March 4, 2013

From Firsts to Firsts…

This edition of the newsletter is designed to spotlight special opportunities, academic pathways towards those opportunities, and ways to get the support you need from faculty and staff through effective communication. UNC is full of opportunities and resources for support. We hope this newsletter provides useful ways to make the most of them.

Sincerely,

Leslie, Jennifer, and Carmen

Contact us at carolinafirstsnews@unc.edu

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SAVE THE DATE!
Carolina Firsts Graduation Recognition & Pinning Ceremony
May 11, 2013 – The Carolina Inn

Are you graduating this May? As part of a new University tradition, every graduating Carolina First is invited to wear a special pin on their graduation garb. Carolina Firsts graduates are also invited to take part in a graduation and pinning ceremony in their honor. Invitations will be sent in March.
Opportunities

Upward Bound

Upward Bound is a pre-college program focused on assisting high school students from low income and first generation families with developing academic skills and encouraging students to feel motivated to apply, enter and complete college. They are currently accepting application for summer 2013 employment for rising juniors and Bachelor degree recipients. The following positions are offered:

- Full-time Teachers
- Part-time Activity Teachers
- Residential Residence Hall Coordinator
- Bridge Coordinator
- Tutor Mentors
- Residence Hall Night Monitor

For more information on these positions and the Upward Bound Program, please visit this website.

Carolina United

Carolina United is a program sponsored by Carolina Leadership Development. This program works to connect students and exploring diversity issues in a way that bridges the social and cultural gaps. Carolina United is a 5-day camp in which students attend sessions on distinctive diversity issues and develop insight to bring back Carolina United’s message to campus. The application will be available in the spring of 2013. For more information, please visit this website.

Carolina Center for Global Initiatives – Beyond Study Abroad

Want to explore the world and make an impact on world populations? The Study Abroad Program is not your only avenue. The Carolina Center for Global Initiatives (CGI) offers exciting opportunities for students who desire global academic experiences. Tripp Tuttle, a program officer with CGI, offers individual appointments to help students consider these opportunities, develop goals and make plans for global study. Check out the amazing opportunities for scholarship, leadership and training programs offered to undergraduate students (Programs, Scholarships/Awards, Internships with CGI). Make an appointment to talk with Tripp today!
Leadership Opportunities with the Carolina Firsts Student Organization

There are many opportunities to get involved with the Carolina Firsts Student Organization. Several leadership positions are open and accepting applications today, including positions on the Executive Board and to serve as a mentor to other first generation college students. Click on the links above to apply.

School of Nursing Careers Beyond the Bedside Grant and Scholarship (CaBB)

The Careers Beyond the Bedside (Cabb) Project is a federally funded project that strives to increase the number undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds who study nursing. This program comes with many advantages for its participants, including academic skill development workshops, opportunities to meet key people in the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Nursing, as well as research and scholarship opportunities. For more information about the CaBB program, email cabbnursing@unc.edu or call 919-843-8554.

Leslie Castrejon (one of our editors!) is a CaBB Scholarship recipient. She is a sophomore from Robbins, North Carolina. We interviewed her to gain insight into the CaBB experience:

Q. Why did you decide to pursue a nursing career?
A. I decided to pursue a nursing career because I want to take care of people at their most vulnerable times and provide quality services to all those in need. I also want to be a part of the extensive research community and contribute to the general knowledge and understating of certain diseases.

Q. What makes you most excited about applying to the School of Nursing?
A. What makes me most excited about applying to the School of Nursing is being a part of an outstanding nursing program that is well known for their professors, staff, and students. I also want to be a part of the School of Nursing community.

Q. What opportunities does this scholarship give you to further explore the nursing field?
A. It has given me the opportunity to investigate new nursing opportunities such as teaching, research, and different nursing positions I had not thought about before. It also provides me with a lot of support from faculty, staff, and students at the School of Nursing.

Q. What advice do you have for other students who are interested in nursing?
A. My advice to other students who are thinking about pursuing a career in nursing would be to set realistic goals, study hard, and realize that there are a lot of different opportunities within the field of nursing.
Most students change their major at least once during their undergraduate career. Yet, this can be an unexpected and scary decision for many students. Changing your major can be a great decision, as the most successful students choose a major that is most aligned with their unique strengths and interests.

Jennifer Owenby (another one of our editors!) is a sophomore from Andrews, North Carolina, who has explored different academic majors at Carolina. We interviewed her to gain insight on the experience:

Q. What has it been like to change your major? What have those majors been?

A. It has been interesting at best but I’ve come out realizing what absolutely doesn’t suit me and what I am good at. First I was completely undecided, then I decided to be a Biology major. From there I switched to Health Policy and Management, then seeing that I couldn’t complete my pre-requisites in time, I switched to economics and psychology double major, and I am currently tossing around different graduate school options in the health fields.

Q. Why did you change your major and what have you learned from the experience?

A. I changed my major mostly because I realized that it is ok to change your major. Just because you come into college thinking that you know what you are doing for the rest of your life doesn’t mean that you should be afraid of changing your life plans. It happens to lots of people.

Q. Who has helped you through this process? What resources have you used?

A. I think UNC as a whole has really great resources for exploring different opportunities and majors. Academic Advising and University Career Services both helped a lot in showing me what academic pathways and fields were available.

Q. What are you looking forward to?

A. I am looking forward to exploring more options and opportunities during the rest of my time in college and embracing change.

Knowing your strengths and interests can help you choose the best major for you. Make an appointment with University Career Services to take the Strong Interest Inventory Assessment and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator Assessment to learn more about your interests and personality. Then meet with an Academic Advisor to discuss options for academic study.
Effective Communication with Instructors

We hope you are interested in some of the opportunities presented in this issue, and that you will look to your faculty for letters of recommendation. To this end and toward your academic success in general, you need to building solid relationships with faculty. That relationship begins with effective communication.

Below are examples of not-effective and effective communications from a student to an instructor, followed by an outline of tips for successful communication with instructors. We hope you will consider these tips before writing your next email to a faculty or staff member.

An Ineffective Email:

“Can we meet on Wednesday at 10 to go over the exam? Your office hours don’t work for me. – Carol”

What’s wrong with this email?

This email does not include a greeting, nor does it specify who the email is from (there are many people named Carol at UNC!). The tone and style are also too casual and is likely to be perceived as demanding and impolite. The request does not indicate what questions the student has or that the student has made an effort to review the information on their own or that they have attempted to come to office hours.

A More Effective Email:

“Dear Professor Bromfield,

I am in your Biology 101 class at 9am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. My score on the last exam was much lower than I expected. I would like to speak with you about questions I have from the exam and to get your feedback on study habits for success in this course that I may not have considered. Unfortunately, I have class during your regular office hours. Is there another time next week that would be convenient for you to meet with me for about thirty minutes? I appreciate your time and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Carolina Blueridge
PID #712345678”

See the How to Talk To Instructors: Tips for Success notes on the last page of this newsletter for more guidance on how to communicate effectively with instructors.

About the Editors...

Leslie Castrejon (class of 2015/ Pre-nursing major) and Jennifer Owenby (class of 2015/ Psychology major and Economics major) are first-generation undergraduate college students who work in Undergraduate Retention. Carmen Huerta-Bapat is a first generation college student earning her Ph.D. in Sociology and a Graduate Assistant in Undergraduate Retention.
How to Talk To Instructors: Tips for Success

Successful students build and maintain productive relationships with academic instructors and university professionals. Successful students also communicate effectively and take responsibility for their own academic success.

Below are a few tips on communicating with instructors.

Introduce yourself! Before you start talking, say, “Hi, I’m _________ from your ________ class.”

Be respectful. Unless your instructor indicates otherwise, it is always best to address an instructor or university professional by their title: Professor, Dr., Ms., Mrs., Mr., etc. Ask politely for an opportunity to speak with the instructor at their convenience. Always address the instructor at the beginning of an email with “Dear...” and/or their preferred title and name. Remember to turn off your cell phone when you meet face-to-face, and that basic manners (please and thank you) can go a long way!

Be specific. Instructors interact with dozens of students every day. It is important that you continue to restate your name, your PID (in emails), and keep your communication specific and concise in order to help them remember you and focus on your individual needs.

Communicate specific concerns (i.e. indicate that you are having trouble understanding a specific assignment, state why, and what you have done to try to understand the assignment on your own). Avoid saying you don’t understand the subject or topic in general. Also, ask for strategies that will help you prepare for class and perform well on assignments and tests.

Be prepared. Try to find the answers to academic questions on your own before asking the instructor. Often, the answer is already in your textbook or class materials.

If you are having trouble understanding a concept or formula, bring your textbook, problem set, and/or syllabus to show the instructor an example of exactly what is giving you trouble.

If you are having trouble with several issues, bring a list to your meeting to be sure you cover all topics of concern. It may also write down your questions and read over them before the meeting.

Ask what you can do to improve. There is a big difference between asking what you can do to increase your grade in the class and asking how you can better understand the course material. It is best to focus your questions on ways to enhance learning, and the grade will follow.

When you ask what you can do to improve, write down the professor’s suggestions and follow through on them. If the suggestions work well for you, send a “thank you” note to the instructor. They really like to hear when their advice works and it helps in providing advice to others.

Go to office hours. An instructor’s office hours are usually included on the class syllabus and posted on their office door. Even in very large classes, aside from just prior to major exams, instructors tend to have very few visitors during office hours. If the posted hours don’t work for your schedule, politely email to ask if it is possible to meet another time.