural cohort for the RISE (Reaching and Inspiring Student Excellence) Living Learning Community. She received the Teal Scholarship as well as the Sarah Faison Jones Diversity Scholarship. Her sophomore year she obtained two additional scholarships, the Seahawk Grant and the Reeder-Sheridan BFSA Scholarship, while maintaining the requirements for her existing financial awards up until she graduated.

After graduation, Ashlee plans to attend graduate school to further her plans for a career involving psychology.

Ashlee describes her UNCW experience as: “UNCW gave me meaningful experience in overcoming adversity.”

Nicole Fortoso, graduating with degrees in social work and Spanish, earned a 3.537 GPA. Mayra Robles, first-year admissions coordinator with the Office of Admissions, wrote, “Nicole is a leader within UNCW and our local community. She passionately serves others and advocates for improvement.”

Nicole was actively engaged on campus and continuously showed her commitment to community engagement throughout her four years at UNCW. From 2018 to 2021, Nicole was a part of the Seahawk Admissions Network for Diversity, an organization housed under the Office of Admissions dedicated to promoting diversity and acceptance at UNCW as well as recruiting diverse students to pursue their college career at UNCW. Nicole embraced many leadership roles within SAND, serving as vice president her junior year and president her senior year. She was a part of the Seahawk Leadership Advisory Council and served as a committee member for the 2019 Seahawk Leadership Conference, where she spent ten months planning and recruiting her peers to attend a campus-wide conference. Passionate in her commitment to serve the Latinx and immigrant population, Nicole completed her BSW internship with Catholic Charities, working with their immigration specialist, assisting immigrant community members in completing and submitting legal documents. In summer of 2020, Nicole completed a Spanish internship with Loaves and Fishes in Charlotte and for the 2020-21 academic year, she served as a community liaison with El Cuerpo, a Hispanic ministry in Wilmington striving to connect Latinos to resources for spiritual growth, health and education. Nicole values community engagement, volunteering regularly with various local nonprofit organizations in the Wilmington community such as Nourish NC, First Fruit Ministries and the YMCA. She was a recipient of the Distinguished Engagement Award in 2020. Additionally, she was a member of the Phi Alpha Honor Society for Social Work and the Sigma Delta Pi Spanish National Collegiate Honor Society.

After graduation, Nicole will pursue a master’s degree in Social Work at UNC Chapel Hill in their advanced standing program, in hopes of continuing her social work educational career to better serve the Latinx and immigrant community.

Nicole describes her UNCW experience as: “A transformational time of growth and opportunity to discover my passions.”
Margaret Hudson, graduating with a degree in elementary education with a concentration in language arts, earned a 4.0 GPA. Kathleen Schlichting, associate professor in the Watson College of Education, wrote, “Ms. Hudson is committed to investing the time and energy necessary to do an outstanding job. She is a wonderful teacher, a strong leader, a positive advocate, and most importantly, she cares about each and every student fortunate enough to have her as an instructor.”

Although Margaret didn’t begin her collegiate journey at UNCW, she certainly made the most of her time as a Seahawk. Upon transferring to UNCW from the University of Alaska Anchorage in the fall of 2019, Margaret’s commitment to academic excellence earned her a Transfer Merit Scholarship worth $3,000. In addition to maintaining a 4.0 GPA, she was hired by Watson College’s Betty Holden Stike Education Library as an undergraduate student work assistant in the fall of 2020. Margaret partnered with the Ed lab faculty to support and mentor pre-service teachers as they navigated the unique challenges of virtual tutoring. Margaret also acted as the treasurer of Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society and she facilitated several successful community service initiatives with KDP, including an event that collected 600 nonperishable food items and a mask drive that distributed more than 1,000 child-sized face coverings for students at five elementary schools in three different counties. In her senior year, Margaret was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, and she most recently served as a teacher intern in a first-grade classroom at Bolivia Elementary School.

After graduation, Margaret will become an elementary educator before eventually pursuing a master’s degree in language and literacy. She hopes to one day build a forever home with her husband and two daughters in the great state of North Carolina.

Margaret describes her UNCW experience as:
“My time at UNCW has been life changing!”

Jacobi Loyd, graduating with a degree in English, earned a 3.576 GPA. Sean Palmer, Director of Upperman African American Cultural Center, wrote, “Jacobi is an outstanding example of leadership, scholarship, athleticism and commitment.”

Jacobi Raheim Loyd is a first-generation college student. Throughout his four years at UNCW, Jacobi Loyd ardently served his university and community as an actively engaged student leader and exhibited dedication to social equity and inclusion through his involvement in several organizations. Jacobi was a member of the UNCW track and field team as a hurdler/sprinter and received a scholarship to run for the university. His primary events were 110M hurdles and 400M hurdles. As a student-athlete, Jacobi served as a representative for the track and field team on the UNCW Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and was involved in UNCW’s B.E.A.S.T. (Black Excellence Achieving Success Together) program, whose goal is to provide support and a sense of community as African American male student-athletes navigate attending a predominantly white institution. Jacobi was also very active outside the realms of athletics. He was a member of the Alpha Omega Campus Ministry, served as a residence assistant in Schwartz Hall and supported freshman African American students as a peer mentor in Upperman Center’s Excellence Project. Jacobi served as the secretary of the UNCW NAACP chapter his junior year and led the organization as president his senior year. Jacobi worked as a student intern for the Racial Justice Learning Community under the mentorship of Dr. Addie Sayers (Eng. Dept.). During his time with RJLC, Jacobi drafted a diversity and equity statement for the university and gave a presentation on Language, Race and Internalization of Race at a conference for freshman seminar/transfer seminar professors at UNCW. Jacobi also practices poetry and was able to display his creative writing skills as an art equity fellow. At the “Healing Generational Trauma” conference held for the Wilmington community, Jacobi presented original artwork (three poems) alongside fellow UNCW student J.T. Smith. Jacobi also served his community outside of the university by serving as a volunteer mentor for SPARK Academy, a grant-funded arts resilience program for youth in southeastern North Carolina.

After Graduation, Jacobi plans on teaching High School English before pursuing his Masters in School Administration and later his or Doctor of Education. He hopes to make significant contributions to dismantling the social and economic inequities present in the U.S. education system.

Jacobi describes his UNCW experience as:
“A period of self-discovery that helped me excavate my true self from what the world perceived me as.”
ALEXIS DANIELLE PEAN
Pat Leonard Senior Medallion Award Recipient
Chemistry, B.S. and Mathematics
3.349 GPA
Fort Mill, SC

Alexis Pean, graduating with degrees in chemistry and mathematics, earned a 3.349 GPA. Stefanie Norris, director of arts and programs in Campus Life, wrote, “Alexis is positive, inquisitive and willing to stand up for what she believes in.”

Similar to her high school experience, Alexis slowly progressed into increasing involvement during her time at UNCW. During her freshman year in 2017, she was in the Leadership and Service Living Learning Community (LEAD) and then was hired to be one of the 2018 LEAD peer mentors due to her expression of a deep appreciation for the program and helping others assimilate into an unfamiliar environment. Alexis joined Chi Omega Fraternity during the fall semester her freshman year, and shortly after became the 2018 director of sisterhood. During her time as sisterhood chair, she also joined the sisterhood support team to assist the new member educators with their tasks in planning “Bid Day” and preparing for the new members. Ultimately, Alexis was slated to be Chi Omega’s vice president her junior year. With every leadership experience, Alexis gained more confidence to try something new. She also worked as an involvement specialist intern in the Campus Activities and Involvement Center and as a General Chemistry I supplemental instructor for the University Learning Center. During the 2020-21 academic year, Alexis served as the treasurer of Order of Omega, a department liaison for the College of Arts and Sciences, and a student representative for the Black Student Action Group. Alexis spent two years working in a biochemistry laboratory within the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, where she was awarded the College of Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Research Award and the spring and summer Undergraduate Research Creativity Award. She completed her Honors thesis through the same biochemistry laboratory her senior year. In her last semester at UNCW, Alexis was crowned 2021 Homecoming Royalty alongside Sabrina Balent. Every leadership position and organization that she was a part of contributed to the pride she felt graduating as a Seahawk.

After graduation, Alexis will spend the next year working as a national leadership consultant for Chi Omega Executive Headquarters.

Alexis describes her UNCW experience as:
“UNCW showed me that staying true to yourself is a superpower.”

EMMA PELFREY
Pat Leonard Senior Medallion Award Recipient
Exercise Science
Minor in Psychology
3.315 GPA
Warrenton, NC

Emma Pelfrey, graduating with a degree in Exercise Science, earned a 3.315 GPA. Christina Logan, director of Transition Programs, wrote, “Emma is hard-working, kind-hearted and always willing to go the extra mile.”

Emma was passionately involved in multiple extracurricular activities throughout her four years at UNCW. She worked for Transition Programs as an orientation leader and a Seahawk Link, both positions held for the duration of her sophomore, junior and senior years as a Seahawk. Through her position as an orientation leader, Emma was chosen by the organizers of the 2020 Southern Regional Orientation Workshop during her junior year to give a presentation on leadership to a crowd of more than 2,000 undergraduates, graduates and professional staff. During her junior and senior years, Emma worked for Campus Life as an office assistant. In the fall of her senior year, Emma was voted into UNCW’s Student Government Association as an at-large senator and served in that role until she graduated. While in SGA serving as at-large senator, Emma was also a member of the diversity and inclusion committee and was vice chair of the academic affairs committee. She was chosen by her professor and academic advisor to be a research assistant for a directed independent study that observed the effect of exercise on stress and anxiety levels in college students. In addition to her campus involvement, Emma volunteered regularly with the Miracle League of Wilmington through ACCESS of Wilmington. Additionally, while being a full-time UNCW student, Emma enrolled in a night class at Cape Fear Community College during her sophomore year and obtained her Emergency Medical Technician certification. She then went on to pass the state exam, which designated her a state licensed EMT Basic.

After graduation, Emma will travel to South Africa before going to graduate school to obtain her Doctorate of Physical Therapy.

Emma describes her UNCW experience as:
“Irreplaceable encounters, often trying, always a growing experience!”
Madison Poor, graduating with a degree in public health with a pre-clinical concentration, earned a 3.73 GPA. Alexis Dawson, coordinator of fraternity and sorority life, wrote, “One of Madi’s greatest qualities is her quirky personality, which she uses to help others feel included and connected.”

Throughout her four years as a Seahawk, Madison was diligently engaged in leadership development, focused on academic achievement, and was passionate about giving back to those around her. As a freshman she was elected as the director of property in her sorority, Alpha Gamma Delta, which only perpetuated the gratification she received from leadership positions. After spending the summer in Iceland as a part of an Honors study abroad program focused on international citizenship, she became a study abroad ambassador. During her sophomore year, she was an Honors College mentor for incoming freshmen, advanced to vice president of campus relations for her sorority, and became vice president of service for the Honors Scholars Association. One of her proudest achievements was becoming the founding vice president of the Student Health Association, restarting a club on campus that had been dormant for years. She focused her last leadership contributions working on the Panhellenic Council, first starting as a recruitment counselor guiding students through sorority recruitment, then becoming the director of recruitment counselors on the executive board. Throughout her final year as a student, she completed her Honors thesis, focused on student self-perception. In this way, she is hoping to discover better ways to promote positive self-image on UNCW’s campus. During her time as a senior, she also interned at the Cape Fear Clinic in Wilmington, NC, and she worked as a CNA at a local assistive care facility. Due to her efforts to improve the lives of her university and community around her, she was the recipient of the Excellence in Engagement Award.

After graduation, Madison will continue to work in clinical settings, gaining hours of experience and exposure before applying to Physician Assistant programs throughout the duration of 2021.

Madison describes her UNCW experience as: “UNCW allowed me to find confidence in myself.”

Brianna Ramirez, graduating with a degree in biology, earned a 3.6 GPA. Jon Kapell, director of Campus Activities and Involvement, wrote, “Bri is a dedicated student leader. She brings critical thinking skills to her SGA role as she navigates how to best support our BIPOC students during these tumultuous times.”

During her four years at UNCW, Bri held many leadership positions in various organizations and served on three different executive boards. She most recently served as the director of diversity and inclusion for the Student Government Association. In the Association for Campus Entertainment, she held positions of membership coordinator, Homecoming chair and vice president of membership. In the Seahawk Admissions Network for Diversity, an organization under the Office of Admissions dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion at UNCW and in the Wilmington area, she served as the public relations chair and was a general member beginning her sophomore year. Through this organization, she gave campus tours and was highly active in community outreach in the Wilmington area. Additionally, she served a resident assistant, where she was as a mentor for both freshmen and upperclassmen students. In addition to her involvement on campus, Brianna was also highly involved in community service. She assisted as a Spanish interpreter and medical assistant at St. Mary’s Clinic in downtown Wilmington. St. Mary’s is a nonprofit medical clinic for those with low socioeconomic incomes without access to health care. Furthermore, she researched with Dr. Rachel Kohman in the field of psychoneuroimmunology. Brianna was a recipient of the Excellence in Engagement 2019 award, Distinguished Engagement 2020, and Martha Duncan Fellow Award in 2020.

After graduation, Brianna is applying to medical school with the hope of becoming a medical student in the summer of 2022. Her long-term goal is to be able to open low-cost clinics in medical deserts within rural NC.

Brianna describes her UNCW experience as: “UNCW has given me endless opportunities to grow as a leader and individual.”
Breanna Reingold, graduating with a degree in economics, earned a 3.698 GPA. Jade Willey, coordinator of aquatics and fitness, wrote, “Breanna is a student who is constantly looking for more ways to grow, learn and develop to improve herself and serve her community to the best of her ability.”

Breanna was an incredibly active leader throughout her three and a half years at UNCW. Transferring to UNCW as a freshman, she sought out opportunities to connect with her peers and faculty in any way she could. Breanna served as vice president for the Cameron School of Business Student Advisory Committee, as well as president of UNCW’s Omicron Delta Epsilon chapter, the National Association for Business Economics club, and the UNCW Yoga Club. Breanna held multiple on-campus jobs, working at the Student Recreation Center as a group fitness instructor from her sophomore to senior year and going on to become a fitness supervisor in her last semester. She also served on the Student Recreation Center’s Student Advisory Committee during her senior year. In addition to her on-campus engagement, Breanna completed an Honors thesis on behalf of the Department of Economics and Finance. Her research was on the willingness to pay for coastal state park improvements at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, where she interned as an undergraduate researcher and museum curator for two summers. She enjoyed volunteering at Eugene Ashley High School, where she graduated in 2017, encouraging prospective students to pursue majors in the Cameron School of Business. Breanna was the recipient of the Distinguished Engagement Award, departmental honors from the Department of Economics and Finance, and the UNCW SOAR Ambassadors grant. During Breanna’s time at UNCW she also received the following certifications: Base Medical Wilderness First Aid, American Red Cross CPR/AED, American Council of Exercise Group Fitness Instructor, Stairmaster HIIT, and CITI Human Research Social/Behavioral Research. She has remained on the dean’s list since she arrived at UNCW in 2018.

After graduation, Breanna will continue teaching classes as a group fitness instructor and join the economics career field.

Breanna describes her UNCW experience as:
“How much teal is too much teal? I’ll never know.”

Gabrielle Schmidt, graduating with a degree in exercise science, earned a 3.6 GPA. Nikki Kroushl, student service specialist in the Honors College, wrote, “Gabby’s commitment to leadership, service and fostering relationships between students and making UNCW a better place has made her an exemplary student and citizen.”

Gabby was an active and dedicated member of the Seahawk community throughout her four years. She worked for Housing and Residence Life as a desk receptionist in Seahawk Crossing and for the University Learning Center as an academic achievement mentor. She served as the Honors College senator for the Student Government Association and as a member of the Campus Conduct and Student Academic Honor Board. Gabby was a member of Alpha Xi Delta and served on the executive board for two years as Panhellenic delegate and chapter president, as well as Greek Week chair for two years. Through her membership in Alpha Xi Delta, Gabby engaged in Autism Speaks fundraisers and volunteered with Miracle League and the Good Shepherd Center. Additionally, Gabby worked as an orientation leader and returned for a second year as orientation coordinator, where she selected and trained her orientation team and helped them navigate running orientation in a virtual format due to COVID-19. She was also involved with the Transition Programs office as a Seahawk Link for two years. Gabby danced with Physical Graffeeti, an alternative dance organization on campus. During her senior year, Gabby conducted her honors research thesis on health and wellness initiatives at UNCW and the impact of community-level interventions on student health. Gabby was the recipient of the Distinguished Engagement Award and the George H. Hutaff Honors Scholarship.

After graduation, Gabby will be working full-time for Alpha Xi Delta Fraternity headquarters as an educational leadership consultant for a year, then she plans to pursue her master’s in clinical mental health counseling.

Gabby describes her UNCW experience as:
“A beautiful home for growth and finding myself.”
IAN SHIELDS

Pat Leonard Senior Medallion Award Recipient
Environmental Sciences
Minor in Sustainability and Professional Writing Certificate
3.97 GPA
Oyster Bay, NY

Ian Shields, graduating with a degree in environmental sciences with a minor in sustainability with a professional writing certificate, earned a 3.97 GPA. Ann Rotchford, senior lecturer of criminology, wrote, “Ian has a true commitment to the environment and sustainability. He does not let obstacles stand in the way of his mission to raise awareness and make a change to better the environment.”

During his time at UNCW, Ian was strongly committed to rigorous interdisciplinary learning thorough campus involvement and the proliferation of UNCW sustainability. Early in his freshman year, Ian joined the executive board of Tri-House Area Council. In summer 2018, Ian served as an orientation leader for Transition Programs and began his career as a resident assistant for Housing and Residence Life soon after. Ian served three years as a resident assistant where he worked on the sustainability committee and was awarded Community Builder of the Year in 2019. Beginning in 2018, Ian dedicated much of his time outside of class and being an RA to founding and developing the Sustainable Seahawks Living Learning Community. Here, Ian collaborated with faculty and staff to provide freshmen from 2019 and 2020 with sustainability-based living, education and research/service projects. Despite setbacks from the COVID-19 pandemic, Ian, the SSLLC team and fellow students led the expansion of composting efforts in the Wilmington community to Winter Park Elementary School and the Good Shepherd Center. After showing unique initiative in creating SSLLC, Ian was appointed as a student representative on the Chancellor’s Sustainability Council from his sophomore year until graduation. Throughout his campus involvement, Ian maintained a 3.97 GPA and interned with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality during summer 2020 and the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority in spring 2021.

After graduation, Ian plans to work in environmental justice and write a book before obtaining his law and doctoral degrees to pursue a life of public service and environmental stewardship.

Ian describes his UNCW experience as:
“Continuous opportunity and prosperity.”

BRIAN SMITH

Pat Leonard Senior Medallion Award Recipient
Biology
Minor in Chemistry
3.69 GPA
Charlotte, NC

Brian Smith, graduating with a degree in biology, earned a 3.69 GPA. Erin Williamson, assistant director in the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, wrote, “Brian has showed continued positivity, resilience and commitment to his duties despite the pandemic.”

Brian actively participated in and sought out opportunities in academic research, leadership and community engagement that will have a lasting impact on UNCW. He was a member of the Dean’s Student Leadership Council, which met with deans of the College of Arts and Sciences on a monthly basis to discuss concerns from a student’s perspective. In these meetings, they discussed issues from academic advising to parking availability; ultimately, the focus was creating equal access for all and keeping the university’s policies up to date. Brian was also a community engagement specialist in the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, where he acted as a liaison between the student body and multiple nonprofit organizations to set up and manage biweekly volunteering events that made community engagement more accessible to his peers. By participating in these programs, Brian became a leader on campus, inspiring change that will continue to benefit UNCW students for years to come. Brian also approached his academics with rigor, making the dean’s list several semesters and working in multiple research labs. The first lab that Brian volunteered in was Dr. Alecia Septer’s molecular genetics lab at UNC-Chapel Hill for a summer technician position, where he discovered his passion for research. There he worked with a bacteria squid symbiont to study how bacteria colonize a new host. He also volunteered in Dr. Julia Buck’s parasitology lab at UNCW for several years. In this lab, he worked on multiple projects researching the effects of various parasites on several types of mollusk and their life cycle.

After graduation, Brian will be attending graduate school at UNCW studying pharmaceutical chemistry.

Brian describes his UNCW experience as:
“UNCW led me to my passion.”
Matt Talone, graduating with a degree in political science, earned a 3.32 GPA. Jon Kapell, director for Campus Activities and Involvement, wrote, “Matt has left a legacy of leadership through his roles in SGA; he is a steadfast leader who confronts issues when needed.”

Matt was involved in numerous leadership positions during his time at UNCW, beginning with his arrival to campus freshman year. He was a member of the Leadership living and learning community, where he began to explore and develop his leadership skills. He volunteered at the annual Halloween carnival and with the Miracle League/ACCESS Wilmington. During the latter half of his freshman year, he began his tenure as a member of the 2018 Seahawk Leadership Conference Committee, and he was also selected to be a resident assistant in Galloway beginning his sophomore year. Through his role as an RA, he helped educate his residents about how to vote in upcoming elections, how to get involved on campus, and about opportunities to grow as young professionals. In 2019, he served as the co-director of that year’s Seahawk Leadership Conference, where he helped to advise his peers in the planning and implementation of a conference for more than 100 students. During his junior year, he served as the chief of staff for the Student Government Association and led the planning of the State of the SGA address and inauguration. As a result of his commitment to the student body, he was elected to serve as the student body president for his senior year, where he continued serving his peers by making sure their voices were heard by the university administration.

After graduation, Matt will attend Bowling Green State University, seeking a master’s in higher education.

Matt describes his UNCW experience as: “Life-changing.”

Julianna Tresca, graduating with degrees in geology and environmental science, earned a 3.72 GPA. Erin Williamson, assistant director of the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, wrote, “Julianna has an incredible focus and passion for food insecurity, particularly for college students. Her impact on campus will be felt as she has worked hard to serve her peers to make sure they had access to healthy food.”

Julianna was dedicated to raising awareness of student food/housing insecurity while at UNCW. She founded the UNCW Gardening Club, a service-based organization to utilize the sustainability garden to grow produce for the student food pantry while teaching UNCW students about sustainable organic agriculture in the process. While president of the club, she procured a TGIF grant to rebuild the decayed raised beds of the garden, modifying them to be ADA compliant. The club provides student service opportunities through community garden days on and off campus, in addition to supporting local food pantries through donation drives, produce drop-offs and tree plantings. The StarNews published her letter to the editor regarding food insecurity at UNCW. Additionally, she wrote environmental justice articles on college student food/housing insecurity, and PFAs/water contaminants in the community through the Rachel Carson Council fellowship program.

As a member of the community engagement specialist team in the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, she spoke at local food conferences, education symposiums and started discussions around this topic. She received the Master Gardener Volunteer Association Scholarship and participated in UNCW’s leadership development program and Certified Internship Program. As a researcher at multiple labs at the Center for Marine Science, she also served as a coastal ambassador for the NC Coastal Federation. She was an aquarist/scuba diver for the Fort Fisher Aquarium. She completed her honors thesis through the Coastal Estuarine Science lab utilizing UAS drone technology and GIS focusing on the restoration ecology of New Hanover County’s landfill transformation into a city park and its risk to climate change and sea level rise.

Julianna will be attending NC State in the fall, thanks to being awarded a SMART scholarship with the DOD, which will help her to reach her goal of earning a master’s degree in water resources engineering. After graduate school, she will be working with the USACE Alaska division.

Julianna describes her UNCW experience as: “Utilizing the resources offered to you with higher education, being grateful, and taking none of them for granted.”
Gabrielle Turner, graduating with a degree in marketing strategy, earned a 3.35 GPA. Brittany Philbert, assistant director of Housing and Residence Life, wrote, “Gabby is often the ‘go-to’ person for her team, the first to volunteer and the last to leave.”

Gabby was an advocate for leadership and growth during her time at UNCW. She was committed to diversity and the advancement of students. Her favorite and most rewarding position at UNCW was working as resident assistant for three and a half years in Seahawk Crossing and Pelican Hall. She served in roles on multiple committees and executive boards, including president of the Cameron School of Business Student Advisory Council, Student Conduct Board chair for the Office of the Dean of Students, vice president of public relations for UNCW’s National Residence Hall Honorary chapter, and Entrepreneurship Club president. Her favorite committees were the Student Government Association Appropriations Committee and the UNCW Chancellor’s Natural Areas Stewardship Committee. Gabby represented UNCW on a state level as the director of the North Carolina Association of Residence Halls and as a conference delegate for two National Association of College and University Residence Halls conferences. In 2019, Gabby frequently participated as a volunteer with the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, received the National Residence Hall Honorary’s Outstanding Service Award, and achieved dean’s list honors. In 2020, she received the Distinguished Engagement Award. In addition to being an RA, she worked as a marketing specialist, summer conference assistant, front desk receptionist and as an office assistant with Housing and Residence Life. She was able to broaden her global citizenship during her study abroad experience in Japan during the summer of 2019.

After graduating, Gabby hopes to work on a marketing creative team and eventually have her own marketing and freelance agency.

Gabby describes her UNCW experience as: “Inspiring and influential to current and future Seahawks.”

Marissa Mae Vincent, graduating with degrees in biology and Spanish, earned a 3.866 GPA. Amanda Boomershine, associate professor of Spanish, wrote, “In all endeavors, Marissa gives tirelessly of herself while always being kind and caring toward others.”

Marissa was recruited to UNCW to play soccer and served as captain of the UNCW Women’s Soccer team her final season. She studied biology and chemistry in hopes of attending veterinary school in the future, and later decided to pursue her passions for Spanish and international studies. Marissa graduated with honors; her interdisciplinary honors thesis in Dr. Soon Lee’s biochemistry lab tackles a critical protein in the pathogenesis of a plant pathogen. During the fall of 2020, Marissa presented her biochemistry research online as part of the State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium. She also received a CSURF grant of $500 for this research during the spring of 2020. In her last year at UNCW, Marissa was very active in serving the Wilmington community. After the pandemic started in the spring of 2020, Marissa dedicated time to distributing school lunches to elementary school kids who were out of school. She then continued to distribute fresh, local produce from Nourish NC to Latinx communities in need around Wilmington. Marissa also served as a diaper deliverer, for the Latino Alliance and the diaper bank, to Latinx families around Wilmington. As part of her service-learning course during the fall of 2020, Marissa volunteered with the GenX exposure study as both a translator and Spanish-communicator for Latinx participants.

After graduation, Marissa will attend the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine in August of 2021. The school is located at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA.

Marissa describes her UNCW experience as: “Eye-opening and character-building.”
TATYANA WILLIAMS

Pat Leonard Senior Medallion Award Recipient
Film Studies
Minor in Journalism
3.345 GPA
Raleigh, NC

Tatyana Williams, graduating with a degree in film studies, earned a 3.345 GPA. Caitlin Grindall, residence coordinator in Sandpiper Hall, wrote, “In her professional, academic and personal life, Tatyana is an advocate for all people and creates inclusive environments wherever she is.”

Since the beginning of her time at UNCW, Tatyana has strived to diversify herself and create a positive impact on campus. Whether it was through performing arts, mentorship roles or advocacy, she always found ways to make her time at UNCW worthwhile. Starting her freshman year, she joined the UNCW Dance Company after being dragged to the audition and she learned how to open herself up to new opportunities. This pushed her to run for e-board, and she was elected to her role as artistic director during her second year. Tatyana advanced her filmmaking and her communication skills by joining UNCW TealTV as an assistant editor. This led her to become the lead editor for TealTV in her third year. Exploring the role of mentorship, Tatyana became a Seahawk Link for the fall of 2018 where she mentored freshman students. She built connections and guided them through the semester. She also advanced those skills serving as a resident assistant her junior and senior years, assisting a variety of students as well as her staff in her second year. Wanting to expand her advocacy, Tatyana joined the Student Government Association where she most recently served as vice-chair for diversity and inclusion, working to lift the voices of students of color. But her pride and joy lie in the documentary she created during her junior year, titled “Living in Color.” The documentary put the spotlight on Black student leaders on campus and convey their experiences at UNCW.

After graduation, Tatyana plans to continue be creative and pursue a job in the entertainment industry.

Tatyana describes her UNCW experience as: “A place where I truly found who I was and what I am capable of.”

UNCW CORNERSTONE PLEDGE

I am an engaged learner in constant search of knowledge.

I foster human dignity through acts of civility and respect.

I maintain a distinguished character based on truth, honesty and integrity.

I pursue inner peace by recognizing the significance of spirituality.

I demonstrate honorable citizenship through acts of civic engagement.

I embrace community by active involvement and service.

I lead a lifestyle that advances physical health and emotional well-being.

The content of this publication was created by the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement.
Questions? Contact Jaime Russell at russelljl@uncw.edu.