



We provide a world-class, transformative scholars experience for exceptional students who are committed to learning and working at the intersection of business, academia, policy, government and the nonprofit sector at home or abroad.

2024-2025

ANNUAL REVIEW



From the Director



Greetings Scholars, Alumni, Friends, and Supporters!

The 2024-2025 academic year has been another period of exciting growth and refinement. This year, we launched Explorations, our alternative fall break experience that provides an up-close look at cross-sector collaboration. We also welcomed Meghan Blackwood as our newest staff member, while saying goodbye to Tya Smith, our inaugural program coordinator, who joined the Kenan Institute's External Affairs team. We co-hosted a symposium on the Business of Sports with the Shuford Program in Entrepreneurship, rebranded our Lunch & Learns and other networking opportunities as Connections, and launched our Alumni Engagement portal. Additionally, we received an exciting gift from the Cannon Family Foundation to help support our efforts in expanding scholars' understanding of the business-related challenges that face North Carolina's non-profit community.

We continue our work fueled by the optimism of the young people we serve and our mission to develop leaders excited by the challenge of using business to address some of society's most complex problems.

As always, we look forward to your continued engagement with the Luther Hodges Scholars program. We'll keep reaching out to you through email, LinkedIn message, call, or text with an invitation to meet with a scholar and share advice with a small group of students looking for reassurance that work-life balance is achievable in the workplace. Join us at scholar events and any of the Kenan Institute's activities that interest you. Check them out [here](#).

Please enjoy this review of the program's accomplishments and highlights. Thank you for your continued support, commitment to our students, and excitement for all the good that is to come.

Open roads ahead!

Executive Director



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OVERVIEW



Luther Hodges Scholars are dynamic emerging professionals passionate about transforming the world for the better! Each year, up to 25 talented sophomores are selected to join this prestigious program. Chosen for their outstanding academic achievements, innovative research interests, and eagerness to collaborate with top-tier private and public sector leaders, these students are driven to address the most urgent challenges facing business and society.

Scholars recognize the crucial impact of business and the private sector in tackling these challenges. They acquire skills in leadership, research, and cross-sector collaboration necessary for their leadership roles. The program's curriculum, based on competencies, blends classroom learning with practical experience alongside business leaders, lawmakers, policymakers, and non-profit professionals dedicated to enhancing the lives of residents in North Carolina and beyond.

Scholars play a crucial role in their success by receiving personalized coaching and advising, research mentorship from Kenan-Flagler faculty, and financial support for professional development activities aligned with their career goals. Additionally, they can utilize numerous resources at the Kenan Institute, such as translational research, exclusive conferences and forums, and networks linking to the Institute's affiliated centers.

Additional opportunities for Luther Hodges Scholars include:

- 1.** A fully-funded, cross-sector internship experience
- 2.** Alternative Break and field trips
- 3.** Community-building and social events
- 4.** Research Support
- 5.** Networking opportunities with alumni, faculty, business professionals, and community leaders

Program Refinements

Building on last year, we continued to clarify the goals and objectives of our events and activities and clearly communicate expectations for student participation. Our goal is always to deliver high-impact co-curricular activities that align with the program's core competencies and mission. Our scholars are campus and community leaders who balance multiple, sometimes competing, priorities in their studies, clubs, and career preparation. They also rightly prioritize their well-being. For these reasons, we are especially thoughtful when redesigning and updating our offerings, respecting existing commitments while considering students' desire for new and meaningful opportunities to learn and grow. Read below for a summary of enhancements aimed at improving the scholar experience.

Connections



Mark Korell, Board Chair, Habitat for Humanity of North Carolina, addresses scholars in a Connections session

The Luther Hodges Scholars Program emphasizes the importance of networking and guidance in students' personal and career growth. Since the program started, various activities have been designed to connect students with professionals from the private, public, and academic sectors.

These include Lunch & Learns, Brown Bags, Cross-Talks, and Networking Sessions. We now refer to these formal and informal networking activities as *Connections*. These efforts aim to help scholars and professionals develop and support each other within a community committed to using business to improve society.

Scholar Points



To increase scholar participation in program activities, the program launched *Scholar Points*, a novel way to encourage active and meaningful involvement. Its aim is to motivate scholars to fully participate in activities, develop leadership skills, and build community by tracking and rewarding individual engagement. Scholars earn points by participating in required events, optional or informal experiences, and leadership opportunities each semester. The top four point-earners qualify for rewards and prizes such as program swag, lunch with a staff member, a UNC Student Store or Amazon purchase, or a Café McColl voucher.

Curriculum Review

Following the 2022 five-year program review, the program implemented major curriculum updates. Since then, there has been a steady decline in students pursuing honors theses or independent research projects. Furthermore, the program needed to assess how well courses align with its learning objectives and how students perceive their overall value. At the request of Greg Brown, the program’s faculty advisor, the Kenan Institute commissioned Courtney Wright, a clinical assistant professor at Kenan-Flagler, to analyze the curriculum and student experience. The study focused on four groups of scholars: two alumni from the classes of 2022 and 2023, and current students from the classes of 2024 and 2025. Twenty-six respondents completed the survey, and 16 participants were interviewed.

The following curriculum enhancements and program enhancements were recommended.

Curriculum Enhancements

- Align course credits with workload (consider 1.5 credits).
- Refocus BUSI 120 with clearer objectives and practical projects.
- Calibrate BUSI 220’s rigor and link it more closely to thesis pathways.
- Deepen BUSI 221 content and improve group dynamics.

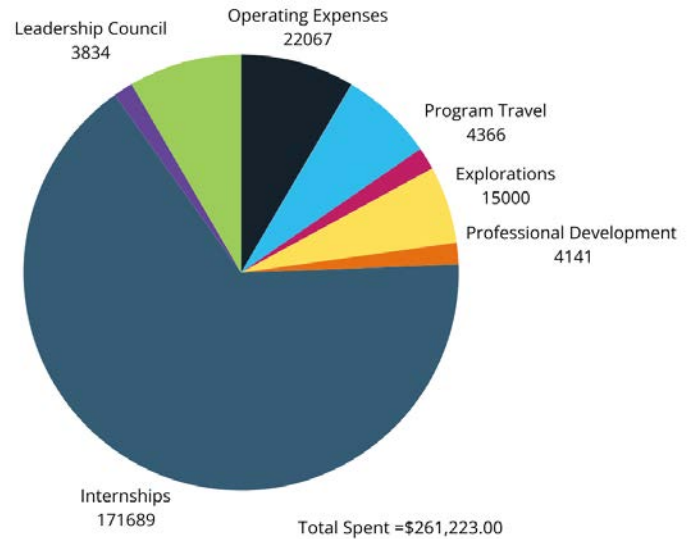
Non-Personnel Expenditures

Summary of Budget Expenses

The table displays the allocation of the budget across different expense categories and provides a breakdown of all non-personnel expenses for the Luther Hodges Scholars Program for FY 2025. The total budget for the period was \$240,000, but expenditures reached \$261,223,

resulting in an average of \$21,223 or 8.3%. The largest portion of the budget was designated for internships, which also represented the highest expense; \$132,000 was budgeted, but \$171,689 was spent. Other major budget items included operating costs and Exploratory Funds.

\$21,000 was allocated for operating expenses, with \$22,067 spent. For Exploratory Funds, \$25,000 was budgeted, but only \$21,941 was spent. Meetings and Events had a budget of \$15,000, yet expenses totaled \$18,044. Staff professional development, Leadership Council, research stipends, Explorations, and program travel were collectively budgeted at \$47,000, but the actual expenditures amounted to \$27,482. The distribution of spending for FY 2025 is reflected in the pie chart.



Non-Personnel Expense Report FY 2025

Budget Category	Year-End Expenses
Professional Development	\$4,141.00
Leadership Council	\$3,834.00
Operating Expenses	\$22,067.00
Research Stipends	\$141.00
Meetings & Events	\$18,044.00
Program Travel	\$4,366.00
Explorations	\$15,000.00
Internships	\$171,689.00
Exploratory Funds	\$21,941.00
TOTAL	\$261,223.00

Internships consistently make up the largest part of the budget, showing that a significant portion of funds is dedicated to these essentials. It is also important to note that \$132,000 was budgeted in May 2024 in preparation for approving the FY 2025 budget. Mid-year, the decision was made to increase the stipend per student to \$7,000 to account for significant cost-of-living increases and to avoid awarding multiple stipends to students on an ad hoc, as-needed basis. Each student received a one-time award of \$7,000 to simplify the stipend process and ensure fairness in distribution. Actual spending was expected and aligns with the costs of providing a fully funded internship experience. All other reported expenses are within approved limits. There were notable surpluses in several categories, including Leadership Council, research stipends, and Explorations, which offset the internship shortfall.

Figures for FY 2026 were adjusted to better match increased planned spending on internships and reduced spending on Explorations. Otherwise, FY 2025 expenses are appropriate and align with program costs.

Actionable steps to continue managing the program's budget and expenditures effectively, keeping them reasonable and within expectations, include the following:

- Program staff will monitor and record every expense and reconcile them with quarterly spending reports provided by Kenan Institute's financial services unit.
- To cut meeting and event costs, the focus will be on optimizing food expenses and discretionary spending.

In summary, regular reviews and adjustments will be made based on future spending patterns.

New Staff

**Welcome Meghan,
Our New Program Coordinator!**



The Luther Hodges Scholars program is excited to welcome Meghan Blackwood as our new program coordinator. Meghan wowed the hiring team with her wide-ranging and deep artistic, teaching, and administrative skills and experience. She also has an infectious smile and a warm, supportive manner with students and colleagues. She has quickly proved to be an invaluable member of the team. [Read More](#)

Social Media

Highlighting the program’s outstanding work and impact, along with fostering community, is key to our social media focus. Content and messaging emphasize the program’s three core competencies: leadership, research, and cross-sector collaboration. We focus on program elements for three audiences:

- Students—both prospective and current scholars
- External stakeholders—program alumni, mentors, donors, scholar parents, and internship sites
- Internal stakeholders—UNC, the Kenan Institute, and Kenan-Flagler partners and affiliates.
- Instagram mainly targets student audiences for sharing content related to scholar activities.

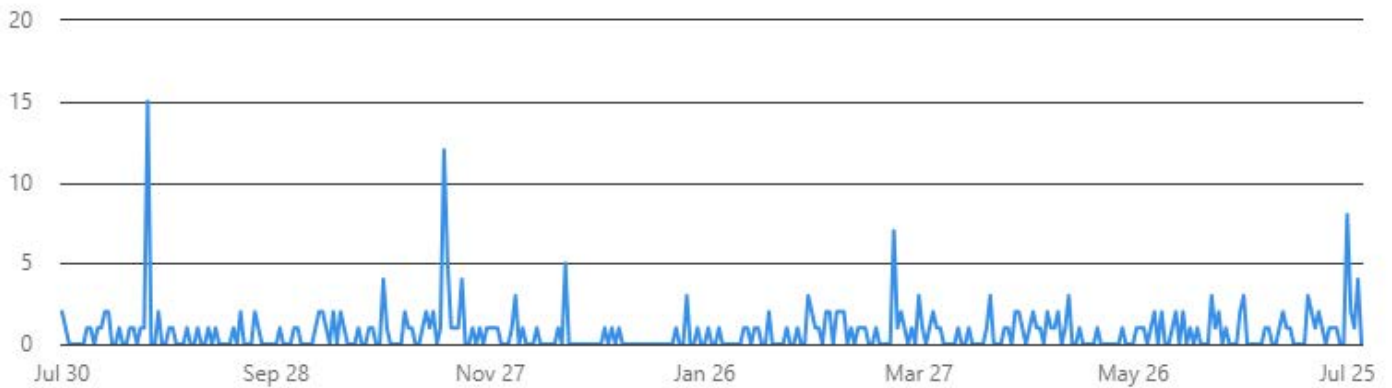
Metrics that are currently being tracked are:

- Followers - people who subscribe to the program’s social media accounts get regular updates and posts on their news feeds.
- Engagements - a measure of how people are interacting with posts, e.g., likes, favorites, comments, direct messages, reposts, visits to links, etc.

The program utilizes two channels:

- LinkedIn – To ensure internal and external partners and stakeholders stay informed about individual scholar and program activities.

LinkedIn



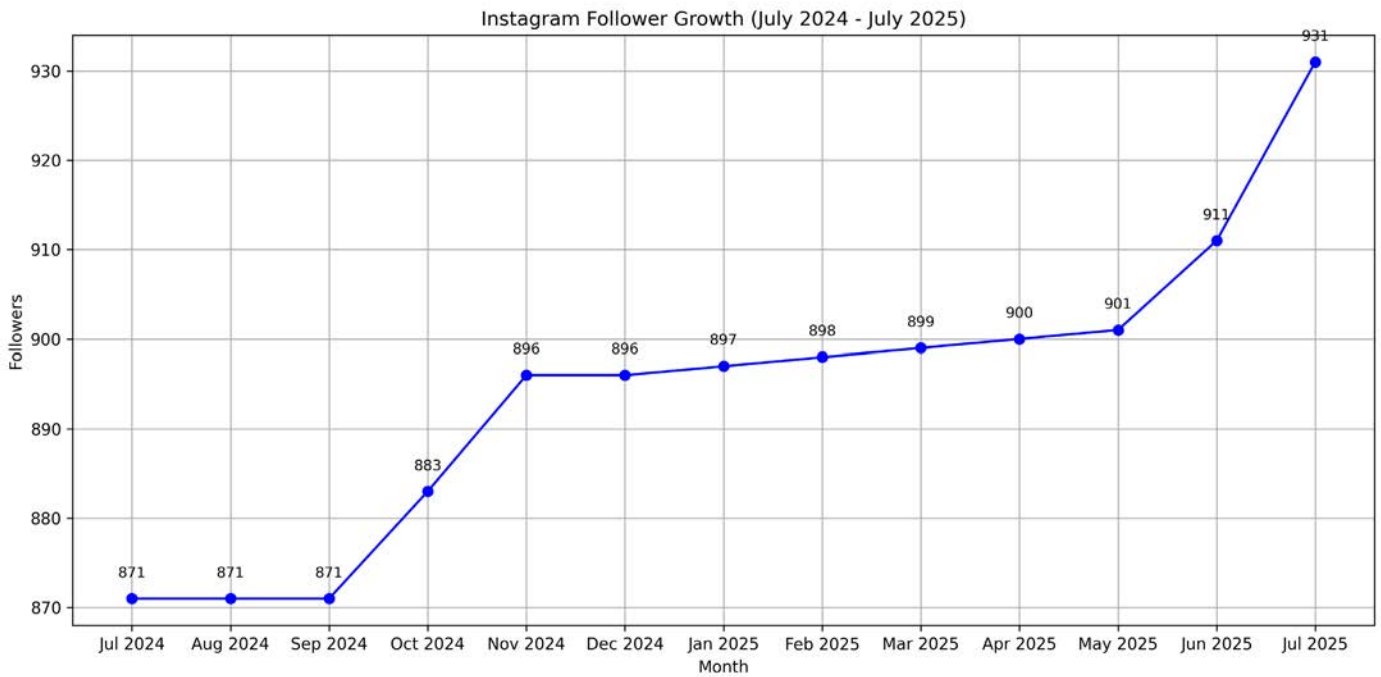
Audience Growth Rate

- 1,027 total followers as of July 29, 2025
- 27.4% increase in 365 days = Gained 221 followers in 365 days

Top Posts - Engagements

1. Celebrating the Scholar recipients of the Kenan Institute Student Awards
2. 18th Annual Kenan Institute Student Awards Recap
3. Class of 2025 Graduation Celebration
4. Hodges Scholars Program Recruitment, Promotion, and Application Information
5. Announcing New Leadership Council Members

Instagram



*Note: This chart also includes unfollows.

* The four posts with the highest engagement used the “Collaborate” feature on Instagram. The Collaborate feature is a tool that allows two users to co-author a single post, making it appear on both their profiles and shared with both sets of followers.

Audience Growth Rate

- 932 total followers as of July 29, 2025
- 7.99% increase in 365 days = Gained 69 followers in 365 days

Top Posts (Engagements)

1. Hodges Scholars Program Recruitment, Promotion, and Application Information
2. The Business of Sports Panel Discussion Recap
3. Class of 2025 Graduation Celebration
4. 18th Annual Kenan Institute Student Awards Recap
5. New Scholar Welcome Dinner Recap
6. “What is the Best Part about Being a Scholar?”

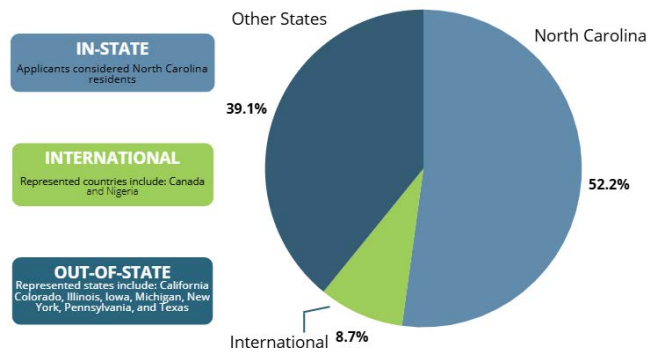
Applicant Profile

Twenty-three sophomore students from UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School make up the eighth class of Luther Hodges Scholars.

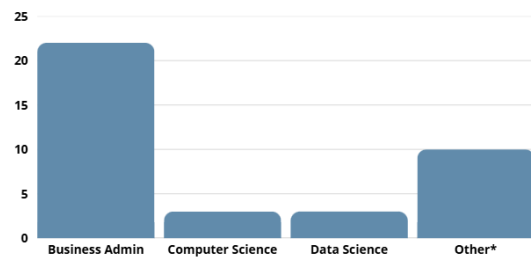
This 2.5-year program, sponsored by the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise brings together business majors and minors who exhibit leadership and a passion for serving on campus and in the community. This year's class includes patent holders, entrepreneurs, and sports-minded pre-professionals.

The Class of 2027 is a fantastic representation of future business leaders committed to improving society!

SCHOLARS BY LOCATION



SCHOLARS BY MAJOR



NOTE: This includes both programs for students with multiple majors which explains the total number of majors exceeding the total number of scholars

*Other includes English & Comparative Literature, Economics, Environmental Studies/Science, Human & Organizational Leadership Development, Media & Journalism, and Psychology

APPLICATIONS BY YEAR



Class of 2027 Finalists At-a-Glance	
Admit Rate	2024 Finalist Academic Info
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Round 1: Application Review: 88/44 = 50% Round 2: Finalist Interview: 44/24 = 54.5% Final Admitted: 88/24 = 27.2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average GPA = 3.81 First-Generation College Students = 9 (20.4% - matches the percentage of first-gen students in UNC Class of 2027)
2024 Finalist Interest Areas	2024 Finalist Campus Involvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Consulting Healthcare Finance Technology Philanthropy Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carolina Housing/Residence Hall Association Student Government Greek Life Daily Tar Heel Kenan-Flagler Student Organizations/Clubs Other Scholars Programs (KFBS Assured Admits, Honors Carolina, Carolina Scholars, Carolina Covenant, Accelerated Research Scholars)

SCHOLARS

The Luther Hodges Scholars Program is a unique community of future business leaders from a variety of backgrounds committed to using their skills to make a meaningful impact in the communities where they live and work.

Graduates in Review



During the 2024–2025 academic year, the program engaged a total of 65 scholars. Approximately 58% (38 scholars) were from North Carolina, 31% (20 scholars) were out-of-state students, and 11% (7 scholars) were international students, contributing to the program’s global perspective and reach.

The majority (89%) of scholars majored in Business Administration, while 11% pursued business as a minor. Notably, 52% (34 scholars) were double majors, enriching the program with interdisciplinary insights from fields such as economics, public policy, computer science, environmental science, journalism, psychology, and data science, among others.

The training, guidance, and experiences the program offers to these passionate, forward-thinking students support their growth into high-impact leaders. Their contributions not only benefit North Carolina but also inspire and influence communities worldwide.



Arnav Gunwani '25 addresses the Class of 2025 at the Graduation Celebration.

Luther Hodges Scholars '25



Rishi Aila
Cary, NC

Rishi will begin his career as a Government and Public Services Consultant at Deloitte in Washington D.C.



Harrison Dixon
Apex, NC

Harrison will begin his career as a Product Manager at Pennymac in Cary, NC.



William Ballenger
Chapel Hill, NC

William will begin his career in Healthcare Investment Banking with Bourne Partners in Charlotte, NC.



Nora Elsayed
Germantown, MD

Nora will begin her career in Tech Marketing with IBM in New York City, NY.



Elizabeth Barteldt
Davidson, NC

Liz will begin a Post-Baccalaureate Sustainability Fellowship at The University of New Hampshire as a fellow at Dean's Beans Organic Coffee Company.



Arnav Gunwani
Austin, TX

Arnav will begin his career in as a Consulting Analyst at Accenture in Atlanta, GA.



Connor Brennan
Raleigh, NC

Connor will be joining McKinsey & Company as a Business Analyst in Atlanta, GA.



Aleena Islam
Cary, NC

Since graduating in December 2024, Aleena has worked as a Legislative Clerk for NC Senator Kandie Smith. In fall 2025, she will be attending law school.



Allie Dalola
Cary, NC

Allie will begin her career in Financial Services Consulting with PwC in New York City, NY.



Khushi Jain
New Delhi, India

Khushi will be starting her own firm in the energy sector in New Delhi, India.



Wei-Chieh Liu
Taipei, Taiwan

Wei-Chieh (Richard) is currently in Taiwan and is planning to go to law school.



Sasha Surkin
Greenville, NC

Sasha will be leading and managing WeyeZE, a medical device startup, as CEO, based out of Chapel Hill, NC. banking with Piper Sandler in Charlotte, NC.



Aadit Mehta
Fayetteville, NC

Aadit will bring his career as a Venture Capital Analyst with Truebridge Capital in Chapel Hill, NC.



Rohan Tapia
Cary, NC

Rohan will bring his career in Consulting at Oliver Wyman in Washington D.C.



Hyo In Park
Seoul, South Korea

Hyo In is currently in Seoul, South Korea and will be enrolled in a financial mathematics master's program.



Isobel Tuck
Niwot, CO

Izzy will begin her career completing a finance rotational program with Royal Caribbean in Miami, FL.



Shivalee Patel
Mint Hill, NC

Shivalee will be pursuing her JD/MB at Wake Forest Law School in Winston-Salem, NC.



Elizabeth Winsor
Tarboro, NC

Eliza will begin her career as an Incoming Wealth Management Analyst at Bank of America Private Bank.



Zoe Rockas
Rye, NY

Zoe will be volunteering with the Peace Corps as a Community Environmental Conservation Promoter in Panama.

Luther Hodges Scholars '26



Matthew Abel
BSBA



Samhita Gattupalli
BSBA, Information Science



Lucia Park
Biostatistics



Jasmine Berry
Human Organizational
Leadership &
Development



Larkin Gliddon
BSBA



**Adhithi
Ramprakash**
BSBA and Psychology



Kathryn Bolick
BSBA, Art History and
Entrepreneurship



Vansh Gogoi
BSBA and Statistics



Anna Claire Sems
BSBA and German



**Abhiram (Abhi)
Bolisetty**
BSBA, Data Science and
Statistics



Asiah Graham
BSBA



Yashu Singhai
BSBA and Computer
Science



Christie Chen
BSBA, Sports
Administration and
Data Science



Nandini Gupta
BSBA



Chi Vu
BSBA and Information
Science



**Juliana
Chiamonte**
BSBA and Public Policy



Raven Heyward
BSBA



Meilin Weathington
BSBA and Global Studies



Tyler Coffee
Entrepreneurship and
Data Science



Soham Joshi
BSBA and Computer
Science



Caroline White
BSBA and Environmental
Studies



Eli Dykes
BSBA and
Entrepreneurship and
Data Science



Carter Osborn
BSBA

Luther Hodges Scholars '27



Elena Abuin
BSBA and Environmental
Science



**Catherine (Catie)
Ginther**
BSBA and Economics



Anna Nguyen
BSBA and Psychology



Riya Behari
Economics



**Ashley Hinostrroza-
Villacorta**
BSBA, Media & Journalism



**Emmanuel
Omolafe**
BSBA and Human
Organization Leadership
Development



Aarav Bhaskar
BSBA and Data Science



Prachi Joshi
BSBA and Data Science



Joseph Reardon
BSBA and Computer
Science



Keniya Black
BSBA and Data Science



Falisha Khokhar
BSBA and Computer
Science



Anirudh (Ani) Soni
BSBA and
Environmental Studies



Paige Bundon
BSBA



**William (Cameron)
Layne**
BSBA



Pranav Uppalapati
BSBA, English and
Comparative Literature



Charlie Cochran
BSBA



John Liu
BSBA and Data Science



**Rosendo Zapien
Diaz**
BSBA



Tina Dongara
BSBA



Molly Malek
BSBA



Caroline Zedek
BSBA



Robert Dwortz
BSBA and Psychology



Risa Mohapatra
BSBA

SCHOLARS IN THE NEWS



Luther Hodges Scholars are inspiring change-makers who make a difference in our campus community and beyond. Once a Scholar, always a Scholar, so we're proud to recognize both alumni and current students. Some have even been featured in the news, but many others are making just as meaningful an impact without the spotlight. We'd love to share some of their inspiring stories with you—we think you'll be inspired too!

A portrait of Fridah Mbwaya '22, a young woman with long, dark, curly hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt with a white zigzag pattern and large, round, light-colored earrings. Her arms are crossed. The background is a solid, vibrant red color.

Fridah Mbwaya '22

We are pleased to report that a recent graduate of the program has been awarded the prestigious Schwarzman scholarship. Fridah Mbwaya, Class of 2022, was selected in January 2025 as a Schwarzman Scholar. This distinction provides Fridah the opportunity to pursue a fully funded master's degree in global affairs at Beijing's Tsinghua University. [Read More](#)

Sasha Surkin '25

Entrepreneur Sasha Surkin is on a mission to revolutionize vision care through her startup, WeyeZE (pronounced “wise”). With a bold commitment to improving access and affordability, Sasha is bringing equity to the vision-care space; one innovative solution at a time. Backed by funding from pitch competitions and grants, WeyeZE is reimagining what convenient, inclusive eye care can look like. See how this founder is turning vision into action. [Read More](#)





Lydia Thomas '24

In a recent article by The Daily Tar Heel, Lydia Thomas, a former Luther Hodges Scholar and 2024 UNC graduate, offered valuable insight into the process of securing academic accommodations through the university's Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS) office.

Thomas described her experience beginning in 2020, when she submitted the Accommodation Request Form and was contacted by ARS within three days to schedule a meeting. After discussing her diagnosis with a staff member, she received confirmation of her approved accommodations within a week.

She emphasized the ease of using the ARS Hub to communicate accommodations to professors each semester, noting that students are not required to disclose their diagnosis unless they choose to.

Encouraging others to take full advantage of the resources available, Thomas shared this advice: "You are given this free gift, and you should run with it."

Her reflections underscore the importance of accessibility and self-advocacy, and we're proud to see a Hodges Scholar leading by example in the campus community. [Read More](#)

Kenan Institute Student Award Winners



*Rollie Tillman Jr.
Outstanding Achievement Award*

In Appreciation and Recognition of Service and Contributions that Advance the Mission and Vision of the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, this Award is Presented to

Sasha Surkin

by the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise this Third Day of April in the Year of Two Thousand Twenty-Five in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Paul D. O'Neil
Executive Director
Frank Hawkins Kenan
Institute of Private Enterprise



Paul D. O'Neil
Executive Director, Educational Initiatives
Frank Hawkins Kenan
Institute of Private Enterprise

*Frank Hawkins Kenan Distinguished
Scholar Medal Award*

In Appreciation and Recognition of Exemplary Leadership in Demonstrating the Importance of Human Values and Ethics in Business as in Life, this Award is Presented to

Rohan Tapia

by the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise this Third Day of April in the Year of Two Thousand Twenty-Five in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Paul D. O'Neil
Executive Director
Frank Hawkins Kenan
Institute of Private Enterprise



Paul D. O'Neil
Executive Director, Educational Initiatives
Frank Hawkins Kenan
Institute of Private Enterprise

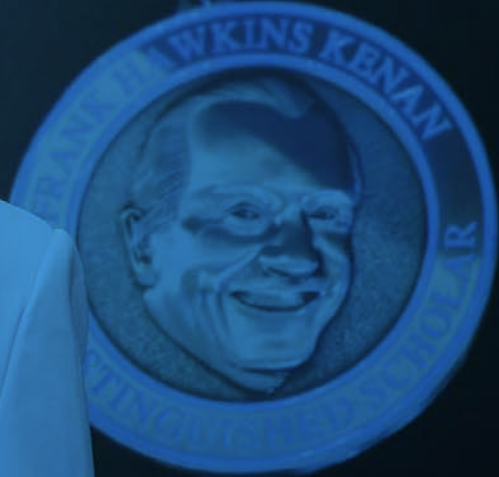


APR
03
2025

12:00PM - 1:00PM

KENAN INSTITUTE

Student Awards



 **KENAN INSTITUTE**
OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE
1900 KENAN FLAGLER BUSINESS SCHOOL

On a lovely spring afternoon, friends and supporters of the Kenan Institute came together to celebrate some truly outstanding students who made a difference through their scholarship, leadership, and service. We proudly recognized talented, mission-driven students who went above and beyond at the Kenan Institute and Kenan-Flagler Business School. Our gathering was a wonderful chance to strengthen our bonds and, while we celebrated achievements, it also reminded us to remain hopeful amidst these uncertain times. The Scholars Program was especially proud that three of the five award winners were scholars recognized for their excellence in research and their generous service to the Scholar community and beyond. [Read More](#)

A portrait of Keniya Black '27, a young woman with dark skin and long, dark, braided hair. She is smiling and looking slightly to the right of the camera. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a maroon turtleneck. The background is a blurred brick wall with some colorful objects hanging on it.

Scholar Spotlight: Keniya Black '27

“My goal is ... to leave [every place] better than I found it and make it more accessible.”

Our Scholar Spotlight is Keniya Black, a member of the Class of 2027 from Youngsville, NC. Keniya exudes passion, hard work, compassion, and intelligence—qualities of an ideal Luther Hodges Scholar. She has a deep love for reading and writing poetry and is especially drawn to its ambiguity and reflective nature. Langston Hughes is her favorite poet, a discovery she made during a middle school poetry class. Though Keniya had fallen in love with poetry before the class, the academic rigor of the class deepened her appreciation for poetry’s ability to express complex feelings, thoughts, and emotions. Poetry has captured her imagination.

Passion Projects & Advocacy

Motivated by personal experience with a chronic illness, Keniya started researching accessibility in higher education while in high school. This inspired her to co-found Diverse Abilities in Business, a student organization dedicated to supporting neurodivergent students. The group has expanded from a small Zoom meeting of five to having a national presence at over 20 universities. At Kenan-Flagler, Keniya also helped launch an affinity group to support neurodivergent students and advise faculty on accessibility issues.

Career Aspirations & Impact

Keniya is dedicated to making workplaces more inclusive and accessible, striving to leave every organization better than she found it. She hopes to use her lived experience to educate others and advocate for systemic change.

Luther Hodges Scholars Program

Keniya joined the program to collaborate with like-minded peers who believe that business can promote positive change. The program has helped her clarify her career goals and develop a supportive community.

Internship Experience

This summer, Keniya interned as an Impact Analyst at the Latino Community Credit Union, helping to create a 25-year impact report. The experience strengthened her interest in accounting and demonstrated how financial institutions can support underserved communities.

Future Plans

Summer 2026, Keniya will intern at Elliot Davis Accounting in Raleigh, NC, gaining experience in both tax and audit roles. She plans to apply to UNC's Master of Accounting (MAC) program and is interested in forensic accounting. She is also actively expanding her disability advocacy work on campus.

Personal Mission

Driven by a desire to be a role model and a source of representation, especially for those from underrepresented backgrounds, Keniya aims to inspire others to believe in their potential. Her guiding principles are hard work and representation, shaped by her experience as a first-generation college student from a low-income family.



RESEARCH

Research is one of the program's three core competencies. This is because research fuels innovation and is essential for success in today's economy. Additionally, employers highly value workers who excel at solving problems, thinking critically, interpreting data, and clearly and convincingly communicating findings to various audiences. The Scholars Program provides a robust research experience through coursework, exposure to the work of distinguished researchers who partner with the Kenan Institute and research produced by the Kenan Institute, along with a research workshop series organized by program staff.

Research Course

To enhance the research skills of our scholars, the program offers *Persuasion with Data*, a 1-credit course taught by the Kenan Institute's chief economist, Professor Gerald Cohen. The aim is to train scholars to craft compelling data-informed arguments and understand the importance of a data-driven approach to problem-solving and business decision-making.



Research Workshop Series

In the first installment of this two-part series, a panel consisting of faculty researchers, graduate students, and alumni discussed what drives them to pursue research. They explored the purpose and advantages of different types of business research, various data collection and analysis methods, and best practices for conducting responsible research. Panelists included Kenan-Flagler faculty members Laura Sunday and Annie Williams, Ph.D. candidate Umit Celik, and program alumnus Chris Karras '20. Dr. Sarah Dickerson, a Research Economist at the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, moderated the session.

The second workshop focused on research mechanics and was led by Stephanie Brown, a librarian at UNC Kenan-Flagler, and library assistant Erica Freed. They reviewed the fundamentals of online searching, covering topics such as how to craft a good search question, when to use OR and AND, searching beyond Google Scholar, how to save findings for later, and how to easily format citations.



Chris Karras '20

Product Creator, Crocs

What is Business Research Workshop
Honors Thesis: Should You Should
Others: Sustainable Marketing's Impact
on Brand Perception and Green
Sportswear Consumption



Umit Celik, Ph.D.

**Operations Management and Data
Analytics**

UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School
What is Business Research Workshop
Research Interests: Econometrics and
Machine Learning to Improve the
Efficiency of Healthcare Facilities



Laura Sunday, Ph.D.

**Assistant Professor of Organizational
Behavior**

UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School

What is Business Research Workshop
Research Interests: How People
Conceptualize Work, Including the
Purpose and Meaning they Attribute to it,
and How Work Relates to their Sense of
Identity



Annie Williams, Ph.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Marketing
UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School

Research Interests: Understanding how
to encourage sustainable consumer
behavior and how brands can leverage
sustainability communication to bolster
their brand equity



Sarah Dickerson, Ph.D.

**Assistant Research Professor and Research
Economist**

UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School

What is Business Research Workshop
Research Interests: Regional
economic and policy research and the
consequences of housing instability
and migration, with recent work that
evaluates global migration models



Stephanie Willen Brown

Librarian

UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School

Get Ready to Research Workshop



Erica Freed

Library Assistant

UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School

Get Ready to Research Workshop

ABSTRACTS & PUBLICATIONS



From Policy to Practice: How Gender Diversity Resulting From the Nasdaq Board Diversity Rule Impacts Short-term Financial Outcomes for Companies

Advisor:

Allison Schlobohm Ph.D.
Clinical Associate Professor of
Management and Corporate
Communication,
UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School




Shivalee Patel '25

Honors Thesis

Corporate board diversity has become a focal point in governance discussions, particularly following changes involved in the Nasdaq Board Diversity Rule. This study examines the correlation between board gender diversity on a sample of Nasdaq-listed companies and short-term financial performance using annualized stock returns and yearly return on assets (ROA) data. This study aims to investigate whether firms that comply with the Nasdaq rule and voluntarily disclose board diversity exhibit measurable financial advantages in terms of annualized returns and ROA. This study considers how the two-year period for the Nasdaq Board Diversity Rule (2021-2023) may cause limitations in understanding the impact of increased gender diversity on boards. These findings found that increased gender diversity does not decrease short-term financial returns in terms of annualized returns or ROA. This rule was recently invalidated, but more research should be conducted on its long-term financial impacts.

BUILDING COMMUNITY



Luther Hodges Scholars recognizes that a sense of belonging is essential for our students to thrive as individuals, scholars, and professionals. Since its inception, the program has worked diligently to provide opportunities that foster collaboration, personal support, and professional development. As a result, Luther Hodges Scholars has a thriving community among current scholars, program alumni, and campus & community partners.

The 2024-2025 academic year continued to build our supportive community as program staff offered events and activities that deepened relationships between scholars, alumni and friends of the program. From team-building activities with current scholars (including the launch of the Explorations alternative break trip initiative), to conducting check-ins with program alumni, to receiving continued guidance from the Luther Hodges Scholars Advisory Council, this year was filled with intentional efforts to enhance engagement with program stakeholders.

Mentor Spotlight: Liz Kelly '06,'11



Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, Elizabeth Kelly, or Liz, has always had a connection to higher education. At the age of eight, Liz moved to Cary as both parents pursued careers in academia. Her father is a professor of Chemical Engineering at N.C. State and her mother is a professor of Nursing and practices at UNC Chapel Hill. Liz's parents' commitment to education was a driving force in her own professional journey. "With two academics as parents, education was a key priority growing up and beyond... curiosity and the desire to learn were instilled in me as long as I can remember", Kelly recalls. As an undergraduate at UNC, Liz knew that she wanted to go into healthcare, originally thinking she wanted to pursue medical school. She redirected this interest to focus on the business side of healthcare which eventually led to pursuing her MBA at UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School.

After completing her undergraduate degree, Kelly began working at Pappas Capital, a venture capital firm focused on investing in early-stage life science companies, which gave her the opportunity to learn the business of healthcare - delivering strong returns to investors while having a meaningful impact on patients.

Following her first tenure at Pappas Capital and getting her MBA at UNC Kenan-Flagler, Liz enhanced her operational skills while working with Chimerix, a Triangle-based startup focused on developing new therapies for immunocompromised patients. At Chimerix, Liz gained experience in a variety of roles across the organization, including in the company's IPO in 2013 while also preparing to start a Phase 3 clinical trial. She later worked with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, helping launch its corporate venture fund focused on healthcare technologies. In 2020, Liz rejoined Pappas Capital to lead the development of a new fund focused on biotech, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and quantum computing in Asia and currently manages that fund in addition to the firm's early-stage life science venture fund, Pappas Ventures VI.

A consistent theme throughout Liz's career is her interest in the intersection of healthcare and business and the desire to invest in resources and technologies that help people, and in particular, patients. Most of her experience has been in small companies, whether a start-up developing new therapeutics or a venture firm investing in startups developing new therapeutics. In both cases, whether directly or indirectly, you have exposure to the real impact a new drug is having on patients. And when you get distracted, you remind yourself why you got into this business in the first place - to help people.

Kelly's passion for serving as a resource for young women in business along with her support of the program's mission led to her joining the Luther Hodges Scholars community in 2019, following an introduction to the program by Pat Hartley. In her time serving in the program, Liz has enjoyed continued engagement with students and then watching their academic success at UNC translate into professional growth and accomplishments beyond UNC.



Elizabeth Kelly ('06, '11), Vicky Garcia ('07), and moderator Paige Wagenmaker ('22) address scholars at the "Women in Business Leadership Connections Event."

So many people at UNC helped me get to this point in my career, and it is incredibly rewarding to return the favor in support of fellow Tar Heels who are just starting out on their own professional journey. Liz encourages students to develop their own "fan club", a community of peers and professionals that can be resources for advice, guidance and encouragement.

Liz also recognizes the impact of mentorship and support in her own life. From her parents showing her the value of hard work and providing a well-rounded childhood, to colleagues who have taken a chance by hiring her, Liz is grateful to those that have driven her to the next level professionally and personally.

"I very much recognize that there are lots of people that have done things for me throughout my career and so I try to pay it forward to the next generation."

Liz Kelly's commitment to "paying it forward" is abundantly clear through her investment in Luther Hodges Scholars. From providing guidance as an inaugural member of the program's Advisory Council, to serving on the application selection committee, to hosting panel sessions and conversations for current scholars, Liz has made a tangible impact on the program and the lives of the students. We are grateful for her many contributions and look forward to seeing the continued growth of our scholars because of her presence in the Luther Hodges Scholars community!

Explorations

Explorations, the Luther Hodges Scholars alternative fall break, provides scholars first-hand experience engaging with local and national organizations, leaders, and communities addressing contemporary business issues. This initiative offers current scholars the ability to pursue impactful opportunities beyond the academic curriculum that expand educational experiences, heighten understanding of cross-sector collaboration, and foster development as future business leaders.



The inaugural Explorations trip took place in October 2024. Five scholars and one staff member traveled to Washington, D.C. to examine collaborations across the sectors on economic development initiatives at the local and federal levels. Scholars had the opportunity to meet with federal government organizations, businesses, and non-profits working at the intersection of business and public impact. While there, the program also hosted an alumni dinner for graduates in the D.C. area to meet with current students and reconnect with fellow alumni and staff.

We look forward to future Explorations and the opportunities they will provide for our students to grow as future business leaders! Read more

Advisory Council Activity Summary

The Luther Hodges Scholars Advisory Council is essential in supporting the Luther Hodges Scholars Program. Council members contribute their skills and talents to help develop future business leaders who are dedicated to making a positive impact on the world. They meet twice a year (fall and spring) to assess program progress, provide recommendations, address issues, and advise on programming efforts.



Since its inception two years ago, in AY 2023-2024, the Council has provided professional expertise, diverse perspectives, and access to resources, colleagues, philanthropic support, and other vital assistance. In preparing for each meeting, staff create a comprehensive Board Book that highlights activities from the previous semester, including background on issues of staff and scholar concern. Council members requested a more active role during meetings by offering helpful guidance and specific advice.



Staff responded by preparing one-page summaries on two big issues facing the program, such as student engagement, alumni engagement, and mentorship. The shift from staff presentations to member discussion and deliberation has had a significant impact. Attendance is around 85-90%, with robust, substantive discussions, and after each meeting, next steps are identified for staff follow-up. Council members report feeling valued and appreciated, leaving meetings energized and engaged.

For instance, regarding alum engagement, staff launched the program's new Alumni Engagement portal, which features a map of alums and a dashboard displaying career data.

The portal allows alumni and current scholars to find contact details easily and helps staff track key metrics and trends. Impressed with the portal, council members suggested promoting it at Kenan-Flagler and UNC alum events and exploring more ways for users to connect beyond LinkedIn. Members emphasized the importance of fostering a lifelong learning mindset among scholars and alums, stressing that alums need to stay informed and keep learning to adapt to a changing world. They also proposed using the portal to share podcasts and book recommendations. In line with their focus on lifelong learning, members supported a continuing education initiative offering alumni engagement opportunities

through accessible webinars that provide professional development and skill-building on relevant topics for early-career professionals.

At the Spring 2025 council meeting, members reflected on their two years of service as the inaugural council members, noting program improvements and how much they enjoy meeting with current scholars outside of scheduled events. Notably, members appreciate the size of the board book, which contains 20-25 pages of developments from the previous semester. They enjoy weighing in on a few challenges and issues, and they love the opportunity to connect with alumni. However, they would find it helpful if staff could provide more information about their needs and how the Council can assist.

Members serve two-year terms with the option to renew, and since their initial terms are ending, some resignations are expected. For example, Chuck Lovelace, who serves as chair, will step down from that position but remain on the Council. Both he and the executive director will reach out to members individually over the summer to gather feedback and assess continued interest in serving.

The advisory council will continue to monitor the program's progress and offer additional guidance. The positive impact and importance of the council's contributions cannot be overstated. Staff feel recognized, validated, supported, and challenged in their efforts to provide a world-class transformative experience for students striving to use business to make a positive change in the world. The Advisory Council is a valued partner in this worthy endeavor. [Read More](#)

Alumni Profile

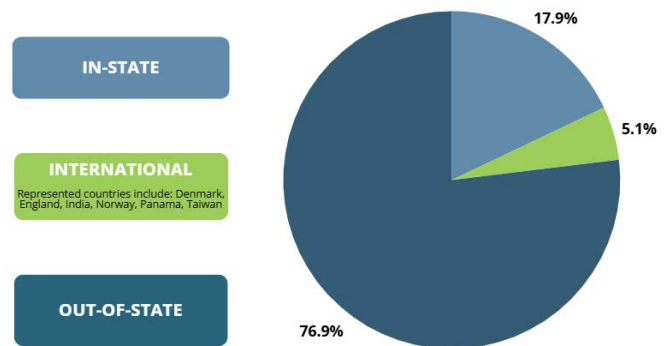
As the program continues to grow, so does the number of alumni making a positive impact across the world. There are now 118 program alumni that make up the seven graduating classes (2019-2025) of Luther Hodges Scholars. These graduates are working in a variety of organizations and have unique career aspirations and professional interests.

We strive to maintain relationships and continue fostering connections to the program, current students, and fellow alum. From meetups and community dinners, to online programming, to phone call check-ins, our staff works diligently to engage with program alumni and serve as a resource throughout their professional careers. Below is an overview of the Luther Hodges Scholars alumni community. We look forward to being a part of their continued growth and seeing the contributions they make to society!

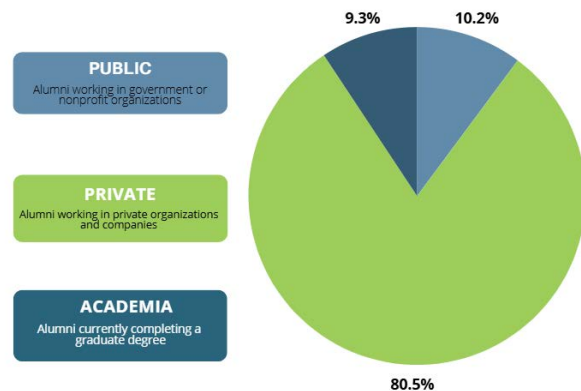
Hodges Scholars Alumni meet up for an alumni dinner in Charlotte, NC, December 2024.



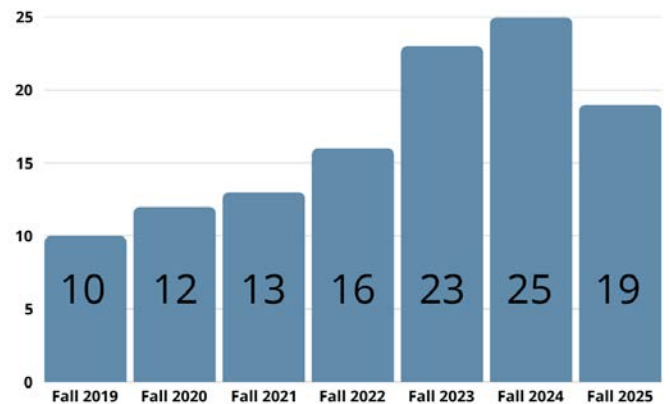
ALUMNI BY LOCATION



ALUMNI BY PROFESSIONAL SECTOR



ALUMNI BY YEAR



Alumni Spotlight: Andrea Prego '21

The Value of Learning from Experiences and Maximizing Opportunities



A graduate of the Class of 2021, Andrea Prego recently caught up with the Luther Hodges Scholars staff to discuss her academic and professional experiences, how business can positively impact society, and advice for future professionals.

Background

What is your hometown? Managua, Nicaragua. **Where do you currently live?** Charlotte, North Carolina. **What is your current job title and employer?** I serve as a Senior Analyst. I lead Customer Experience Strategy on the insurance team at Bankrate. **What are some of your hobbies?** I recently joined a bowling league despite my very limited bowling experience. Practicing has taken up a lot of my time recently. I also love to bake, and spend a lot of time with my Aussiedoodle, Toby.

Experience at Carolina

Why did you pursue a business degree? Growing up, I easily recognized the differences between my life in the United States and the experiences of my family in Nicaragua. As I got older, I began to understand that these differences were not just cultural, but also deeply tied to economic systems. I had relatives who worked on a coffee plantation, and it wasn't until I took my first international business class in high school that I began to connect the dots between global trade, economic development, and quality of life. That realization sparked my interest in business. I came to believe that if business practices could contribute to global inequities, they could also be part of the solution. The nature of business is finding solutions to complex problems, and the opportunity to engage in that work is what motivated me to pursue a degree in the field.

Why did you decide to become a Luther Hodges Scholar? When I first learned about the Luther Hodges Scholars program, it immediately resonated with the values I hoped to carry into my career. I had taken courses in economics, business, and policy that each felt relevant to the impact I wanted to make, but they often felt like separate pieces of a larger puzzle. The LHS program was the first opportunity that allowed me to integrate those disciplines in a meaningful and intentional way. More importantly, from the very beginning, the program emphasized not just understanding the connections between these fields but also developing the skills to apply that interdisciplinary approach in any professional context.

What person, course, or experience most influenced you when at KFBS/UNC? Jessie LaMasse, Dr. Kim Allen. In 2019, I traveled to Bangkok for an internship through Hodges Scholars at Kenan Foundation Asia—an experience that not only shaped my professional growth but also sparked one of my most meaningful friendships at UNC.

Over nearly three months abroad, Jessie and I bonded through our first professional experience—one that just happened to take place on the other side of the world. Though our friendship began in an unconventional way, it has become one of the most meaningful aspects of my LHS experience. Most recently, during a difficult career pivot, she was the first person I called. Her insight and support have been invaluable, and I continue to lean on her as both a friend and advisor.

Dr. Allen, Executive Director of Luther Hodges Scholars, was one of the most influential figures during my time at UNC. From the very beginning, she provided steady guidance in what was often an overwhelming environment, becoming a trusted mentor. She consistently made time to discuss my career interests, connect me with relevant opportunities, and offer thoughtful, candid advice. Even after graduation, her support has never wavered. To this day, I know I can turn to her for guidance, and she will give me the same thoughtfulness as she did when I was a student.

Work and Career

What has your career path been like? A lot of exploring! Generally, my overarching goal has remained consistent: I've always wanted to use business as the tool to advance inclusive economic opportunity. The way that I've done that has varied in different roles in the private/public sector, which I've really enjoyed. Because business skills are so universal, I've never felt tied down to a specific job or career, and that flexibility has allowed me to explore several different avenues.

What do you enjoy most about your job? The best part of my job is getting to solve problems in real time. Millions of users enter our site asking questions like “what’s the best way to build credit?” or “what’s the first step to buying a home?”. When users land on our site, they place their trust in us to provide unbiased advice on some of the

most important decisions they can make to shape their financial future. When I analyze a user’s journey on our site, my goal is to ensure they find what they need—and if they don’t, I look for ways to improve their experience. That means getting creative: developing new strategies, testing new ideas, and knowing when to pivot if things don’t go as planned. Every day is different, which makes it challenging and rewarding.

Lessons Learned

What has your time “in the real world” taught you as it pertains to your career? It’s not about what you know, it’s about what you learn! When I first started in my career, I felt so nervous asking questions when I didn’t understand something. I really struggled with imposter syndrome. As I’ve grown in my career, I’ve learned to appreciate all the moments when I learn something new, because it keeps me challenged and motivated. It’s easy to get stuck in the routine of things, especially after school when you no longer have grades to worry about. Challenge yourself to ask more questions, learn new things, and meet new people.

What advice do you have for students transitioning to post-grad professional life? Keep learning and keep pushing yourself! After graduating, I worked for the same employer for three years, but towards the end I started to feel like it was time to try something new. I decided to pursue a new opportunity at NCGrowth (part of the Kenan Institute), which was incredibly refreshing and rewarding. I got to use the business skills I had learned in the ‘real world’ to return to one of my favorite places and help make a direct impact in my local community, which has been a highlight of my career journey thus far! While I ultimately decided to go back to the private sector, I’ll forever be grateful that I took the time to take a step back, try something new, and reconnect with the things that motivate me.

IMPACTFUL PROGRAMMING

The Hodges Scholars Program is uniquely designed to provide programming and experiential learning opportunities that support scholars' professional development. Through meaningful engagement with industry and community leaders, scholars sharpen essential skills necessary to excel in business and research.

Hodges Scholars Program

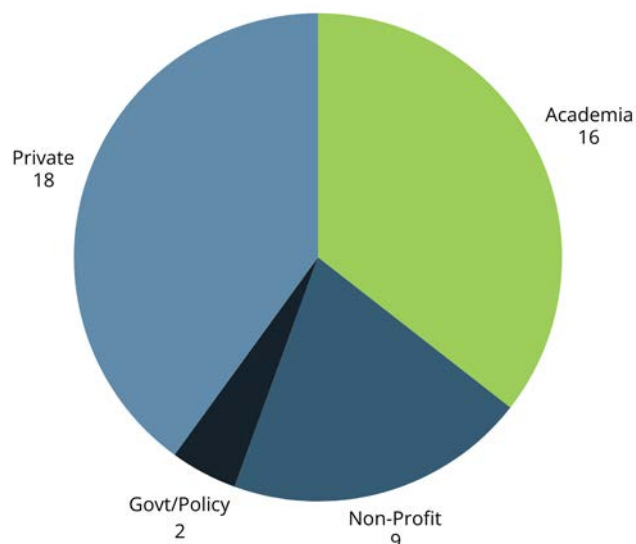
As a mission-centered and value-driven program, the Hodges Scholars Program delights in engaging students through a variety of formal and informal activities. These include coursework, curated cross-sector internship opportunities, holistic and competency-based advising, connection and mentoring initiatives, and other experiences that cultivate the core competencies needed to become effective, transformative global business leaders.

With community at its core, the Luther Hodges Leadership Council plays an instrumental role in organizing events that foster connection and create meaningful experiences among scholars. Each gathering is designed to nurture scholars' desire to build relationships with others who share their passions, values, and aspirations.

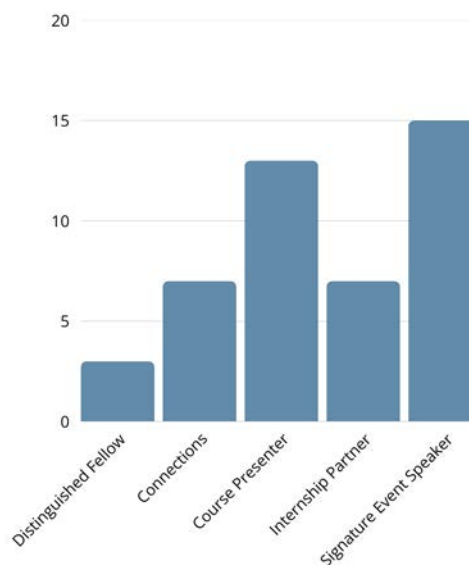
The scholars have an opportunity to engage with many guests and speakers throughout the academic year. The following is a compilation of all the engagement opportunities from the 2024-2025 academic year. The opportunities are categorized in the following channels:

1. [Connections](#)
2. [Distinguished Fellows](#)
3. [Course Speakers/Presenters](#)
4. [Cross-Sector Internship Partners](#)
5. [Signature Events](#)

SECTORS



SPEAKER TYPE



Connections

Connections, a new opportunity for students to engage in curated conversations with impactful professionals, has proven to be an excellent initiative to support our scholars networking and professional development. This year, we were fortunate to have several high impact business leaders join us for these conversations to educate and encourage the scholars.

Women in Business Leadership with Liz, Vicky, and Paige



One Connections session in spring 2025 brought together a group of professionals for a discussion focused on empowering women in business leadership. The panel featured Vicky Garcia, President & CEO of Latino Community Credit Union, and Liz Kelly, Managing Director at Pappas Capital, who shared insights and advice from their own career journeys. We were also thrilled to welcome back LHS alumna Paige Wagenmaker ('22) to serve as the moderator for this event.

This conversation provided an excellent opportunity for our scholars to ask questions, explore career aspirations, and reflect on their own journeys in a supportive and encouraging environment. We are grateful to all of our Connections speakers this year for their investment in our students!



Jason Liberty '15

President & CEO
Royal Caribbean Group



Ned Powell

Former President & CEO
USO World Headquarters,
Former Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



Vicky Garcia '07

President & CEO
Latino Community Credit Union



Elizabeth Kelly '11

Managing Director
Pappas Capital



Bob Faber '89

Vice President Finance
Clinical Research Group (PPD)
Thermo Fisher Scientific



Mark Korell

Board Chair
Habitat for Humanity of North Carolina



Moderator

Paige Wagenmaker '22

Senior Global Partner Marketing Analyst
Dell Technologies



Distinguished Fellows Fireside Chats

Luther Hodges Scholars have the opportunity to sit down with the Kenan Institute Fellows during their visit to the Kenan Institute. With each visit, a scholar is selected to moderate an exclusive fireside chat that provides the scholars with time to ask additional questions about their research and any career insights and advice the fellows may have. Three fellows visits occurred during the 2024-2025 academic year.



Jayashankar M. Swaminathan

GlaxoSmithKline Distinguished Professor of Global Operations
UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School



Annelies Goger '13

Fellow
The Brookings Institution; 2025 Kenan Institute Distinguished Fellow



Christine Moorman

T. Austin Finch, Sr. Professor of Business Administration, Duke University Fuqua School of Business; Managing Director, The CMO Survey; 2025 Kenan Institute Distinguished Fellow

Summer 2025 Cross-Sector Internship Partners

Each summer, the Luther Hodges Scholars program collaborates with for-profit and not-for-profit organizations across the globe to provide our students with a Cross-Sector Internship Experience. This initiative offers scholars a fully funded, eight-week internship in which they use their business skills and knowledge to address a particular societal need. We're thrilled to share our partners from Summer 2025, who hosted scholars from the Class of 2027:

1. CLIMB USA – Madison Wisconsin
2. Go Global – Research Triangle Park, North Carolina
3. The KAL Firm – Atlanta Georgia
4. Kenan Foundation Asia – Bangkok, Thailand
5. Latino Community Credit Union – Durham, North Carolina
6. The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) – Mesa, Arizona

Program staff facilitated bi-weekly reflection sessions for scholars to gather and discuss the impact of their experience. We're pleased to share that the scholars have completed this summer's experience and will be presenting their experiences at the virtual Cross-Sector Showcase this fall. Follow the link for more information on the partners and projects for each internship. [Read More](#)



Robert "Bob" Wynn '76

President
CLIMB USA



Rachel Page '11

Deputy Director
Go Global NC



Kaseem Ladipo '09

Founder & Principal
The KAL Firm



Allison Morris

Director of Partnerships
Kenan Foundation Asia



Alison Yonas

Chief Development and Impact Officer
Latino Community Credit Union



Jessamyn Tracy

Director of Special Projects
The National Center for American Indian
Enterprise Development (NCAIED)



LSDS

Team Leader Solutions and
Decision Support

Fall 2024 Cross-Sector Internship Showcase



Communities Learning to Invest and
Mobilize for Business

The Power of Investment Education in Closing the Racial Wealth Gap

Members:

Abhiram Bolisetty, Chi Vu, Carolina White, Yashu Singhai

[Watch Video](#)



Empowering Non-Profits to Achieve Lasting Change

Members:

Christie Chen, Tyler Coffee, Larkin Gliddon, Vansh Gogoi, Carter Osborn

[Watch Video](#)



Encouraging Sustainability in Thailand

Members:

Jasmine Berry, Jules Chiamonte, Eli Dykes, Soham Joshi

[Watch Video](#)



Capturing Member Experience for Medicare Advantage

Members:

Kathryn Bolick, Nandini Gupta, Lucia Park

[Watch Video](#)



Bridging Borders: A Summer in Global Trade and Commerce

Members:

Matthew Abel, Samhita Gattupalli, Asiah Graham

[Watch Video](#)



Rebuilding Ukraine

Members:

Raven Heyward, Adhithi Ramprakash, Anna Claire Sems, Meilin Weathington

[Watch Video](#)

Cross-Sector Internship Cost Breakdown

2023 Cross-Sector Internship Cost Breakdown

Year	Internship Site	Total Site Cost	Avg. Total Per Site	Avg. per student	Total Interns	Avg. Interns per Site
2023	5	81,362	16,277	5,335	19	4 (2-5)
2024	6	126,296	21,049.33	5,775	23	4 (3-5)
2025	6	161,000	26,833	7,000	23	4 (3-5)



Each summer, the scholars program partners with organizations worldwide to offer the Cross-Sector Internship Experience. This curated internship provides scholars with a fully funded, eight-week, project-based living and learning experience working alongside professionals in both the public and private sectors.

As shown in the table, the average cost per student rose sharply from \$5,774 in 2024 to \$7,000 in 2025. The decision to increase the stipend to \$7,000 reflects higher housing, food, and transportation costs caused by inflation. Despite the \$1,226 increase per student, the \$7,000 stipend still falls short of the market rate for a Kenan-Flagler undergraduate intern. The stipend does not cover expenses for staff support needed to secure the internship and other staff time, including reflection sessions and on-the-job guidance. When these hidden costs are included, the actual average internship stipend per student is considerably higher than \$7,000.

Course Speakers/ Presenters



Josh Abrams
Director of Education
PEAK6 (BUSI 220: Investment Values and
Their Application)



Ritch Allison '89, '95
Former CEO
Domino's Characteristics of Effective
Leaders - Decisiveness



LaChaun Banks
Professor of the Practice
UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School
(BUSI 120)



Stephanie Brown
Librarian
UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School (BUSI
220:Background Research/Literature
Review)



Susan Cates '98
Managing Partner
Leeds Illuminate
Characteristics of Effective Leaders -
Communication



Hannah Cohen
Strategy & Operations Associate StreetEasy
(Zillow) (BUSI 220: Finding the Right Data
and Wrangling It)



Mary Margaret Frank, Ph.D. '92, '99
Dean, UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School
Characteristics of Effective Leaders -
Integrity



Vicky Garcia '07
President & CEO
Latino Community Credit Union
Characteristics of Effective Leaders – Vision



Dan Gitterman
Department of Public Policy
UNC Chapel Hill (BUSI 120)



Jonathan Pingle Ph.D. '03
Chief U.S. Economist
UBS (Economic Application)



Thomas Stith III
Co-Founder & CEO
The Michael Thomas Group
IncCharacteristics of Effective Leaders -
Courage



Jeffrey Su
Managing Partner
Crescent Park Management (Investment
Application)



Phillip Swagel
Director
Congressional Budget Office (Policy
Application)

Susan Cates '98 discusses leadership with scholars in the BUSI 221 Leadership Seminar.



Signature Events

Frontiers of Business Conference



The 2024 Frontiers of Business Conference: Building Business Resilience convened corporate executives, leading researchers, and policy experts to share objective, evidence-based solutions for navigating today's most turbulent business challenges.

Luther Hodges Scholars had the exclusive opportunity to attend the conference, network with distinguished professionals, and play an active role by introducing featured speakers—gaining firsthand insight into the intersection of business, research, and policy leadership.

[Read More](#)

Orientation & Welcome Dinner



Luther Hodges Scholars gathered for the All-Scholar Welcome Back Dinner to celebrate the start of the spring semester with faculty, staff, and peers. The evening featured inspiring talks from Professors Greg Brown and Brad Hendricks, cross-cohort connections, and a special recognition of Professor Hendricks' recent honor. Surrounding the dinner, new scholars from the Class of 2027 also participated in a two-day orientation weekend to kick off their journey in the program and build community with their cohort. [Read More](#)

Living Room Conversations

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Luther Hodges Scholars program implemented its first-ever series of Living Room Conversations—a dialogue model designed to foster connection, trust, and understanding across differences through structured, curiosity- and story-based conversation.



Hodges Scholars hosted two Living Room Conversation sessions this year. The first focused on polarization, exploring political and social divides through the lens of personal experience rather than debate. The second session centered on the future of work, encouraging scholars to reflect on how evolving technologies, values, and industries are reshaping their future career paths.

[Read More](#)

Senior Brunch



The inaugural Senior Brunch invited graduating scholars to convene for food and fellowship. Over a shared meal, staff introduced scholars to the alumni database, a Hodges alum shared reflections on the transition to post-grad life, and the director from UNC's Financial Well-Being Center offered guidance on managing financial responsibilities after graduation. The event provided a thoughtful blend of reflection and preparation—giving seniors, staff, and speakers a chance to gather for one final hurrah before commencement.

The Business of Sports Panel

The 2025 Business of Sports panel discussion was an on-campus event designed for Shuford and Hodges Scholars interested in pursuing impactful careers in the sports industry, with a particular focus on marketing and branding.



This interactive event featured a panel discussion—moderated by scholar Tyler Coffee '26—with four industry professionals providing insights on emerging trends and innovations in the field, including Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) and advancements driven by digital technology. The panel discussion was followed by two round-table sessions that offered valuable opportunities for networking and learning. Attendees gained strategic insights into the dynamic and evolving world of sports business. [Read More](#)

Caffeinated Conversations



Caffeinated Conversations is an informal engagement offering that allows scholars to connect with program staff and one another—often over a caffeinated beverage or light snack. These gatherings are offered at various times throughout the semester and take place in both on- and off-campus locations. Conversations range from light-hearted chats to deep, reflective discussions, each contributing to a sense of community and meaningful dialogue.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



Leadership Council Activities

Leadership Council Activities

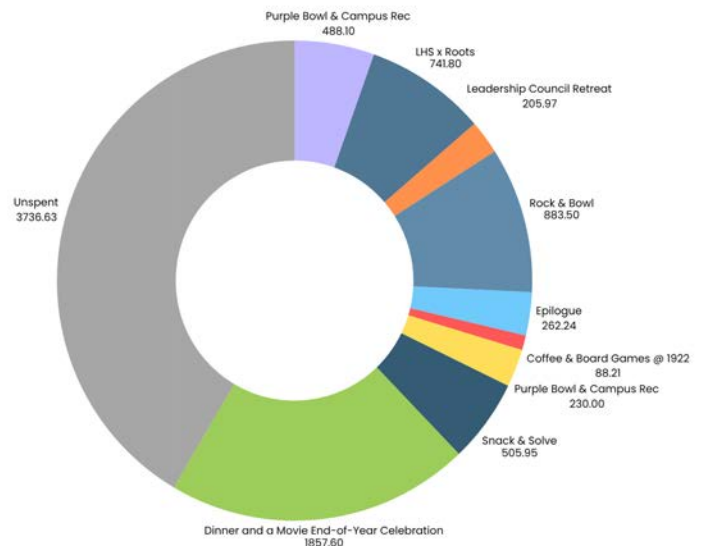
Fall 2024	Spring 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inaugural Leadership Council Retreat Pickleball x Purple Bowl at UNC pickleball courts LHS x Roots Rock & Bowl at Bowlero in Durham LDOC Celebration and Semester Send-Off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coffee and fellowship at Epilogue Books Coffee and board games at 1922 Purple Bowl and UNC Campus REC event Snack & Solve (LDOC event) Dinner and a Movie End-of-Year Celebration at The Carolina Inn and Varsity Theatre

The Luther Hodges Scholars Leadership Council represents the scholar experience and promotes engagement among scholars. Council representatives organize activities that foster a sense of community and provide staff with feedback and suggestions to ensure the scholar community stays supportive, relevant, and engaging.

Since many students study abroad or take part in semester-long off-campus programs, the council decided to raise the number of representatives from 2 per cohort to 2-3. This adjustment means there will be more representatives in the spring semester and fewer in the fall, when sophomores haven't yet joined the program. The details of this year's community-building activities are listed in the table.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL BUDGET CHART

AY 2024-2025 Budget = \$9000
Total Spent = \$5263.37



SPECIAL THANKS



The 2024-2025 academic year was marked by change and uncertainty. Despite these challenges, our tight-knit community stayed resilient. We still feel hopeful and are grateful...

To the Class of 2025 for bravely stepping into the unknown despite the world's uncertainties. Your passion and unique journeys will undoubtedly bring positive change to the world.

To Luther H. Hodges, Jr. for his dedication to public service and his inspiration in fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote progress in North Carolina and beyond.

To the program's alumni, mentors, advisory council members, internship partners, donors, and the many speakers and presenters who generously share their time, advice, and talents with our scholars and staff: your contributions enrich our community in ways you might not always realize.



To the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise for its dedication to promoting the public good through rigorous, non-partisan research and for providing research, networking, and learning opportunities to our scholars that deepen their understanding of the dynamic relationship between business and society.

And a heartfelt thank you to Craig and Kathleen from the Cannon Family Foundation for their generous support of the program's Cross-Sector Internship Initiative.

Their generosity will help students gain a better understanding of North Carolina's nonprofit sector and enable them to contribute to improving the sector's ability to serve the state more effectively.

STAFF



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Kim Allen heads up the institute's signature scholarship program, which provides a world-class, transformative scholarship experience for undergraduate and graduate students of Kenan-Flagler Business School. Kim has more than 20 years of leadership experience in education, community engagement and nonprofit management in organizations such as UNC-Chapel Hill, the NAACP and the Martin Luther King, Jr. History & Public Policy Center, where she served as executive director.



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Phil Hardy serves as the Assistant Director of External Relations for the institute's Luther Hodges Scholars program. His primary focus is to foster relationships with campus and community stakeholders, support continued engagement opportunities for program alumni, and develop cross-sector summer experiences for students. Prior to this role, Phil was the Luther Hodges Scholars Advisor, providing advising and programmatic support for student development and achievement. Before joining the institute, Phil was a student success advisor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. He has experience working in public, private and community colleges.



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Keith Martin serves as the Assistant Director of Student Engagement for the Luther Hodges Scholars program. In this role, he provides our students advising and coaching to support, connects them with campus and community resources and assists with securing internship and research experiences. Prior to joining the Institute, Keith served as the Senior Academic Advisor for NC State University's College of Education.



Meghan Blackwood
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Meghan Blackwood joins the Luther Hodges Scholars program as Program Coordinator. Her work involves overseeing the planning and execution of projects and events, managing the program's media and communications efforts, and ensuring that vital administrative, operational, and business support needs are fulfilled. Prior to joining the Institute, Meghan was a Choral Program Director for New Hanover County Schools.



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