The Office of Undergraduate Research

Charlotte Community Scholars

Summer 2020 Project Descriptions
# List of Faculty CCS Projects for 2020

Abstracts are grouped by department name.

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Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Sharing Community History

Mentor Name: Dr. Nicole Peterson

Mentor Department: Anthropology

Mentor College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Mentor Status: Associate Professor

Project Description: The student will work with Community Dream Builders and Dr. Peterson to share the oral histories of community members with the community through a series of events. The student will also get feedback from the community to understand the impact of the oral histories and any changes in the project that could be undertaken, as well as how neighborhood needs could be better met by the organization. The collaboration with Community Dream Builders will allow the student research programs, develop outreach materials, and connect with residents around issues of tax increases, home repair, and community cohesion.

Minimum Qualifications: None
2020 Summer Research Experience
Faculty Mentor Research Project Submission

Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Understanding the Charlotte Food System

Mentor Name: Dr. Nicole Peterson

Mentor Department: Anthropology

Mentor College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Mentor Status: Associate Professor

Project Description: Student researcher would assist with the 2020 State of the Plate food system assessment, including phone, in-person, or web-based surveys of food-related organizations, interviews with food system participants or policymakers, and analysis of this data. The research assistant would be trained to collect and analyze the survey and interview data, and would also help with the logistics of data collection and analysis. This project is being coordinated by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council, in collaboration with other organizations around Charlotte.

Minimum Qualifications: None (interview experience preferred but not necessary).
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Arts-based Social Mobility: Exploring Cultural Capital in Charlotte

Mentor Name: Dr. Meg Whalen

Mentor Department: College of Arts + Architecture

Mentor College: College of Arts + Architecture

Mentor Status: Director of Communications & External Relations

Project Description: A variety of artists and arts organizations in Charlotte, NC offer programs whose motivation and methods are focused on social impact. Many such programs aim to increase the cultural capital of individuals and communities through music training, visual arts lessons, community-based cultural events, and other types of arts education and experience. In this project, we explore how individuals and organizations in Charlotte conceptualize the social impact of the arts and how they aim to assess that impact. We also seek to understand the beliefs, motivations and experiences of individuals and families that participate in such programs. The project has academic implications for theories of arts participation, cultural capital, and social inequality as well as practical implications for efforts underway in Charlotte to increase economic mobility. This project builds on the work of my 2018 Charlotte Community Scholar to document the range of arts organizations engaged in relevant activities in Charlotte.

Minimum Qualifications: Ability to take field notes and transcribe interviews; ability to summarize information (good writing skills); ability to create and manage data spreadsheets.
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Assessment of Community-Based STEM Education Programs

Mentor Name: Dr. Jennifer Warner

Mentor Department: Biological Sciences / LEADS Program

Mentor College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Mentor Status: Teaching Professor

Project Description: As the region’s leading provider of STEM experiences, Discovery Place is poised to serve as a primary convener of resources in support of STEM literacy and life-long learning in the Charlotte region. Through a variety of initiatives, Discovery Place is working to strategically engage with a wider audience to strive for equitable support of all Charlotte citizens, with emphasis on high need populations. Target audiences include: adults, diverse populations, marginalized persons, and low income audiences.

Discovery Place offers a variety of community-engaged programming to provide opportunities for participants to: hone STEM knowledge and skills, increase college/career readiness, help participants develop a strong social capital network, foster relationships between diverse groups of students and industry mentors, and advance and enhance socioeconomic mobility of future leaders. Examples of community-engaged programming include: Club Code, an after-school coding and computational thinking pilot program for middle school students; STEM Corps, a program for high school students that provides them direct access to the museum resources while building critical personal and professional skills to support students in their post high school aspirations; and summer camps for children in grades pre-K through 8 to fuel interest in science, technology, engineering, and art.

Working with the Discovery Place community engagement team, Charlotte Community Scholars will be part of a team that helps explore the best ways to bring science into the community and engage those lacking access to STEM experiences. Scholars will evaluate the effectiveness of Discovery Place’s community-engaged programming in terms of approach, content, pedagogy, and impact as well as help shape the future direction of programming. This experience will provide the scholar with a unique opportunity to learn more about informal science education and the non-profit industry, as well as to be part of a team that deepens impacts and benefits for the next generation of STEM professionals.

Minimum Qualifications: Students should: have a strong interest in the type of community-based programming that Discovery Place offers; display strong interpersonal skills; have strong written and oral communication skills; be comfortable working independently and within a team representing diverse perspectives; be responsible, flexible, hard-working, and ethical; possess strong organizational skills.
2020 Summer Research Experience
Faculty Mentor Research Project Submission

Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars

Project Title: Program Evaluation of Public School Teachers, Professors, and K-12 Students in Charlotte Teachers Institute

Mentor Name: Dr. Scott Gartlan

Mentor Department: Charlotte Teachers Institute

Mentor College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Mentor Status: Full-time executive staff in CLAS

Project Description: This project is designed to provide an undergraduate student with an applied research experience. CTI engages in regular program evaluation activities with multiple stakeholders focused on K-12 teachers, their students, and university professors. Working along a mentor with experience in program evaluation, the student will learn about all aspects of evaluating a teacher professional development program. Possible areas include models of effective teacher professional development evaluation research, using logic models, identifying proximal and distal outcomes, the casual paradox in program evaluation, and differentiating among different methods of collecting and interpreting data. Existing CTI program evaluations and data collection will be used as a starting point for inquiry. Along with reviewing CTI evaluation practices, the student will be expected to read and critique articles related to the field of teacher professional development research. The student will be expected to make a contribution to CTI’s evaluation work, and thus a long-term, intensive project will be the goal of this research experience. Additionally, the project could evaluate CTI’s Summer Research Experience for Teachers (SRET) program, which matches CTI Fellows with university scientists to conduct collaborative STEM research.

Minimum Qualifications: Knowledge of basic research methods and data collection can be helpful, but not required.
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Computer Security and Privacy for Refugees

Mentor Name: Dr. Liyue Fan

Mentor Department: Computer Science

Mentor College: College of Computing and Informatics

Mentor Status: Assistant Professor

Project Description: The objective of the project is to conduct research with vulnerable groups, e.g., refugees, while protecting them with tools of computer security and privacy. The summer scholar will help build and test a privacy-preserving mobile app and disseminate to the community members in need. Additionally, the scholar will develop and implement computer security and privacy educational workshops to the local community. Present during partnership meetings and during all classes.

Minimum Qualifications: Interests in computer security and privacy, mobile app development; good communication and interpersonal skills.
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Nurturing Our Gardens: Community Wellness Narratives

Mentor Name: Dr. Janaka Lewis

Mentor Department: English/ Women and Gender Studies

Mentor College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Mentor Status: Associate Professor

Project Description: Based on Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," in which she documents the legacy of Zora Neale Hurston, this project will put K-8 students (with a specific focus on girls) in the practice of citing the voices that influence them (their own gardens) and actually creating gardens to nourish their communities. In conjunction with the Eastside Development Corporation's Learning, Enrichment, and Achievement Program (L.E.A.P.), the scholar will assist with student reading of the essay and other material about emotional and physical wellbeing, will assist with the healthy eating workshops, and will coordinate and initiate local garden projects for the students and other interested students in the Charlotte community. Student should be prepared to coordinate 1-2 weeks of programming in conjunction with LEAP leadership and to assist otherwise with the program implementation as needed.

Minimum Qualifications: Willing to take initiative in organizing workshops, program and speaker experience.
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: (Re)Framing The Immigrant Narrative-Case Studies of the OurBRIDGE for Kids Community

Mentor Name: Dr. Lan Kolano

Mentor Department: Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education

Mentor College: College of Education

Mentor Status: Full Professor

Project Description:
With the exponential increase in numbers of immigrants to Charlotte, schools continue to struggle to meet the needs of English Learners (ELs). In response to the needs of schools and families, one community non-profit organization, ourBRIDGE for KIDS has emerged to support these young learners by providing a linguistically and content-rich after school program designed to support the whole child. Qualitative data has been collected with this organization for two years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. For ourBRIDGE families, the highly volatile and anti-immigration local context has created even more challenges.

Year 3 (2019-2020) of this longitudinal evaluation project will focus on the use of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as the framework for data collection and analysis. This approach calls for researchers (including the Charlotte Community Scholar) to work collaboratively with a range of local stakeholders at ourBRIDGE to take action against social injustices within a specific context. Year 3 of the evaluation will explore the trends in the data collected longitudinally since 2017 to highlight the depth of impact or the organization on the community. Data will be collected and analyzed to (1) determine they ways in which students, families, and staff are engaged in the ourBRIDGE program, and (2) highlight the qualitative ways the organization has impacted their lives.

Summer data collection will focus on participant observations and interviews with ourBRIDGE for KIDS participants and their families. The in depth interviews will help document the ways in which they are able to navigate the social and academic spaces they occupy within a highly volatile anti-immigrant political social context. This ethnographic study is designed to allow these children and their families a safe space to share their stories with the Charlotte community.

Minimum Qualifications: Computer processing skills. Strong writing skills. General understanding of qualitative research methodology. College of Education students and those who have completed TESL 4204 or equivalent are preferred. However, others with interest equity and education, and in supporting immigrant communities are encouraged to apply.
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Teacher Diversity and the Freedom Schools Experience

Mentor Name: Laura Handler

Mentor Department: Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education

Mentor College: College of Education

Mentor Status: Adjunct Professor

Project Description: Diversifying the teaching force in the United States is a pressing matter. While the student population in American public schools continues to increase in representation of people of color, the demographic of public school teachers remains predominantly comprised of white females (Taie & Goldring, 2017). This demographic mismatch manifests itself in numerous ways in education, from testing bias to discipline disproportionality, most often impeding the academic achievement of students of color. Furthermore, research has shown the positive impact linguistically and culturally diverse teachers can have on the schooling outcomes of students of color (Sleeter & Milner, 2011), emphasizing even more the need to recruit teachers of color into the field. From previous studies, we know that early exposure to the teaching profession can significantly influence teenagers and young adults to pursue a career in education (Valenzuela, 2017). Programs such as Pathways2Teaching provide real-world experiences as a teacher that often result in participants’ affirmations to become an educator (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011).

One community organization that offers such early exposure to teaching is Freedom School Partners (FSP). Part of the national organization founded by the Children’s Defense Fund, Freedom Schools seeks to build civic engagement and servant leadership in two generations: the children who are served and those who teach and serve them. Every year, FSP employs nearly 150 servant leader interns (SLIs) for their six-week summer program that takes place in approximately 17 sites across Charlotte. SLIs are responsible for a group of 10 scholars, ranging in grade from rising first to completing eighth, and spend six hours a day with them promoting a love of reading and a sense of agency in their lives. In the morning, they teach the Integrating Reading Curriculum, which includes a read aloud and interactive activities to develop skills of cooperation and conflict resolution. In the afternoon, SLIs facilitate hands-on learning experiences both on site and out in the community. In preparation for their work, SLIs receive training on instructional practices, classroom management, cultural bias, and more.

Because FSP is intentional in its recruitment and selection of SLIs, the demography of these teachers are much more diverse than the current teacher workforce. While the organization has some data on the influential experience of being an SLI, empirical evidence is needed to explore the impact on SLIs’ future decisions to pursue a career in teaching. Findings from this study could not only garner support for FSP’s work in Charlotte and across the nation, but improve understanding of the characteristics of their early teaching experiences alongside contextual factors that influence the decisions of diverse young adults either to enter or abandon the profession. In turn, this work offers implications for future practices and policies to recruit and
support culturally and linguistically diverse students into the field of education.

I am proposing a mixed-methods study in order to analyze SLIs' intentions of career paths before and after their summer experience working for FSP. A pre- and post- survey instrument will be used to run descriptive statistics and statistical analyses. Qualitative data will include open-response items on the post survey as well as semi-structured interviews of consenting participants. A summer scholar would collaborate with me in the development of the survey instrument (May) and its administration (early June). The scholar would also contribute to the development of the interview protocol (June) and subsequent data collection (July). As time allows, the scholar would also be involved in the analysis process and later dissemination of findings to the organization and through potential publication opportunities. Because Dr. Bruce Taylor has previous data on this topic, summer time could also focus on the analysis of his data set, and the scholar would be mentored through this process.

Minimum Qualifications: The summer scholar would work closely with me to develop the skills necessary for the tasks outlined above. Preferred qualifications include: familiarity with Google platforms (docs, sheets, and forms) and completion of EDUC 1000/1100/2100 (foundations courses for education).
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: Community Partnerships to Enhance Evidence-Based Practice and Research Opportunities

Mentor Name: Dr. Meredith Troutman-Jordan

Mentor Department: School of Nursing

Mentor College: College of Health and Human Services

Mentor Status: Associate Professor

Project Description: I plan to collect pilot data from delivery of the Geri-Fit exercise intervention for community-based older adults, a project I will be undertaking with my long-term community partner and executive director of Arthritis Patient Services (APS), Mrs. Cindy Berrier. A Summer Scholar would be instrumental in collecting data from participants as they start and finish the Geri-Fit program, data entry, helping to ensure safety of participants by observing classes occasionally, and literature reviews for manuscript preparation. I have enjoyed a wonderful professional relationship with APS for years now, serving on the board of directors, taking students to various APS sites for service learning opportunities, and partnering with Mrs. Berrier in the development of several proposals. Currently we are collecting pilot data for future grant proposals and we presently have two proposal under review with National Institute of Nursing Research and Pfizer.

Minimum Qualifications: Ability to participate in literature review update; English proficiency, ability to use Microsoft word, enter data into Excel, strong communication skills; love of working with older adults a plus.
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program (CCS)

Project Title: TEAR-UP: Teachers Exploring Anti-Racism Using Pedagogy

Mentor Name: Dr. Tehia Glass

Mentor Department: Reading and Elementary Education

Mentor College: College of Education

Mentor Status: Associate Professor

Project Description: Teachers will work with K-5 students to build and teach anti-racism content in their summer school courses. This project will explore both teachers and students experiences with anti-racism content. Summer scholars will build surveys, conduct observations and interviews, support teachers and students during summer school, and analyze collected data.

Minimum Qualifications: Summer scholars should have academic writing skills, computer skills, and research skills.
Summer Program: The Charlotte Community Scholars Program

Project Title: Arts-Based Social Impact in West Charlotte

Mentor Name: Dr. Vaughn Schmutz

Mentor Department: Sociology

Mentor College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Mentor Status: Associate Professor

Project Description: Lorien Academy has been a Charlotte Community Scholar partner for the past two years (2018, 2019). They provide high-quality visual arts classes (e.g., drawing, painting, graphic design, photography) during the summer for low-income students in West Charlotte. Over the past two years, we have developed ways to measure the impact of this program on students' confidence, creativity, and critical thinking. We are excited about building on our previous data collection efforts and plan to expand our research and analysis in 2020. The Charlotte Community Scholar assists with planning and preparation of the program; participates in data collection, management, and analysis; and supports other aspects of the program in consultation with the Lorien Academy director (Mike Khoe) and the faculty mentor (Vaughn Schmutz). We have built a positive working relationship with Lorien that we maintain throughout the academic year and they are grateful for the opportunity to work with our Scholars. At the beginning of the project, we meet together (Mike Khoe, the Scholar, and I) to identify the Charlotte Community Scholar’s areas of interest and strengths and use that to plan the specific contributions for each Scholar and to set expectations for the summer.

Minimum Qualifications: Patience, strong work ethic, and an appreciation of diversity are a must. Experience with social science research skills (either hands-on or in the classroom) are helpful, but not required. Interest in working with middle schoolers and/or an interest in visual arts are considered a plus, but not required.