Holding a Mirror up to Society –

public sociologists look to applied learning to solve complex problems
With this issue of the Arts & Sciences Magazine, we have the pleasure of telling you about a new initiative based on a traditional College of Arts and Sciences strength. First, a little background:

We live in a time when more people than ever before are studying at colleges and universities. And just as individuals look to us to prepare them for life and career, society itself increasingly turns to the university for solutions to a host of problems. There is a growing awareness that in order for higher education to make its mark on the individual and on society, the university needs to prepare its students to bridge the gap between the classroom and the complex problems that fill everyday life. This is one of the essential outcomes of a university education.

We understand this in the College of Arts and Sciences. That’s why the 23 academic departments in the College are taking a step to ensure that our graduates leave UNCW well prepared to live good lives and to make meaningful contributions wherever they live. We call this step the Applied Learning Initiative. By “applied learning,” we mean any teaching/learning practice that requires students to integrate the various strands of knowledge they’ve acquired and to apply that knowledge to broader, real-world situations. Examples include faculty-directed research, internships and practicum experiences, field school, service learning and capstone courses and projects.

This is how it works in practice: Each CAS department has developed an applied learning requirement as a part of the curriculum for its undergraduate majors. The specific requirements vary by department. An internship might be the best choice for one discipline, a research experience for another and a group project for yet another. But common to all of these experiences is an emphasis on integration and application. The entering class of fall 2008 will be the first class subject to these requirements.

Does the Applied Learning Initiative signal a big change for CAS? Actually, no. For many faculty members and students, this is nothing new. The College has a first-class research faculty with a long tradition of working closely with undergraduate students outside the traditional classroom. And many of our programs already had an applied learning experience imbedded within the major.

But with the Applied Learning Initiative, all of our academic programs have taken what was, for the most part, an opportunity and articulated it as a requirement. They have now ensured that all CAS students – not just some – will experience the integration and application of what they learn in the major field. In doing so, they’ve made applied learning a hallmark of the CAS experience.

In this issue, you’ll find a generous sampling of the many ways our students in the College experience applied learning. Students and their stories are always interesting, so it’s a good bet that you’ll enjoy the read. But I hope that along the way, you’ll also gain a sense of the growth our students experience, the confidence they gain and the life preparation they absorb as they take part in these experiences. You’ll also be reminded, once again, that the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences is an extraordinary group of educators whose commitment to the advancement of knowledge is second only to their dedication to students.

Best regards,

David Cordle, Dean
College of Arts and Sciences
In this issue of Arts & Sciences, you will find undergraduates engaged in ground-breaking research, practicing in the field, managing projects, doing community-based service learning, contributing at national conferences and studying abroad.

These learning experiences are outcomes of the Applied Learning Initiative that requires students in the College to demonstrate their ability to apply learning to complex problems in real-world settings. Through this initiative, our graduates will be better prepared to succeed and lead in the 21st century.

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Reel Girls: an applied learning experience that enabled 25 middle school girls to make movies

The Arts: creative hands etch the tracings between idea and image

A Hallmark of UNCW: undergraduate research
Everywhere we turn someone is fighting for our attention, urging conformity to standards that direct our behaviors, dictate our options and opinions and influence our choices.

You want to look like them. You must have these clothes. You need this new product.

Reel Girls

An Applied Learning Experience that Enabled 25 Middle School Girls to Make Movies

Young girls are especially vulnerable to these influences, often investing unqualified acceptance and belief in the ideals – and idols – created for them by media messaging.

Four UNC Wilmington faculty members decided to take action to empower young women with the self-confidence to make their own choices.

In 2006, Shannon Silva, assistant professor of film studies; Susan Bullers, director of the Women’s Studies Resource Center; Mariana Johnson, assistant professor of film studies; and Donna King, associate professor of sociology and criminal justice initiated an original project they named Reel Girls. The project gave four UNCW students the opportunity to mentor 25 local middle school girls from less privileged areas in the production of their own short independent documentary films.

The project vision was to give UNCW students practice in outreach, public relations, community service, teaching and event coordination. Middle school students would learn to become critical evaluators of media as they became technologically proficient at making films that told real stories from their own experiences.

This vision quickly became a powerful partnership between UNCW faculty and undergraduates and D.C. Virgo Middle School. Principal Megan Silvey was thrilled when UNCW proposed the project. “Our students struggle with pressures not to excel, so that they won’t ‘stand out.’ They receive conflicting messages concerning the rewards for ‘being like everyone else’ and being their own person. I knew Reel Girls would empower our girls to express themselves through arts and technology in ways that most never knew existed, and the project really complemented Virgo’s Infusion of Technology and Arts into Learning (VITAL) program.”

During joint project planning sessions, faculty advisors with film studies majors Ashli Bogart ’07, Alexandra Lefkowitz ’08 and Meghann Sumner ’08 and sociology major Hillary Hood ’07 developed a curriculum and organized lesson plans for a series of UNCW student-led workshops that would provide the seventh and eighth grade girls with training in media literacy, filmmaking techniques and film editing.

**Empowering Young Women with Technology**

One important goal of the project was to engage young women with technology early in their education. “When I teach equipment, boys are usually the first to move towards the tools, while girls typically stand back and observe before going hands on. We hoped by getting women to handle technology at such a young age we would build their confidence in this area,” professor Silva said.

Undergraduates Bogart, Lefkowitz, Sumner and Hood said they were “blown away” by the enthusiasm in the application essays on what it means to be a “real” girl in society. Yet, they were nervous about how the girls would receive their “reel” lessons.

**Gaining Understanding**

“We were anxious about the generation gap and concerned about how we would relate to kids whose...
backgrounds could be very different from ours. Virgo is an inner-city school, and we thought that many students might come from challenging backgrounds, so we were not sure what to expect,” Sumner said.

Their fears disappeared the moment they met the girls. “The experience changed the way I view people across the board,” film studies major Ashli Bogart said. “I may have had preconceived ideas going in, but now I know if you’ve got it, you’ve got it. And those girls, well, they have it!”

Self-assurance

Given digital video cameras and the freedom to use the school as a film set to capture their environment, the girls set out to interview peers and teachers to create on-camera footage that would explain what being a real girl means for them in a media-saturated world.

“I felt like a director, like a professional, with the camera. When you can’t afford these things, it is nice to be trusted with this technology. You feel better about yourself,” said Virgo Reel Girl Lainey Hanna.

With the footage, each two-student team constructed three-minute movies using D.C. Virgo’s Movie Maker editing software. The university provided digital video cameras and other equipment for the project.

The Virgo filmmakers experienced the premiere of their movies in true Hollywood style at UNCW’s Lumina Theatre. Following the films, the girls held an audience question and answer session for parents, friends and guests.

That’s a Wrap

“The project was about more than just teaching these students how to make movies. We wanted them to become confident using and working with all types of technology; to develop their own opinions in response to the media they consume; and, of course, to be full-fledged partners in a campus learning collaboration. It was successful beyond our expectations,” Bullers said.

When asked if they had considered the unrealistic nature of media messages about females prior to the project, the middle schoolers unanimously responded “No.”

After her Reel Girls experience, eighth-grader Elizabeth Honeycutt said, “I know everything is not always as it seems, and that you can’t look like that without a computer making you look that way or act like that without getting in trouble.”

Virgo student Lauren Bennett said, “I think, you know, there is pressure, but now I don’t care. I am going to be me, and I can’t wait to go to college.” Bennett is already sharing her new insights. “When my 5-year-old cousin said, ‘I want to be skinny like this girl on TV,’ I said, ‘No, you don’t! She is not real. Real girls don’t look like that!”

Film studies major Sumner said, “You can only learn so much inside the classroom. This was one of the best experiences I have had at UNCW. I hope it continues to expand and impact the lives of more children.”

Bogart said, “It was a full-circle learning experience for all of us. For me, it was truly life-altering. Even at 24 years old, the media literacy material made me re-evaluate my self-image and seeing the positive impact this had on the kids made me rethink what I want to do with my life. I never thought I would be a teacher, but now I plan to do a project like this in my Charleston community.”

Looking Forward

In the spring semester of 2008, the original interdisciplinary UNCW student team will share a presentation at the annual Southeastern Women’s Studies Association Conference and then return to campus to collaborate with a second generation of UNC Wilmington undergraduates and D.C. Virgo real girls as Reel Girls returns for another “season” in New Hanover County Public Schools. — by Joy Davis ’07
Undergraduate Research:
Real Scholarly Practice

Shawna M. Lesseur-Blas ’08: The Honors Thesis
Socioeconomic Criticism in Eugene O’Neill’s One-Act Plays: Trading Human Growth for Economic Gain
“Early on,” Newlin says, “Shawna recognized that scholars have preferred to focus on the major works and tended to treat O’Neill’s early works merely as apprenticeship work. By examining the early plays in particular, she has discovered aspects of O’Neill’s writing virtually ignored by traditional scholars.”

“At the core of his work she has identified a preoccupation with the artist/poet figure who sells out his art for economic success, betraying the self,” Newlin says. “This theme has roots in O’Neill’s personal story and is a new, original route of inquiry into the body of his work. This is extremely unusual for an undergraduate, even for graduate students, who typically synthesize work rather than create new approaches.”

Characterizing her intellectual curiosity as “dogged,” Newlin describes the level of Blas’ scholarship as “such that profs ask to work with her, actively seeking to serve on the committee that will review her departmental honors project.”

Engaging Big Questions

In her proposal for her honors project, Blas addresses O’Neill’s unwavering view that trading personal dreams for economic prosperity destroys the soul. Her original research also explores wider ethical, communal implications of O’Neill’s reasoning. “As I learn more about O’Neill’s preoccupation with socioeconomic issues, I will also explore the way in which financial concerns and decisions affect society and the individual.”

Practicing the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation

“I have learned that 40 percent of his works are one-act plays. Yet, thus far, I have not found a single article focusing on a one-act play’s significance in his body of social criticism,” Blas says. To better understand the playwright’s intellectual journey that informed his beliefs, she is developing a targeted reading plan with her critical theory professor, Meghan Sweeney.

Producing a Quality Learning Experience

“Thus far, the honors project experience has challenged me to fine-tune my research methods,” Blas says. Although an undergraduate, she has been invited to join graduate-level research classes at Randall Library where she is learning the most efficient use of microfilm, bound periodicals, topic-specific encyclopedias and interlibrary loans.
Gaining Real-World Practice

With an Undergraduate Research Travel Award from the Center for Support of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (CSURF) and the support of Newlin, Blas was able to attend the annual American Literature Association (ALA) Conference in Boston, Mass., where she was introduced to O’Neill scholar Robert Dowling. The meeting created an opportunity for Blas to write for Dowling’s soon-to-be-published encyclopedia, A Critical Companion to Eugene O’Neill.

Originally Newlin had been asked to do the entries for the encyclopedia, but “as I was buried in other work,” Newlin says, “I asked Shawna if she’d be interested — since I know her abilities. The work she completed is indistinguishable from what a scholar with some years in the field would write.”

Blas’ four original pieces for Dowling investigated O’Neill’s connection to New York Times theatre critic Brooks Atkinson, the actor and singer Paul Robeson, the Washington Square Players theatre group and O’Neill’s four Pulitzer Prize-winning plays. The entries will be her first scholarly publications.

From her experience at the ALA Conference, Blas learned, “If you want to get into new scholarly projects, conferences are the place to go. In just a couple of days, I exchanged contact information with people who are interested in helping me get published, spend a year in Greece, study at major graduate schools, and ‘recreate the Wharf Theater in Provincetown.’ Okay, the last one is a joke; but now I have an inside joke with a major O’Neill scholar — that’s amazing!” — by KIM PROUKOU ’06M

Characterizing her intellectual curiosity as “dogged,” Newlin describes the level of Blas’ scholarship as “such that profs ask to work with her, actively seeking to serve on the committee that will review her departmental honors project.”

UNCW rewards students with opportunities to excel both in individual and collaborative learning experiences. The following are a list of major awards and learning opportunities that Blas has received while a student at UNC Wilmington:

- CSURF Undergraduate Research Travel Fellowship
- Louise Jackson Green Scholarship
- CSURF Undergraduate Research Fellowship
- Michael D. Wentworth Student Travel Fellowship to Shakespeare’s England, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville’s New England

Shawna Lesseur-Blas says she plans to attend graduate school and “one day to become an English professor.”
Choosing art as a full-time career may seem like risky business: no clear career ladder, no guaranteed monthly paycheck. But that’s exactly what Shannon Bourne ’87 is planning to do when she graduates from UNCW — again, in the spring of ’08.

Bourne’s first degree prepared her for the corporate world. With that confidence and the lifetime skills she’s earned, she has returned to the university to pursue the career she believes she was meant to have all along — as an artist.

Inspired by people she has met in a transitional neighborhood near her home, Bourne produced a collection of prints of migrant workers. “Many immigrants come here and are glad to do jobs we don’t want to do. Their attitudes are joyful, lucky, grateful,” she said. Bourne seeks to communicate these emotions and experiences through her art.
A studio art major, art history minor, Bourne is specializing in printmaking, a discipline whose methods and equipment have remained relatively unchanged for centuries. Rembrandt, Picasso and Hopper are just a few great artists who have used intaglio, lithography and other printmaking techniques to impress artistic images, ideas, motifs, usually on wove paper. The connection to the past is appealing to Bourne. She enjoys mastering methods that printmaking artists have been using since the 1400s to create prints that reflect her own 21st century vision.

“In studio art there are three ways for students to have an applied learning experience,” says Don Furst, chair of the Department of Art and Art History. “All majors are required to take the capstone course ART 476, the Senior Exhibit, in their final semester. Additionally, some students also take an internship, a real-world work experience in a museum, with a graphic design firm or working with a practicing, professional artist. Another opportunity is a Directed Individual Study (DIS), where a student works closely with a faculty mentor to more fully experience and practice the pursuits of a professional artist/scholar.”

“The nature of the DIS is that, in the beginning, the student formulates an idea for a unified suite of images, the kind of thinking we encourage in our upper level students. These individualized efforts under faculty-mentored direction pave the way for the final semester’s culminating senior exhibit. “In Shannon’s case, art work she has produced in her DIS experiences will form an important part of her senior exhibit, the required capstone project,” Furst says.

Bourne will be part of a group of 20 senior studio majors taking part in the ART 476 Senior Art Exhibit class during the spring semester. The capstone Senior Art Exhibit is an example of an applied learning initiative that promotes integrated learning, furthers competency and showcases milestone work.

A unique feature of Shannon’s senior exhibit is that she is the 2007-08 recipient of the Ann Flack Boseman Scholarship. This scholarship requires a solo exhibit, which will also be Bourne’s senior exhibit. “As the Boseman scholar, she will produce a solo exhibit, which will be on display in the new Ann Flack Boseman Gallery in the University Union,” Furst says.

Furst said he finds professional satisfaction in applied learning programs that challenge students to demonstrate advanced accomplishment. “It is the difference between completing a set of assignments and true exploration. The directed individual study and the senior exhibit are ways of preparing students to meld passion with the skills needed to succeed as an artist.”

Bourne credits Furst for the quality of her applied learning experiences. “Don is such a gift to UNCW and a large part of the success and popularity of the art program. Out in the world, other professionals in the field immediately recognize his name, know his work and understand the advantages that studying with him provide.”

Bourne sums it up this way: “These studies give you the confidence to go out and pursue your craft.”

— BY BRENDA RIEGEL
**Furst Achievements in Art**

“Fifth International Triennial of the Print 2007,” Prague, Czech Republic. One of three American artists among 61 artists from 21 nations invited to exhibit. All artists selected have been award winners in other international printmaking competitions.

2006-07 North Carolina Artist’s Fellowship. Furst was among 14 North Carolina artists selected to receive an $8,000 fellowship.

“Premio Acqui VIII Biennale Internazionale per l’Incisione,” Acqui Terme, Italy. Premio Consorzio d’Acqui Brachetto” award – purchase of entire 75-print edition of mezzotint *Down and Out*.

“Prints U.S.A. 2007” juror’s cash award winner, Springfield (Mo.) Art Museum for mezzotint print *1:30 a.m.*

Lithograph *Quotidien* currently touring in Britain as part of “Stone Plate Grease Water: International Contemporary Lithography.” Began at the Museum of Modern Art in Wales and is now on display in London.


“Terzo Premio Sciascia Amateur d’Estampes,” Milan, Italy, 2006. One of three American artists invited to this international show. Exhibited work was mezzotint *Faith Helix*.


**Teaching Awards**

UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1999.

UNCW Board of Trustees Teaching Excellence Award, 1996 -1998.

UNCW Distinguished Teaching Fellowship, 1996.

UNCW Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence, 1992.

The mentored learning experience is highly collegial. Faculty and students work together as peers, dividing and completing tasks.
UNCW students expect a gneiss (pronounced “nice”) learning experience when they enroll in Geology 470, an intensive, five-week summer school field course that explores the geology of the American Southeast and Southwest.

Gneiss is a type of metamorphic rock that forms deep in the roots of mountains under intense pressure and heat. Over millions of years, minerals align into visible layers giving the rock a striped appearance. Students in Geology 470 not only study gneiss, but other metamorphic, igneous and sedimentary rocks, minerals, fossils and surface features to learn about Earth’s ever-changing crust and interior.
“Focusing on the rock record in field settings, students gain an appreciation of the diverse processes and immense time required to form the variety of features found in the Earth’s crust,” explains David E. Blake, associate professor of geology in the Department of Geography and Geology at UNCW and lead instructor for Geology 470.

To excel in the class, students must successfully connect and apply all the geologic knowledge they have acquired on campus to active problem-solving in the field. Using critical judgment, students must evaluate what they observe in rock outcrops and actual geological formations, construct geologic maps of these rocks and formations and analyze the map results – at an accelerated pace. “This type of course also requires students to hone their skills in scheduling, time management and presentation of findings,” professor Blake says.

Geologic mapping is one of an Earth scientist’s most fundamental skills. Students learn to record, sketch and make interpretive drawings of geological features using a variety of techniques. This course requires that students focus on individual mapping projects in regionally significant locations of rock outcroppings located in the mountains of west-central Virginia, the piedmont around Raleigh, N.C., and the mountains of northern New Mexico.

As students assimilate and analyze new settings and new information quickly, they must also adapt to the existing conditions and the logistics of field settings. Professor Blake provides guidance and feedback. This mentored engagement permits students to apply their learning in real practice under his direction. It also allows him to assess their skill acquisition, as he and a graduate teaching assistant map along with students.

Orienteering through unfamiliar territory in the Eastern woods or the Western deserts, each student learns to use the traditional Brunton compass for measuring the angles of rock formations and other outcrops, a rock hammer and one of the newest field tools – a handheld GPS receiver that tells you, within a few meters, exactly where you are on Earth.

With these tools and other specialized equipment, students collect mineral, fossil and rock samples for further analyses and evaluate volcanic ash flows, magma intrusions, geohydrologic characteristics, structural faulting and folding and regional plate tectonic features in order to build a database for their final reports and interpretations.

Students in Geology 470 field school also learn many lessons for a life well-lived. “This field course provides students with opportunities to experience wilderness settings, diverse people, cultures and foods that may be drastically different from what they are used to. And students need to be prepared and organized while traveling for five weeks with others,” Blake said.

According to David Parnell ’04, currently a graduate student, the field course was a life-changing experience. “It allowed me to finally put all of the concepts and ideas that I had learned in the classroom to work in a real geological setting. The experience and knowledge gained was no doubt invaluable, and I will take that knowledge with me for the rest of my geological career. It was at field course where I learned what I truly want to do as a geologist. It inspired me to attend graduate school here at UNCW.”

David Blake, who holds a Ph.D. in geology from Washington State University, is deeply committed to inspiring his students to assume greater personal and social responsibility. “Considering some of the significant global events that have occurred in the past couple of years, understanding geologic processes enables budding Earth scientists to wisely use their expertise to help minimize future impacts on public health, safety and welfare.”
Holding a Mirror up to Society

Public Sociology

How a Discipline Struggled with the Need to Know and the Need to Do

Community-based learning is an integrated service learning experience used by public sociologists. A perfect fit for public sociology education, this applied learning experience frames civic engagement as an alternative “text” that brings service, learning and practice together in one cohesive learning experience.
In 1906, Lester F. Ward, the first president of the American Sociological Association (ASA), defined the pure science of sociology as ever-evolving toward application, “the great practical object for which it exists.” For the first 100 years, Ward and others like Jane Addams and W.E.B. DuBois set this objective of knowledge directed toward application as the standard for the discipline. Yet, until recently, the discipline struggled to achieve the integration of knowing and doing. At times academic sociological research was taken over by the professions, government and agencies before best applications for theories could be discovered and tested. Other times, debates within the discipline about how to apply sociological knowledge to pressing social problems eluded resolution.

21st Century Sociology
Beginning in the 1980s, sociologists proposed a redirection of sectors of the discipline. Without compromising traditional sociological research and methods, reformers like Michael Burroway called for a special focus on applied learning and civic engagement. Today, this focus is called “public sociology.”

Making a Public Impact
Public sociologists take sociological research directly to communities or, conversely, identify problems in real-world communities that beg sociological research. With hope and commitment, public sociologists apply their learning with the aim of leaving a footprint of positive social change.

In 2005, a visionary departmental faculty charted the course to develop a public sociology program at UNC Wilmington. Hiring Kimberly Cook as chair of the department and public sociologist Leslie Hossfeld, co-chair of the national ASA Task Force for Institutionalizing Public Sociologies, the department was able to create both an undergraduate and a graduate level public sociology program at once.

The investment in purpose and talent has given the department national visibility. “We are proud that our department is on the cutting edge of public sociology,” Cook says, “and grateful for the administrative support and community partnerships as we maintain our commitment to do sociology in the public interest.”

Community-based Learning
Community-based learning is an integrated service learning experience used by public sociologists. This applied learning experience frames civic engagement as an alternative “text” that brings service, learning and practice together in one cohesive learning experience. Course requirements compel students to connect their learning-in-service to theory in ways that demonstrate a high level of scholarship that will benefit both learners and publics.

“The idea is to give students direct experience in the community with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts in the discipline to analyze and solve social problems.”
— Leslie Hossfeld

Hossfeld says, “Students are eager to get out of the classroom and into the community to use the tools of the discipline to address local problems. The idea is to give students direct experience in the community with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts in the discipline to analyze and solve social problems.”

The Community Garden Initiative
A 2006 grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation to Cape Fear Healthy Carolinians, administered by UNCW, enabled a number of community non-profit organizations to address obesity and poor nutrition.
in the region. With the assistance of UNCW’s Division of Public Service and Continuing Studies the extraordinary regional collaboration became the Obesity Prevention Initiative (OPI).

The Wilmington Housing Authority (WHA) joined OPI to give public housing residents access to high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables in a way that would bring neighbors together, beautify the neighborhood with garden space, educate and edify. Known as the Community Garden Initiative, the project excited Hossfeld.

With a Technical Assistance Grant from the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Community Foods Program, on behalf of The Southeastern North Carolina Food Systems Project (SNCFS), Hossfeld’s students became full partners in the Community Garden Initiative.

The funding permitted public sociology students to provide intensive technical assistance to five community-based groups doing community food systems work in the southern United States as students learned the dynamics of the challenges and aspirations of the neighborhoods.

Describing his participation, Justin Anderson ’08 says, “Public sociology gave me the opportunity to learn not just how I might apply theory, but to actually go out into the field. Today, I have a better understanding of how class, race, gender, family and age affect our social world from my own experience.”

From Academic to Activist

Jessica MacDonald ’08 remembers arguing with her first sociology professor over pure objectivity vs. applied science.

“He had a penchant for summing up the objectivity of the discipline with one succinct phrase: ‘I’m not saying it’s good; I’m not saying it’s bad; I’m just telling you how it is.’”

MacDonald could not accept such a passive point of view. “I saw how it was, and often times, I thought it was bad. Why do we as academics, as sociologists, not feel an obligation to right the blatant wrongs that emerge in our study? “Why are we sitting in a classroom learning about what was happening, instead of getting up and doing something about it?”

“Then I took some public sociology classes. These public sociology courses transformed me from an academic to an informed activist.”

MacDonald joined the UNCW Chapter of Amnesty International, “which broadened my world view more than I thought possible.” She volunteered at Dreams, a local arts center for low-income, at-risk children, and became a substitute teacher at Dreams, earning a scholarship with AmeriCorps for her more than 300 hours of volunteer service to the organization.
MacDonald became president of UNCW Amnesty International, and she created “UNCW Goes Global,” a weeklong series of events aimed at raising awareness of human rights abuses around the globe, now an annual campus event. For this and other work, MacDonald received a UNCW scholarship for leadership and service.

While working toward departmental honors, MacDonald recently completed a six-month internship with N.C. State Senator Julia Boseman. In the future, she plans to attend graduate school at American University in Washington, D.C.

**Public Sociology Majors are Prepared for Employment or Grad School**

Training in evaluation and research, writing for non-academic audiences as well as for academic ones, participation in interdisciplinary collaborations, grant writing, non-profit management and organizational culture are all part of the undergraduate public sociology curriculum.

Many students go on to graduate school. Many go directly to work. Danielle Aldrich ’07, who worked on the SNCFS project with the Wilmington Housing Authority, was hired by the housing authority as a grant writer. Lynn Casper ’07, whose idea for an internship project launched the Northside Resource Center community garden site, was hired by Working Films, a firm that creates documentary films about social justice issues.

With the resolve of practicing engineers, young public sociologists are applying the tools of their trade, sociological methodology and research, to build a better social order – to make a real difference.

— by Kim Proukou ’06M

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In a critical dialogue recently published by sociology professor David L. Brunsma and graduate student David Overfelt of University of Missouri-Columbia, teacher and student imagine breaking out of the ivory tower by analyzing themselves in the same way that “we have analyzed the objects of our own studies.” What if, they ask – “we allowed our subjects to study us in the same way we study them? Turn the mirror around and look into your own soul asking, how have you, as a sociologist, done something to help people...?” The answer is an application of expertise that works not only for faculty and students, but for real-world communities as well.
A breakthrough in the conquest of Alzheimer’s Disease — or the means to render the use of nuclear energy safe? At UNC Wilmington, Robert D. Hancock, DeLoach Distinguished Professor of Chemistry, has assembled a team of researchers, including some extraordinary undergraduates, to work on computer-assisted ligand design to accomplish just these objectives.

A ligand is an ion, molecule or molecular group that binds to another. Ligand design is an atom-by-atom approach to fashioning chemical agents able to identify and target specific molecular structures in order to disable or change the course of chemical/biochemical relationships and interactions.

The performance of Hancock’s designs is so impressive that the U.S. Department of Energy recently funded his

“Teaching undergraduates to do useful things with ligands is like giving them a chance to play serious piano music, not just constantly practice scales. And they respond to the opportunity. Of course they have to learn the scales, but they seem to do that quite well and welcome more creative and challenging prospects.”

— Robert Hancock, DeLoach Distinguished Professor of Chemistry
laboratory for an initial quarter of a million dollar grant to support continued development of the Hancock ligand 1,10-phenanthroline-2,9-dicarboxylic acid (PDA), and others.

PDA is of special interest because of its attraction to Ln (III) ions and its affinity for metal ions with higher charges. “We made it,” Hancock said, “and, unlike what happens 99 percent of the time, instead of being worse than we hoped – it was extraordinarily better.”

Designing a ligand to do what you want – to bind a specific target – is like training a linebacker to follow his assignment and successfully break up an offensive play. Like defensive football, supramolecular chemistry is a mix of talent, timing and art.

The study of supramolecular chemistry arose in the late 19th century. Surprisingly, its roots lie in philosophy. Perhaps this is why the study attracted Hancock, whose early interests were the arts and humanities, essay writing and drawing.

A Molecule of Superior Design
All ligands have active lone pairs of electrons in the outer energy level that permit them to form coordinate bonds with target molecules or ions – in the case of PDA, the targets are metal ions.

Key to the structure of PDA is its “backbone” that imparts rigidity to the ligand, permitting it to lock and hold its target. PDA is the leading member of a family of ligands the Hancock group is designing based on this “backbone” blueprint.

These ligands show unprecedented power to successfully complex radioactive isotopes, targeting and isolating transplutonium actinides from fission product lanthanides.

Areas of application for Hancock’s ligand design lie not only in the separation of radioactive isotopes found in nuclear waste, but also the recovery and separation of metal ions in mining operations, biochemical applications for treatment of diseases like Alzheimer’s and cancer as well as new and better MRI imaging techniques to diagnose diseases earlier and more accurately.

Basic Notions: Chemistry 101
You might think that Hancock would be found exclusively in his laboratory working with post-graduates and professional researchers. In fact, he never misses an opportunity to teach a basic chemistry course, recruiting talented undergraduates for his team from the ranks of freshmen and sophomores, many of whom had no plans for a career in chemistry until they met him. Often, this identification of talent occurs in Chemistry 101.

“I love teaching Chemistry 101,” Hancock says. “I have a positive opinion of all the students in the 101 class. So many of them when offered a challenge rise to the occasion, taking an interest in the lecture and from this go on from my class with great enthusiasm about learning – whether they ever become chemistry majors or not.”

Yet, he makes no apologies for encouraging chemistry majors or recruiting undergraduates for his research. Disdaining the diminutive undergraduate, he says, “I prefer to call these students ‘pre-doctoral.’ Among these ‘pre-docs,’ I identify several with keen intelligence and ability and take them in where they become part of the research team in the fullest sense of the word.”

Neil Williams ’08
Neil Williams ’08 entered UNCW as a biology major, pre-med, then changed his mind after taking Chemistry 101. As a rising junior, he began to work in the research laboratories of the department, discovering how chemistry called upon all of his abilities, requiring him to think, analyze and investigate solutions for himself. “Then, I knew what I wanted to do,” he said.

When a graduating senior encouraged him to consider working in Hancock’s laboratory, he seized the opportunity.

“Dr. Hancock encourages us to think outside the box,” Williams said. “Each ligand is unique with unique characteristics, like people. He lets us design our own ligands. He comes in and checks my designs and makes recommendations, and if things are not working, leads me to try new approaches. It is nice to actually do research, to put what you learn into practice.”
Williams is designing ligands that will bind to copper, zinc and iron, the three metal ions that are instrumental in the development and advance of Alzheimer’s disease. He brings a deep personal connection to his research.

“Alzheimer’s took my grandfather; this is my way of coming back at it,” he said.

For Julian Keith, working with students in a Directed Individual Study (DIS) is the favorite part of his job as a psychology professor at UNC Wilmington, and one that goes beyond his required teaching responsibilities.

“It is part of the culture here. We know it is something that needs to be done. We couldn’t be who we are if we didn’t do DIS with students,” he said. It is something that permeates the whole department with faculty members supervising three, five, up to 10 students a semester and hundreds over the years.

Most of the students in Keith’s lab are doing either DIS work or an advanced honors project. A DIS fulfills the

**Jen Cockrell ’10**

“I mean, I’m a sophomore,” Cockrell said, “and I never imagined that I would be doing what I am doing in a laboratory like this! It’s really the only way you are going to learn…by getting in there and doing it, jumping in over your head and trying. I really love working here. And I love chemistry. You know, a chemistry experiment doesn’t always – or even often – work out the way you want it to. That’s a good life lesson to learn.”

“My oldest brother got both his undergraduate and master’s degrees at UNCW, and he worked in Dr. Hancock’s lab last year doing his master’s thesis on ligand research. His thesis was recently published in the Journal of the American Chemistry Society.”

Cockrell is also considering an applied learning internship at PPD. Located here in Wilmington, PPD is a leading global contract research organization (CRO) with offices in 30 countries and clients and partners serving pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, academic and government organizations.

Jen Cockrell plans to get both her master’s and undergraduate degrees in five years at UNCW through the Combined B.S./M.S. Program.

— by Kim Proukou ’06M
requirement for applied learning for psychology majors. In Keith’s Brain Lab students work in pairs and/or collaborative teams or lab groups mastering methods used for analyzing behavior, psychopharmacology, neurosurgery, as well as techniques for visualizing the structure of the brain at the microscopic level. “Our laboratory studies memory and memory disorders with special emphasis placed on restoring memory function after brain injury, ‘regenerative neuroscience,’” Keith explains.

“The psychology department has always emphasized – even when I was an undergraduate student here – the importance of students being actively involved,” said Keith, who graduated from UNCW in 1983 with a degree in psychology. “I was completely swept up by the chance to actually do science, absolutely nothing else like it excited me that much.”

“Mark Galizio (department chair) talks about the student as a research colleague. He treats his students that way. I was his DIS student, and I think I’ve always tried to emulate how he helps students enter into a scientific career.”

Keith said most of his DIS students go on to graduate or medical school or land impressive jobs right out of college. “They go on to be movers and shakers in their fields. We’ve had great success with DIS students going off and getting great gigs elsewhere.”
“They do this with the toolkit we give them to work with that you can’t get by sitting in a class. That’s the cool thing for me – you see them get to learn to do something productive,” Keith said.

In Keith’s Brain Lab, which is funded by grants from the National Institute for Mental Health and the National Science Foundation, students study memory and memory disorders. The research focuses on promoting the birth of new neurons in an area of the brain called the hippocampus.

“Almost always students come to you because they’ve heard of your research – in class, from the Web site, other students,” Keith said. “There is no shortage of really good students on this campus who want to be brain researchers.”

In the Brain Lab, students learn and master methods used for analyzing behavior, psychopharmacology, neurosurgery and techniques for visualizing the structure of the brain at the microscopic level, including immunofluorescence cell labeling and laser scanning confocal microscopy.

The work is not glamorous, in fact, Keith said it can be very tedious – “sometimes counting brain cells – you have hundreds of billions of them – it takes determination, commitment, unlike just showing up for class.

“It’s not easy. It’s enormously difficult to do research – some are addicted to the challenge, others find out they aren’t cut out for it,” he said.

In collaboration with Memory Assessment and Research Services, LLC, the laboratory also studies human memory and subtle changes in memory performance that are early indicators of the onset of diseases such as Alzheimer’s dementia (see www.memoryassessment.com). Another component of the human memory research, in collaboration with Lloyd Smith (president, Cortech Solutions, LLC), involves measuring the electrophysiological activity of the brain while new memories are being formed and already established memories are being accessed. One goal of the work with Cortech Solutions is to identify brain activity patterns associated with accurate versus inaccurate memory recognition.

Directed Individual Studies inspire not only the students who participate, but also the faculty, who voluntarily take on the additional responsibilities.

Keith said, “You realize that this is what you’re really here for. When students want to learn how science is really conducted, it’s a lot more fun. I never teach as well as when I have students in the lab – that’s the highest quality teaching I do.”

Research assistant Emily Kidder ’05 and student Nicole Matheson view tissue taken from the hippocampus, a brain region involved in long-term memory. They are counting the neurons that express a protein called doublecortin, found only in recently born, immature neurons. Neurons in the doublecortin stage of development are able to grow new connections within neural circuits more efficiently than older mature neurons. Thus, we believe that these new neurons are especially important for the formation of new memories. This research is vital to advancing restoration of brain function due to injury, damage or diseases of the brain.
“I want you on a plane!” Valerie Rider, lecturer in Spanish, says to each and every student. “Go abroad! Yes, you will perfect your language skills, but more than that study abroad will open your mind to see and appreciate other ways of life. And, you may not believe it now, but it will change your life.”

“I would like to see every student spend at least one semester abroad and a summer volunteering in another country as part of their educational plan,” Rider says. “So many of my students, upon graduation, tell me – of all their university experiences – study abroad was the best.”

Certain that second language acquisition cannot be separated from second culture acquisition, Rider says, “More than teaching Spanish, my job is to inspire each and every one of my students to go, see, explore and breathe another culture.”

“Cultural patterns affect language patterns. Patterns of thought open windows of perspective. We are not here to teach students how to say the same thing in another language. There is really no such thing.”

Spending time with native speakers, students steadily acquire the ability to communicate as a native speaker would. It is a process that takes time and patience, as well as careful observing and responding.

Rider says, “Students are encouraged by the acceptance they receive from native speakers in exchange for their efforts and interest in acquiring the other language and for their appreciation of the other culture.”

Rider holds high expectations for student success, and her students rarely disappoint her. Rider’s classes fill early, every semester. Her pace of instruction and intensity attracts students.

There is the experience of visiting the three homes of Chilean Nobel Prize winner Pablo Neruda, while discussing his poetry, in Spanish. There are everyday debates and local involvement with issues with ordinary citizens and host families, attending an asado, or Chilean barbeque, visiting a Chilean cowboy ranch and coursework at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, PUCV.

In this study abroad experience, students travel with Rider and attend classes taught by her, receiving their instruction hours from Rider at PUCV. Those who are successful earn six credits for two UNCW courses, SPN 305, Conversation and Composition, and SPN 203, Intermediate Reading. PUCV also makes the arrangements for student housing with host families.

Assignments are based on local events as often as possible. Rider says, “I ask the students to become informed about a local issue, like fishing quotas, then to discuss the topic with their host families, each other and with me in class and write an essay about it, in Spanish – of course. They must define which side of the issue they supported and explain why – in Spanish.”

Converting the obligation to take a foreign language into an invitation to become an international citizen, Rider inspires her students to gain multicultural competence. Students find the challenge rewarding, often citing her classes as having made the greatest impact on their personal development and undergraduate careers.

According to Bryan T unstall ’08, “For someone like...
myself who had never taken Spanish in high school and had only two years of experience in the language in college, I was extremely nervous on taking a trip to Chile. However, the trip to Chile truly changed me. Aside from the major advance in my communication skills in Spanish, I became something that means so much more to me, a global citizen. Entering another country not only changes your perspective on that particular place, but on the entire world. Without Miss Valerie’s encouragement, I would never have had the courage to get on a plane to South America.”

UNCW encourages study abroad by making possible a variety of creative, innovative programs designed for students of all levels of language ability and interest. “Wide varieties of shorter, supervised study abroad opportunities offered early in the undergraduate experience encourage students to try it. We find a summer semester abroad, even a spring break abroad, gives more students access to the rich opportunities that immersion in other cultures affords,” says Denise DiPuccio, interim assistant provost for international programs. “Once they go, they want to go back.” UNCW Office of International Programs also facilitates the traditional junior year abroad.

“My experience with Miss Valerie is the ultimate experience for a lifetime. Not only was I exposed to a different culture that I learned greatly from, I gained confidence in the language. I left with the appreciation that every activity was worthwhile and meaningful,” says Whitney Clarida ’10.

Oddly enough, you also learn a great deal about your own language and culture. Study abroad is one of the most powerful educational experiences possible.”

Rider agrees. “Students come back from abroad with a sense of appreciation for others, but also for who they are and for what they have. They appreciate both.”

To fulfill the applied learning requirement, students majoring in foreign languages and literatures must complete at least six hours of study abroad at the 200 level or above, or three hours of an internship, Directed Individual Study, practicum, honors thesis or service learning practice requiring the use of the second language.

— BY KIM PROUKOU ’06M
Leaving UNC Wilmington for Bogaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, Hailey Cook ’07 felt as if she was moving to another world. Stepping into Turkey, where East literally meets West, she discovered a realm of experience more diverse and dichotomous than she had ever imagined. The lines and overlapping branches of cultures, civilizations and perspectives create such dynamism that Cook still searches for the best way to describe it.

Bogaziçi University is located on the European side of the Bosporus, overlooking the 20-mile-long strait that integrates the Sea of Marmara with the Black Sea and divides the continents of Europe and Asia.

For Cook, her semester in Turkey was part of a dream that began at home.

“All my life, I heard about Turkey from my grandfather, who worked for the U.S. Agency of International Development in the ’60s and ’70s. That was a time of great cooperation between the U.S. and Turkey. My grandfather served for seven years in Ankara, capital of Turkey and the country’s second largest city. My grandmother taught English over there, and both my grandmother and my mom still speak Turkish.

“From my grandfather, I learned a lot about Turkish politics. He had books and books on various national movements within Turkey and about the history of Anatolia, the Byzantine Empire’s capital city, Constantinople, which is now Istanbul, and the lands east of Europe.”

Before her grandfather died, Cook told him she was determined to study there. “He was ecstatic that I would be carrying on his interest in Turkey,” she said.

UNCW’s Office of International Programs worked hard to place her, eventually arranging an individual study by directly enrolling her in Bogaziçi University for fall semester 2006.

Leading up to her semester abroad, with advisement from Remonda Kleinberg, associate professor of political science, Cook began a senior thesis focusing on the Europeanization of Turkey and its effects on Turkish domestic
and foreign policy. Her research and writing turned out to be a perfect preparation for her studies at Bogaziçi.

“It was a whammy of a paper, a great paper,” Cook said. “I was able to bring it with me to Turkey the following fall and then continue to use it as a working research project, even after graduation,” Cook said.

At Bogaziçi, Cook took two political science classes, a language course, an economic course and a graduate-level seminar. The seminar required 300 pages of reading a week, a paper and a presentation every Tuesday.

“It was grueling,” Cook said, “but I would look out from my classroom on the view of the Bosphorus Bridge and the crusader castle of Bodrum on campus, and, well, it was all amazing.”

“I listened carefully to the perspectives of the Turkish students and other foreign students in my classes. Their viewpoints really changed me. Being around European young people, seeing how in tune they are with world events, their awareness of political issues of all kinds and their concerns, I realized how deeply they care about world issues. They aren’t just talking about Britney Spears. They understand the importance of world affairs,” Cook said.

“If there is one thing I would like to say, it is how much I gained, how much I learned from the international students that I lived with. UNCW gave me this experience that allowed me to learn from them, to share their urgency, to gain the global perspective I did not have before I went.”

Early in her career at UNCW, Cook took a leadership role in UNCW’s Great Decisions Program, a public lecture and discussion series that brings international leaders to campus to offer lectures and exchange viewpoints with students, faculty and the community-at-large.

In the spring of 2005, Cook assisted in bringing Bulent Aliriza, director of the Turkey Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C., to campus to deliver a Great Decisions lecture.

Today, Hailey Cook works as a research assistant for CSIS. She was offered the position upon graduation. While Cook credits her involvement with Great Decisions and her efforts in bringing Aliriza to campus, she believes that her study abroad is what best prepared her for the job.

“My personal research on Turkey helped me a lot in getting this job, but really being independent, living alone abroad, living among the Turks and going to school there, all these things together I think qualified me. I grew so much as a person.”

“Life and work in D.C. has so far been nothing short of surreal, but wonderful,” Cook said. “The heart of what we do is independent analysis. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of fascinating, timely presentations from diplomats and experts in many fields of international politics. I am most proud of being able to help to organize the recent visit of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the center on Nov. 5, 2007, after his meeting with President Bush.” — BY KIM PROUKOU ’06M
Over the years, with the support of environmental studies department chair Jack Hall and department faculty, associate professor Robert Cutting has developed a highly successful for-credit, internship/practicum program at UNCW that engages 93 percent of environmental studies majors, even though they are not required to participate.

“There are two reasons to consider an internship or practicum,” Cutting says, “graduate school and jobs. Employers and graduate schools constantly remind us that they want students with demonstrated ability in the field.”

**A Cutting Edge: Portfolio Development**

In a work portfolio required of each intern, Cutting’s students record the terms and conditions of their internship, their learning experiences, reflections and educational activities. They copy their agency evaluations and work logs, attendance records, even mileage records, as well as detailed descriptions of their agency’s mission, organizational structure and the goals and objectives of their internship or practicum.

Students document their contributions to agency newsletters, community outreach efforts and their professional services in the form of student surveys, plans and drawings, maps, photographs, graphs and other research. Students who give educational presentations to community groups include their audience evaluations.

When handing in their portfolio, each student delivers a formal multimedia presentation to Cutting, faculty and their peers. The experience is invaluable. And so is the payoff. As one student said, “Wow, what a great feeling – to bring that portfolio to my first job interview.”

**An Unexpected Bonus**

In the March 2008 *Journal of Geoscience Education*, the premier nationally peer-reviewed publication for geoscience educational research at the undergraduate level, Cutting and Hall offer other colleges and universities their prescription for designing successful field-based learning experiences along with a surprising outcome: “Employers in the environmental field often report that ‘C’ students work harder and are more motivated, both because they know they need to and because they are stimulated by a real-world experience.”

“In fact,” Cutting says, “in the field, average students become better students and better workers with as much or more to contribute than ‘A’ students.”

For fostering individual excellence throughout a departmental culture of applied learning over time and creating a model design for internships and evaluation, the College of Arts and Sciences offers Bob Cutting the Last Word – Bravo!
In the arts, learning to give and receive feedback is essential to professional development. Applied learning requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences challenge all students to practice their disciplines and test their skills before mentors and peers.