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**UNC Asheville’s North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Scholars Complete First Semester of Research**

In April 2016 UNC Asheville received a $1.5 million grant from the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation to advance the undergraduate research program in chemistry and biology with a focus on giving women and historically under-represented minorities more access to professional opportunities in science.

Led by Chair and Associate Professor of Chemistry Herman Holt, Assistant Professor of Medicinal Chemistry Amanda Wolfe, and GlaxoSmithKline Distinguished Professor in Molecular & Chemical Biology Ted Meigs, 12 Scholars have been selected to receive scholarships and mentorship while conducting research alongside faculty as part of the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Scholars Program. Three post-doctoral teaching and research fellows have also been chosen to mentor the scholars and gain teaching experience by shadowing faculty members and will begin in summer 2017.

“The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Award will help UNC Asheville as an institution not only attract young female scientists by being able to offer them a scholarship but to, more importantly, retain them in the program and in STEM through the undergraduate research experience and support and mentorship these students will receive. We hope that this program will not only give the scholars superb research skills but will also give them the confidence to be successful in the male-dominated STEM workforce post-graduation,” says Wolfe, who was also recently named a 2017 Cottrell Scholar by the Research Corporation for Science Advancement (RCSA).

It’s for these reasons that sophomore biology major and member of Meigs’ project team Katie Brown was drawn to the program. “I will be able to gain valuable research experience that will aid me in furthering my career as a biologist. I strongly believe that this experience will further inspire me to encourage young women to pursue scientific inquiries of their own,” she explains.

The scholars are working in three teams of four with a faculty mentor to conduct research in two prominent areas: antibiotics and cancer. In their research to develop new antibiotics naturally produced by bacteria, Wolfe’s team has already successfully isolated and synthesized several molecules capable of killing bacterial pathogens.

Holt’s team is working to develop anticancer medication, and Meigs’

team is studying a class of proteins associated with the progression of several cancer types as part of his ongoing cell biological research. Their findings on how these proteins interact with other proteins in cells have recently been published in several scientific journals.

In addition to gaining hands-on research experience, the scholars are learning to balance independent and collaborative work, developing problem-solving skills, and becoming part of the larger scientific community.

The opportunity to learn beyond the lab and engage with other scientists is particularly exciting to Leah Bouthillette, a junior chemistry major on Wolfe’s project team. “I know this program encourages traveling to conferences and meetings, which I think is imperative to being actively engaged in the science field. I don't believe many undergraduates get to experience going to conferences and learning about what is currently happening in the world of science, which makes this program unique,” she says.

About the Project Teams

Herman Holt, Faculty Mentor

Scholars:

· Rayven Van Kalker, sophomore chemistry and new media major

· Malina Navarez, junior chemistry major

· Danielle Davis, junior chemistry major

· Mary McCrory, sophomore chemistry major

Ted Meigs, Faculty Mentor

Scholars:

· Katie Brown, sophomore biology major

· Makenzy Mull, sophomore biology major

· Courtney Quick, junior biology major

· Samantha Nance, freshman biology major

Amanda Wolfe, Faculty Mentor

Scholars:

· Jordan Hartig, freshman chemistry major

· Leah Bouthillette, junior chemistry major

· Tess Handy, junior biology major

· Sita Luna Schussler, junior chemistry major

For more information about UNC Asheville's Chemistry & Biology Fellows & Scholars, visit <http://ncgskfoundationscholars.unca.edu/>

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ABOUT UNC ASHEVILLE

UNC Asheville is the designated liberal arts institution for the UNC system and one of the nation’s top 10 public liberal arts universities. Enrolling 3,800 students and offering more than 30 undergraduate majors and a Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences degree, UNC Asheville encourages students to take part in a nationally acclaimed undergraduate research program and participate in interdisciplinary learning. From internships and hands-on projects, to study abroad and community engagement, students experience an education that extends beyond campus into the vibrant City of Asheville, the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains and the world.

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ABOUT THE NORTH CAROLINA GLAXOSMITHKLINE FOUNDATION

The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation is an independent self-funding 501(c)3 nonprofit organization supporting activities that help meet the educational and health needs of today's society and future generations. For decades, the Foundation has been a proud supporter of programs in our state that help advance science, health and education. [www.ncgskfoundation.org](http://www.ncgskfoundation.org)