



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

**TO:** UNCW Board of Trustees  
**FROM:** Dr. James J. Winebrake, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
**DATE:** April 16, 2025  
**RE:** Division of Academic Affairs Highlights

Trustees: Below is an overview of notable highlights and activities within the Division of Academic Affairs, primarily since the February quarterly meeting of the Board of Trustees.

### **Cameron School of Business (CSB or Cameron)**

- **MCARTEC Briefed Subcommittee of the National Security Council:** Faculty members Ulku Clark and Jeff Greer [were invited to join](#) the Maritime Domain Awareness Executive Steering Committee of the National Security Council to present information on a Maritime Cyber Resilience Roadmap. This opportunity allowed Clark and Greer to invite key national security stakeholders to become research partners and engage with work underway at one of UNCW's strategic research hubs: Maritime Cybersecurity Applied Research, Technology & Education Center (MCARTEC). [Learn more about MCARTEC.](#)
- **Annual Business Week:** A cornerstone of Cameron's commitment to student success and community engagement, the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual Business Week was held in March with nearly 2,000 UNCW students in attendance. The two-day event had more than 200 speakers, including many returning alumni and keynote addresses from Steve Smits (Head of Commercial Banking at Live Oak Bank) and alum Derek Bomar '08 (Managing Director and Asset Manager, head of Asset Management Investment Banking at Deutsche Bank). [Learn more about Business Week 2025.](#)

### **College of Health and Human Services (CHHS)**

- **Research and Innovation Day:** The CHHS Research and Innovation Day in March was held as the kickoff for the college's annual Health and Human Services Week. This year, the keynote Distinguished Researcher lecture was delivered by Dr. Alex McDaniel (School of Health and Applied Human Sciences), who presented on ways interdisciplinary collaboration enhances research outcomes, fosters creativity, and drives innovative discoveries through shared knowledge and technology. His talk was followed by a poster showcase, where 50 posters highlighted the scholarly activity of CHHS students, staff, and faculty.
- **Annual Health and Human Services Week:** The annual Health and Human Services Week featured 34 opportunities to engage in dynamic lectures, wellness activities, and interactive discussions. Events covered a wide range of topics, including health and wellness, exploring the role of AI and technology in healthcare, community-engaged

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scholarship, design thinking, professional networking, and more. Community partnerships with numerous regional organizations (including Novant Health, Trauma Resource Institute, Lower Cape Fear LifeCare, Pender County Health Department, Coastal Horizons, New Hanover and Pender County Chief District Court Judge, Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC, Liberty Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, NC Alliance of Public Health Agencies, Onslow Memorial Hospital, AARP of NC, City of Wilmington Parks and Recreation, and many more) enhanced the impact of these events. Nearly 750 attendees learned from experts, participated in hands-on activities, and networked with local health and human services professionals and UNCW students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

- **Spring Break Mega-Simulation:** The third annual Interprofessional Collaboration Mega-Simulations event was hosted at the Problem Based Learning Lab in Veterans Hall. This spring-break travel-themed event, titled "See How Far Teamwork Can Take You," brought together student participants from UNCW, Cape Fear Community College, and UNC Chapel Hill, representing 13 health and human service majors. The event engaged 47 in-person and 26 online participants, along with 32 student volunteers, eight guests, and 16 faculty and community partner facilitators. Students traveled with their interdisciplinary teams to four learning labs, each staged to depict emergency situations or clinic settings in different areas around the world. They practiced teamwork and communication skills while learning about health literacy and emergency response, including opioid overdose and bleeding emergencies.
- **Student Poster Placed First in National Meeting:** Social Work senior Amaria Rankins' research poster was awarded first place at the Social Work Baccalaureate Program Directors' Meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada. Her poster, "Community with Care: An Impactful & Engaging Service Project", showcased her locally based service work initiatives and highlighted two key projects: "The Clean Up @ Creekwood South" and "Reading with Maides Park". The Community with Care initiative was created to strengthen connections between UNCW students and under-resourced areas in Wilmington. The goal was to facilitate student engagement through service opportunities aimed at supporting local communities.
- **MOUs Signed for Public Health Partnership in Uganda:** Dr. Michelle Cathorall (School of Health and Applied Human Sciences) has developed a partnership with a Uganda university and two local NGOs working on malaria prevention. CHHS has formalized this partnership with two memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and will continue taking public health students each year to gain international applied learning experience on a short-term faculty led study abroad to Uganda.
- **Interdisciplinary Project Focused on End-of-Life Care:** The Gerontology program continues to collaborate with the Respiratory Therapy program and the Department of Psychology in an interdisciplinary project focused on end-of-life care and advance care planning. Supported by a UNCW Seahawks Advancing Interdisciplinary Learning grant and led by

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faculty, the project includes both undergraduate and graduate students working together to learn about issues that everyone will face, both personally and professionally. In the first year of the project, students from each academic program collaborated to develop discussion guides for caregiver peer mentoring pairs to support their navigation of difficult conversations and decisions around legal and financial matters as well as personal preferences and concerns toward the end of life. Now in the second year, students are developing scenes for an online module teaching end-of-life care and planning. The module will be developed throughout the next year and then shared with others for use.

- **Recreation Therapy Applied Learning with Military Veterans:** Over Spring Break, faculty and students in the Recreation Therapy program took a road trip to MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida to assist with the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Adapted Sports Camp and Warrior Games Trials. Students engaged in a wide range of applied learning opportunities through their work with trial participants who are military veterans with disabilities. Students learned about adaptive equipment available to athletes by participating in sports such as Wheelchair Basketball, Track, Wheelchair Rugby, and Archery, in addition to learning from coaches, many of whom are former Paralympic athletes themselves.

#### College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts (CHSSA)

- **New Applied Learning Classroom Unveiled:** The Department of Communication Studies celebrated the launch of a new Applied Learning Classroom. The space, courtesy of a donation from Mimi and the late Tom Cunningham, is an innovative hub bearing state-of-the-art communications technology. It will be used for various classrooms and for Pier601 Creative, an applied learning course that is now in its 10th year. [Read more.](#)
- **Film Studies Alum Wins \$1M Super Bowl Ad Contest:** Film Studies alum Dylan Bradshaw '19 won a Doritos ad contest alongside his project partner, taking his creative commercial to screens far and wide for the NFL Super Bowl. Bradshaw will be returning to campus soon to speak to students about his experiences. [Watch them online at NBC's TODAY show.](#)

#### College of Science and Engineering (CSE)

- **UNCW Awarded \$1.5M for Coastal Research:** A received \$1.5 million grant will help lead the TEAL-SHIPS Transect Expedition, a groundbreaking project to study coastal land-to-sea habitats. Over the next three years, this funding will support an interdisciplinary research initiative, spearheaded by principal investigator Dr. Bradley Tolar (Biology and Marine Biology, that focuses on coastal marine sciences. Other UNCW collaborators include co-PIs Dr. Christian Briseño-Avena (Biology and Marine Biology), Dr. Winifred Johnson (Chemistry and Biochemistry), Dr. Matthew McLean (Biology and Marine Biology), and Dr. Sutara Suanda (Physics and Physical Oceanography). [Read more.](#)



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- **High-Tech Job Opportunities on the Horizon for Students:** CSE, Protocase, and its subsidiary, 45Drives, announced a strategic partnership to provide students with enhanced research opportunities and hands-on training in advanced manufacturing and open-source data storage. This collaboration will open potential employment pathways for students in high-tech industries as well as strengthen workforce development in the region. [Read more.](#)

#### **Watson College of Education (WCE or Watson College)**

- **Collaboration with University of Ghana on Applications of AI:** Dr. Michele Parker (Educational Leadership) is collaborating with a team of Computer Science faculty members at the University of Ghana on the effective use of AI in higher education. Recently, Dr. Parker shared information about their work at the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE) conference in March, in a presentation titled "Leveraging AI for Faculty Excellence: Tools and Best Practice." [Read more.](#)
- **Inaugural Faculty Fellow for Research:** Dr. Yan Liu (Educational Leadership) has been selected to serve as WCE's inaugural Faculty Fellow for Research, a position created to support faculty, promote research collaboration, and enhance scholarly activities throughout the college. Dr. Liu is an associate professor and also the coordinator of WCE's Master of School Administration and School Administration Add-on Licensure programs. [Read more.](#)
- **Regional STEM Competitions with CESTEM:** The Center for Education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (CESTEM) hosted three regional STEM competitions on campus again this spring: the [Southeast Regional Science & Engineering Fair](#), which gives third-to 12th-grade students from 11 counties the opportunity to showcase STEM-related work; the [Wilmington Regional NC Science Olympiad Tournament](#), which promotes middle and high school student engagement in biology, earth science, environmental science, chemistry, physics, engineering and technology; and the [Wilmington Regional SeaPerch Competition](#), an innovative underwater robotics program for middle and high school students.

#### **Global Partnership and International Education (GPiE)**

- **Education Abroad Advisor Receives Statewide Recognition:** Megan Hinson, an education abroad advisor, received the Professional Newcomer Award for the state of North Carolina at the 25th Annual NC Association of International Education Conference. As part of the annual conference, Excellence in International Education Awards are given to individuals and institutions that have demonstrated outstanding commitment and impact to the field of international education. [Learn more.](#)



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### Graduate, Continuing, and Lifelong Education (GCLE)

- **Online Degree Programs Nationally Ranked in U.S. News & World Report:** UNCW is ranked #68 in the Healthcare Management category, tied with four other institutions. This is the first year UNCW has been ranked in this category. The university is tied for #121 with seven other institutions in the Public Affairs category, up three spots from last year. UNCW is ranked #209 in Education. [Read more.](#)

### Teaching, Learning, and Library Services (TLLS)

- **2025 Battle of the Books Academic Competition:** The UNCW Library hosted 350 fourth and fifth-graders, teachers, and school media specialists for the 2025 New Hanover County Elementary Battle of the Books academic competition. Twenty-three local public elementary schools battled for the title, with Bradley Creek Elementary winning for the second year in a row. The competition is sponsored by the NHCPs Media Specialists.

### Undergraduate Education and Faculty Affairs (UEFA)

- **Long Receives BOG Teaching Excellence Award:** Dr. Zachary Long (Biology and Marine Biology) was announced the UNCW recipient for the 2025 UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award winners represent all 16 of North Carolina's public universities and the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. Recipients are nominated by special committees at each institution and selected by the Board of Governors Committee at the Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs committee meeting. Dr. Long will be celebrated at UNCW's second annual Faculty Awards Celebration, and then presented the medallion during the university's May commencement ceremonies. [Read more.](#)

### Research and Innovation (R&I)

- **Ocean Innovation Conference Earns United Nations Recognition:** For the second year in a row, the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship's Ocean Innovation Conference received the United Nations Ocean Decade stamp of approval and was subsequently advertised across the world. CIE has received correspondence about the programming from as far as New Zealand! As a result of this recognition, the conference's programming is now also offered virtually. Mark your calendars – the 2025 conference will be held on September 30 at the UNCW Burney Center, and also online.
- **Alum Named NCInnovation Hub Director for Southeastern NC:** NCInnovation is a nonprofit organization that provides grant funding and other support to UNC System researchers working on discoveries that have practical application and commercial promise. In February, Scott Davis '17, '18M was named the hub director for Wilmington

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and the southeastern North Carolina region, a recent expansion of the NCI headquarters locations. As part of an MOU between NCI and UNCW, Davis resides in UNCW's Office of Innovation and Commercialization (OIC). [Read more.](#)

- **Export University Workshop:** The Small Business and Technology Development Center recently held a workshop at CIE, where participants learned the fundamentals of running a successful export business. Topics and speakers reflected the most current global trends, challenges, and opportunities. [Learn more.](#)
- **Director Certified as Registered Technology Transfer Professional:** Justin Streuli, OIC director, received international certification as a Registered Technology Transfer Professional by the Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals. The RTTP designation is the highest accolade offered to tech transfer practitioners and is the only international standard for the profession. [Read more.](#)
- **Record Number of Invention Disclosures:** As of March 14, and with a quarter to go, OIC has received 15 invention disclosures – this is more than any previous fiscal year on record. Researchers submit invention disclosures when they make a novel discovery that could have societal impact. This growth is a direct reflection on the university's increased R2 activity, multiple year-over-year increases in research expenditures, and numerous strategic initiatives (such as the Research Hubs and other efforts by OIC) over the past four years to push UNCW's culture towards innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **New Express License Agreement:** OIC recently implemented the UNCW Express License Agreement, allowing UNCW-affiliated startup companies a standard expedited model to license university-owned technology. This growing trend in university licensing creates a streamlined process that encourages "home grown" startup formation, creates transparency and fairness, fosters a collaborative spirit with the university and its inventors, decreases COI, saves time and money for all parties, and can serve as a recruiting tool for new faculty.
- **Recent Research Stories:**
  - [Involving Caregivers in Brain Tumor Clinical Research](#)
  - [Associate Professor Joseph Covi Among National Class of Emerging Inventors](#)
  - [UNCW's Rising Impact on Coral Research](#)
  - [Love Data Week Explores Open Access and Collaborative Research Trends](#)

## Recent External Recognitions

- **Dr. Joseph Covi (CSE)** named to the National Academy of Inventors (NAI) 2025 class of Senior Members. [Learn more.](#)
- **Dr. Brian Davis (CSE)** received the 2025 Fainting Robin Foundation Distinguished Scholar Award. [Learn more.](#)
- **Rachylle Hart (CMS)** named to WILMA Leadership Institute, Class of 2025. [Learn more.](#)



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- **Megan Hinson (GPIE)** received the Professional Newcomer Award, one of NCAIE's Excellence in International Education awards. [Learn more.](#)
- **Dr. Zachary Long (CSE)** named UNCW's 2025 recipient for the Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching. [Learn more.](#)
- **Jenna Noe (CHHS)** named to WILMA Leadership Institute, Class of 2025. [Learn more.](#)
- **Megan Kauzlaric (Office of the Provost)** named to WILMA Leadership Institute, Class of 2025. [Learn more.](#)
- **Leneice Rice (CHHS)** named to WILMA Leadership Institute, Class of 2025. [Learn more.](#)
- **Dr. Lindsey Schroeder (CHHS)** received the 2025 Athletic Trainer Service Award for the North Carolina Athletic Trainers' Association (NCATA). [Learn more.](#)

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