



**Media contact:**

Elizabeth Keri

[E\\_keri@uncg.edu](mailto:E_keri@uncg.edu)

**UNCG Receives Historic \$5 Million Grant to Launch  
Paid Internship Program for Humanities Students**

*Program will create 650 paid internships at 130 local nonprofits*

**Greensboro, NC (April 17, 2024)** — [The College of Arts & Sciences](#) at UNC Greensboro has been awarded a \$5 million grant from the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#) to implement a five-year paid internship and educational program for humanities students called “Humanities at Work.” This landmark grant is the largest ever received by UNCG’s College of Arts & Sciences – as well as one of the largest in the University’s history.

“We are absolutely thrilled to be one of only five universities in the country to receive this historic award from the Mellon Foundation,” said UNCG Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. “The Humanities at Work project will not only provide hundreds of UNCG humanities students with high-quality, paid internship experiences, but it will also help them to articulate the value of a humanities degree to potential employers, translating to fulfilling careers.”

The backbone of this program is the transformative value of paid internships, which will impact 650 students and 130 local nonprofits over five years. “This funding allows UNCG to serve as a national model for closing equity gaps,” said Dr. Maura Heyn, co-PI and associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. According to [a 2023 study](#) by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, unpaid internships increase inequity and create longstanding hurdles in career advancement, particularly for Black and first-generation college students.

Humanities at Work aims to eliminate these barriers – an especially relevant goal at UNCG, where over 50 percent of the student population self-identify as belonging to a minoritized group, 50 percent of students are first-generation college students, and 46 percent receive Pell grants.

“Access to a paid, high-quality internship can change the entire trajectory of a person's career,” said Megan Walters, director of [UNCG’s Career and Professional Development](#) and partner on the project. “As a campus highly focused on the social mobility of our students and our state, we must provide equitable access to meaningful opportunities to help students realize their potential and to help them knock down financial barriers to lifelong success. Humanities at Work is the ideal opportunity for UNCG.”

UNCG has a vibrant humanities program, made up of nine disciplines: English; History; Philosophy; Classical Studies; International and Global Studies; Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; Religious Studies; Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; and African American and African Diaspora Studies. Access to internships is particularly beneficial for humanities students.

"We know that humanities majors are qualified for a range of opportunities, but paid internships are scarce," said Dr. Heather Adams, an associate professor of English and a PI on the grant. "This program will help students more fully imagine and speak to their unique contributions as they hone their skills through hands-on internship placements."

Humanities at Work will begin recruiting students in spring 2025. Over one academic year, students will work in small groups on paid internship experiences with local community partners. Simultaneously, students will participate in a Humanities at Work course to guide their internship projects and to learn skills for translating the value of their humanities degree into work beyond the classroom.

Humanities at Work also promises to benefit the Greater Greensboro community. "The projects completed by UNCG students will offer local nonprofits a chance to develop capacity to support their missions," said Dr. John Z. Kiss, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and a PI on the grant. "By providing coursework, guidance, and mentorship, Humanities at Work also lifts much of the burden of maintaining an internship from these partner sites – work such as interviewing, training, and supervising interns."

For students and parents who are increasingly worried about the return on investment of a college education, the Humanities at Work project lays the groundwork for success.

"For many students at UNCG, a college degree is the single biggest investment they will make over the course of their lifetimes," said Dr. Jennifer Feather, head of UNCG’s [English Department](#) and another PI on the grant. "While a program like this one contributes to lifetime earnings, it does more, situating students to bring their best talents to urgent needs and aspirational projects in the Greensboro community and the region."



(left to right) Dr. Maura Heyn, Dr. John Kiss, Dr. Jennifer Feather, Dr. Heather Adams co-authored the UNCG grant application.

## About UNC Greensboro

Located in North Carolina's third largest city, UNC Greensboro is among the most diverse, learner-centered public research universities in the state, with nearly 18,000 students in eight colleges and schools pursuing more than 150 areas of undergraduate and over 200 areas of graduate study. UNCG continues to be recognized nationally for academic excellence, access, and affordability. UNCG is ranked No. 1 most affordable institution in North Carolina for net cost by the N.Y. Times and No. 1 in North Carolina for social mobility by The Wall Street Journal — helping first-generation and lower-income students find paths to prosperity. Designated an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, UNCG is a community-engaged research institution with a portfolio of more than \$67M in research and creative activity. The University's 1,100 faculty and 1,700 staff help create an annual economic impact for the Piedmont Triad region in excess of \$1B.

**Secondary photo for release:**



UNCG Career and Professional Development Office presents the valuable skills Humanities students bring to their careers.