Welcome.

Research is an essential part of the undergraduate experience at UNCG and at the Residential Colleges in particular. Regardless of their majors or career paths, our students learn from our faculty the importance of scholarly inquiry and are encouraged to first ask important questions and then seek creative and innovative ways to find the answers. At the University Teaching and Learning Commons, we are honored to have the opportunity to encourage the work of our students through initiatives like our Residential Colleges, faculty mentorships, and the Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creativity Office. In this magazine, we present to you a sampling of the projects our sophomore, emerging researchers are producing in the Residential Colleges written by students in the Capstone Courses of Ashby and Strong Residential Colleges. Together they are shining examples of the high quality of work being produced by our undergraduate students.

The name of the magazine, Minerva, pays homage to the Roman goddess of wisdom, who has served as an unofficial mascot since the school opened in 1893. The image of Minerva has graced every diploma, appears on the official college seal, and welcomes visitors with open arms from the east courtyard of the Elliott University Center. And in these pages, we offer you stories that reflect UNCG’s dedication to academic excellence and creative inquiry.

We believe that Minerva would be proud.
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Among the 16 college campuses in the North Carolina system, UNCG currently is one of the top three state institutions with the highest number of minority students in terms of ethnicity. So, it would be normal to wonder how these populations are affected by interactions on a campus that has historically catered to a white, female southern population. Amari Hobgood, a senior majoring in Sociology and Criminology decided to ask the question: “How can we, as UNCG students and faculty, expose latent assumptions where diversity is concerned?”

When asked what sparked this research project and why it hits close to home, Hobgood replied with a shocking anecdote. While living within one of UNCG’s Residential Colleges, an African American student she associated with had the door of a residence hall room vandalized. The
vandalism occurred during the Trump v. Clinton election and used a racial slur that dates back to America’s time of slavery. Hobgood thought this was not okay. Amidst her normal interest in reading and studying about race, she wondered how many other students were experiencing something similar on UNCG’s campus. “UNCG preaches inclusivity, diversity, and intersectionality so it would stand to reason that they’d want to minimize these types of occurrences.” Hobgood set out to survey minority students about their overall college experience in terms of their racial background and ethnicity.

Hobgood’s research endeavors were no small feat. With the help of her research professor who is well versed in race relations and research methods, Hobgood developed her survey. A couple of obstacles were positionality and word choice. While people typically value personal story, researchers often need to leave this behind, meaning her questions couldn’t be blunt or overly knowledgeable about circumstances students of color may have encountered. She needed to write questions that were designed to be objective but that also addressed the phenomenon of being a student of color, an experience that is often, and perhaps intentionally, obscured at institutions.

When the rolling obstacles had come to a stop and Hobgood was actually able to collect her data, she was in for a surprise. As an African American female student she had personally experienced many examples of discrimination and oppression due to sexual orientation, gender identification, and ethnicity, so, while not universal, her personal experience on this campus is specific to how all those identities play out in society, and she expected an overwhelming amount of negativity in her survey responses.

However, she actually found that a resounding amount of students reported that they are comfortable, feel safe, and haven’t experienced much discrimination. Students also reported that, because of UNCG’s diversity, they appreciated the option to engage with so many different types of cultures, but they weren’t forced to do so. Many respondents reported that while there are many different populations of people on campus, their own friend groups are segregated and limited to one or two cultures. Throughout the interviews, there was a common theme of optimism towards becoming more
inclusive at UNCG. Even though there is still a certain feel on campus that diversity is simply an illusion rather than something that is real for students of color on campus, Hobgood learned that “students want to see a greater push for other students to become more truly integrated, meaning when people of different origins or backgrounds come together for authentic and selfless reasons, rather than meaningless mixing.” To summarize the issue, Hobgood says, “Black students feel accepted and well received on campus within their selected groups, but once the conversations switch to the overall campus, opinions are mixed with a lean towards invisibility and disregard.”

While this research started with her capstone class in Strong College, Hobgood will carry the lessons learned forward and possibly even adapt the survey for use at other PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions). Hobgood noted that if she had more time she would take her survey on the road, with UNCG, a mecca for diversity, as a model. Hobgood plans to work with race and sustainable integration, believing this area needs development. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “I fear I may have integrated my people into a burning house.”

Hobgood intends to squelch the flame, as well as obtain her PhD, focusing on the study of White Supremacy. Strong College has offered an interesting opportunity for Hobgood to begin her research-based journey.

Hobgood was open to sharing why the research topic was close to home for her personally, but a larger question is why does UNCG, and the greater community, need this research project? Hobgood had a swift and succinct response to a painful question: How can we, as people, sustain our relational growth if our unity is disrupted by hate? This question is the reason the world needs studies like this and people like Amari Hobgood. Her choice to begin the research within her own Residential College was one of focus and strategy. She believes Cornelia Strong College is an environment that promotes and embodies intersectionality and integration of culture. She believes Strong is a microcosm that can become the poster child of consideration, acceptance, and progress.
In a small town in North Carolina, the world is painted red. Living among decaying buildings, in desiccated towns, surrounded by a vibrant world that had left them behind, citizens voted against a government system they feel has failed them, placing their trust in a party that may in fact be determined to cut the strings these same citizens rely on. This is the world Nicholas Smurthwaite was born into. Nick is a sophomore at UNCG and part of the Ashby Residential College community and program. When given free rein on a research paper, he decided to go back to his roots and determine why his hometown voted the way they did. Specifically, his research was dedicated to understanding why low-income communities in North Carolina vote Republican in the majority of elections both locally and nationally.
When he began his research project, he discovered his problem wasn’t finding data to use, but determining what data was valid and unbiased enough to be used. Many of the polls and studies had either obvious slants or not enough focus on what he specifically needed to be useful. The worst part, says Nick, was “information that has questionable facts. There is good information you can draw out from biased sources, but you have to work to scrub it clean of bias. That was definitely one of the hardest parts of this research project.”

Once he worked through that problem, the project was eye-opening to him. “I gained a perspective on what happened with voting in low-income areas,” he said. “It shows what we can work on in our communities. It’s not just a problem for Democrats or Republicans, but for anyone who wants social change. It shows what we need to change in these low-income communities to create change, rather than just having bitter hatred towards one party or another.”

Through interviews and data analysis, Nick found that rural communities were feeling left out of many public initiatives or rather felt pushed back into a position of lower political priority for the government. Many members of these communities felt other groups of citizens were getting more support from the government. This disconnection left citizens in his low-income community voting for the Republican party as a means to feel acknowledged and to send a message of discontent for their current situation.

Nick is hoping for change at the ground level of the communities, bringing life and growth back to the towns: “I would do a small scale theory of investing in

“These photos represent the conditions of much of rural North Carolina and the amount of effort needed to understand the complexities of both class struggle and low population living.”

Through interviews and data analysis, Nick found that rural communities were feeling left out of many public initiatives or rather felt pushed back into a position of lower political priority for the government. Many members of these communities felt other groups of citizens were getting more support from the government. This disconnection left communities to see if it does, in fact, affect politics. I think we could raise money for the Democratic Party to donate to nonpartisan groups that would benefit low-income citizens directly and see if it revitalizes the community and changes voting.”

Regardless of whether his theory is right or not, he feels that this issue is something that needs to be brought to the attention of the national community. “It’s kind of eye-opening. Cities make up half the vote, but so do these rural areas.
They make a difference, especially in swing states.”

“I would like people of the Democratic Party to come to terms with the fact that feeling valued is important to everyone, that we need to bring back trust in these communities, because it won’t just affect elections; it will affect lives. North Carolina has voted red nine times out of ten, and I think it’s because of this lack of trust.” Despite the level of the problem, he didn’t find the election results too surprising. “Growing up in a small, rural town, I kind of figured this would be the answer. But I was surprised that it turned out that the situation in my home town was the case in other swing states.” When asked why he thought this issue needed to be raised in the Ashby community, he said it was a vital part of our identity as a community. “Ashby is about community learning, and Greensboro, though being a city, is surrounded by rural areas, and this gives people a perspective on groups not that far away. People in urban areas, including many people in Ashby, didn’t understand why so many people voted Red,” says Nick. “They’re not unreasonable; they just feel let down and don’t see what we see because of the lack of opportunity in low income areas. It gives us all at Ashby some perspective.”

“The topic’s important because it gives society a view on something that’s often hidden from the spotlight. Society doesn’t often consider what these communities are and what they mean. They’re hard working people who are important to the community, but they don’t feel important lately.”

Nick said he hoped to see change come from his project as people better understand what is going on in the communities outside of urban centers and that they would be able to come together once this gap of ignorance was bridged. “I want to see things change; I want to see communities more open to voting options because they feel more understood as a population. When this changes, everything will change and society will get better.”
The movie industry has under-represented diverse character roles for years, but it has only been recently that people are speaking about this issue. Imani Thomas, a student at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a major in Media Studies, advocates for changes in the curriculum of media studies programs. So many film degree programs in the US are advised to teach “film history,” when really it’s just “American film history,” plus two French people. It is plainly American, white, male film history, but there are so many other voices out there.

Imani admits that though these voices of diversity aren’t quite making it “big” in mainstream film making, they are thriving. In fact, they have industries of their own.
from which Hollywood is constantly borrowing techniques and stories. She sees now that these diverse filmmakers really already have “made it” even though they haven’t been treated right in Hollywood or given any light. Imani would like to address this issue of curriculum in media studies programs with white male achievements and history. There have been countless improvements, approaches, and inventions by non-white, non-male filmmakers that have changed the craft, and even inspired the white filmmakers we do study, yet these diverse filmmakers are never even mentioned.”

She speaks out about how students would like to see more range. Right now, Imani sees a pattern: “White males basically learn about other white film makers and there seem to be many of her fellow students who have no issues with what the classes include.” Imani hopes to tell her audience about international filmmakers such as Park Chan-Wook and his film *Oldboy*. He has inspired so many directors and filmmakers that we know today, yet he is often not part of courses offered in media studies programs.

Imani argues that film students “are not learning how to become efficient filmmakers if we are not learning the full history. By omitting diverse media, we not only miss out on international film history, we lose differences in techniques, approaches, visual styles, and storytelling.”

In one moment, it hit her; Imani had the epiphany that her friend group was very diverse in race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, and she was learning

“**It is important, as budding filmmakers, that we study diverse media and the effects it will have on our work and the future of the industry.”**

in her own projects by using research to learn new techniques and ways of thinking about film and filming. Imani’s project does not just have diversity as its main focus. Imani’s project also focuses on what media departments are missing out on when they limit their curriculum to a narrow, white male lens. She argues that by only studying white straight men in film, students are missing out on a rich history, techniques, styles, storytelling and more.

Imani articulates the problem she is experiencing. “I decided to study film as my major in college, and I found that diverse history was not taught. Everything we are learning is laden
more about film and filmmakers from people who offered a variety of perspectives. There is so much more to learn about film beyond the traditional curriculum that privileges white, male-centric filmmakers.

This potential range of perspectives in film has inspired Imani to be interested in film education. She says that it is very important for those who enjoy film to look past their favorite filmmakers and explore others for diverse interests.

She hopes to communicate that non-white, non-male filmmakers are vital in film history. Not only do these diverse filmmakers need to be studied, but their impact on the film community should be recognized; they have changed the industry. She now sees, because of her research project, the racist and sexist elements of some media studies curricula.

Looking back, Imani wanted to act when she was little but gave up because there are so few roles for her. Imani hopes that one day there will be change, and media students will learn diverse histories of media that include female and non-white contributions.

In the future, a male director will be inspired by the films of Alicia Guy-Blanche, the first female director (her first film was in 1896), and a Japanese media student will be excited to learn how people of his heritage contributed to cinematography and the rise of digital movies.

Today Imani sees that many people can relate to the lack of diversity in media studies programs. She hopes to inspire students to challenge their professors and their colleges to expand their media studies curriculum. She would hope that this issue will change soon because one day, when Imani becomes a successful filmmaker, creating incredible films, writing wise scripts, and receiving wide acclaim as a film maker, she would hate not to be recognized because she is not a white male.

Imani says, “Our films are going to be international; why shouldn't our education be?”
Many people struggle with belonging in modern day society, but most can find their way. Jessica Barber was born deaf and received cochlear implants when she was 15 months old, yet Jessica belongs neither to the hearing community nor the deaf community. Jessica’s parents, who are both hearing, made the decision to put her through surgery as a toddler. Her parents believed that this decision would greatly improve Jessica’s life, and, overall, it has. “I’m thankful my parents made the choice to implant me while I was a baby. I feel lucky that I have the opportunity to hear. I wouldn’t have been able to communicate so well if they had waited until I was old enough to decide for myself. It was a hard decision for them, but I’m glad they made the one they did.”

Being born deaf, or becoming deaf due to fever or illness, affects around 2.1% of people nationally. Within the deaf community, many members frown upon the use of cochlear implants because it takes away their identity as a deaf person. Using a cochlear implant is believed, by some in the deaf community, to aid in diminishing deaf culture. The original sign

Jessica Barber: Deaf culture is a beautiful thing to witness and be a part of.
for a cochlear implant in American Sign Language resembles the sign for “evil.” This stereotype of being wrong in the deaf community for having a cochlear implant affects many people, which makes feeling included very difficult. “I never was sure where I fit in when I was growing up. I wasn’t hearing, but I could hear with my implants so does that mean I’m not deaf either? Seeing protests in the media against cochlear implant companies just made it harder for me to find my identity,” said Jessica when questioned about her Capstone project. Many young people who receive cochlear implants feel the same non-belonging that Jessica has felt for many years.

As a young child, she was never taught sign language and went through years of extensive speech therapy. Jessica can enunciate, speak clearly, and has no deaf accent. On the other hand, Jessica’s friend Emily had her cochlear implant surgery at the age of 11. Emily uses cued speech to be able to communicate, has a very heavy deaf accent, and cannot enunciate well.

The years between when Jessica and Emily received a cochlear implant made all the difference. A common argument against cochlear implants in the deaf community is to wait until the child is old enough to decide for themselves. The problem with this argument is that cochlear implants become less effective the later that they are surgically implanted.

Jessica lives without fitting into one clear-cut mold. She has volunteered at Camp Cheerio for multiple years and has learned American Sign Language in her time here at UNCG. Finishing her sophomore year here at UNCG, Jessica is majoring in audiology because she wishes to help others like herself.

After experiencing the hard divide in the deaf community, Jessica decided to educate instead of demean those around her, which has inspired her research of the impact of cochlear implants on the deaf community.

Jessica says that her research has opened her eyes to just how much tension is present in the community. She now realizes the problem has been going on for much longer than she originally thought, and the protests are much more common than she guessed. This has made her more dedicated to seeing if there is a way to solve this old argument.
There's been a fairly predictable rhetoric of dreaded English classes where teachers force the students to read works of Shakespeare or a series of multi-layered poems that are hard to understand. Students in the classroom often want to avoid the projects and assignments associated with *The Scarlett Letter* or *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and when some students remain unable to understand the books, they can become disheartened, potentially giving up on the subject. Sophomore Abby Davenport notices the issue of lack of interest in English classes and seeks to fix the problem. Her research project addresses this question and offers an answer: Young Adult Literature should be taught in middle and high schools.

Young adult literature focuses on characters who are teenaged or young adults and addresses issues this age group might face. One reason this genre is a good fit in particular is because it is in middle school that the English curriculum
starts to focus on heavier topics and texts, causing students to lose interest in literature. Abby notes how she loved reading in the earlier parts of her life, but when she began reading denser school materials, she lost interest because reading went from a hobby to a chore. “When I was in middle school and high school, I stopped reading on my own because the books they were having us read were so dense, dull, and hard to relate to.” Forcing students to read canonical works in middle school and high school asks them to abruptly gain the ability to relate to and comprehend the stories of people from centuries long before they were born.

The issue at hand is not just that students don’t want to read anymore; it is also that when students stop reading, they stop attempting to broaden their knowledge and understanding of both literature and the English language (not to mention the broader human experience). When students stop reading, their literacy is also affected and, in turn, every other portion of their life is affected because literacy is necessary for all of life’s demands.

So how do we stop students from becoming disheartened and negatively affecting their literacy? Abby hopes for her research on young adult literature to reach educators and middle school and high school teachers so that there could be a reform of education to include young adult literature in the curriculum alongside canonical works. Abby’s research shows that using young adult literature provides students with relatable themes and approachable language that gives children the ability to expand their comprehension and move on to more complex pieces.

Abby hopes that her research helps the education system take young adult literature seriously and address the issues that are plaguing the English classroom, a subject which can often be in the shadow of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs, as the curricular focus shifts to market-driven, technology-based education. Perhaps Abby’s research will encourage consideration of the value of teaching young adult literature as an important tool for keeping the study of English vibrant and the future of reading and literacy alive.
Are you a person who uses cosmetics? If you are, do you know what often happens before those products make it to the shelves? Many people aren’t aware of the level of pain and suffering that animals go through in cosmetic testing facilities and don’t know which brands to avoid in order to pursue a lifestyle that includes cruelty-free cosmetics. UNCG sophomore Abby Parlato is a lover of many things, but the one thing she loves more than anything else is animals. Because of her love for animals, not only did Abby become a vegetarian several years ago, but she also decided to make this love of animals the focus of her research by investigating the effects of animal testing in the cosmetics industry. More specifically, she is interested in which brands allow product testing on animals and which brands do not. Abby’s research also examines the effects of animal testing and possible alternatives. Abby has always been an advocate for animals and believes consumers should know how the cosmetic products they buy every day are most likely harmful to animals.
Abby’s decision to become a vegetarian also made her more aware of cruelty free products. She discovered that 100 million animals are put to death each year by cosmetic laboratory testing in the U.S., according to the PETA organization, and once her awareness grew, it became more difficult for her to witness people using products without considering this issue. Through her research she aims to inspire people not to use animal tested products and she hopes to change people’s perspective by making her audience more aware of the products they’re buying and using.

If you’re one of the people that just grabs random cosmetic products off the shelves in stores and neglects to learn anything more about the cosmetics you buy than what the front label says, hopefully finding out that cosmetic animal testing still happens and what that entails might change your mind. Abby reminds consumers that “there is nothing humane about these tests. Laboratories have no remorse and usually very little (if any) pain relief for their participants, and educating consumers on these issues,” argues Abby, “is the most important tool to make a difference.”

The only way to promote the end of cosmetic testing is for consumers to stop buying products that use these practices. Although the number of companies that have found alternate testing procedures outnumber the ones that still use animals, huge companies are the ones that still participate in this research method. Some of the brands that Abby has learned are cruelty free include Bath & Body Works, NYX, LUSH, Too Faced Cosmetics, and Wet ’n Wild. Conversely, brands like Dove, Maybelline, ChapStick, Estee Lauder, Coppertone, and St. Ives are some of the many brands that do test on animals.

Consumer power is really the only thing to stop these tests. If you don’t buy, they can’t sell, and if they stop selling, the animals stop suffering. Abby hopes that through her research people will become more sensitive to which companies test on animals and be more mindful of who they are giving their money to. She would love for people to consider going cruelty free and to petition companies who are not cruelty free to change their practices. No one likes to see animals harmed; our foundation is not worth a poor bunny’s life.
No matter what some might like to believe, racism is still alive and well in our country. In his research project, Samata Allen examines one surprising reason that contributes to the problem: Black History Month. It has been around for several generations, and although its existence is inherently positive, it has turned into something that has as much of a negative influence as a positive one. Motivated by the hope for a better education for his younger sisters, Samata looks at the effects of Black History Month on both black and non-black students in the context of the general lack of black history education in American school systems.

As a black man himself, Samata adamantly believes in educating our youth about black history, black importance, and black impact on our society. “It is very important to emphasize Blackness in our society, especially in early education,” says Allen, “because the most instrumental stages of a person’s life start in the first few years, and the education that you
receive during those years has a heavy hand in shaping the type of person you become. One thing that happens when you neglect to shine light on black importance is that it leaves our black students feeling isolated and less important. This is important to me because my sisters are those black students, and it’s vital to me that they feel important.”

Samata’s research revealed that raising money and awareness would help create a solution. His hope would be to establish programs to educate teachers more about black historical figures, black impact on our society, and black importance in general. “I would invest in schools and give them resources to study more black poets, black authors, and black scientists in order to give the younger students role models to look up to,” and, says Samata “to diversify the materials used in schools. I would also like to see some school systems enrich and expand Black History Month. Schools need Black History Month because of the lack of diversity in everyday curricula,” but he does advocate for enriching those programs by having speakers talk to classes about their experiences of blackness.

“Investigating the impact of Black History Month,” says Samata, “could explain why, or at least begin to explain why, there is still so much racial tension and prejudice in our country.” He also said that he thought that while racism is a vast, expansive issue that will take years and years to truly fix, this research shines a light on a smaller part of the bigger issue that can be fixed relatively easily by reaching out to teachers. Though this is an issue that spans all grade levels and every part of a person’s education, Allen’s research led him to focus on middle and high school teachers specifically. The middle and high school years are when Black History Month really starts to taper off, so he hopes that his research will speak to teachers and administrators at those levels especially. When I asked him what kind of reaction he was hoping to receive from his audience, he said, “Hopefully the reaction I get will be surprise and shock. I hope this causes people to fix and update the curricula.”

In Ashby’s curriculum, observed Allen, “One of its key focuses is cultural awareness and participation. It has to do with curricula, and Ashby does a very good job with diversifying their curricula and opportunities, having different

“While history can’t necessarily be outdated, it can be updated, and that’s what I want to do.”
Minerva speakers come, endorsing different types of meetings and events, and tying all of that back to awareness and participation.” Ashby’s curriculum, said Allen, is an example of what he hopes all schools will look like one day, in terms of diversity of content and education.

Samata’s research project has reminded him just how important Black History Month is in school curricula, causing him to rethink the subject in more nuanced ways. Because the information given to students was essentially the same year after year, the repetition of it made it boring, and the impact lessened significantly, because he felt like he was allowed to not care about the issue. However, after this research project, Samata realized that if Black History Month were taken more seriously and approached differently by schools, then it would be taken seriously by everyone else, giving it a much greater impact.

“I think my topic is important because the more knowledge that everyone has on black issues, the more aware everyone is, the more socially active they are, the better race relations could get, and the more easily we can move onto bigger issues when we’re not fighting amongst each other. Instead of divisiveness we can focus on educating our youth, on teaching them acceptance and awareness, as well as empathy NOT sympathy.

“If we keep teaching our students that black people are ‘others’ and that if you’re not black you don’t have to care about race, it teaches people apathy. When you go your whole life thinking that something like racism isn’t an issue, but then people are screaming at you that it is an issue later on, it creates an inconsistency in your own mind and your education. It criticizes your intelligence and knowledge and makes you feel ignorant, which in turn makes some people get defensive or worse. If you pinpoint, focus, and fix, then the issue gets solved much easier.”

This project has changed Samata. “I think I’ve gained not only a stronger connection to my Blackness, personally, but also a passion for research and for the school system. I care a lot more about curricula than I did before, and I’m much more aware of what is or isn’t being taught.”
Tahjma VanBuren’s research project on Millennial Activism is rare. It is the type of project that inspires conversations that everyone wants to have, but not everyone is entirely sure how they’ll get themselves to the same level in that conversation. It’s that good. This project speaks directly to the new type of activism that our society calls for in the 21st century: Digital activism. This project hopes to understand where millennials have been and where we’re going without attacking the styles of activism we’re used to seeing.

We’ve seen a lot happen in our country over the last decade: Shootings in Ferguson, Missouri, police brutality in New York, Baltimore, and elsewhere. We’ve seen how rogue citizens have taken actions of law enforcement into their own
hands in Sanford, Florida. As a society we’ll be judged on how we as a people responded to each of the aforementioned situations. Did we fight for what’s right in the judicial systems of Missouri, New York, and Florida? Or did we sit on the sidelines and choose to do nothing?

“Sustainability has a societal narrative of being only about pretty flowers and tree hugging; however, I learned that sustainability focuses on the conservation and preservation of all systems.”

Tahjma’s research project makes inroads towards answering that question and it helps establish a path for ensuring we have a constant answer for the next generation of activists.

Tahjma interviewed and researched our current generation of high school students. Millennials, Tahjma points out, are often characterized as lazy and greatly apathetic. “I often read articles and hear people of older generations discuss with great disgust the ways in which millennials perform activism, or our lack of advocacy as a whole.” But she notes, in contrast, “As a millennial, I completely see and experience a whole other side of the story; I wanted to explore the differentiation between the two opinions.” This project started out of love for her generation and activism as a whole. Tahjma’s fieldwork and research led her to discover consistent elements within the practices of millennial activism that were counter to some of the assumptions that often circulate about this population.

Tahjma conducted interviews with the students of the UNCG Middle College, a program that exposes high school kids to a college setting free of additional tuition costs. The conversations she had included topics on social justice issues, social diversity, and inclusivity. And while this experience was occasionally frustrating for her, it was also fun. “I had the chance to do my fieldwork with the UNC Greensboro Middle College, in order to get some interviews and research from those on the younger end of the millennial generation. This experience guided a lot of my research as it provided me with new information to look up when I finished each facilitation session with the middle college students.”

Talking with these kids is incredibly important because it helps people understand what the next generation is thinking. Though it is easy to underestimate high school students, they are more developed in their approach to community involvement than they’re
given credit for, particularly since they are often not old enough to vote. It is clear though, that just because they’re not able to vote doesn’t mean they’re not able to develop opinions about what’s going on in the world around them. The kids Tahjma worked with have formed strong opinions on the important topics of today and are clear about what they want to see change.

It’s some older folks who have a hard time seeing change and an even harder time understanding that the world of being an activist is changing and changing quickly. Tahjma made a good point of noting that it was people from previous generations who debated with her on the definition of activism and what counts as being an activist, and they were often hesitant to believe that being involved online counts as being an activist.

According to Tahjma, “This research serves as a way to examine how millennial activism functions in the twenty first century and to deconstruct older, perhaps more ingrained and stagnant notions of what constitutes activism.” Tahjma’s research argues that “millennial activism is a living and breathing concept that functions in three major ways: through grassroots community engagement, through social media, and through reshaping the narratives of marginalized communities.” In particular, her project looked at “some well known communities and/or movements that are signature examples of millennial activism, such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and the LGBT community as a whole.”

Tahjma’s research project has been a large and at times stressful undertaking. “One reason,” she says, “is that it seemed as though I was proving something that had never been proven before. Often I was pulling together ideas from the left side of the world in order to make a point that was on the right side of the world, and this capstone project was yet another Strong College experience that will forever shape my academic and social life.”

Tahjma wants to focus her career on youth development, inclusivity, and intercultural engagement.
One of the unique aspects of Japan is its fashion subcultures. These fashion subcultures can vary from very feminine bows and ribbons to dark masculine metal and chains. These styles are worn by people of all ages and genders, but the majority of these trends attract young teenagers and adults. Japanese fashion subculture has become so popular that people from around the world have started to wear these styles to special events like meetups or anime conventions. This fashion has even inspired American apparel, making new styles trendy and fashionable. But at what point do these Japanese subculture styles get adopted, and is it appropriate for American apparel designers to adopt another nation’s fashion?

Victoria Sales, through her research project, attempts to answer these questions. A senior at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a student in the Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies program, she has been interested in Japanese Fashion since she was in high school, especially when she attended
one of the biggest anime conventions, Animazement. Through the convention and Cosplay (the custom of dressing up as anime characters), Victoria learned about Japanese Fashion and became interested. Given Victoria’s consistent interest in fashion, seeing these different and unique Cosplay styles inspired her Japanese Fashion, or JFashion, research project.

JFashion is a shortened word for Japanese Fashion and is interchangeable with “Japanese Street Fashion.” Research suggests that this subculture grew out of Japan’s focus on a strict social order. For much of the Japanese population, fashion is dictated by uniforms. From school to the workplace, there’s a uniform for every occasion. Over time, Japanese youth have branched out to defy the boring uniform-obsessed culture to create subcultures dedicated to self-expression: this is JFashion. The term is typically used here in the West to differentiate the fun and colorful styles prominent in Japanese fashion subcultures from the typical styles we see in America.

Lolita fashion, one of the subsets of JFashion, is also an important part of Victoria’s research. Lolita has made its mark in the western world as a popular street fashion style that consists of conservative, doll-like attire. The style originated in Japan, but it takes inspiration from the Victorian era in Europe that privileged modesty. Born in reaction to the emphasis on form fitting, body revealing clothing popular in the Seventies, Lolita fashion was for women who didn’t want to show off their bodies. They wanted to set their own rules of modesty, and Lolita fashion was a way to accomplish this goal.

Yet, it is clear that rather than bringing the West to the East, Victoria wants to move in the opposite direction, focusing on how America takes the styles of these subcultures and renders them fashionable here. There are many speculations as to when the JFashion that we know today was exposed to the West. Some believe that the obsession began when American pop icon Gwen Stefani released her brand “Harajuku Lovers.” During the peak of Stefani’s solo career, she released the Harajuku Lovers perfume line, which then raised the question, “What is a ‘Harajuku Girl?’”

After this brief moment of exploration, JFashion became a small subculture that saw little growth until the past few years. Over the past few decades,
However, underground Japanese fashion subcultures have exploded in popularity, with popular chain-stores such as Forever 21 and Hot Topic picking up on the niche market.

Why is this market flourishing? America culturally idolizes the idea of individuality, and teens and young adults, in particular, cannot resist the urge to stand out and be different. This population has recently begun to adopt Japanese styles as a way to express their individuality through their clothing.

Victoria argues that “similar to previous decades, western youths are taking global styles and making them their own. Through my research, I want to explore the influence of Japanese underground fashion on the impressionable twentiesomethings to the West.”

Victoria describes her pursuit of JFashion: “Throughout my research, I constantly questioned why the west is so obsessed with Japanese street fashion. Even though style isn’t just for one country, what made Japanese style so sought after?” Through her personal experiences and research she feels she might have touched on an answer. “Somewhere,” says Victoria, “in between the aesthetic properties and the thirst for personal identity, lies the ultimate desire to be accepted.” Victoria reminds us of the words of American fashion designer Rachel Zoe, “Style is a way to say who you are without having to speak.”

For Victoria’s future, she wants to focus on the business side of her dream, hoping to open a brick and mortar store in Japan, rather than selling fashion items solely online, like many new designers have done. “As a fashion designer,” she says, “I take inspiration from the one style that I love more than anything else, JFashion.” She wants to use this inspiration to create and sell her own designs and run a successful boutique in Japan, and this project has given her important foundations. The apparel industry can be difficult if you don’t understand its global relations and cyclical trends, but Victoria is ready to expand her work and one day reach her goal of opening that store in Japan.
I have been having a weird dream. I am in a world where everything is hazy and pastel-colored, and everyone is dressed like the capitol people from the Hunger Games. In this dream, I can’t speak. Every time I try, my mouth fills with this gum-like substance. Nothing much happens in the dream besides everyone dressing like clouds, but I know I’ve had it before. I have no idea why it’s recurring, so I talk to my own personal dream expert: Rebecca Bischoff. She’s doing a capstone research project on interpreting dreams, a topic that she has been deeply interested in. Her focus for her research is on the relationship between dreams and imagination. Her major, New Media and Design, inspired her to become interested in “what evokes visual experiences in artists.” She is new to the art scene, having come to UNCG as a business major and with art only as a hobby. But, possessing wild creativity and a
vivid imagination since birth, she quickly acclimated herself to her new world of the art department.

Rebecca’s research, she says, aims to “tap into the science behind why it is that I can see things that are not of this world optically in my daily life.” While

“Engage within unconscious thoughts through your dreams and display a visual interpretation of them in whatever way individual creativity gravitates towards.”

dream and reality are two contradicting areas, for her art, Bischoff researches and implements surrealism and works from the movements to draw connections between them. “I want to explore the world of dreams and the unconscious to access a higher understanding of why my mind works the way it does.”

Dreams, reality, creativity, and imagination are all very broad topics to research, especially when you are talking about them all generally and how they intertwine. More specifically, Rebecca’s project focuses on the influence living in the daily, real world has on imagination, since she recognizes that not everyone has a vivid imagination.

“My focus has dreams as an underlay of the imagination part of the topic.” Her project zeroes in on how our everyday surroundings in our real lives impact our surroundings in our dream lives.

Her inspiration for pursuing this research topic came from her desire to apply herself as an artist. This has also allowed her to fill her life with the kinds of art she finds interesting. Some artists that she is currently into are Salvador Dali and Erik Parker. “They have given me inspiration to explore dreams and the mind deeper because of the out-of-this-world content that tends to be explored in their art.” Dali and Parker give Rebecca the craving to “understand the connection of imagination and inspiration.” She seeks out the place “where the real world can no longer provide the insight into works of art and it, instead, crosses boundaries into the vivid magical expressionism of what our minds can access.”

Through her research, Rebecca has gotten a better idea of how dreams and reality work with creativity. “I have more science behind my knowledge on how all of these correlate with each other. I have statistics to prove what I am trying to say about my topic, and they have given me a more stable feeling towards how I approach it.” Bischoff hopes to get across the message that the unconscious mind is a serious tool for our lives and
she hopes to raise awareness, or spike curiosity, in us to pay more attention to our imagination, dreams, and creativity. “Without implements of imagination and intelligence, we would not have creativity. Those who rely mainly on ‘what is’ cannot be capable to think of ‘what could be’. ‘What could be’ is how things are invented, how boundaries are pushed, and how a man has walked on the moon.”

She hopes her project will inspire people’s creativity to kick in, and they will either create something or find something already created that represents their mind. Rebecca hopes, too, that through this research project, she will learn more about herself and her personal dreams. “I hope to start keeping a dream journal and start taking note of what I can remember. I want to evoke the same feeling for my audience and get them to crave knowing more about their mind and the functions of the unconscious.”

Bischoff would one day like to become a designer for Sanrio, the company that designs Hello Kitty, and “having a vivid imagination and creativity will aid me while I design for my young audience of children.” Having access to her dreams and imagination fuels her inspiration.

As I think back to my pastel-gum dream, Rebecca and I determine that this pastel, fantasy dream recurs because I have taken an interest in painting lately. I might even be able to paint this vivid dream world. Also it seems that the gum-like substance that appears in my mouth every time I try to speak comes from feeling silenced in my real life. If you’ve ever experienced a dream that was hard to forget, this project is one to follow, exploring where creativity, intelligence, and dreams coincide. You don’t have to be an art major, or even an artist, for your dreams and imagination to be intertwined. Her project aims to delve deep into your unconscious to find the correlations that might explain why it is you have those vivid recurring dreams, which will, with hope, unearth your natural creativity.

Rebecca (whose art work you see above) and Micah exhibited their art work at a local gallery.
Do you know where your clothing comes from? Yes, you can read the tag and most likely you are going to see “Made in China,” but do you know where your clothes actually come from? Perhaps the underpaid sweatshop laborers and child laborers that some big brand companies like H&M, Forever 21, Nike, etc. use to create your clothing. It is hard to accept that fact, I’m sure, because these may be some of your favorite places to shop, but it is time for the world to get educated and become knowledgeable about ethical fashion.

In fall 2015, UNCG’s first-year common book was Where Am I Wearing? by Kelsey Tillerman, which discusses this phenomenon of how and where fast fashion is made. In contrast to fast fashion, ethical fashion represents an approach to the design, sourcing and manufacture of clothing which maximizes benefits to people and communities while minimizing impact on the environment. The meaning of ethical goes beyond doing no harm, representing an approach which strives to take an active role in poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods,
and minimizing and counteracting environmental concerns.

Kayla Braswell is currently a sophomore at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a sustainability and environmental studies major, and a part of the Spring 2017 graduating Strong College class. Kayla is a vegetarian with goals to work toward becoming a vegan in the future. She is an avid believer in the betterment of the community and the environment, which is why in the future she wants to have a career in the field of sustainability.

Ethical fashion is such a field, as it attends to the use and misuse of human and natural resources. With any career path she chooses, one way or another, it will relate back to sustainability. She values the way ethical fashion works to make consumers aware of how their choices impact the economics and bio systems involved in making clothes.

Kayla hopes to spread her views about ethical fashion to others through her research. She argues that people who are more informed with ethical fashion make smarter choices. They know more about sweatshop labor and understand alternatives to the products of fast fashion companies. And finally, they will have more options as consumers because they have become educated and engaged with the multi-layered issues surrounding ethical fashion.

Kayla believes people should care about the results of her fieldwork because it is related to an everyday activity that everyone does, but many people do not think about what’s in their clothing and the people and companies that produce it. Did you know that about 17-20% of industrial water pollution comes from textile dyeing and treatment that’s not sustainable?

When asked, “Who is your targeted audience for this research?” Kayla responded, “Everyone,” but she focuses mainly on college students. Ethical fashion links to the greater community because knowledge is power essentially, and everyone can benefit from knowing more about this topic. It could also lead to improvements in the clothing industry. For example, if enough campaigns are held and more people get informed and involved, real change can happen, such as better wages for sweatshop laborers.

Kayla wants to learn more and would like to research further about the business side of ethical fashion. She would like to know more about the structure of ethical businesses, like The Reformation and Krotchet Kids, as far as how they specifically run their ethical businesses including fair wages, etc. She wants the community to become more knowledgeable about ethical fashion, so that more people will practice it and sustain the fashion industry.

Rather than buying new clothes for every occasion, repurposed clothing can be refashioned and reused.
As someone who is passionate about Rome and its influences, Maggie chose to focus her research project on how the Roman Empire influenced and impacted America’s Civil War architecture. After taking a course in Roman architecture, Maggie saw the beauty and timelessness of the designs and was inspired to take a closer look at how this culture and its architectural designs have influenced other time periods. Maggie remarks, “While we don’t usually equate Rome and the Civil War, it had such a major impact on the architecture and design of the period and even in architecture all over America.” Her work with her research project has changed her thoughts about the influence of Roman architecture on Civil War period architecture. She has now expanded her knowledge about what is classified as Roman architectural design and how those elements can be incorporated into designs from another
period. “Before this project,” she says, “I would’ve never known about all the statues and monuments that are inspired by Roman architecture.”

So, why Roman architecture? Maggie has a vested interest in Rome and its architecture as a classical studies major who plans on either becoming a museum curator or Roman archeology professor. For either career, Maggie wants to know and understand the inner workings of Roman architectural design and its influence on cultures that existed after the fall of Rome.

Maggie has come to appreciate the Roman influences that are all around us, suggesting that “all that it takes to see these influences is a basic understanding of Romanesque designs.” Another element of her research focuses on the importance of design and how it can convey meaning. And it is this goal that she hopes will help other students understand the major concepts of Roman design, so they, too, can see how these concepts in architecture transcend time and geography.

This is important information for people to know about, no matter where they live. In Greensboro, for example, many buildings have Roman columns as well as Romanesque-inspired sculptures, monuments, and statues. Maggie hopes to learn the extent of the effect of Roman architecture and see just how many monuments are influenced by Roman design and which time periods may have been influenced the most.

These designs and monuments are still in common practice despite the hundreds of years of development in between then and now. The Civil War monuments are reminiscent of the classical period and its ideals of sacrifice and memorializing the dead. These monuments are designed from a period of time that idealized the Civil War and those who lost their lives for freedom. America continues to use these designs to commemorate these ideas, even now well into the 21st century. As we look at the world around us, it is easy to forget about the civilizations that were here long before us. Even though many of these great empires are long gone, their marks still influence our lives every day.
John Easterling is a second semester sophomore at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a second year student in the Strong College program, and a political science major at the university. He describes himself as, “a 20 year old African American man from rural Laurinburg, North Carolina, located in Scotland County.” Yet, John, in addition to being all these things, is also an avid Democrat, and in that capacity he serves as the State President of the College Democrats of North Carolina. His deep concern with where the direction of the Democratic Party has been going the past 6 years has led him to research the factors that contributed to the continued party losses in his hometown. In 2010 in Scotland County, the position of the Democratic Party, which had been stable for over one hundred years, suddenly shifted toward the Republican Party in 2010. If you are from a rural part of North
Carolina and wondered why so many voters there do not vote Democratic anymore, then John’s research would help answer those questions. Researching Scotland County, John hopes, will provide insight into the voting patterns of other rural counties.

To support his research, John personally observed rural county party conventions, a state Young Democrats function, and the daily business of a rural county Board of Elections. He also interviewed two prominent figures in North Carolina politics and policy. Through analyzing analytical, statistical, and personal data, John was able to posit some root causes of the Democratic Party’s substantial losses over the past few years.

One of the first steps in his research was an interview conducted with Walter Rogers from Scotland County. Mr. Rogers is the former state Chairman of the North Carolina Black Leadership Caucus and has been highly involved for much of his life. Because of his leadership expertise, work in the minority community, and his personal relationship with Scotland County, Chairman Rogers was a rich source of information. “Our interview was only set to last an hour,” says John, “but it ended up lasting over three hours. Chairman Rogers provided extensive knowledge of minority issues and immense detail in his answers to my interview questions.” He described how African Americans are the most loyal base of the Democratic Party, and on average they vote 90% of the time for the Democrat. But Rogers believes that the party has left minorities behind and that they are on the chopping block by the GOP. Not a good situation.

From this interview and his other research, John argues that sustaining the Democratic Party comes from breaking the urban and rural divide and making sure that the party addresses issues concerning all people. Capitalizing on the minority vote and affording more opportunities for minority involvement in politics and government outside of election years will be critical to the Party’s future success.

“The Democratic Party is my family,” says John. “I have a vested interest in making sure that we can sustain the political party that has lasted for over 200 years, to make sure it is has the opportunity to last for another 200 years.”
Tamika Smith is a sophomore from Gastonia, NC who attends the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is a Psychology Major with a minor in Human Development and Family Studies, and she has another minor in American Sign Language. Tamika is currently researching the issue of African American resistance to seeking mental health treatment. Tamika says her research revealed a cultural stance that supports the idea that “African Americans typically resist getting help when it comes to mental health.” As a member of the African American community, this issue is very important to her. Tamika explained, “Some people in my family have experienced mental health issues including substance abuse and depression.” She says that even though her family has experienced this personally, they don’t talk about it, nor has any of her family sought treatment.
Besides her experience with her family she has also had experience with her church and how the stigma of mental illness within that community can prevent people from seeking treatment. Tamika is a part of a nondenominational church while at school, but while she is at home she goes to a Baptist church. She explained that in church, mental health issues are demonized. The church’s approach is a major deterrent for many people who are suffering and who don’t want to feel the judgment of the church. It can cause people not to seek help.

From her research, Tamika found that another one of the reasons that African Americans don’t seek treatment is because it is often unaffordable. Getting help with mental health is quite expensive, especially since it isn’t something that can necessarily be cured quickly. Tamika hopes her research will help sufferers have a better understanding of the healthcare system and help them see ways that it could become more affordable. “It would be good too” she says, “if the healthcare system could understand itself, which might address why there are so few African Americans seeking treatment.”

She learned from her research that “only 2 percent of members of the American Psychology Association are African-American. Since professionals in the field are predominately white, there is a lack of cultural competency.” Cultural competency, she argues, is important because healthcare providers need to know how culture may contribute to what patients are dealing with. When African Americans see this lack of cultural competency, they may refuse to seek treatment out of fear of misdiagnosis or even over-diagnosis. She would also work toward increasing the number of African American doctors in the field to help contribute to a more diverse health system, which would then improve cultural competency.

Most importantly, Tamika wants her research to address the importance of talking about mental health and to work to erase the stigma around it, especially in the African American community. Society generally only talks about physical health, but mental health affects physical health. Mental health is so often silent, and it is time to stop being quiet.
Aron Johnson is a political science major at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. During his recent experience in Florida, working on the 2016 presidential campaign for the Democratic Party, he found a passion for incorporating young people into the world of politics. He suggests this is one of the main reasons he decided to focus his research on the presence (or the lack of presence) of apathy among young people in college when it comes to voting and the political system as a whole. His research took him in the direction of talking to campus organizations such as College Democrats and Turning Point as a segment of his fieldwork. It was in these settings that Aron learned what college students are thinking about politics these days. His research revealed that a lot of students he interviewed were, in fact, interested in politics. However, the people who were not already involved in politics gave reasons for their inactivity, ranging from feeling helpless to effect change to not having enough
digestible information that explained the different situations going on in our government.

Aron wants to change this narrative. He would like to see that even if students are not working in the field of politics, that they still find a way to participate in the world of activism, ensuring that their voices be heard. Aron is a strong believer in the idea that nothing changes unless you force it to change, and speaking up is one of the first steps to getting active in the laws and policies that affect you and your loved ones in the long run.

When asked about what truly inspired him and how his gender, age, cultural background, and sexuality influenced his research, Aron immediately cited his being black as a big motivator. He believes that the black community has a big mistrust of the government and all of its entities, but he acknowledges that the mistrust is probably valid, considering how African American history has played out.

Being a black man from Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Aron is familiar with the lack of public funding in certain parts of the community, and this can also contribute to the mistrust. There is a missing commitment to the African American community, evident in the lack of sidewalks and access to public transportation in areas of his neighborhood. He cites this as a problem that further creates disparities among the younger age groups that may have to endure this kind of inequity in their own cities and neighborhoods. He sees the problems travel up into the larger systems of the city, county, and state. Aron recognizes the necessity of having young people in the decision making rooms to further impact the kind of access that is available to the masses.

His entire research is the start of an effort and plea for young people to find and gain the resources to become more involved in their futures. Aron liked the overall outcome of his research project, and he is excited to continue this kind of work with government and politics as a focal point. He wants to keep working on UNCG’s campus while he continues his education, and then it’s on to spread the same goal to bigger territories.
Fred Woodruff immerses himself in the rules of the role playing game, Pathfinder.

THE ROLE OF ROLES

Recognizing the Value of Table-Top Role-Playing Games

By Zachary Toumey

Rolling dice, killing goblins, and gaining experience. Role-playing games can explore your wildest fantasies and gain lifelong skills and friends. Fred’s research examines the benefits of role-playing games. He argues that Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) and other similar table-top role-playing games build communities, develop social and critical thinking skills, and expand creativity. Yet, the common assumption is that D&D is just a game for pretending you are someone else, which is correct, but it is so much more than that.

Fred has been a fan of role-playing games ever since he played his first game of Pathfinder, a popular variant of the famous D&D role-playing game, in his sophomore year of high school and has absolutely loved role-playing games ever since. He has played a great many characters in the four years since he first started from a Halfling ranger to a Goblin gunslinger. Fred is now a Dungeon Master in a Pathfinder campaign, and he is responsible for creating the fictional world the players will be exploring in the game.
The world he has created is one full of strife and conflict among three kingdoms, who are all vying for control of the continent. The players must overcome their pasts and prevent the wars to come. It is challenges like the ones Fred designs that move role-playing games out of mere entertainment and into an opportunity for growth. Building the world, a story, and characters of a role-playing game campaign is a creative and analytical process. According to Fred's experience and research, “D&D is a game that brings people together, and barring extenuating circumstances, can help to create long-lasting friendships. Through the problems and puzzles created by the Dungeon Master, it can be useful in the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.”

Fred argues for a holistic view of role-playing games and their activities. This view is in contrast to how role-playing games are often portrayed in the media as the domain of asocial nerds and gawky geeks. Instead, role-playing games are a very social activity that encultures a sense of community and comradery between players. This practice, perhaps surprisingly, also engenders an ability to empathize because the practice of “being someone else” helps create a virtual space for authentic feelings of understanding what others besides yourself might be experiencing.

Fred hopes that by showing the benefits that one can reap from role-playing, more people will begin to play these games, and those who have already played will play more. His research also addresses concerns about game playing that emerged in the 80s, contextualizing the myths that emerged when D&D first came out during the satanic panic that spread in that period.

Fred plans to participate in role-playing campaigns for a long time both as a player and a Dungeon Master. The benefits of table-top role-playing games and board games are incredibly evident. They provide a means of teaching skills and lessons that stick with a student much better than a normal discussion, or even a computer game. It encourages creative and individualized thinking, on top of social skills that are incredibly useful in an adult setting, and you get to interact with other real, live humans too!
The Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Commons through its Residential Colleges Office supports co- and extra-curricular engagement of undergraduates in faculty-mentored research projects through its three Residential Colleges: Ashby, Grogan, and Strong. It is the goal of the Residential Colleges’ curriculum to engage students in learning the elements of the research process, working on semester-long projects of their own design. With articles and photos generated by students, Minerva magazine profiles a few of these projects every year.