



Welcome from Dr. Pereira

Listen to this special welcome message from our dean highlighting the amazing things that happened this year in the Honors College and what to expect in this annual Communiqué.

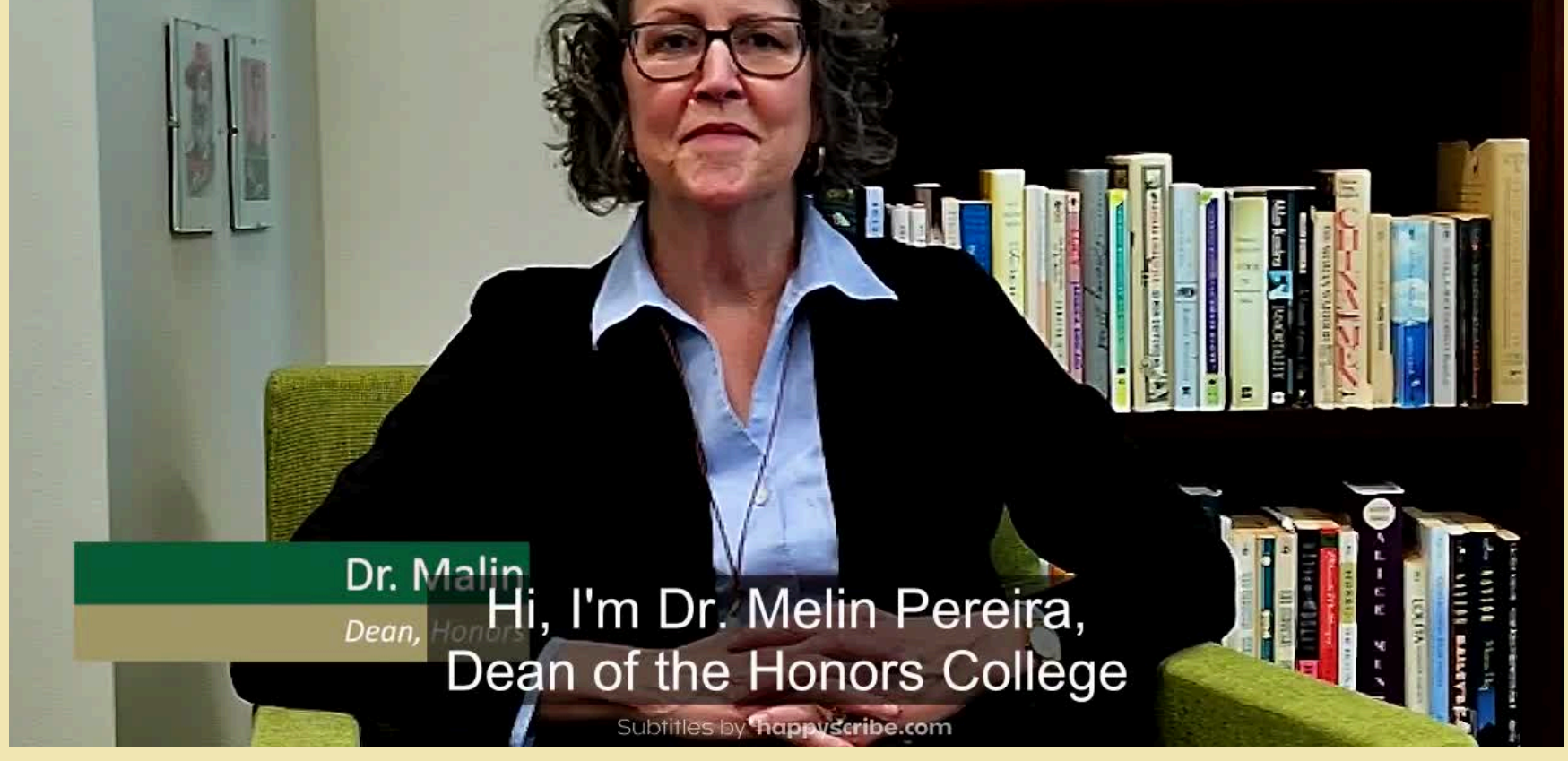


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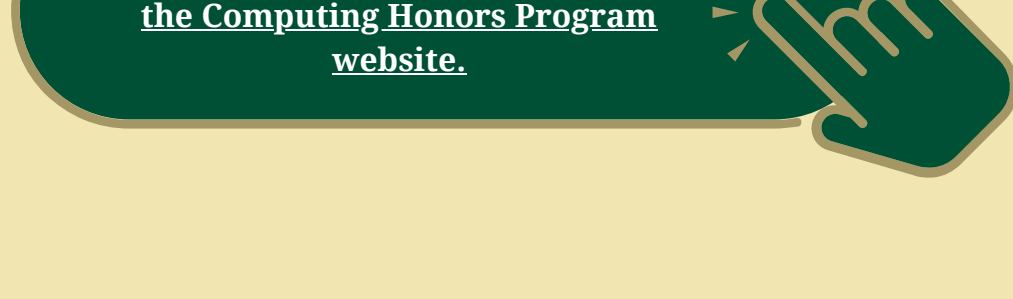
A message of gratitude to our students, faculty, alumni, and partners for their continued support and commitment to the honors community.

Exciting News!

The 4-Year Computing Honors Program Launches in Fall 2026!

An exciting addition to the wide range of excellent honors programs offered at UNC Charlotte is the newly redesigned Computing Honors Program (CHP), set to launch in Fall of 2026. We are currently recruiting our first incoming cohort! Formerly the Computing and Informatics Honors Program (CCI Honors), CHP is expanding to become one of the three multi-year honors programs at Charlotte that recruit incoming first-year students as well as continuing and transfer students! Dr. Sunshine Niu, Associate Professor at the Department of Software and Information Systems and Director of CCI Honors, will continue in her role as Director for CHP.

CHP is designed for incoming, continuing, or transfer undergraduate computing majors who are academically motivated and interested in discipline-specific research opportunities. Students can apply to CHP via one of three entry points based on GPA and past course experience. Admitted CHP students complete honors sections of a set of courses and develop an honors thesis with the mentoring support of a faculty advisor. Successful CHP students are recognized at Commencement and receive a commendation on their academic transcript.



STUDY ABROAD HIGHLIGHTS

Yoshiharu Ono

Class 2027: Mechanical Engineering , Japanese

Last spring, Yoshiharu “Yoshi” Ono spent five transformative months studying abroad at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. While there, he pursued courses to complete his minor in Japanese and immersed himself in his heritage culture. The experience allowed him to form lasting friendships and deepened his appreciation for Japanese traditions, history, and daily life. Reflecting on his time abroad, he credits the experience with expanding his worldview and inspiring him to pursue new opportunities for personal and academic growth. He returned to UNC Charlotte with a greater sense of curiosity and motivation to engage with the University’s diverse community and take on new challenges in research and leadership.

“Studying abroad made me more comfortable with being uncomfortable, a skill that continues to shape me as both a student and a person.”



Abbey Beam

Class 2027: Criminal Justice and Psychology

This past summer Abbey Beam studied abroad in Salerno, located along Italy’s stunning Amalfi Coast, an experience she describes as truly life-changing. After months of preparation, living abroad challenged her to become more independent and open-minded. She cherished exploring new cities, wandering through historic streets, and discovering hidden corners beyond any guidebook. Each day brought fresh adventures filled with local food, culture, and connection. The blend of coursework, cultural immersion, and spontaneous moments with friends made her time in Italy both deeply educational and personally transformative. Navigating new environments and language barriers strengthened her confidence, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. She returned with a renewed perspective, one that aligns closely with the Honors College’s values of global understanding and intellectual curiosity.

“Studying abroad taught me to approach learning with openness and reflection and to see every experience as an opportunity to grow.”



Congratulations to UNC Charlotte’s first-ever Marshall Scholarship finalist: Annabelle Hill (Class of 2026)!

Lena Ayesh

Class of 2026: Winner
Critical Language Scholarship

Tamara Simpson

Class of 2028: Winner
NCHC Freddie T. Davy Scholarship

Batman Whiteside

Class of 2027: Winner
NSF-REU - U of Missouri, Kansas City

Nationally Competitive Awards

Nationally competitive awards such as prestigious scholarships and fellowships, fund study abroad, graduate school, or other experiences and require a rigorous application process. These awards are a result of significant academic achievement and extracurricular or professional contributions and applying for them helps students develop important skills like writing, self-reflection, and networking.

Sonia Birla

Class of 2026: Winner
Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange

Wilson Sawyer

Class of 2027: Winner
Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange

Ellie McCutchen

Class of 2026: Finalist
Princeton in Asia

Nationally Competitive Award Recognitions

Student Name	Classification	Honors Program	Award
Trenton Brooks	Sophomore	University Honors Program	Finalist, Institute for Responsible Citizenship
Annabelle Hill	Junior	Political Science Honors	Finalist, Truman Scholarship
Sonia Birla	Senior	Business Honors Program	Finalist, Princeton in Asia
Gabriel Jugan	Sophomore	University Honors Program	Finalist, DAAD-RISE
Ellie McCutchen	Senior	Political Science Honors	Finalist, Gaither Jr Fellows Program
Sylvia Srinivass	Senior	Business Honors Program	Semifinalist, Princeton in Asia
Yuleny Gomez Rodriguez	Graduate	Biology Honors	Honorable Mention, National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program

Honors Alumni Speed Networking Event

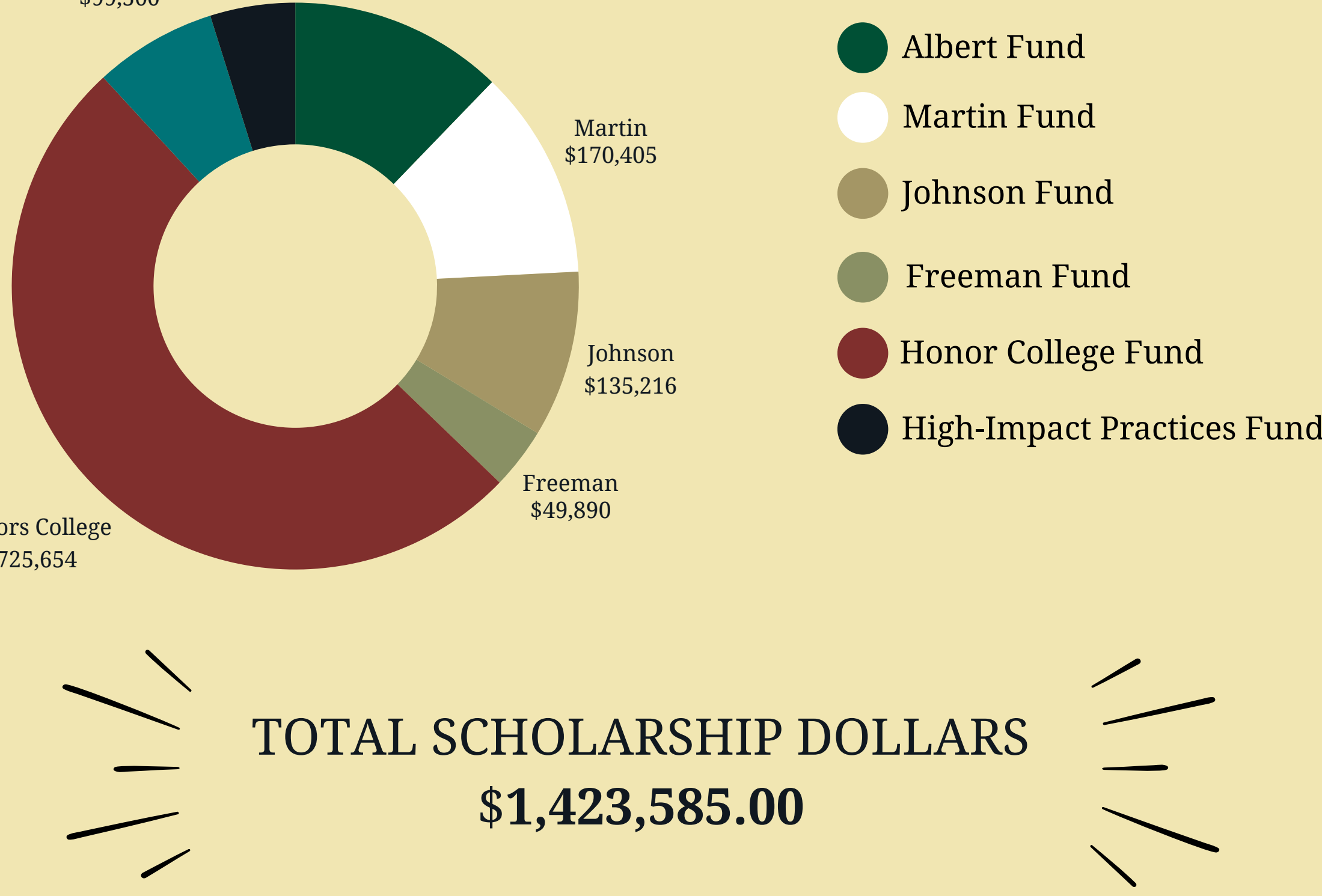
Students engaged with several honors alumni during a special networking event designed to foster mentorship and professional growth. Alumni sat at tables organized by career field and area of expertise, allowing students to choose which tables to visit based on their interests.

Every 15 minutes, students rotated to a new table, asking questions and gaining valuable insight from alumni experiences. The event provided a meaningful way for students to explore career paths, build professional relationships, and strengthen connections within the honors community.



Honors College Scholarship Commitment

- The Honors College continues to grow and thrive, welcoming 226 new students across our three 4-year programs (i.e., University, Business and Arts & Architecture).
- We proudly celebrate the accomplishments of 214 honors graduates in 2025!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

Highlighted students are from our 4-year honors programs

If you could describe your college experience in one word (or phrase), what would it be and why?

Unexpected

I never imagined that I would get the Gilman Scholarship and go to Japan. I never thought that the job that I wanted since freshman year would be the job that I was offered sophomore year and still have today. I am very fortunate to have the support system that I have from my scholarship and my major.

Breonna Tuitt

Arts + Architecture Honors Program (AAHP)

Transformational Growth

I've developed not only as a professional but also as a person. I've learned how to lead, adapt, and persevere through challenges. My time at UNC Charlotte has transformed me into someone who values service, resilience, and integrity, which are qualities I will carry into every chapter of my career and life.

Hayden Walker

Business Honors Program (BHP)

Dynamic

As a second-generation Latino immigrant, I am committed to opening doors for others and using my academic journey to uplift my community. From engaging in research and leadership roles to study abroad and marching band, my college experience has taught me to adapt and to embrace change.

Luis Tejada

University Honor Program (UHP)

BREONNA TUITT

Arts + Architecture Honors Program (AAHP) and Martin Scholar

Class of 2027: Architecture, Communication Studies



Breonna Tuitt, ambitious and creative, has been a dedicated member of the Honors College since her freshman year. She is a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Alumni (2025) and was recognized as a Fulbright UK Summer Institute Semi-Finalist (2024). Her passion for research led her to collaborate with Dr. Janaka Lewis on a project mapping Black Charlotte history during the summer of 2024 as part of the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR). She also finds fulfillment in her role as a preceptor for the COAA 1101 Student Success course. Through this position, she has discovered her passion for mentorship and education, an experience that has inspired her goal of becoming both a licensed architect and a professor. She finds joy in watching her students grow, gain confidence, and take initiative in campus organizations and professional networking. Ultimately, she aspires to create architectural spaces that foster connection and belonging. Her vision is to design environments that serve and uplift communities, spaces that not only stand beautifully but also bring people together and make them feel at home.



Breonna's academic journey also includes a global experience. In the summer of 2025, she studied abroad in Tokyo, Japan, through the Gilman Scholarship, participating in a studio focused on Japanese contemporary architecture and urbanism. Immersed in Tokyo's dynamic urban landscape for one month, she developed a deep appreciation for the city's intricate design systems, from its layered train lines to its efficient wayfinding methods. Living among locals, exploring neighborhood convenience stores, and navigating the city independently helped her gain a nuanced understanding of urban design and cultural influence.

Her time abroad had a profound impact on her perspective, both as an honors student and as a future architect. She learned to approach spaces with critical curiosity, examining how design reflects societal values, culture, and governance. This mindset now drives her academic and professional pursuits, encouraging her to question, investigate, and design with purpose.



HAYDEN WALKER

Business Honors Program (BHP)

Class of 2026: Accounting, Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies



Since joining the Honors College in 2022, Hayden Walker has distinguished himself as a leader, scholar, and community advocate. As External Vice President of the Business Honors Program (BHP), he coordinated partnerships with 19 nonprofit organizations across the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, leading initiatives that addressed food insecurity, homelessness, and financial literacy. His leadership helped the program achieve a record 1,188.5 hours of community service in a single year. Beyond his honors involvement, he currently serves as a Turner School of Accountancy Ambassador, helping promote the accounting major and organize professional events with local firms. He previously founded Walker & McCraw Landscaping Services, LLC, which he co-managed for over two years, and gained hands-on experience as a Client Accounting Services Intern at GreerWalker, CPAs and Advisors, where he will return in Spring 2026.

Hayden's leadership and academic excellence have been recognized through the 2024-25 Business Honors Program Trifecta Award and the Honors College High Impact Practices Scholarship (HIPS). He also serves on the Belk College of Business Dean's Student Leadership Council and is an active member of the National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS). One of his proudest accomplishments was bringing the First Generation Investors (FGI) Program to Cochrane Collegiate Academy, where high school seniors received financial education and invested grant funds in Roth IRAs or mutual funds, empowering them to build long-term financial confidence.



Luis Tejada

University Honors Program (UHP) and Johnson Scholar

Class of 2026: Sociology Organizations, Occupations, and Work Concentration, Statistics



Now in his fourth year as an Honors College student at UNC Charlotte, Luis Tejada has embraced every opportunity to grow academically, professionally, and personally. His dedication to research and scholarship has led him to present his work at both regional and national conferences, including the American Sociological Association Conference in Chicago, one of the most prestigious gatherings in the field. In the summer of 2024, he was selected for two highly competitive research programs: the Organizational Science Institute at UNC Charlotte and the NextGen Pop Undergraduate Program in Population Research at the University of California, Irvine. Research has been a cornerstone of his undergraduate experience. As a research assistant in the Department of Sociology, he contributes to studies examining arts, culture, and inequality in Charlotte. His honors thesis investigates how cultural capital influences on-time college enrollment and how those effects differ across racial groups. His academic excellence has been recognized through several awards, including the Michael A. Pearson Scholarship (2025), the Honors College High Impact Practices Scholarship (2024), and the Johnson Scholarship (2022-26). These experiences strengthened his passion for sociology and solidified his commitment to pursuing graduate studies. On campus, he serves as president of the Student Association of Sociology and as an undergraduate preceptor for a first-year sociology course. Outside the classroom, he proudly performs in the Pride of Niner Nation Marching Band (alto saxophone). Luis is also the student representative for the Honors Council, where he provides valuable student feedback to honors faculty.

In the spring of his sophomore year, Luis participated in a Cultural Comparative Sociology study abroad trip to the Netherlands. The experience deepened his appreciation for cultural sociology and strengthened his international outlook. Reflecting on his time in the Honors College, he credits the program with helping him step out of his comfort zone and build confidence. He fondly recalls taking a "leap of faith" during his first-year UHP Venture experience, literally jumping off the top of a 30ft power pole to grab a handkerchief, and realizing that he could achieve anything, even when it felt daunting. He believes that being an honors student at Charlotte has shaped him into a more curious, courageous, and community-minded scholar, ready to take on the challenges of graduate study and beyond!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Brenda Tindal '04

Class of 2004 ~ University Honors Program

Do the things that give you oxygen, and never have a poverty of imagination about what you are capable of at Charlotte and in the world.

Brenda Tindal, a proud native Charlottean, earned her B.A. in History and African American Studies as a University Honors Program (UHP) student at UNC Charlotte in 2004 before completing her M.A. in 2010 and reaching Ph.D. candidacy in American Studies at Emory University. These academic foundations launched her career as a museum leader, curator, public historian, and educator. She currently serves as the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Chief Campus Curator and Executive Director of the Office for Academic Culture and Community at Harvard University, while also teaching in the Museum Studies program at the Harvard Extension School.

Her curatorial and historical work spans major institutions, including the Levine Museum of the New South, Princeton University, the Detroit Historical Society, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Harvard Museum of Science and Culture, and the International African American Museum in Charleston. A former faculty member in UNC Charlotte's Honors College and History Department (2012-2015), Brenda describes teaching honors students as a full-circle moment that shaped her approach as an interdisciplinary scholar-practitioner. Her work with the "City as Text" model at Charlotte continues to influence her teaching, inspiring her "Campus as Text" learning experience at Harvard. She remains connected to her alma mater through her service on the Honors College Advisory Board.

Brenda has earned numerous awards, including the IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service (2005), the Robert W. Woodruff Fellowship (2009-2010), the IMLS/HistoryMakers Fellowship at Princeton (2011-2012), the SEMC Museum Leadership Award (2020), Phi Beta Kappa induction (2022), and Signet Society induction at Harvard (2025). She hopes to continue using history and curation as tools for building community.



Welcoming Our New Merit Scholars

Meet our newest Martin, Albert, Freeman, and Johnson Merit Scholars!
We are excited to welcome them to the Honors College

Martin Scholars



Ryan Arias

Major: Political Science, Finance
Business Honors Program

He is passionate about the intersection of business and law and plans to attend law school after graduation. He is also an active member of the Undergraduate Law Review at Charlotte.



Felix Moran

Major: Biology
University Honors Program

He plans to attend medical school and become a physician focused on serving Hispanic and underserved communities.



Jesenia Xiong

Major: Biology (Optometry)
University Honors Program

She serves on the executive board of Coloring 4 Chemo, a student-led nonprofit dedicated to creating uplifting cards for children undergoing chemotherapy in the Charlotte area.

Freeman Scholars



Jainaba Sanneh

Major: Psychology
University Honors Program

Passionate about mental health advocacy, she hopes to break the stigma surrounding mental health in West African communities



Celene Yang

Major: Pre-Biology
University Honors Program

Aspires to become a pediatrician—driven by her passion to help children lead healthier, longer lives.

Albert Scholars

Evelin Golovashkina

Major: Electrical Engineering
University Honors Program

She is also passionate about Baroque architecture and how design can integrate with the environment.



Michael Peevey

Major: Mechanical Engineering
University Honors Program

Michael hopes to join engineering-related clubs, as well as explore more unique interests and look into academic leadership.



Johnson Scholars

Carys Burden

Major: Mechanical Engineering
(Biomedical)
University Honors Program

Plans to specialize in rehabilitation or tissue engineering.



Jadyn Burton

Major: Architecture
Arts + Architecture Honors
Program

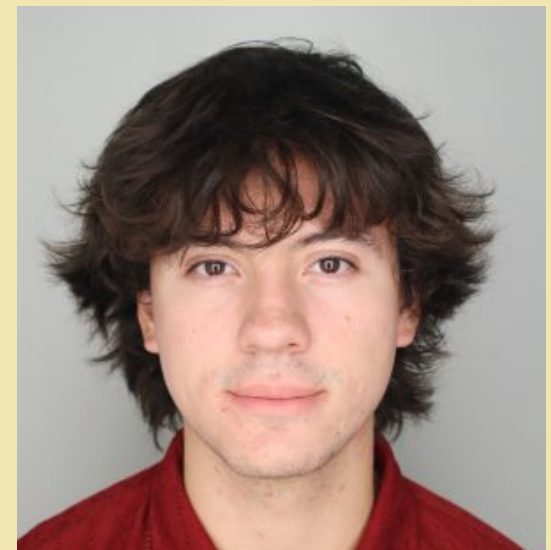
Jadyn is a pole vaulter for the UNC Charlotte Track & Field team.



Daniel Chacon

Major: Civil Engineering
University Honors Program

Pursuing a career in civil engineering with a focus on building better communities.



Luna Peterkin

Major: Earth and
Environmental Science
University Honors Program

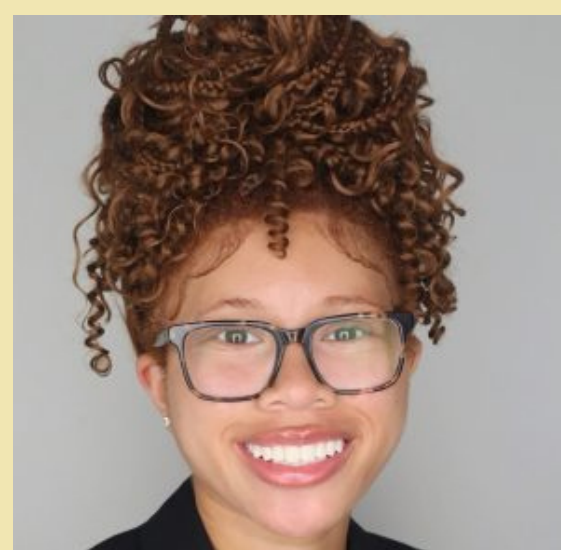
Wants to be an environmental scientist and aspires to find sustainable solutions to various environmental problems.



Alissa Young

Major: Finance
Business Honors Program

Alissa is actively involved in athletics, including trying out for the women's basketball club team.



HONORS COUNCIL 2025-2026

What is the Honors Council?

The Honors Council is a standing committee of Faculty Council that serves as the advisory body to the dean of the Honors College. The Honors Council also serves to review and evaluate the honors curriculum, program proposals and revisions, the dean, and associate dean of the Honors College.



Laura Magennis
Co-chair



Abby Moore
Co-chair



Erin Fitzpatrick



Paloma Fernandez Sanchez



Meg Harkins



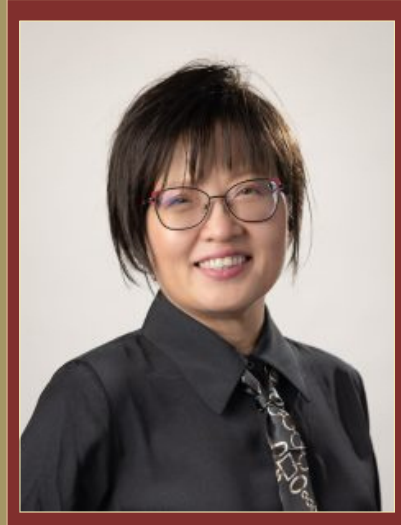
Lisa Homann



Victoria Rankin



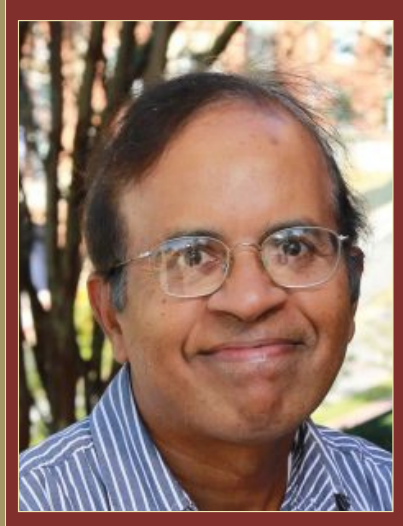
Jackie Robinson



Bao-Hua (Alysa) Song



John Stogner



Kalpathi Subramanian

[Click here to learn more about each representative of 2025-26](#)



Pilar Zuber

HONORS FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Karen Ford-Eickhoff, Ph.D.

With an impressive academic journey and a passion for inspiring students, Dr. Karen Ford-Eickhoff has been shaping minds at UNC Charlotte for 13 years and has served as an Honors Faculty member since 2016. She holds a B.S. in History Education and an MBA from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, as well as a Ph.D. in Organizations and Strategy from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

In her role within the Management Department of the Belk College of Business, Dr. Ford-Eickhoff developed the Business Honors Case Project, a unique alternative to the traditional thesis designed to prepare students for graduate studies and their future business careers. Since its creation, she has mentored 196 honors students, helping them explore real-world strategic challenges faced by companies.

Dr. Ford-Eickhoff's influence extends far beyond the classroom. She has served as Chair of the Honors Council, on the state-level Faculty Assembly, the Chancellor's Advisory Council on Intercollegiate Athletics, and the Faculty Council, among other leadership roles. Her service has earned her numerous accolades, including the Belk College Outstanding Service Award (2023) and being selected as the University Marshal for the May 2024 Commencement Ceremony.

A first-generation college student who began her Ph.D. at age 50, Dr. Ford-Eickhoff embodies the spirit of lifelong learning. She encourages her students to “do whatever will make you thrive as a person in your career; life is too short to do otherwise.” When she's not mentoring students or leading committees, you can find her outdoors on the beach, canoeing, hiking, or gardening – activities that keep her grounded and energized.



NEWLY-APPOINTED AND RE-APPOINTED HONORS FACULTY

[Click here to see all of our newly appointed and recently renewed Honors Faculty](#)



How to become Honors Faculty?



[Click here for more information on how to become a Honors Faculty member](#)

Aaron Hooker, M.Ed.

Assistant Director, Community Building & Advising

Mr. Aaron Hooker joined the Honors College team in Spring 2025 and is already wearing many hats in his role. He works closely with University Honors Program (UHP) students in their 2nd – 4th (and beyond) years to ensure they meet co-curricular expectations and complete their Honors Core Experiences. He also builds meaningful partnerships across the Charlotte community and beyond, helping to create a wide range of experiences for students. In addition, he provides support to three honors societies, Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Beta Kappa, and Sigma Xi, while also teaching within the Honors College.

Before joining UNC Charlotte, Aaron was a student in the Master of Divinity program at Duke University, where he also worked as a program assistant for first-year programs. His educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Connecticut, a master's in Student Affairs from the University of Maryland, and he is currently finishing his M.Div. at Duke.

One of Aaron's favorite parts of working in the Honors College is connecting with students outside the classroom. He finds it rewarding to engage with students on a deeper level through programs and events, building relationships that go beyond academics.

He is drawn to UNC Charlotte for the opportunity to teach and advise students at a large, public university connected to a major city, an environment he enjoys both as a student and educator. With a passion for student success and retention, he continues to help students navigate their academic and career goals through experiential learning. Aaron is excited to be a member of the honors team on the beautiful campus of Charlotte!



Student Interns

UIP: Marketing & Social Media Intern



Nika Parui

Class of 2028
Finance & International Business

My favorite part of working with the Honors College is getting to connect with other honors students and staff on a personal level. I also enjoyed working on the Niner Nation Gives campaign last year and helping the Honors College raise more than 100% of the previous year's donations.



Hannah Green

Class of 2028
Marketing & Communication

My favorite part of working at the Honors College is helping others get involved and collaborating with the staff to support students in the program. I also enjoy being the editor-in-chief for this year's Communiqué to help spread the word about this amazing organization only at Charlotte!

THANK YOU

Thank you for engaging with this year’s Honors College Communiqué. After 10 years of printed newsletters, we have transitioned to an all-digital format, which inspired a refreshed look and feel for the Communiqué. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed reflecting on and celebrating our students’ accomplishments. We also encourage and welcome you to participate in upcoming Honors College events. Thank you, and we look forward to seeing you again next year.

HONORS COLLEGE FACULTY & STAFF

[Click here for more information about our Honors College staff](#)



The Difference is

