

politics:

the next generation

Young alumni
fill leadership
roles across the
political spectrum

By Dana Fischetti

The North Carolina state director for the Kerry-Edwards presidential campaign. The finance director for the Burr for Senate campaign. The president of the Guilford County Young Democrats. A Bush administration political appointee in the Social Security Administration. A former staff member of U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms. And an account manager with a firm that oversees contributions to the Bush-Cheney campaign.

Cheri Arnott poses at the entrance of Air Force II as she prepares to travel with Vice President Dick Cheney.

While this group of professionals and volunteers works in a wide variety of political positions and splits their allegiance between the two major parties, they do have several things in common. All of them are up-and-coming leaders in national, state and local politics, ensuring that the critical behind-the-scenes work gets done within their campaign or office. And they were all prepared to take on these leadership roles through their academic and extracurricular experiences at UNCW. While they may call themselves Republicans or Democrats and sometimes be bitter opponents in heated campaigns, at the end of the day they're all Seahawks.

And by the way, the oldest one was born during the Ford administration, while the three youngest entered the world with Ronald Reagan as president. One can only imagine the great things they'll do when they hit their third decade.



Cheri Arnott '97

Volunteer with Vice President Dick Cheney's Office

A former staffer for the Bush-Cheney presidential campaign in 2000 and a Bush administration political appointee, Cheri Arnott sometimes travels with the vice president as a volunteer on official visits. This year, she visited Aviano Air Base in Pordenone, Italy, and Seoul, South Korea, assisting with special event planning and

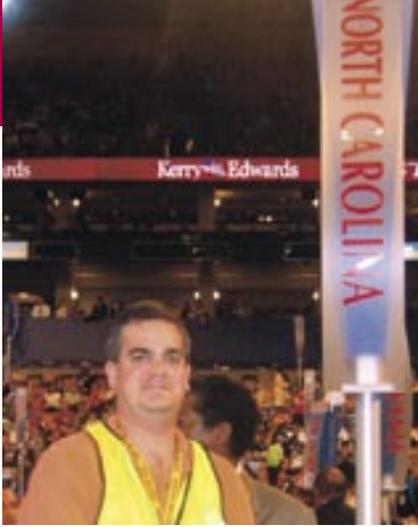
media relations. Both trips were eye-opening, she said, particularly with the increased security and awareness of the post-9/11 era.

"There's nothing that will compare to standing on that army base in Seoul with a room full of American troops to see how tenuous peace really is," she said. "I had tears in my eyes when the vice president came out and the national anthem was played. There is something magical about that, something that reminds us how lucky we are to live in the USA."

While Arnott looks forward to volunteering for future state trips, she is keeping busy with her full-time position as director of the Combined Federal Campaign in the Social Security Administration (SSA) in Baltimore, Md. The combined campaign is similar to the United Way campaign, raising funds for charitable organizations from government employees. Last year, Arnott raised just under \$1.3 million from about 14,000 SSA employees. She is also president of the Baltimore/DC UNCW Alumni Chapter.

After graduating from UNCW, Arnott earned her Master of Public Service and Administration degree at the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. While there, she had several opportunities to meet with Bush family members and work with then-Gov. George W. Bush. In 1999, she moved to Austin to work as a volunteer on Bush's first presidential campaign and was hired as a full-time staff member a week later.

"Working on a campaign is probably the most stressful job I can imagine," she said, "because everything you do is live and on the news immediately. But it's also incredibly rewarding. It's the thrill of winning, the thrill of seeing someone who you believe will truly change the world in a position to do that and knowing you had a part in it. You really have to have a personal investment in your candidate to make it worthwhile."



Jason Coley represented North Carolina at the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston.

Jason Coley '00

President, Guilford County Young Democrats

Jason Coley is on a mission. As president of the Young Democrats of Guilford County, he wants to encourage more young people to get involved in the political process and bring their youthful energy to campaigns.

"There's a lot of opportunity to encourage young voters to get involved," Coley said. "On many college campuses, the voter turnout is less than 10 percent. It's hard to find people that young who want to be active in politics, but I've started to see a change in that over the past year. More young people are showing an interest in politics, and we emphasize to them that they can really make a difference."

Coley makes his living as a research and development lab technician for Syngenta Crop Protection in Greensboro, but invests a large part of his time off the clock working for the Democratic Party. This has been true since he was eight years old, when he began helping to recruit voters with his father, who was on the executive board of the AFL-CIO and chair of the Guilford County Democratic Party. While at UNCW, he worked with the New Hanover County party office on the "Get Out the Vote" campaign. In addition to serving as president of the Young Democrats, he traveled to Boston as a North Carolina delegate to the 2004 Democratic National Convention.

"There was so much energy there," he said of his convention experience. "It was like being at a sporting event that is coming down to the final seconds and seeing the winning shot or the winning field goal. And the North Carolina delegation was fortunate to be up front where we could see and be a part of everything. It really energized us to go back home and hit the ground running on the campaign."

Shane Fernando '00

Former Staff Member for Sen. Jesse Helms

After graduating from UNCW, Shane Fernando was planning to go to China to teach through the Sister Cities Program connection between Wilmington and Dandong. The day after graduation, just as he was about to accept the teaching position, Fernando received a call from U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms that changed his course.



Shane Fernando is pictured with former U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, with whom he interned while a student at UNCW.

Instead of going to China, he went to Washington, D.C., to work in a position Helms offered him with the office of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and later worked as a member of Helms' Senate office staff. During high school and while at UNCW, Fernando had interned for Helms as well as for U.S. Sen. Lauch Faircloth, and those internship experiences led to the full-time staff opportunity.

As a communication studies major and active member of student government, Fernando said the experiences he had at UNCW helped prepare him for the challenge of working on Capitol Hill and for any future career opportunities he may pursue.

"Working with the Student Government Association and with the administration at UNCW helped me hone my leadership skills and taught me a lot about the political system, how our government works and how all of that ties into a university setting," he said. "But I also knew I'd want to work in other areas besides politics, and the communication studies program is structured so that you can tailor it to the type of education you want to receive. It can open so many doors because success in many fields comes down to whether or not you can effectively communicate."

When Helms retired from the Senate at the end of 2002, Fernando decided to take some time off to pursue another of his interests, buying and refurbishing a historic home in Washington. He has since completed that project and is currently seeking a position with the U.S. Department of State and exploring graduate school opportunities. He hopes his next career move will keep him in Washington.

"When I was about eight or nine," he said, "we went on a family vacation to D.C., and I remember tugging on my mom's and dad's sleeves to tell them that I wanted to live here someday. I fell in love with the city, and I still feel the same way."



Morgan Jackson is pictured with Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards.

Morgan Jackson '96

N.C. State Director Kerry-Edwards Campaign

Morgan Jackson worked for U.S. Sen. John Edwards for the past three-and-a-half years, before accepting a job in July as state director for the Kerry-Edwards presidential campaign. He had worked in the senator's office since 2001 and later became national deputy political director for the John Edwards for President campaign, overseeing several states in the Southeast. For both positions he was based in Raleigh.

"I was one of the senator's outreach aides," he explained. "My job was to keep in touch with constituents and keep my eyes and ears to the ground so that Senator Edwards would be aware of changing needs in North Carolina. That's what I liked best about my job – being in the district and talking face-to-face with the people the elected office represents."

profiles

CHERI ARNOTT '97

Age 29

UNCW Degree: B.A. in political science

Current Position: Director of Combined Federal Campaign, Social Security Administration in Baltimore, Md.

Volunteer: Travels with Vice President Dick Cheney on official state visits, president of Baltimore/D.C. UNCW Alumni Chapter

JASON COLEY '00

Age 26

UNCW Degree: B.S. in business information systems

Current Position: Research and development lab technician for Syngenta Crop Protection in Greensboro

Volunteer: President of Young Democrats of Guilford County and delegate to 2004 Democratic National Convention

SHANE FERNANDO '00

Age 24

UNCW Degree: B.A. in communication studies

Current Position: Took time off to renovate a historic home in Washington, D.C.; currently seeking a position with the U.S. Department of State and exploring graduate school opportunities

MORGAN JACKSON '96

Age 30

UNCW Degree: B.A. in political science

Current Position: North Carolina state director for the Kerry-Edwards presidential campaign, based in Raleigh

AMANDA KORNEGAY '97

Age 29

UNCW Degree: B.A. in political science

Current Position: Finance director, Richard Burr for U.S. Senate campaign, based in Winston-Salem

KATE RUSSELL '02

Age 24

UNCW Degree: B.A. in communication studies

Current Position: Account representative, Campaign Mail and Data, Inc., in Falls Church, Va., which manages contributions to the Bush-Cheney presidential campaign and to the Republican National Committee

Jackson also had that opportunity earlier in his career, when he interned with U.S. Rep. Charlie Rose during his senior year at UNCW, then served as a congressional aide to both U.S. representatives Mel Watt and Bill Hefner in their N.C. offices. During the 2000 election cycle, he worked as political director of the North Carolina Democratic Party. He credits UNCW and the Political Science Department with helping him get his start in politics.

"I always thought I wanted to work in politics but when I got into the political science classes and began experiencing what politics was really like it helped me figure out what I wanted to do with my life," he said. "The faculty puts every effort into helping students find the career path that is right for them. And one of the best things was that I got the job with Congressman Hefner due in large part to my internship with Charlie Rose and the help I received from UNCW."

In late August, Jackson returned to the UNCW campus with Edwards, who made a campaign speech at Kenan Auditorium. In Jackson's current role, he is responsible for all aspects of the campaign in North Carolina, including helping define the candidate's messages, planning special events, managing a team of volunteers making voter contacts across the state and developing and executing a media plan.

"It's a little bit of everything," he said.

Amanda Kornegay '97

**Finance Director
Burr for Senate Campaign**

Amanda Kornegay was instrumental in organizing a visit to UNCW by First Lady Laura Bush in July as a campaign fundraiser for U.S. Rep. Richard Burr, candidate for U.S. Senate. Her main role was to raise campaign funds across the state but, as with most jobs on small campaign staffs, her role was broadly defined and changed every day.

That variety is one of the things she loves about working in politics.

"It's the opportunity to always do different things," she said. "In some ways, it's like having a different job every day. There are days you can plan because you have an event going on, like organizing the visit by the First Lady. That week my life was com-



Amanda Kornegay is pictured with, from left, U. S. Rep. Richard Burr; Brandon Macsata '96, owner of Macsata & Associates, a consulting and lobbying firm; and Vice President Dick Cheney.

pletely taken up by that event. Other days you have no idea what may come up that suddenly takes priority over everything else."

Before joining the Burr campaign earlier this year, Kornegay worked for six years in Washington, D.C., spending the first year and a half working as an aide to U.S. Sen. Lauch Faircloth and the following four and a half running the National Association of Broadcasters' political action committee. She also interned for Faircloth while at UNCW and was active in the Student Government Association.

She said she feels fortunate to have had so many different professional opportunities at such a young age but that it requires a major commitment.

"Capitol Hill is run by 22- to 30-year-olds," she said. "Young staff have the time to put in and are so eager to be out of college and to learn. It's new and exciting but it's also difficult and demanding work. Candidates and members of Congress truly appreciate what their staffs do because they know what hard work it is."

Currently based in Winston-Salem, Kornegay's goal is to move back to Wilmington and buy a house, but she is unable to think about any short-term goals until after the election.

"At this point, there is no future beyond Election Day," she said. "Like most campaign staffers, my hope is that this opportunity will turn out well and will lead to the next one."

Kate Russell '02

Account Representative
Campaign Mail and Data Inc.

When Kate Russell was a student at UNCW, she took advantage of the opportunities she had to get involved and gain experience for her career. She was the youngest-ever female student body president and a member of the first female president and vice president team. She studied abroad in England as part of the International Studies program.



Kate Russell was with President and Mrs. George W. Bush at the 2002 Presidential Christmas Party.

And she helped lobby for the bond issue in 2000 to provide funding for the new education building, among others.

"It was incredible to be involved in that process," she said. "I was able to attend the groundbreaking for the new building, which made it real. It was rewarding to see that the university that had the smallest square footage per student in the UNC system was finally going to get more classroom space."

Russell grew up in Kansas and moved to Greensboro with her family just before her senior year of high school. When she was 16, her father worked as campaign treasurer for U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, a Kansas Republican, and Russell interned for Brownback while a student at UNCW. She found the atmosphere in Brownback's Senate office very different from that of the campaign in Kansas.

"It was strange because the chief of staff, this person who was in a very high-ranking position in the Senate office, was

a person I had known when I was younger and who would come over to my father's house with pizza," she said. "Also during the campaign Sen. Brownback was always there but most of the time on Capitol Hill he was in meetings, drafting legislation or working on committees. The Senate floor is empty a lot of the time because there are so many meetings."

After graduation, Russell worked for the Republican National Committee (RNC) in Washington during the 2002 campaign, and then took a position with Campaign Mail and Data Inc. in Falls Church, Va., which oversees private contributions to the Bush-Cheney campaign and to the RNC. The firm checks the accuracy of

donor records and ensures compliance with campaign finance laws before contributions are deposited.

Russell said she prefers to provide support to the Republican Party in this way rather than being directly involved in a campaign.

"A campaign is really demanding," she said. "Everything is all the time, real time, need it now. That was hard for my father and for our family. I could've applied to work for the Bush-Cheney campaign after I worked at the RNC, but I didn't want to choose that. I wanted to find a way to work in politics but not wonder if I would have a job after Nov. 2."

Dana Fischetti is a marketing and communications consultant for UNCW's professional schools.

Political science at UNCW Curriculum emphasizes classical theory, real-world experience

Political science is a broad, diverse field, and students come to it with many different areas of academic and career interest. Recognizing this, the UNCW Political Science Department and its degree programs are structured to give students a core understanding of classic political theory as well as the flexibility to apply that theory to their own specific interest areas.

"Some of our students are interested in legislative politics, some have a stronger interest in state than national politics and some are preparing for law school," said department chair Tom Barth. "We help our students determine a career direction based on their interests and their personality types. Working in an agency in the federal government is a whole different world than working on a campaign or in a legislative office. Some people are more comfortable in one world than the other."

To assist students in developing the skills they need to be successful after graduation, the curriculum heavily emphasizes writing, the ability to present persuasively, basic analytical skills and critical thinking. The department also provides students with practical experience through internships

and coaches them on how to dress and behave in their internship settings.

"There's the theoretical world of politics and then there's the real rough-and-tumble world," said Barth. "Most students have never been a part of that real world, and there's no substitute for actually living it and experiencing it. We constantly remind our students that politics is all about networking, and if they do a good job and make an impression on the right people it can go a long way."

In the classroom, the focus is on providing a complete overview of American domestic politics, including the theories that American political principles are built on, as well as international political issues and how they affect domestic policy decisions. Classes discuss viewpoints from across the political spectrum on a wide variety of topics, and students are encouraged to form their own political identities and value systems.

"Most students who come here are a product of their parents' views, whether conservative or liberal," Barth said, "and part of their education is exposure to other points of view and learning to value the diversity that is part of our political system."