



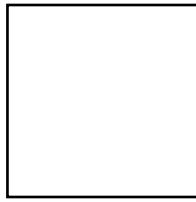
UNC CHARLOTTE

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**PSYCHOLOGY
STUDENTS OF
DISTINCTION**



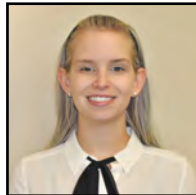
APRIL 17, 2020



RANESHA BARNETTE

Nominated by: Professor Erin Godly-Reynolds

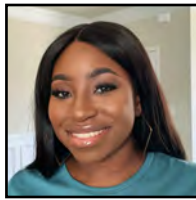
Regarding her academic qualifications, Ranisha will graduate in December (2019) and her current GPA is a 3.6. As a student taking my Community Psychology class during the fall 2018 semester, Ranisha immediately impressed me through her insightful comments and questions, and positive interactions with her classmates; for her peers, she exemplified how to work with the instructor to co-construct a positive learning environment in which she and others could truly thrive. Part of her motivation for this class, in particular, stemmed from her deeper-level understanding of difficult, sometimes controversial topics, as a result of her lived experiences. Ranisha has already begun to give back to our academic community. As a teaching assistant for our 1101 students this semester, she models how to navigate providing support while challenging students to learn and grow. In addition to typical TA responsibilities, Ranisha went above and beyond this semester by presenting at the International Society for Exploring Teaching and Learning's annual teaching conference alongside Andrew Case and myself. She held her own during a discussion of how to facilitate difficult conversations in the classroom, and impressively represented UNCC throughout multiple days of conference participation. At some point that week I realized how lucky I am to have had the opportunity to work with and learn so much from Ranisha, and so I am thrilled by this opportunity to nominate her as a truly inspiring, brilliant student of distinction!



SARA GOINS

Nominated by: Dr. Anita Blanchard

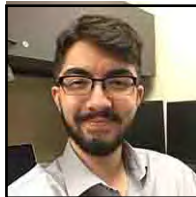
Sara Goins is an Honor's Psychology student completing her honor's thesis this semester. Sara graduates with a 3.6 GPA and an interest in either working in I/O psychology or with older populations. Sara's Honor's thesis project examines differences between social and work groups. She is one of the first researchers to propose and test that we should expect that social groups are more positive for people than work groups, even though research treats them as if they are the same. Further, Sara used her research to examine various ways of analyzing individuals and groups which could help future undergraduates in how to analyze complicated projects. Sara is an active and important member of the Virtual Identity, Community, and Entitativity (V.I.C.E) lab contributing insights and analytical skills to lab projects. During her time in the VICE lab, she helped with content coding nearly 600 responses to determine the citizenship behavior of the study participants. She also participated as an actor/confederate in a graduate dissertation data collection project. Congratulations, Leila, on being a UNC Charlotte Student of Distinction!



KENNY KOLAWOLE

Nominated by: Dr. Jordan Lyerly

I'd like to nominate Kenny Kolawole (Sharon Kolawole in the system) for the service/teaching category. Kenny has been TAing in my Brain and Behavior course this academic year. While my entire undergraduate TA team has been phenomenal, Kenny really goes the extra mile. She is proactive in completing her tasks and takes initiative. A great example of this is that prior to the first exam review sessions last fall, Kenny had the great idea to structure the study session as interactive stations. This was a great way to engage students and was a creative approach for an exam session. In addition to being proactive and knowledgeable about the course content, Kenny seems to have built a strong rapport with her fellow UTAs. At the end of the fall semester, I asked each UTA to give positive and constructive feedback for each other. This feedback made it clear that her peers view her as a leader and role model. Here are a few examples of her peer feedback: "I wasn't sure coming into the first review session what to do and Kenny had made stations and so I also took this idea going forward!", "With Kenny it was easy to have a plan and carry it out accordingly". Finally, Kenny is a pleasure to interact with - she always has a positive attitude and a smile on her face.



SEENA KOOHESTANI

Nominated by: Dr. Amy Canevello

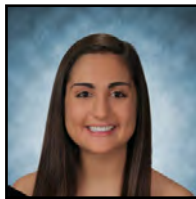
His research skills are awesome – In the past year he has conducted two studies to pilot his honors thesis, which is a longitudinal study examining predictors of meaning in life (thesis data have been collected and we're just starting analyses). He has presented at three conferences, won a library research award, and received funding from Psi Chi to support his work. He has a positive attitude and takes feedback like a champ (he focuses on improvement and growth) He's a leader – has taken over the lab manager position when I lost two graduate students. And done it seamlessly. He's humble. He accepts compliments, but does so in a way that recognizes those who support his efforts.



KATERINA LANTZ

Nominated by: Dr. Hannah Peach

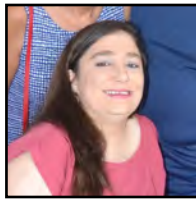
I am nominating Katerina Lantz as a Student of Distinction in the Research category. During the summer of 2019, Kat and I were matched through the Charlotte Research Scholars Program, and she was awarded a full-time research assistant (RA) position in my Sleep and Health lab for three full months. During this time, I assigned Kat the responsibility of merging, cleaning, and analyzing a three-year longitudinal data set with hundreds of participants and variables across several time points. This type of task is ordinarily completed by a current graduate student; in full transparency, I was a bit skeptical that this project could be completed by an undergraduate without significant supervision and oversight by me. Successfully completing this major task would require the RA to be organized, conscientious, proactive, and meticulous. I was absolutely amazed at Kat's ability to complete this task so beautifully. She asked for guidance when needed, but ultimately took leadership on a project that required her to learn as she went and manage her time successfully to meet deadlines. Kat not only completed this task as a requirement for the summer program, but became intrinsically motivated to master the task, playfully referring to it as her "labor of love." She even offered to volunteer her time during the academic year to guide my current RAs (as to ensure her painstakingly organized dataset did not fall prey to chaos!). She is co-authoring a poster at the SBM conference, and I am so pleased to share that she has received offers for both UNCC and UNCG Counseling Master's Programs. I am so proud of Kat as she truly embodies a Student of Distinction.



LEILA MUSTAFA

Nominated by: Dr. Anita Blanchard

Leila Mustafa is an outstanding Psychology undergraduate student. She has an exceptional GPA (3.7) as a double major with communication studies. She has a particular interest in I/O psychology and Organizational Communication and wants to pursue a career in I/O psychology or Human Resources. She has been a welcome addition to her classes and can always be counted on to be positive as well as provide insightful comments to class discussions. She is sought after as an intern both around Charlotte and internationally. At one local internship here in Charlotte, her top performance early on meant she was tapped to lead a special project for the owner of the company. But most impressive is her summer internship in Syd'nSsey, Australia as an I/O and Human Resources intern! This experience is impressive not only for the opportunity to work for a top organization but the cultural exchange of working overseas! Leila is an active and important member of the Virtual Identity, Community, and Entitativity (V.I.C.E) lab contributing insights and analytical skills to lab projects. During her time in the VICE lab, she helped with content coding nearly 600 responses to determine the citizenship behavior of the study participants. She also helped analyze graduate student handbooks to determine which ones likely created a greater sense of community. Congratulations, Leila, on being a UNC Charlotte Student of Distinction!



CHRISTINA NIXON

Nominated by: Dr. Jane Gaultney

I would like to nominate Ms. Christina Nixon as a student of distinction in the “Inspiration” category. She is currently a student in my section of PSYC 2101. Her major is Psychology, and her minor is in Child and Family Development. Christina has multiple disabilities and serious health challenges; simply getting to school and around campus is challenging, but she is conscientious about class attendance. She is quick to master new ideas, meticulously keeps up with assignments, and brings an energy to learning that is inspiring. She is determined to complete her education in the face of daunting challenges. Despite illnesses and hospitalizations, she has maintained a 3.88 GPA. Her health challenges have been lifelong and are ongoing. However, what one notices most is not a person with a collection of disabilities and health issues, but rather an avid learner with clear goals, optimism, perseverance, intellectual ability, and a person with a lot to offer the world. Christina is also invested in service and advocacy. She is being considered for a state advisory board on transplant issues (License to Give Trust Fund), and will soon meet with Gov. Cooper in consideration for this position. She ably personifies the spirit of the Student of Distinction Inspiration award.



MICHELLE NGUYEN

Nominated by: Dr. Sara Levens

Michelle has been a valuable member of my lab for 2 ½ years, and during this time I have been continually impressed by her kindness, positivity, work ethic and quality, and dedication to personal growth and service of others. Michelle is one of the most hardworking students I have known—she balances a heavy school load, volunteering at the hospital, working in my lab, working at her mother’s nail salon and working multiple nights per week as an aid to a family with a special needs child. She also volunteers at multiple church and community organizations. To all of her endeavors she brings a positive can-do attitude and she has been an instrumental research assistant in my lab—playing vital key roles on multiple research projects. She has presented research posters at three national conferences and completed her Honors Thesis examining the relation between heart rate variability and sleep habits. Her goal is to become a physician’s assistant and I know that she will attain this dream and be an exceptional addition to the field of medicine. I look forward to continuing to be a part of her journey and watching her grow into her full potential.



SAM SAIA

Nominated by: Sara Levens

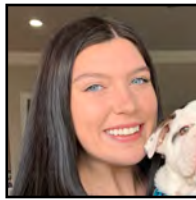
Sam is a thoughtful, hard-working, and dedicated research assistant. He is always prepared and communicates well with me and his research assistant peers. The research project Sam is working on is unique in its social-political content as it involves the coding of over 9000 responses on participant's reflections of distressing political news. Sam has embraced the project as a skill building learning experience. Throughout the coding process, Sam adjusts his approach while also maintaining his unique perspective, an essential balancing act for being a part of a qualitative research coding team. I have been impressed by Sam's range of interests as well as his quiet compassion. He has already been accepted to graduate school and will be seeking a Master's degree in Counseling. I think that Sam has the capacity to build bridges and find avenues of similarity between people which I know will be an asset to his counseling pursuits. I know that Sam will be an asset to his profession and I look forward to seeing how he develops himself in the years to come.



EDWARD SHAFFER

Nominated by: Dr. Sara Levens

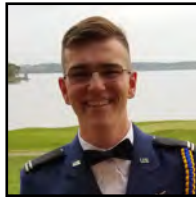
Edward exudes intellectual engagement and curiosity, and he brings these qualities to each classroom and research meeting. He exemplifies both the unique value that non-traditional students bring to classroom and research setting, as well as the joy in teaching students who have years of life experiences under their belt. In the classroom, Edward would go above and beyond in trying to foster a learning environment for himself and his fellow students. Edward brought the same level of investment to his research involvement. Edward is contributing to a unique socio-political qualitative research project that is coding of over 9000 participant reactions to distressing political news. On the project Edward embraces self-reflection, and is open about his perspective an experience while coding. He is a true asset to the project and a joy to work with. He always seems to bring 150% of himself to whatever activity is occurring—likely a combination of his stature, vibrant personality and love of learning. I wouldn't mind cloning Edward so that I could continue to work with him long after he has moved on to his next intellectual adventure. I look forward to tracking his trajectory as someone who was fortunate to be a part of his journey and growth.



ABIGAIL SHOOK

Nominated by: Dr. Hannah Peach

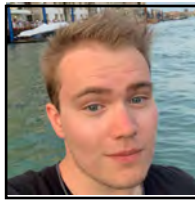
I am nominating Abigail Shook as a Student of Distinction in the Academics/Teaching category. Abbey completed my Research Methods II course in the fall of 2019. As you know, RM II is the “dreaded course” of the major and requires students to complete an entire research project from start to finish in one semester. However, we were piloting an accelerated version of the course, meaning students completed this project in SEVEN WEEKS. Despite the rigor of the course and limited time frame, Abbey knocked her project out of the park, earning a nearly perfect score on her final paper (and trust me, that very rarely happens!). I was so impressed by Abbey’s capabilities, I asked if she would be willing to serve as my TA for PSYC 1101, which is a large (300 student!), primarily freshmen intro course. Abbey happily agreed, and I couldn’t be more grateful she did, as her efforts have allowed this course to go so smoothly (which frankly, is always a challenge with 1101). She manages the quite large slew of emails we receive from students, assists me in entering grades and helping students monitor their gradebook, and is my Packback guru. Abbey has taken so much initiative in sending out important announcements to our class and even started a weekly “Packback Star Student Spotlight” where she picks students that have posted exceptionally thoughtful critical thinking questions and recognizes them publicly. Her sweet spirit and helpful attitude have really made this semester a positive one for me. I highly recommend Abbey as a Student of Distinction.



CHRIS SWEENEY

Nominated by: Dr. Amy Canevello

Chris has an amazing positive attitude and sense of integrity. I first met him when he took my Intro Social class in Fall 2018. Even in an 8am class, he was engaged and asked good questions. He also has an amazing ability to connect with people - he connected with other students in the class and was instrumental in keeping the class on a positive note. He’s the kind of person who, if faced with a challenge, he tackles it head on and does so with a positive attitude. Around that same time, I was looking for new RAs to help with a particularly difficult study the following semester and I specifically recruited Chris to be on my team because I knew that he could rally the troops, keeping them on task and optimistic that they could reach their goals. And that’s exactly what he did. Recruitment for that study was extremely challenging and he was instrumental in its success. He has stayed on my RA team since then and he’s my go-to person if I need help with something difficult. Importantly, he takes this positive attitude and openness with others across domains - he is currently in my Senior Seminar and is definitely a leader in the class. He is humble, encourages others, is willing to take risks for the sake of learning, and when he does something wrong, he owns it and does what he can to correct it.



BEIGHLEY THORNOCK

Nominated by: Dr. Maria-Carla Chiarella

Beighley is a model Psychology Major, who serves as an inspiration to all students. He has clearly made the most of his years at UNC Charlotte. Beighley is a highly accomplished and dedicated student – always coming to class, often participating with thoughtful questions, and never missing an assignment or exam. After quickly catching my attention in the classroom, I was very fortunate to have Beighley become my Teaching Assistant for two of my classes - Adolescent Psychology and Social and Personality Development. Students noticeably improved grades reflect Beighley's careful efforts. Beighley's attention to detail made him an ideal Undergraduate Coordinator Assistant. In this role, he reviewed and contributed to documents, websites, and email messages to best tailor information to Psychology students. Beighley has also distinguished himself as an active Research Assistant for the past year in Dr. Amy Canevello's The Self & Social Motivation Lab. In preparation for a Masters of Social Work, Beighley honed his professional communication skills as a Psychology Academic Peer Advisor and Practicum intern at InnerVision, supporting services provided to individuals with mental health and addiction challenges. Lastly, as a Music Minor and four-year Choir Member, Beighley studied abroad in Italy during the summer of 2019. While executing all his countless efforts, Beighley is gracious, cheerful, and enthusiastic. Beighley most definitely leaves an outstanding legacy of participation and success among UNCC students.



VICTORIA UDOMSIRIRAT

Nominated by: Dr. Linda Shanock

Although she is still fairly early in her undergraduate studies (just recently achieved junior standing I believe), Victoria has already been very proactive in engaging in research and has shown a drive and motivation to learn, as well as a grasp of conceptual and statistical thinking that is beyond many undergraduates, even more senior ones. She got involved early on in the Organizational Science Club that Dr. Steven Rogelberg runs for a select few undergraduates. In addition, she has been a member of my research lab team for just over a semester now and she is already contributing to a manuscript for publication, preparing a presentation for the undergraduate research conference, applied for the competitive REU summer experience at Rice University, and is working on her honors thesis under my supervision. She also learned how to do reflexology and did not complain when working on lots of feet as part of the data collection for an intervention study under the supervision of one of my Org Science doctoral students. When I interviewed her last spring for a spot in my lab, besides the typical qualities I look for in undergraduate research assistants such as intellectual curiosity, conscientiousness, and demonstrated success in her undergraduate pursuits to date, she stood out from other undergraduates. Tori had already read several of my articles prior to the interview, and had a knowledge of the subject area that was more extensive than most people who want to start gaining lab experience. Tori started working in my lab in August of 2019, and she announced very casually and humbly that she had started learning the R software program on her own over the summer. I was impressed and I can report that she is now taking an applied regression class in which she is learning more and more about R and regression. On top of all that, she is a first-generation immigrant college student with a lot of determination and a great attitude. She has been an excellent undergraduate student at UNC Charlotte. I truly enjoy having Tori in my lab.