RESERCHERS TRADE A CLEAN LAB FOR JUST THE OPPOSITE, AND DOZENS OF BUDDING SCIENTISTS REVEL IN THE DISCOVERIES THE BIG MUDDY

page 10
This issue of UNCG Research highlights the essential role that research and creative activity play at UNCG. As a centrally engaged public research university, UNCG serves as a “steward of place.” Defined as “answering the call to join with public and private partners...to identify problems, explore potential solutions, and test those solutions in real time” (2002 ANCSU). Stepping up as Stewards of Place, this stewardship includes a primary responsibility to educate. From far reinventing research to a minor place, the integration of research with teaching and learning and with community and economic engagement propels the research and scholarship of faculty, students and staff into an essential role.

Benefits to Teaching

In addition to providing the content that is taught in university classrooms all over the world, faculty research directly enhances education. The synergy that occurs when research and creative activity are coupled with inspired monitoring and students’ curiosity results in new knowledge and innovation. Dr. Eric Jones’ support of undergraduates conducting anthropological research in Mexico and Ecuador and Dr. James Murphy’s mentorship of students mapping the cultural remains of civilizations in Greece are great examples of this synergy. We want students to learn not just what we know in the various disciplines, but how we come to know it. Encouraging students to imagine and innovate, to test ideas and persist in the face of failure, and to develop original solutions to complex problems in most effectively accomplished when modeled by faculty who are themselves actively involved in research and creative activity.

Generation of New Knowledge

Research results in the generation of new knowledge and plays a critical role in informing what we teach our students today and in the future. Research Excellence professors Dr. Karen Kilcup and Dr. Esther Leerkes provide tangible examples of ways in which research across the disciplines at UNCG contributes to internationally recognized new knowledge and new understandings. Research fosters innovation in virtually every field of human endeavor. UNCG is involved in everything from igniting community passion for the biological diversity of our state and nation to enhancing science education research to innovative approaches to injury rehabilitation in Dr. Chris Rhea’s virtual reality lab. We do now in research and creative activity will be the key to innovation and prosperity decades into the future.

Benefits to the Community

Research and creative activity contribute to the economic vitality of the community and the state. It puts dollars into the economy and results in marketable products and services that can be patented, licensed or result in spin off companies. It supports businesses by supplementing their own research efforts, especially important for smaller businesses, which may not have access to the personnel or the facilities for a large research enterprise. Research and creative activity at UNCG also contribute to internationally recognized new knowledge and new understandings. Research fosters innovation in virtually every field of human endeavor. UNCG is involved in everything from igniting community passion for the biological diversity of our state and nation to enhancing science education research to innovative approaches to injury rehabilitation in Dr. Chris Rhea’s virtual reality lab. We do now in research and creative activity will be the key to innovation and prosperity decades into the future.

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Mixed Sources

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For more information about research at UNCG and the Office of Research and Economic Development, go to research.uncg.edu.

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You have to deal with what caused the problem in the first place. You can give kids new behavior — that’s not the hard part. But when they are out in the community, the old behaviors come back. … If you try to change behavior without changing the context supporting the behavior, it won’t work.” – Dr. Vincent Francisco

How do you keep teens away from drugs and gangs and prevent HIV/AIDS and chronic disease? you psychologist, understands prevention is key. and one Francisco, trained as a developmental and child the behavior, it won’t work.”  Dr. Vincent Francisco

change behavior without changing the context supporting the community, the old behaviors come back. … If you try to change – that’s not the hard part. But when they are out in the community, - that’s not the hard part. But when they are out in the community, the old behaviors come back. … If you try to change the hard part. But when they are out in the community, the old behaviors come back. … If you try to change behavior without changing the context supporting the behavior, it won’t work.”  Dr. Vincent Francisco

Francisco, trained as a developmental and child psychologist, understands prevention is key. And one single change isn’t going to work. It will take hundreds of changes across all the contexts faced by youth and adults in communities.

While working at the University of Kansas, he co-created the Community Tool Box, found online at http://ctb.ukans.edu. Community organizations can go to the tool box and get a number of resources, including information on identifying issues and how to develop a framework or model of change. The more information and training people have, the better they are prepared to change their physical and social environments.

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Growing the wine industry

IT MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE BEST RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS in the state university system.

Dr. Erick Byrd and six students spent summer 2012 visiting wineries across North Carolina. Their goal: learn more about who was visiting and why, so they could help owners develop informed marketing strategies, increase tourism and maximize revenue across the state. The group found that most visitors to the state’s vineyards had little to no knowledge of wine. Instead, they were drawn to a strong visitor experience and exceptional customer service.

“If people might not be able to tell the difference between one red wine and another red wine, but they can tell if someone is spending time with them and being nice to them,” says Byrd, an associate professor of Hospitality and Tourism Management in the Bryan School of Business and Economics.

“We found that people go to wineries for a romantic experience, a pristine landscape, to meet a wine grower and learn a bit about wine, said Dr. Erick Byrd. Good customer service is a key element in expanding tourism in this industry.”

A model of collaboration

A YEAR AFTER ITS LAUNCH, UNCG’s Community Engagement Collaboratory has fulfilled the goals of its creators and then some. The Collaboratory is a database of projects and partnerships that tracks how UNCG faculty, staff and students partner with community organizations. The site — found at communityengagement.uncg.edu — holds information on more than 200 ongoing or completed projects that address some community issue. That number is expected to grow as more people learn about the Collaboratory and add their information.

It gives everyone a richer picture of UNCG’s impact in the community, said Dr. Emily Janke, special assistant for community engagement.

“This year, Janke and Kristin Medlin, a former UNCG graduate student, have been working with the Research Triangle Institute to create a socioeconomic impact report of UNCG. “We never would have been able to talk about social impact without the Collaboratory,” Janke said.

With data a few clicks away, they have been able to identify areas of strength that fall under four general themes: Healthy People, Healthy Communities; School Learning Success; Entrepreneurial Greensboro; and Arts, Culture and Design as a Force for Positive Change. “These data matter,” said Medlin, communications and partnerships manager. “It tells the story of UNCG.”

It will also help when preparing information for Carnegie classification, accreditation review or any other requests. “It’s so efficient,” Janke said.

Last year, because of the work already happening at UNCG, Janke was tapped to lead a UNCG system task force on developing community engagement metrics. Jerry McGuire, UNCG’s associate vice chancellor for economic development, was asked to lead the partner task force on economic development metrics.

“The brought the two task forces together,” she said. “There are strong ways they can overlap to create healthy, sustainable, safe communities. When we show up good things often happen.”

Also in the past year, Janke has made numerous presentations and done several webinars talking about the data gleaned from the Collaboratory and how UNCG is using it strategically. Inevitably, people have asked about how to create something similar on their campuses. “The interest in this thing is incredible,” Medlin said.

Janke and Medlin are working with a vendor with an eye toward licensing the tool to sell. It will be the first online platform of its type that serves not only as a way to collect and report information for campuses and community use, but also services as the only international database of community-university partnerships. “This has the opportunity to transform the field of community-university partnerships as we don’t have access to those kinds of data, yet,” Janke said.

For now, an updated version of the Collaboratory is expected to be launched in early 2014. Its expanded scope also will include information about public service and outreach done on behalf of the community such as camps, performances and lectures. The current model has already helped in unexpected ways. Faculty candidates have said they looked at the database to see which sites would be amenable to their work.

“They are imagining their scholarly lives not only in the department but also in the community,” Janke said. Additionally, the Collaboratory shows UNCG’s commitment to community engagement.

“It has helped UNCG have a more collective mind,” Janke said. Previously she would hear people say they felt they were the only person in their department doing community engaged research. Now with the Collaboratory, they see they are not the only ones.

“We have institutional confidence,” she said. “We are an engaged campus.”
Basically, students think that the parties are more interested in serving themselves than the people.” Dr. Omar Ali

There was a time when Dr. Holly Downs worked for PBS. It was a dream job. “I had always wanted to work for Big Bird,” she jokes. But it wasn’t funny when she saw really good programs fall by the wayside for lack of support.

“I was inspired to get my PhD because of that,” she says. “I wanted young people to have access to this knowledge so they could improve and sustain these programs.”

Today, Downs is an expert on evaluation. As an assistant professor in Educational Research Methodology in the School of Education, she brings her expertise to a number of programs locally and internationally. She teaches graduate students how to conduct effective evaluations as well.

In 2011-12, her class of graduate students spent the fall semester on theory. In the spring, they put theory into practice when they worked with Dr. Holt Wilson to evaluate a math professional development program for teachers.

“They conduct a real evaluation for a client,” she says. They went through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, met with the client, designed an evaluation plan and collected data. As a result, one student got an assistantship. Some students presented their findings to the American Evaluation Association. And Wilson received funding to continue his work.

He appreciated having 20 students working on the evaluation. “There is no way we could have gotten that amount of feedback without this, at the depth we needed to make this program better,” he says.

A new group of students, mentored by a few of Downs’ previous students, received funding to continue the work. “There is no way we could have gotten that amount of feedback without this, at the depth we needed to make this program better,” he says.

Dr. Omar Ali, center, with students in New York City.

The art of evaluation

Students evaluated a UNCG learning community geared toward undergraduate majors in math, chemistry, computer science or physics.

Students did the whole evaluation process – from needs assessment to client interviews to document review. From there, they formed an evaluation plan. Student teams worked with different stakeholder groups, such as the 44 students in the community and the administrators. It isn’t just throwing out a survey,” Downs says. “It’s cool to see it all come together. It’s like herding cats, all these moving parts.”

And students got practical lessons on everything from how to conduct an interview to what to do when someone won’t call back. And students got practical lessons on everything from how to conduct an interview to what to do when someone won’t call back.

Myers, who has neurofeedback certification, is supervising the brain-mapping project. “We were really excited because, as a field, counseling needs to move toward a biological measure of what we do,” says Dr. Scott Young, CED department head. Measuring brain function provides hard data for brain changes that are otherwise difficult to quantify.

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Recovery and restoration

Dr. Karen L. Kilcup, professor of English, didn’t always want to study literature. She grew up on her extended family’s working farm, and, as an undergraduate, had a strong interest in astrophysics. She eventually focused on math and English. “I was actually a better mathematician than a literature scholar,” she says. Today, this 2012 Research Excellence Award winner writes, teaches and “recovery” forgotten American authors.

AMERICAN LITERATURE’S STANDING American literature is still understudied and under-represented, compared to British literature, but the collective energies of many scholars over several decades have enabled us to begin to appreciate its richness and complexity. Studying American literature helps students ponder how we began, how we developed and who we are now; it’s essential for good citizenship.

RESTORING AUTHORS TO PROMINENCE Much of my scholarship falls into the category of recovery work, reintegrating fractured literary traditions.

WOMEN WRITERS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE When I was in graduate school, most women writers — especially of the 19th century, my particular period of interest — were essentially dismissed. But immensely popular writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe transformed American society; they performed “cultural work,” were part of every major literary movement and received significant recognition. But because they often wrote about subjects or in emotional or formal modes that 20th-century scholars and writers dismissed as unimportant, most of these authors disappeared. Women of color were especially vulnerable to cultural exclusion. They included North Carolina writers like Harriet Jacobs, author of “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,” and Anna Julia Cooper, who published “A Voice from the South.” Women writers still face substantial discrimination and underrepresentation in terms of publication, grants and awards.

CHANGING ROBERT FROST’S IMAGE I have wanted to show Frost’s connections to his 19th-century female predecessors and his contemporaries. He gives us immensely sensitive portraits of women, and he supported women writers. I wanted to complicate the view of him (from a prominent early biography) as a self-intoxicated chauvinist. Frost also interested me because he bridged the gap between academic and popular audiences. His readings drew huge crowds, but his academic respectability, if you will, has always been brittle. UNC’s own Randall Jarrell assisted Frost “out the attention, submission, and astonished awe that real art always requires of us.”

BALANCE BETWEEN TEACHING AND RESEARCH Research and teaching are entirely synoptic; my teaching depends on my research, and my research advances my teaching. In my classes, we address questions with which I continually wrestle. My students also regularly conduct primary and archival research, and I share with them my own research and writing, including its unevenness. Students’ feedback helps me think more imaginatively — and more pragmatically — about my projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS I’m really excited about my just-published book, “Fallen Forests: Emotion, Environmental Concerns, and Ethics in American Women’s Environmental Writing, 1781-1924.” The project examines the role of women’s personal and political engagement with nature to forge a strong sense of environmental identity.

INCOMING AND FUTURE PROJECTS In the fall Johns Hopkins University Press will publish my anthology of 19th-century American children’s poetry, which will make available some wonderful material. The first of my new monographs, “Who Killed Poetry?” will examine the interacting forces that caused most 19th-century American poetry to disappear from classrooms and public consciousness. Focusing on the great children’s periodicals, my other project, “The Envious Lobster,” will study children’s nature writing and environmental writing roughly from the founding of the U.S. to World War I.

LEARN MORE ABOUT DR. KAREN KILCUP’S RESEARCH AT www.uncg.edu/eng/English/faculty/kilcupk.html

Positive parenting

Dr. Esther M. Leerkes is an associate professor of human development and family studies. Growing up as one of the oldest in an extended family with more than 50 cousins, she was interested in the variety of child personalities and parenting skills she observed. Educated as a developmental psychologist, she calls herself a “parenting scholar” and, with three children, she knows whereof she speaks. This 2012 Research Excellence Award winner’s multiple research studies have received more than $5 million in grants from the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN My research primarily focuses on links between parenting behavior and children’s adjustment and on what enhances the quality of parenting. I am particularly interested in identifying the skills that help mothers respond effectively to their infants when the infants are upset.

WHEN THE NEW BABY COMES HOME There is no way to predict what a new baby will be like. New babies don’t always fit expectations, predecessors or even mothers’ mental models which can be quite a challenge. You don’t know in advance if you will have a temperamentally reactive baby who cries often and easily and is difficult to comfort. Also, parenting is a profoundly emotional act. We tend to focus most on the positive side of that intense love, but emotions are involved in parenting. But, there are times when parents experience frustration, anxiety and embarrassment related to parenting. One of the goals of my research is to understand how mothers’ experiences of negative parent-related emotions and their ability to regulate those emotions, is related to the quality of their parenting.

WHEN BABIES CRY Crying is an unpleasant sound that puts almost anybody on alert, and it is magnified when it’s your own baby. When a baby cries, a mother has to notice her baby is upset, figure out why, clarify her short-term and long-term goal, consider the pros and cons of various responses, and then decide how to respond, if at all. This process requires a variety of skills, all of which can be compromised by the mother’s emotional state. One of our exciting recent findings shows that mothers who better regulate their physiological stress responses to the sound of crying are more likely to focus on their infants’ needs and needs than their own — which is linked with more rapid and sensitive responding to their infant.

This suggests that efforts to help mothers learn to regulate their arousal may be an effective way to promote positive parenting and may be especially important for mothers who have infants that are temperamentally prone to frequent and intense crying.

MOTHERS’ BEHAVIORS AFFECT CHILDREN We have known for a long time that parenting is predictive of child outcomes. Evidence shows that children have better outcomes — more secure attachment to the mother, better emotion regulation skills, better social competence and less likelihood of being aggressive or depressed later in childhood — if their mothers respond to them quickly, consistently and warmly. One of the unique aspects of my research is that I have demonstrated that what mothers do when their babies are upset is particularly predictive of these outcomes. This suggests that although most children are upset for a relatively small portion of the day, what we as parents do in those moments are of profound importance for children’s healthy development.

OTHER STUDIES I’ve been fortunate to collaborate with a number of colleagues and students on this work and other research as well. In the School Transition and Academic Readiness Project we are studying child and parent factors that promote preschoolers’ positive transition into school. Recently, we found that mothers’ emotional support in problem solving tasks is more predictive of their kids’ later academic skills than how they directly tried to teach their child. Well-intentioned parents believe it’s all about helping them to learn their numbers, letters and colors. That’s likely true, but the quality with which the child actually masters the material is really mattering a lot. New in my monographs, “Who Killed Poetry?” will examine the interaction of influences that caused most 19th-century American poetry to disappear from classrooms and public consciousness. Focusing on the great children’s periodicals, my other project, “The Envious Lobster,” will study children’s nature writing and environmental writing roughly from the founding of the U.S. to World War I.

LEARN MORE ABOUT DR. ESTHER LEERKES’ RESEARCH AT www.uncg.edu/hdf/faculty_staff/Leerkes/Leerkes.html
Kat Walston was tracking amphibians in her own backyard, the rural back roads of Orange County.

On this spring night in 2011, Walston, then an undergraduate working as a research assistant on the HERP Project, was tagging along with a biologist from another university who was listening for calling frogs. Walston figured that where frogs were calling she might find a temporary pond — sometimes called ephemeral pools or vernal pools — where salamanders and frogs breed and lay eggs without threat from predatory fish.

As they approached a pond, Walston sensed she had found what she was looking for. She grabbed her net and discovered it in her first sample — a mature mole salamander, a species of special concern in North Carolina and the first of its kind reported in Orange County.

“It was really cute with these black, big eyes,” Walston recalls.

The biologist was surprised; he’d never seen mole salamanders in Orange County before.

“He said, ‘Well, we might want to hold on to that one.’ I had no idea it was that significant.”

Her find is now on the books in the state’s database.

Talk about a butterfly flapping its wings and changing the course of the future. In Walston’s case it was more like a salamander wriggling its tail.

Her amphibious discovery solidified the path her life was taking. All because of herpetology programs created by UNCG professors.

It started when Walston signed on for Slip Slidin’ Away, a residential program in herpetology the summer before her senior year in high school. Slip Slidin’ Away, the brainchild of a team of UNCG researchers and funded by a modest Burroughs Wellcome grant, has metamorphosed into the HERP Project (Herpetology Education in Rural Places and Spaces). Funded by a multi-million-
ORIGINS
The seeds for the HERP Project were sown several years ago, when Ann Somers, a biology instructor at UNCG, recruited Dr. Catherine Matthews, a professor in the School of Education, to help her run a box turtle program for her son’s class. Matthews was happy to help. Key to changing students’ attitudes is changing how teachers teach science, she says. “Secondary teachers are notorious for being the teachers who are most conservative, most resistant to change, driven by these end-of-year tests, and who teach from a textbook or from a set of standards they are given and gauge the success of their teaching through those standardized test scores. There’s no match for high school kids because high school kids then see teachers as people who don’t really know or do science but rather teach from a textbook.”

Matthews lives across from Camp Chestnut Ridge in Orange County, so that site has become a stomping ground for Slip Slidin’ Away and the HERP Project. Those programs were modeled after Teachers on Special Assignment, a summer herpetology program for teachers. “My interest is twofold. First is making these types of opportunities easy for teachers and doable for teachers and for their students,” Matthews says. “People can come out and collect real data, to answer real questions. They may not label themselves as ‘that kind of person,’ a ‘snake person’ or an ‘outdoors person.’ We are really encouraging them to rethink themselves as a new kind of person. And they do, they take it up.”

Carlone, preparing several articles on her data for journal publication, points to numerous comments showing how the HERP Project helped reframe the students’ self-perception. As one girl put it: “I came into the course like, ‘I’m not gonna touch a frog, I’m not gonna touch a salamander, and snakes? No way!’ But I really surprised myself by handling the amphibians and reptiles.”

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER
Somers agrees with Carlone. And Somers also believes the impact goes beyond scientific identity, to the core of a young person’s relationship with the natural world.

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“My interest is twofold. First is making these types of opportunities easy for teachers and doable for teachers and for their students,” Matthews says. “People can come out and collect real data, to answer real questions that no one knows the answers to and we can make a real contribution to our knowledge of reptiles and amphibians and the issues they face in this state. Then there are other questions, science education questions. Could this change teaching? Could it change career trajectories students have for themselves? Could it get them interested in herpetology?”

OUT OF THEIR SHELLS
A major facet of the HERP Project is its residential summer programs for high schoolers, grades 9-12. The idea is to meet kids where they are, gradually giving them a gentle nudge outside their comfort zone. Some of them have not spent much time outdoors or touched a snake or a frog. Week-long summer programs take place at Camp Chestnut Ridge and at Camp Rockfish in Hoke County. A herpetology component is also part of a four-week summer program at Elon Academy.

Dr. Heidi Carlone, a professor in UNCG’s School of Education, jumped at the opportunity to track the impact of these programs on young people. Carlone has witnessed fantastic transformations during the residential programs. Case in point, one young man who could not even look at a snake in an aquarium when he started, teared up because he could now hold a snake. “They may not label themselves as ‘that kind of person,’ a ‘snake person’ or an ‘outdoors person.’ We are really encouraging them to rethink themselves as a new kind of person. And they do, they take it up,” Carlone says. “Very quickly they approach these opportunities with bravery and intense curiosity and a willingness to offer themselves in new ways.”

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LASSOING LIZARDS!
Lacey Huffling will tell you she has a “strong herpetology identity.” Huffling, a doctoral student in the School of Education with a background in biology and ecology, assists with the HERP Project.

She heads up the new lizard project at Camp Rockfish, actually teaching students how to gently snare lizards with tiny lassos. “It’s quite entertaining to watch,” she says.

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Huffling, Matthews and others in the HERP Project also are working on apps and software programs to make tracking and identifying species more palatable for kids and more convenient for adults. So far, Huffling says, students in the summer research programs are gathering data with Android apps and iPADs — kept in plastic bags to keep them dry. They use GPS apps to track their explorations, which can then be mapped in Google Maps. They’d also like to develop a virtual reality program like the audio-visual aids that guide people through museums. The technology allows kids to learn the same skills while they have more fun.

“Of course, some kids still like to collect data more than others,” says Matthews. “But this is real data on real animals. The kids really get invested in this real science. They know it’s real science and they talk about how different it is than what they do in school.”

Over the last several years the students have collected data on organisms in two ephemeral pools as well as extensive morphometric data — size, shape, etc. — on reptiles and amphibians in Orange and Hoke counties. They also completed a comparative study of Orange County temporary pools.

Researchers have studied teachers’ involvement in these projects and developed visual learning software for herpetology. Matthews and one of her former students, Terry Tomasek, co-wrote a chapter on their findings in Professional Development, published by the National Science Teachers Association Press. Tomasek, now a professor at Elon University, oversees the herpetology program at Elon Academy.

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While Matthews, Carlone and Tomasek cover the educational research in the book “Exemplary Science: Best Practices in Science and Scholarship,” published by the National Science Teachers Association Press, Filene, now a professor at Elon University, oversees the herpetology program at Elon Academy.

Filene, Matthews and others in the HERP Project also are working on apps and software programs to make tracking and identifying species more palatable for kids and more convenient for adults. So far, Huffling says, students in the summer research programs are gathering data with Android apps and iPADs — kept in plastic bags to keep them dry. They use GPS apps to track their explorations, which can then be mapped in Google Maps. They’d also like to develop a virtual reality program like the audio-visual aids that guide people through museums. The technology allows kids to learn the same skills while they have more fun.

“Of course, some kids still like to collect data more than others,” says Matthews. “But this is real data on real animals. The kids really get invested in this real science. They know it’s real science and they talk about how different it is than what they do in school.”

Over the last several years the students have collected data on organisms in two ephemeral pools as well as extensive morphometric data — size, shape, etc. — on reptiles and amphibians in Orange and Hoke counties. They also completed a comparative study of Orange County temporary pools.

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George Washington was first in war, first in peace. But these students were first in the hearts of the judges on a historic estate given by the first president.

By Mike Harris, UNCG Research Assistant Editor
Photography by David Wilson, Assistant Photography Editor

By George, they got it
Why were seven interior architecture students loading up their vehicles to venture to the edge of George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate? It goes back to a phone call that came out of the blue. The MADE: In America organization planned an All American House collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It would be a showcase competition, using exclusively American furnishings in a very historic home, Woodlawn. They researched university interior architecture and design programs including UNCG’s noted program, which got the call.

Ultimately, UNCG was selected to design six rooms in Woodlawn, George Washington University did two. The Corcoran College of Art + Design did a virtual design for another house on the property.

The challenge: Design the interior of 200-year-old rooms for a modern family. The National Trust would oversee everything. Students would meet some of the leading figures in the industry. Their work, if they won first place, would likely warrant a story in the Washington Post.

Sixteen UNCG students formed themselves into teams creating scenarios and designs. It would be a reinterpretation of Woodlawn for a 21st century family,” explained UNCG Professor Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll, who chairs the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions board of directors.

The 16 made presentations in December. Seven continued the work over the spring. And on two long days in April, they transformed the historic Woodlawn house.

At 8 a.m. that first day, all the students were at work, arranging furniture, making pillows, placing stencils and art works. “Divide and conquer,” Leimenstoll advised, as she moved from one room to the next.

In the Lafayette Bedroom, Nicole Ware cut borders from huge printed panels that would create a wallpaper for one wall of the adjoining Linen Room. Kacie Leisure worked on stenciling in the master bedroom with Kathryn Frye, who’d soon enter an internship with Disney.

Downstairs, Sharon Frazier considered three mirrors that would hang in the passageway. Frazier received her bachelor’s in Business from the Bryan School in 1996. She had a career with Luminaire, a prominent furnishing design show. She said, “It’s inaccurate. We have historic buildings on the National Register.”

“If everyone thought there’s no history in California — we tear it down,” she explained. “Think about cabinetry, hospital beds, ceiling tiles, flooring. Are they safe? Do they off-gas carcinogens? It’s ironic that healthcare settings could have things that could make people sick. She wants to be a part of the solution.

As a girl, she loved history. Nursing appealed to her too, before she decided to pursue design. “I’m a cancer survivor,” she noted. She had Mesothelioma in her abdomen, due to asbestos. She has been in remission 11 years. Through design, she can make a difference in many lives. She plans to work two years before starting her master’s program.

The best thing about the All American House? “The real-world experience — to see it all from beginning to end — as you’re about to graduate,” Hankus said. Oh, and working as a team, collaboratively. “That’s how it’s going to be.”

Just outside the room, Lauren Postlmayr worked on a pillow. She will get her master’s with a concentration in historic preservation in December. She hopes to return to California and work for a historical preservation firm and teach.

What drew her all the way from Los Angeles? There, she explained, historic preservation is undervalued.

“Everyone thinks there’s no history in California — we tear it down,” she said. “It’s inaccurate. We have historic buildings on the National Register.” Her professors at Woodbury University advised her on the relatively new field of sustainable health care design.

What is that? Think about the materials and the paints you use, she explained. “Think about cabinetry, hospital beds, ceiling tiles, flooring. Are they safe? Do they off-gas carcinogens? It’s ironic that healthcare settings could have things that could make people sick. She wants to be a part of the solution.

Hankus said, as she entered the room. “I love this house. I’ve always had a soft spot for old homes,” Alyssa Hankus said, as she entered the room.

Her focus is sustainable health care design.

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“They’re making industry contacts. They’re making showroom contacts. They’re making design professional contacts,” he explained. Plus they are pioneers. “No Historic Trust house has ever allowed something like this to happen. These kids are the first…” And consider what this does for their portfolio, he added.

And yes, the Washington Post wanted to do a feature.

Leimenstoll recalled Hampton commenting, “I can’t believe how poised your students are.”

DeLorbe said, “We have been so impressed with The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. They are rivaling anything that professional designers do at the very high end.”

This would be considered a “super-high-end project,” he noted. “This is an Architectural Digest-like project level and they met that challenge, which is unbelievable.”

Chancellor Linda P. Brady hosted a luncheon for a number of UNCG alumni the next day, and the students showed off their work in another tour. They had learned some things the judges loved. “The jury was impressed with the little touches that gave it personality,” Leimenstoll said, such as the stencil motifs in the parlor that were derived from the stair stringer bracket design. The teapots on the mantle. “They loved that they were tarnished.” And the 17 pillows.

Tourists would enjoy the rooms for the summer. The students would relish the experience for a lifetime.

The professor reflected on special contributions by the students. “Each had strengths that complemented each other.” And they did it as a team. “We all planned this.”

AND THE WINNER IS....

While the students toured the Mount Vernon estate Wednesday, members of the Congressional Club — Congressional spouses with design or architecture expertise — judged each room.

At the conclusion of a special Thursday luncheon, Alexa Hampton announced the winners. First place, UNCG for the Family Parlor. Second, George Washington University for the Dining Room. Third, UNCG again, for the downstairs Center Passage.

Perhaps better than the honors was the opportunity to talk with and give a tour to industry leaders such as noted designers Hampton and Barbara Hawthorn, both on hand.

Hampton, the competition’s honorary chair, is one of Architectural Digest’s Top 100 designers, noted MADE: In America Chair James Delorbe. Designer Hawthorn is chair of the MADE: In America National Advisory Council.

“Definitely some networking the students would not normally be engaged with,” Leimenstoll said.

DeLorbe marveled at what this meant for the students as they neared graduation. “They’re making industry contacts. They’re making showroom contacts. They’re making design professional contacts,” he explained. Plus they are pioneers. “No Historic Trust house has ever allowed something like this to happen. These kids are the first...” And consider what this does for their portfolios, he added.

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READ MORE ABOUT DR. JO LEIMENSTOLL’S RESEARCH
at http://ucg.edu/an/UCG/HD/MADE/Leimenstoll.html

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UNC Research

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UNC Research
THE TIES THAT BIND

PHD STUDENT YULIANA RODRIGUEZ AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HEATHER HELMS HAVE LEARNED THE VALUE OF GOOD RELATIONSHIPS — BOTH IN THE MARRIAGES THEY STUDY AND AS MENTOR AND MENTESEE.

BY TINA FIRESHEETS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ENGLISH, PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

A SIMPLE EMAIL CHANGED HER LIFE.

Yuliana Rodriguez was a sophomore when she received an email from her professor, Dr. Andrew Supple. He thought she might be interested in participating in a research project studying marital quality among Mexican immigrants in North Carolina.

There were many students in Supple’s adolescent development class, and Rodriguez was honored that he thought of her.

Dr. Heather Helms, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, pursued the project because she saw a need for such research.

“Our knowledge of marriage and how it works is from predominantly one perspective. It’s about white, middle class marriage and doesn’t attend to the unique circumstances of immigrant families,” Helms says. There was a 400 percent increase in the state’s Latino population between 1990 and 2000. In the following decade, North Carolina was ranked sixth in the U.S. for Latino population growth, with an increase of 111 percent. Helms says she thought of a lot about the project before it was released. She encountered naysayers, but charged ahead anyway.

“It felt right to me. It felt important,” Helms says. “This was a story that needed to be told.”

And she needed Spanish-speaking students to help her share it. Rodriguez had no idea how to conduct research. She worked three part-time jobs, and was the first in her family to attend college. She was excited just to be at UNCG, earning a degree.

Now 25, Rodriguez is a second-year PhD student in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

“That email was the start of a journey that I could never have imagined,” she says.

MENTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The mutual respect between Helms and Rodriguez comes through in their praise of one another.

Since their introduction when the project began in 2007, their relationship has evolved. Rodriguez was a junior when she started the project and continued conducting interviews and managing data through the completion of her master’s degree. Helms has been both professor and mentor to her. Helms often recruits undergraduate and graduate students in her research projects. It’s called a “scaffolding approach to learning,” and it’s how she was mentored, she says.

The approach emphasizes teaching through guided experiences in which students learn with an expert, as well as more advanced peers.

While a PhD student at Penn State, her professors often included both graduate and undergraduate students in research projects. Helms says it was a way to “train and inspire” students. She also says it demystified the research process, revealed possibilities and expanded horizons.

Helms has observed Rodriguez blossom as a researcher, community engaged scholar and teacher. She emphasizes Rodriguez’s combination of strengths: “Sometimes PhDs are good in one area, but not all. “Yuliana is unique in that she is strong in multiple areas — a task that many PhDs find difficult to achieve.”

Rodriguez has authored or co-authored several peer-reviewed journal articles that are in various stages of review and has presented findings at regional, national and international conferences.

Helms promotes Rodriguez’s accomplishments whenever she can, nominating her for a graduate school fellowship and other awards. She also worked hard to connect Rodriguez with the community, including Greensboro’s Family Life Council and the Family Life Department of Catholic Social Services. Both organizations serve local families, and Rodriguez’s work with them has focused on low-income immigrant couples, parents and children.

Rodriguez says Helms taught her how to have a healthy relationship between a mentor and mentee.

“She knows when to let you breathe a little and when to push you some,” Rodriguez says. “She’s a wonderful listener. She takes the time to learn about you and from you.”

Above all, Rodriguez says Helms inspires her with her passion. Her mentor juggles teaching, research and family responsibilities— all with incredible energy and enthusiasm.

“It’s really great to have a mentor who’s really excited about her work,” she says.
LATINOS IN NORTH CAROLINA

400% increase from 1990 - 2000
111% increase from 2000 - 2010
6th in the U.S. for growth from 2000 - 2010
3rd in the U.S. for number of foreign-born Latinos
TOP 10 in the U.S. for number of foreign-born Mexican immigrants

MEXICAN-ORIGIN COUPLES AND MARRIAGE

Endorse values that support marriage
Face challenges to maintaining marriage
• Economic hardship
• Stress related to cultural adaptation
• Depressive symptoms

THE PROCESS

The study included 120 families — 240 people within a 60-mile radius of UNC-G. Most of them — 78 percent — lived in small towns and rural areas. Many of the participants were identified through those who helped provide services for them. Oftentimes, the families referred the researchers to others who might be willing to participate.

Their insights went beyond their perspectives on marriage.

When it came to marriage, Rodriguez says, “It seemed they wanted the opportunity to talk about their feelings about coming here.” They spoke about leaving their families behind in Mexico, fear of deportation and frustration with being unable to speak English.

“No being able to communicate with Americans, experiencing racism and not being able to go to the doctor in case of emergency ... have been challenging in the United States,” says Rodriguez.

When it came to marriage, Rodriguez learned that the strongest marriages were those that were well-communicated with.

“Not only are we saying that communication is very important. Research in this area is very important,” she says.

There are many resources for those that are trying to learn English. They are your resources for that will open doors to them learning to navigate living in this new culture.

Upon realizing this, the UNC-G researchers collaborated with the N.C. State Cooperative Extension to provide the participants families with resources to help them navigate the school system, health care and immigration law.

Add to that financial hardship and acculturating to a new culture. Such stress is bound to affect marital quality, Helms surmised. The present’s timing couldn’t have been more relevant. Data were collected in 2007-08, at the start of the economic recession. Work was scarce, particularly for immigrants. It also was a time of heightened anti-immigrant sentiment.

“It was a really scary time to be an immigrant, particularly from Mexico,” Helms says. Establishing trust was key to collecting data. Rodriguez says it was advantageous that she shares a similar background with the families interviewed. Spanish is her first language. Her parents are Mexican immigrants who struggled financially when they first came to the U.S. in 1990.

“Because I understand the culture, it also made me nervous,” Rodriguez says.

She knew their subjects would worry about how their information would be used and if there would be repercussions for their disclosures. She also knew Mexican men would be reluctant to talk about their marriages.

“One of the reasons is that men, especially married men, people in general are very private people. It’s almost like an insult. That’s information that’s really personal,” Rodriguez says.

Knowing this, they made sure to contact husbands first. Their respect and sensitivity paid off. The families trusted them, which encouraged Rodriguez. It also revealed the women wanted to serve them more significantly.

“They’re willing to allow us to work with them, to ask them questions — it’s just that we realize research is very important. Research in this area is very important,” she says.

There are not many resources for those that are trying to learn English. They are your resources for that will open doors to them learning to navigate living in this new culture.

While the study shows that Mexican-origin couples value marriage, the biggest challenges facing these relationships are economic hardship and stress related to cultural adaptation, which can lead to depressive symptoms. Even depressive symptoms can have a negative impact.

Maintaining their native culture, while adapting to a new one, can be difficult for any immigrant or refugee. But the marginalization experienced by many Mexican immigrants elevates such stress.

In this study, husbands reported more acculturation-related stress than their wives. However, they also reported greater marital satisfaction and less marital negativity than their wives, which is consistent with the larger marital literature.

But the unique finding that this study revealed was that the wives’ marital satisfaction was affected not only by their own experiences of stress — but also by their husbands’. The wives were juggling their own, as well as their husbands’, psychological struggles.

Given that wives, more often than husbands, initiate divorce, this finding is noteworthy. Helms says. It could lead to more resources for immigrant couples, such as language training, mental health intervention/prevention and conflict-management skills.

The economic stressors measured were the extent to which the couples had difficulty making ends meet and the extent to which they had enough money to cover basic needs such as adequate housing, food, transportation, clothing and furniture. Like many of the country’s

research goals

EXAMINATION OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT ASSOCIATIONS FROM SPOUSES’ ECONOMIC PRESSURE AND STRESS RELATED TO CULTURAL ADAPTATION WHICH CAN LEAD TO DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS, MARITAL NEGATIVITY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

• Wives reported more economic pressure than husbands.
• Husbands reported more stress related to acculturation and enculturation than wives.
• Husbands reported greater marital satisfaction and less marital negativity than wives.
• Spouses did not differ in their reports of stress related to English competency or depressive symptoms.

working poor, these interviewed lacked health insurance and benefits, worked long hours and faced uncertain employment.

Ninety-eight percent of the husbands interviewed were employed, and 56 percent of the wives were employed. The wives also reported more economic pressure than their husbands.

The motivation behind their willingness to face such challenges: their families. Most of the parents have strong family values and cited their children’s education and bettering their family’s financial situation as reasons for immigrating.

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They move beyond their campus along Spring Garden Street and travel to England, Mexico and Ecuador.

For the professors, they find out firsthand how invaluable their students’ curiosity — and energy — can be. The professors’ research takes shape. New information is found, data are accumulated. As that happens ever so slowly, students get acclimated to seeing their world in a new frame. Different spots on the globe become their classrooms. Some students learn more about chemistry. Others learn more about archaeology and anthropology. But mostly, they learn a lot about themselves, about who they are and what they want to be.

They function in a world without English, live with people they just met and adjust to a life of triple-digit temperatures and native cuisine that sometimes involves something called cuy. That’s guinea pig.

Still, with the help of their professors, these UNCG students turn places they’ve never been into classrooms, and they learn why packing peanut butter and a long-sleeve shirt is always important.

But that’s not all.

On a hillside in Bristol, England, Daniel Nasrallah sees hot-air balloons rise at dusk. He leans on his bike, taking a break from his long days spent in a chemistry lab. For days, he has spent countless hours working on creating an anti-smoking drug. Every time, he loses track of time in his white coat and purple gloves.

That always happened to him at UNCG. But he could only spend 12 hours a week in a lab in the Sullivan Science Building. In England at Bristol University, on his research project coordinated by UNCG’s longtime chemistry professor Dr. Terry Nile, he can stay all day. And he does until the very last minute of the very last day.

But on this hillside, far from his hometown of Winston-Salem, he forgets chemistry for the moment and thinks of fire-eating dragons and Woodstock, the legendary rock concert that happened way before he was born.

He hears the guttural roar of helium igniting and sees a hillside carpeted with people. They’re grilling burgers, craning their necks to see everything above:

“It’s kinda surreal,” says Nasrallah, 21, a rising senior and chemistry major at UNCG. “The hot-air balloons are huge, and you get the opportunity to be so close, and the baskets of the balloons are flying over your head, and I watched them go until they hit the tree line and went farther and farther away.”

For seven weeks in England, Nasrallah joined seven other UNCG students, and they worked in bigger labs, side by side with graduate students and professors from Bristol University’s acclaimed School of Chemistry. It felt like graduate school for Nasrallah. It felt like freedom for Ayana Smith.

She has gone twice, and it’s been the first time she’s traveled outside the country without her parents. But she’s not a chemistry major. She’s a nursing major from Charlotte. As a rising senior, she knows she’ll be working in the halls of hospitals where patients need her help.

So, she knows she needs to be an advocate and have confidence to question a doctor and say, “Wait a minute.” And she needs to know she can question treatment or walk into any room, thick with uneasiness and dread, and say, “Hello, my name is Ayana.”

The trip to Bristol introduced her to new machines and new techniques. It also gave her

By Jeri Rowe

Photographs by Student Researchers Abroad

Thinking Outside the Borders

They all go somewhere.

They move beyond their campus along Spring Garden Street and travel to England, Mexico and Ecuador.

For the professors, they find out firsthand how invaluable their students’ curiosity — and energy — can be. The professors’ research takes shape. New information is found, data are accumulated. As that happens ever so slowly, students get acclimated to seeing their world in a new frame. Different spots on the globe become their classrooms. Some students learn more about chemistry. Others learn more about archaeology and anthropology. But mostly, they learn a lot about themselves, about who they are and what they want to be.

They function in a world without English, live with people they just met and adjust to a life of triple-digit temperatures and native cuisine that sometimes involves something called cuy. That’s guinea pig.

Still, with the help of their professors, these UNCG students turn places they’ve never been into classrooms, and they learn why packing peanut butter and a long-sleeve shirt is always important.

But that’s not all.

On a hillside in Bristol, England, Daniel Nasrallah sees hot-air balloons rise at dusk. He leans on his bike, taking a break from his long days spent in a chemistry lab. For days, he has spent countless hours working on creating an anti-smoking drug. Every time, he loses track of time in his white coat and purple gloves.

That always happened to him at UNCG. But he could only spend 12 hours a week in a lab in the Sullivan Science Building. In England at Bristol University, on his research project coordinated by UNCG’s longtime chemistry professor Dr. Terry Nile, he can stay all day. And he does until the very last minute of the very last day.

But on this hillside, far from his hometown of Winston-Salem, he forgets chemistry for the moment and thinks of fire-eating dragons and Woodstock, the legendary rock concert that happened way before he was born.

He hears the guttural roar of helium igniting and sees a hillside carpeted with people. They’re grilling burgers, craning their necks to see everything above:

“It’s kinda surreal,” says Nasrallah, 21, a rising senior and chemistry major at UNCG. “The hot-air balloons are huge, and you get the opportunity to be so close, and the baskets of the balloons are flying over your head, and I watched them go until they hit the tree line and went farther and farther away.”

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So, she knows she needs to be an advocate and have confidence to question a doctor and say, “Wait a minute.” And she needs to know she can question treatment or walk into any room, thick with uneasiness and dread, and say, “Hello, my name is Ayana.”

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It rained every day. Meals of fried tortillas, enchiladas, meatballs and breakfast bars. A woman who worked 12-hour shifts in a blue-jean factory and survived on herself immersed in a different kind of cultural classroom. Yet, they continued and gave Pettigrew an education she had never had before. “We can talk about it later if you like,” she told them.

“We have to apply for this program,” he tells them. “It’ll change it seems appropriate, especially when you hear what Nasrallah tells you. He has a nickname. A UNC student gave it to him, and it’s on a whiteboard and feeds the intellectual curiosity of his students through research. He should know. He has been teaching chemistry at UNC for 42 years, and in Bristol, he feels at home. He’s a native Englishman, the only son of a machinist dad and a school administrator mom. He can talk about their memories of a mudslide more than a year before.

In 2007, Brittany Burke discovered the same thing in Ecuador. She and the team leaders were excited. And I was proud because this is what I’ve worked on for this trip. I don’t remember what kind of pot — but it was something special, farther than the length of a football field. No matter how far she went, she knew no one except her UNC classical studies professor Dr. Joanne Killeen, who couldn’t speak English. But Mabry understood. So, with four liters of water, Mabry walked. For more than eight hours.

That happened to Pettigrew. She remembers, even two years after it gave me a huge appreciation of how easy I have it,” said Jones.

They are still stuck in a time warp, and it was almost 14 years after it happened to Pettigrew. She wears a hat, a long-sleeve T-shirt, long pants and hiking boots, and she carries with her the water the round-faced Greek grandmother at the local store told her to buy. Her mom a homemaker, and she used to explore the soil dunes farther than the length of a football field. No matter how far she went, she knew no one except her UNC classical studies professor Dr. Joanne Killeen, who couldn’t speak English. But Mabry understood. So, with four liters of water, Mabry walked. For more than eight hours.

The grandmother couldn’t speak English. But Mabry understood. So, with four liters of water, Mabry walked. For more than eight hours.

“We were all so fascinated with everything we were finding,” Mabry said. “It’s already inside of them. You just need something to pull it out.”

“For these kids, it’s like a Zen meditation,” Murphy says. “It’s already inside of them. You just need something to pull it out.”

“Just for the future. If I want to travel when I get older, it’s nice to know I can be thrown into another culture and be able to communicate with people and learn about them.”

Murphy understands. She’s been to the island of Kea seven times, and she’s taken some students there. She sees the look on their faces when they get off the plane. It’s the wide eyes, the slow walk, the body posture that seems to say, “Oh my God, what have I done?”

Then, she watches the transformation. The UNC students work in the field, work in a lab, live in cramped quarters and eat family-style meals with other participating students from the University of Akron. “For these kids, it’s like a Zen meditation,” Murphy says. “It’s already inside of them. You just need something to pull it out.”

And Murphy does that because she sees how it helps in her own research — as well as her profession. “You see them coming back changed and more aware of opportunities out there in the world,” she says. “They’re just more excited than they were before because they realize there are jobs they’ve never heard about before and they think, ‘Hey, I can do that!’”

Like Mabry, Murphy has had her own Rosetta Stone moment. She grew up in Ireland, one of five kids. Her dad was a captain of a cargo ship, her mom a homemaker, and she used to explore the soil dunes farther than the length of a football field. No matter how far she went, she knew no one except her UNC classical studies professor Dr. Joanne Killeen, who couldn’t speak English. But Mabry understood. So, with four liters of water, Mabry walked. For more than eight hours.

“All with the help of Nile. He created this research enterprise six years ago and turned it into the most successful research enterprise I’ve ever been part of,” Jones says.

Jones is 43, a married father of two. Twenty years ago, he worked for the Peace Corps in Guatemala. Today, he works with students like Mandy Elkins.

She went this summer to Penipe for a month, and she took with her hiking boots, a duffle bag and a jar of peanut butter. Peanut butter was hard to find in Ecuador, Elkins said.

“By the end of that month, she knew that the Rosetta Stone was what she wanted to work in a museum to do with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics — and told herself: ‘I want to work in a museum one day and be surrounded by all the time.”

Today, there are 30 Peace Corps in two years ago packing blueberries on a Sampson County farm. But Mabry realized the importance of bending over, eying the ground each step and looking for things no larger than a dessert plate. She is a double major in archaeology and anthropology with a minor in classical studies.

And this is her thing, ever since she went with her mother to London as a seventh-grader, she longed for this kind of work. She walked into the British Museum, saw the Rosetta Stone — a stone-sized block that helped archaeologists decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics — and told herself: “I want to work in a museum one day and be surrounded by all the time.”

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Read more about Dr. Terry Nile’s research at www.uncc.edu/dept/faculty/nile.html.

Read more about Dr. Eric Jones’ research at www.uncc.edu/dept/faculty/vitae/jones.pdf.

Read more about Dr. Joanne Murphy’s research at www.uncc.edu/dept/faculty/murphy.html.

Meanwhile, Pettigrew walked the city streets and talked to strangers about tragedy. Pettigrew put her UNCC education to work in Tzintzuntzan, a city of more than 60,000 people about 110 miles east of Mexico City. She spent a month there and followed the advice UNCC research scientist Dr. Eric Jones often gives anyone who asks about taking students to disaster spots in Ecuador and Mexico.

“I want to find out why people do what they do,” Jones says. He takes his students to three places so they can see how people function following Mother Nature’s wrath. He pushes them to dig deep and to investigate the need for social networks. In the process, they see themselves with their own perceptions about the world and themselves.

That happened to Pettigrew. She remembers, even two years after it changed people forever. It changed her, too.

It was just after sunrise, six hours or so before the temperature hit 100 degrees, and Mabely Madray was wrapped in sun-protective gear from her head to her toes. She wore a hat, a long-sleeve T-shirt, long pants and hiking boots, and she carried with her the water the round-faced Greek grandmother at the local store told her to buy.

She’s been to the island of Kea seven times, and she’s taken some students there. She sees the look on their faces when they get off the plane. It’s the wide eyes, the slow walk, the body posture that seems to say, “Oh my God, what have I done?”

But not perspective.

Mabry couldn’t speak English. But Mabry understood. So, with four liters of water, Mabry walked. For more than eight hours.

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Elliott Carter’s “What Next?”: Communication, Cooperation, and Separation
Dr. Guy Capuzzo
University of Rochester Press (200 pp.)

Elliott Carter is renowned in the music world not only for the quality of his work but for the remarkable span of his creativity. Carter, who died last fall at 103, composed music for more than 80 years. For one-quarter of that time, a UNC-G professor has been researching Carter’s impact on the music world.

Dr. Guy Capuzzo, an associate professor of music theory, is the author of a new book for music theorists, composers and graduate students called “Elliott Carter’s ‘What Next?’: Communication, Cooperation, and Separation.” The book is a study of Carter’s first and only opera, “What Next?,” which he composed at the tender age of 90. The book was released in September 2012, just two months before Carter’s death.

“I think Carter wrote music that’s built to last,” Capuzzo says of the works, which include orchestral, chamber music, solo instrumental and vocal compositions. “One hundred years from now, people will still be performing Carter. Two hundred years from now, they will still be performing Carter.”

Capuzzo first heard the composer’s work in the late 1980s during an undergraduate 20th century music class. He loved it and completed a doctoral dissertation on him in 1999.

Capuzzo’s book dives deeply into the opera, which features six people who try to cooperate with one another so they can be rescued from a car accident. “I tried to use that idea of cooperation and communication as a way to look at the opera more closely,” he says.

The book also includes material from an interview with the composer in 1996. It was an interview that almost didn’t happen.

Capuzzo had traveled to New York to visit with Carter at the Greenwich Village apartment he shared with his wife for nearly 60 years. But the morning of the interview, the composer called him to cancel. Capuzzo politely asked why. Carter said he lived on the third floor and the elevator had broken.

“He could only see the situation as an 85-year-old man who couldn’t take the stairs,” Capuzzo recalls with a laugh. “On the other hand, I’m this eager graduate student and there was no way I was going to lose this interview.”

He didn’t, and he was inspired even more. For both men, it seems, “there’s something to be said for sticking with something for awhile,” Capuzzo notes. “Keep learning more and realizing how little you know. It opens up all these avenues.”

He traveled to New York for Carter’s memorial service in May. “He just kept doing what he loved up until the very end,” Capuzzo says. “He led such an extraordinary life, and that’s cause for celebration.”

Coached actors, furnished English translations and integrated ASL into their production “Sleeping Beauty Dreams.” This show was then performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

Briley also volunteered at a school for deaf children, where she learned American Sign Language and helped with drama workshops. The combined experience taught her much about letting the work unfold and allowing the process to shape the final product, she says. “It’s a method she will use back in Greensboro. As she co-develops the new production, Briley plans to seek input from students at Jones Elementary, Lindley Elementary and the Doris Henderson Newcomers School. At the same time, her colleagues in Mexico City will conduct a similar study there, and the data will be combined to inform the evolution of the play.

“We want to gather information about what children think of communicating without words and not being able to express their emotions,” she says. “Certainly we have a structure for the play in our adult brains now. But we also feel strongly about engaging children in the dialogue. This way, the story we present to the audience comes not just from our own hearts but from the hearts of children who are living in this situation.”

“The performance will incorporate puppetry, sound and strong visual stimuli to engage the entire audience.”

Ultimately, Briley intends to bring Marionetas de la Esquina to Greensboro to perform the completed work for the children who shared their input along the way.

“We want to show them that their ideas matter,” she says. “They are legitimate participants in this dialogue.”

When Rachel Briley arrived in Mexico City to begin her research, she spoke very little Spanish. Between that and trying to adjust to a new culture, she sometimes felt “isolated, frustrated, alone and unable to connect.” These feelings mirror the theme of her next play, a puppet performance that the North Carolina Theatre for Young People is developing in collaboration with Marionetas de la Esquina, an award-winning Mexican puppet company. The performance will be for a combined deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing family audience. It will include an American Sign Language translation, which has been a particular focus for Briley during her research visits.

“One essential question that’s guiding this work is how we communicate without spoken words,” says Briley, an associate professor who directs the North Carolina Theatre for Young People and UNC-G’s MFA program in Theatre for Youth.

Briley spent January through May working in two capacities in Mexico City. First, she worked as an artist-in-residence with Marionetas de la Esquina.

For Robin Gee, her Fulbright award offered a unique opportunity to live a dual existence as both student and teacher.

Gee, an associate professor of dance in the School of Music, Theatre and Dance, spent spring semester in French-speaking West Africa. It was an opportunity to immerse in the cultural influences that shape dance there — and sharing her own experience of African-American dance and music.

After a two-week trip to France to re-immerse herself in the French language she speaks fluently, she headed to Burkina Faso, once part of Mali, where she remained through July. She produced a film depicting folk dance styles while teaching traditional African-American dance, jazz, hip hop and contemporary styles to students at the University of Ouagadougou.

“African have little knowledge of the African-American voice and experience in the West,” she said before she left. “There’s a lot of French influence in the arts in West Africa of course. Their exposure to what I means to be cultural awareness in the Western sense comes from France.”

Gee has been in and out of Francophone West Africa for almost 20 years, she says. She spent the spring semester of 2007 studying in a small village in Guinea, West Africa.

Although France enjoyed a golden-age of African-American jazz influence in the 1920s, Gee said the contemporary French art scene runs to the avant garde and abstract. The African-American style of storytelling with infused musicality is new to West African countries like Burkina Faso and Mali, which were colonized by the French.

Gee worked primarily with a large international dance center, the Ecole de Danse Internationale Irene Tassembedo in Burkina Faso, staying in “the urban and slightly Westernized” capital of Ouagadougou. The Université de Ouagadougou and the U.S. Embassy hosted her visit.

Gee’s project is called “Urban Griots: The Imagining the Voice.” In addition to producing a documentary and dance, she studied the artist/musician caste there, known as jalis, and how their work has been impacted by urbanization and globalization.

She will also choreograph a dance performance based on what she has learned there. Look for that performance on campus in February 2014, in celebration of Black History Month.
“Think of it as applying the Guitar Hero computer game method for learning how to play an instrument — you know; following the moving dots — to relearn how to walk.”

Dr. Chris Rhea

Virtual becomes reality
LIKE A BADLY COMPROMISED KNEE JOINT, DR. CHRIS RHEA could have gone in any number of directions. His BS degree in physical education might have meant a career in sports coaching or training. But abiding interests in mathematics and computer programming spurred him toward advanced degrees in biomathematics, which in turn could have taken him anywhere from computer game design to military engineering.

But Rhea chose something better, at least for those hoping for faster and more complete recoveries from trauma that affect their ability to walk or run. He combined his interests, knowledge and research skills, and brought them to UNCG in 2011 to establish the VEaRlab (Virtual Environment for Assessment and Rehabilitation Laboratory) in the Department of Kinesiology.

Under Rhea’s guidance, the VEaR lab is bringing virtual reality to bear on the recognition and rehabilitation of injuries and other problems, such as strokes and the effects of aging, that affect balance, leg muscle and joint strength, and endurance. It’s one of about 10 such labs in the US, according to Rhea, and in combination with its neighboring Applied Neuromechanics Research Lab in the HHP Building, the VEaR lab is adding new power to UNCG’s already established reputation as a center for the study, rehabilitation and improvement of human mobility.

The lab, like much of the work done there, looks deceptively simple. It’s furnished with a single, albeit expensive and multi-functional, treadmill. Mounted high on the walls at regular stations are multiple cameras pointed at the treadmill. And in one corner rests a small cluster of computers and video equipment, including a dual-monitor headset. Most often, the image generated by the equipment and beamed either to the wall in front of the treadmill or the headset is of an animated human figure — an avatar — strutting endlessly on virtual pavement, back turned to the viewer.

The set-up can capture impressively detailed, three-dimensional information about the gait of those who walk the treadmill, thanks to the cameras and the sensors they follow; placed at strategic points along hips and legs. That helps Rhea understand the often subtle ways subjects compensate for the pain and awkwardness of the way they walk, thus delaying optimal recovery, or thwarting it altogether.

Not only that, the lab’s equipment can then be programmed to nudge a subject toward a more normal gait.

“Sometimes it’s just a matter of encouraging them to watch the avatar, and to align their steps with it as closely as they can, while they’re on the treadmill,” Rhea said. “That’s the Guitar Hero effect.”

The treadmill also can be programmed to alter its speed, stop momentarily or shift briefly into reverse, causing a subject (safely harnessed) to experience and quickly recover from the effects of slipping and tripping, gradually strengthening those responses.

Plus, Rhea said, he and his graduate student staff are always busy designing virtual landscapes that subjects, wearing the headset, can be asked to negotiate, requiring a wide range of motion and actions designed to restore strength and agility.

Early results of his work suggest to Rhea there’s a real place for virtual reality in physical therapy, and he’s been testing his lab’s approaches with patients from a Greensboro clinic, with a goal of freeing therapists — armed with his computer-aided diagnostic tools and therapies — to see and help more patients.

Not a bad direction for a guy who could go anywhere.
NC A&T State Chancellor Harold Martin and UNCG Chancellor Linda P. Brady take part in announcing the new Nanomanufacturing Innovation Consortium to the public. Members of the consortium will have access to state-of-the-art research facilities at the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology.