

IMPACT **UNC**

Summer 2020 | UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO





Supporting Bear Success

Over the past few months, through stay-at-home orders and social distancing, I've been inspired by just how connected, generous and supportive our donors have been. You've reached out to ask what you can do during the pandemic and have helped our students as they faced the financial, emotional and academic challenges of COVID-19.

In this issue of Impact, we share stories of the difference your generosity makes in the lives of our students through scholarship support and emergency funding. You've made sure Bears have had the resources they needed — whether it was ensuring they could finish their degree, helping them reach their full potential, offering them a supportive community or making sure they had food on their tables so they could focus on their academic studies without hunger insecurity.

For fiscal year 2020, over 3,800 individual donors and organizations have generously gifted more than \$10 million to support areas across campus; much of this was in support of scholarships. Scholarship support makes a tremendous difference in the lives of UNC students, and, as these stories show, will have lasting

impact for generations, as students like Brandon Selz reach for solutions to global health issues, and Jenaya McGowan brings insight and understanding to community conversations.


Hummel Family Scholarship recipient Nancy Ochoa says, "I promise I will pay this forward one day." Generosity is never an isolated event with the UNC community. It continues to make a difference, student-by-student, generation-by-generation.

Thank you so much for all that you've done. Whatever challenges lie ahead, we know our Bears will not be facing them alone.



Allie Steg Haskett

Allie Steg Haskett '03
Vice President for
University Advancement



Hummel Family Scholarship recipient
Nancy Ochoa earned her accounting
degree in December 2019.

Paying it Forward

It was spring semester, 2019, and a number of business students began to file into a conference room in Kepner Hall. They'd been invited to a meeting to hear more about what they thought was a potential scholarship opportunity.

Nancy Ochoa, a senior accounting major, had received the email encouraging her to attend if she was interested in learning more about the Hummel Family Scholarship. As she sat down in the conference room, she had a lot on her mind.

The 34-year-old mom of two (18-year-old Nevaeh, also a UNC student, and 2-year-old Haven) was working two jobs and going to school full-time.

"Not being financially stable and having to manage being a mom and student life has been a struggle, especially because my youngest daughter has had some health issues. I'm usually running on four-to-six hours of sleep. It's hard to focus with very little sleep."

Nancy was born in Mexico and raised in Colorado. As a teenaged single parent she couldn't afford college and worked hard to support herself and her daughter.

"I am a firm believer that where there is a will, there is a way," she says.

In 2013 she was ready to continue her education, and she chose UNC because it was closer to home and affordable, and she'd heard UNC had a great accounting program. As a DACA recipient, she didn't qualify for federal financial aid, so in addition to her schoolwork, she continued working two jobs, one to support her daughter, and one to pay for school.

But by the time she settled into a seat in the Kepner conference room, she had run out of savings and was trying to figure out how she was going to continue to pay for school.

The Stryker Leadership Development Program helps with her tuition, but she still needed to cover other expenses like fees, books and housing. "Running on very little sleep and almost out of money, I was burning out and thinking that I was going to have to withdraw. Not knowing how I was going to pay for fall semester, I still registered for classes and just said to myself, 'I'm going to keep going until I just can't anymore.'"

What she (and the other students in the room) didn't realize was that they were about to hear some astonishing news.

"When they told us that we were not there to receive information, and that they were offering us the scholarships, I began crying. I was in shock and could not believe what was happening. I had to leave the room for a little bit because I could not stop crying. After the meeting I gave Jennifer Ostenson a hug and thanked her for relieving the financial stress off my back."

Twenty-five students received an \$8,000 scholarship that day, thanks to a gift from the Hummel Family Foundation, which was established in 2015 by Dr. Robert and Carole Hummel with their children, Rob Hummel and Jennifer Ostenson. Dr. Hummel earned his veterinary medicine degree from Ohio State University and went on to co-found a business that grew into Animal Health International — one of the largest animal health distributors in the nation.

"When my father was going to school, a gentleman gave him \$200 towards his college education and he said, 'The only thing I ask is that someday when you're able, please support some students and help them out as well,'" says Ostenson. "All his life, it stuck with him."

And in that conference room in Kepner, that moment of 60 years ago replayed itself 25-fold, inspiring a new generation to succeed — and give back.

"I feel extremely blessed to receive this scholarship," said Ochoa. "Because of this scholarship I will finally be graduating in December. I promise I will pay this forward one day."

Succeeding through Community

As a first-generation student, UNC's support systems meant a lot to Jenaya McGowan Zarrad '08. The Greeley native came to UNC from Aims Community College and found a degree and a community that made a difference in her education.

"I'm the first person in my family to complete a college degree, let alone going to graduate school. At UNC things really just kind of started to click for me in terms of what I was studying. And I think what really helped were the support systems that I had in place at UNC through programs like Stryker, the McNair Scholars Program, and my department of study — Africana Studies," Jenaya says.

When she started at UNC she took the Intro to Black Studies class — and it impacted not only her course of study but also offered her something she'd been missing through her school years. "As a person who is African American, really, there were no black people when I was growing up in Greeley, and so it was a part of my identity that was missing, and that certainly wasn't supported in any of the curriculum I was seeing in my K-12 years. It was really important to me at UNC finding black teachers. For the first time in my life, I had multiple black teachers, and it was a really encouraging, supportive environment. I just fell in love with the coursework and learning what I was learning."

Beyond her courses and academic goals, as a first-generation student, Jenaya says that she sometimes felt like a fish out of water navigating college. Becoming a Stryker Scholar through the Stryker Institute for Leadership Development helped her excel.

"I always was a very good student, but none of my teachers or school counselors had ever even talked to me about college. I really had no idea how anything worked or what I was doing. The Stryker program was such a nurturing environment for people with similar backgrounds that I could ask questions," she says.

Through Stryker she found a community of women supporting women in addition to the financial support she needed to earn her degree.

"To get such a generous stipend through Stryker, along with a laptop, that was a really big deal and helped me significantly to accomplish



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—JENAYA MCGOWAN ZARRAD '08

my schoolwork there at UNC. I'm just very grateful to Ronda Stryker. She doesn't know me personally, I don't know her personally, but I think what she's been able to do for — I don't even know how many women at this point, but hundreds, I'm sure — that's a pretty incredible legacy. I'm just grateful for her for setting this up for the women of UNC."

After earning her bachelor's degree in Africana Studies, Jenaya, who was also a McNair Scholar, went on to earn her master's degree in Global Policy Studies at the prestigious Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. She now works as the vice president of people and culture at Joust in Austin, Texas, a startup company that does business banking for the self-employed.

"With an ethnic studies degree, because I'm really able to see things from a very broad length and from a lot of different lenses, I tend to have a great sensitivity around the fact that people come from a variety of walks of life," she says. "I'm able to deploy that when communicating with people or even encouraging people to communicate with each other."

And, as she works in a field that helps others communicate, work and grow, she knows how important those support systems and the people who provide them can be. "I feel like the professors at UNC are really in it to support students, and teach students, and help students set the course for their lives."

The Chance to Make a Difference

Brandon Selz '20 chose UNC for financial reasons. But what he's gained has been invaluable as he sought ways to use his education to make a difference in the world.

"I came to UNC because it gave me the most financial opportunity. I was really looking to get a degree in Biology but also still maintain low debt, if any. Once I got to UNC though, I fell in love," he says.

And he's never looked back.

"I would have chosen no other university other than UNC. The amount of opportunity I've had here has been immense."

A first-generation college student from Aurora, Brandon was both a Reisher Scholar and McNair Scholar. He graduated this spring with his bachelor's degree in Biology, with minors in Chemistry and Psychology and a certificate in Brewing Science.

His scholarships have had an impact on him by giving him the chance to think beyond his undergraduate degree and reach his full potential.

"I'm not sure if I'd have had the ambition to look forward to graduate school just because of how much debt I would have accrued," he says. "I probably would have just graduated and moved forward and worked in a lab somewhere. Scholarships gave me a scope that I can move forward without having to take on debt, but still be able to reach my goals."

The Reisher Family Scholarship Program helped support Brandon's education and mirrored his goals to give back to the community. Reisher is specifically aimed at helping recipients who show promise of making a future contribution to the community through service, leadership, work or unique experiences.

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—BRANDON SELZ '20

"I initially was a pre-med student with the idea that I always wanted just to help people," he says. "I went into the medical field a bit as a Certified Nursing Assistant but I didn't like the fleeting experience that a lot of medical care is. It's very in-and-out in 10 minutes. So, although I'd be helping people, I really didn't feel a personal connection."

That's when the McNair Scholars program, designed to prepare undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities, also helped shape his career path.

"McNair provides scholarships for people of color, women who are not represented in STEM and other fields, as well as low-income students. That's where I fall in. I've really had a lot of help from the staff of McNair, honing me for graduate school, and helping teach me those skills with a lot of compassion."

Brandon had the opportunity to do research while working with Andrea James, Ph.D., assistant professor in Biology. Working with James he was trying to understand the mechanisms involved with colobomas, which are related to congenital blindness.

"Dr. James has been one of the biggest influences on me in my undergraduate work. She specifically worked with me on my research

and helped me with not only the graduate process, but also understanding what graduate school is going to be like and giving me tips for my interviews, just trying to make sure I'm successful," Brandon says.

Through his time working with James, he became intrigued by the idea that research would allow him to make a difference. "I'd be making a big impact in the long run with either helping develop cures or looking at the mechanisms that are causing disease."

Brandon will start his doctoral work at University of California-Davis this fall. "I'm trying to look specifically at environmental factors and how they upset development or cellular processes. I have a personal link with caring for the environment as a biology major, but I also just really think that there are a lot of pollutants that are getting worse in our environment. I want to be able to take action against that and help make an active effort."

And, along with research, there's another reason he's interested in pursuing his doctorate. "I also want to be able to work as a mentor with my research with graduate students or undergrads. I'm trying to give back for all the opportunity I've been given."





UNC's Bear Pantry helps to address food insecurity for many students and their families, including Danielle Ananea and her daughter, Tirion.

How Bear Pantry Helped Me

The Bear Pantry at UNC has had a tremendous impact on my life. I come from a background of food insecurity and am a first-generation college student. So, navigating campus resources was a necessity for not only my success, but for my survival. Additionally, I have a daughter who is now in the 4th grade who has benefited from the Bear Pantry as well.

When I was in elementary school during the summer break there was a free lunch program for all of the children in Post Falls, Idaho who were under the age of 18. It gave me the support to stay safe away from home and also nourished me while I was growing.

When I started at UNC, I was a transfer student from a community college that didn't have the resource of the food pantry on campus. At UNC, a faculty member made an announcement about it, but I felt uncomfortable going at that time, since I wasn't sure how or when to use it. Then I was in a meeting that included Deana Davies, assistant director of student outreach and support with the dean of students office.

Deana and I discussed the Bear Pantry and she walked me to Michener Library (Bear Pantry has since moved to the University Center) and showed me how to start the process. Because of my childhood experiences, I felt compelled to begin a research project for one of my classes surrounding the Bear Pantry.

I completed an ethnography and found out that the majority of students at UNC do, in fact, have food insecurities that would be supplemented if they were aware of what being food insecure meant. After

completing my data collection, I started an informal club where I asked students from the Humanities and Social Sciences if they wanted to walk with me over to the Bear Pantry on Tuesdays in the afternoon; we had days where up to 10 students would come along!

The Bear Pantry not only provides food and some toiletries, but also a sense of belonging that a lot of students need when they leave home. The volunteers and staff that run the Bear Pantry have become close friends of mine and have greatly decreased the amount of stress, anxiety, depression and other psychological issues perpetuated by being hungry.

My daughter loves the Bear Pantry, too! At the beginning of the pandemic, the Bear pantry was supplying students with premade bags, and mine happened to have a roll of toilet paper in it! I've never been so grateful for flushable paper.

It's been hard for me to figure out how to put how I feel about the pantry into words. During my time at UNC, I experienced domestic violence that caused a brain injury, a car accident that caused a spinal injury that required surgery during the semester, and the finalization of my divorce during my degree. Because of all the turmoil and lack of family support, my daughter and I experienced homelessness off and on throughout my education, but we never went without food. So, while I was busy trying to figure out where and how we would have somewhere to live, I knew that my daughter would never suffer an empty belly, because I have the Bear Pantry on our side!

—Danielle Ananea '20, Anthropology



Donor support helps to keep shelves stocked at UNC's Bear Pantry, located in the University Center.

Helping Students Impacted by the Pandemic

Two funds — the Bear Pantry Fund and the UNC Disaster Relief Fund — have received gifts from generous donors who wanted to help UNC students dealing with some of the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The Bear Pantry is specifically focused on addressing the issue of food insecurity on campus, while the Disaster Relief Fund provides critical support to students as they work to overcome the financial, social and emotional burdens resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring they can continue to pursue their education at UNC.

Last year, before the economic impacts of the pandemic, a national survey estimated that as many as half of all college students experience food insecurity as they struggle to support themselves while working, attending classes, and dealing with other life issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the severity of food insecurity on college campuses and for many UNC students.

UNC's Bear Pantry assists those students by providing access to a stocked food pantry, as well as to on-campus dining through the Bear Share Meal Swipe program, which allows other students to donate extra meals to fellow Bears.

The pantry has received gifts from the university community and generous alumni and friends, along with grants from the Weld Recovers: COVID-19 Fund from Weld Community Foundation, United Way of Weld County (\$10,000), and the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger (\$6,500). These gifts and grants have enabled the pantry to respond to the urgent needs of students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



UNC DISASTER RELIEF FUND
\$42,725 from 80 donors



BEAR PANTRY FUND
\$19,458 from 49 donors

- Help provide critical financial support to current UNC students in times of crisis by making a gift to the Disaster Relief Fund today at unco.edu/give.



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A background image of a smiling man with a beard, wearing a dark blue t-shirt with a white bear logo. The text "BEARS hire BEARS" is overlaid on the image.

BEARS
hire
BEARS

Help UNC put the Bear Network to work when you recruit and hire fellow UNC alumni and students for positions with your company or organization.

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