“Climb with one hand so that the other hand is free to help bring someone else up.”

This inspiring lesson Malcomb Coley ’86, ’89M learned from his mentors at UNCW and is one he lets guide his own life.

A partner in the Assurance and Advisory Business Services Group with Ernst & Young in Atlanta, Coley is responsible for the company’s diversity initiatives across the Southeast. He strives to help the accounting firm create an “equitable opportunity for all through the use of good mentors, peer advisors and the necessary resources for success such as up-to-date training and technology.”

The 2004 Outstanding Cameron School of Business Alumni Award recipient, Coley is dedicated to helping UNCW students get their feet wet in the corporate world. He returns annually to attend Business Week, is a member of the Cameron School of Business Executive Advisory Board and recently made a commitment to endow five scholarships in recognition of his own mentors and to give deserving students a financial helping hand.

“Networking is crucial. It allows you to get to know people from both a personal and professional standpoint. They could become a mentor or provide guidance. It also provides you the opportunity to showcase yourself,” Coley said.

Professors such as Fara Elikai played an influential role in Coley’s journey at UNCW. “He was very forthright with me by telling me the things I needed to hear versus the things that I wanted to hear,” Coley said. Elikai said the relationship has been two-way.

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“It was my pleasure to have Malcomb as a student, and it continues to be a pleasure seeing him become so successful in his career. As a student, Malcomb was bright, diligent, thorough and unusually talented. As a person, he was highly motivated, dedicated to self-development, enjoyed intellectual challenges and strived to excel,” Elikai said. “Throughout the decades since he graduated, Malcomb has provided distinguished service and contributions to the Cameron School of Business and the University of North Carolina Wilmington.”

Thanks to his commitment to giving back to the UNCW community, Coley has left footprints in the sand for UNCW students to follow for years to come.

At the 2008 Stompin’ at the Savoy fundraiser, he announced a $250,000, 10-year commitment to fund five scholarships, including two new scholarships. Existing scholarships honor the inspiration and accomplishments of his former professor Denis G. Carter, Ralph Parker, former director of minority affairs at UNCW, and the late Douglas Johnson, who was registrar. The new ones recognize Lt. Col. James Bray, director of career planning and placement, and the Cameron School of Business.

“These four men can never be repaid for all they have given us. This is a way to help with their individual legacies, which will now live in perpetuity at this great university. It is one of the ways we say ‘thanks’ to them,” Coley said.