



The [Office for Undergraduate Research](#) newsletter is published bi-weekly to share news about undergraduate research at UNC, relevant events, accomplishments of our students and faculty, and more. For additional information, please visit our website at

[www.unc.edu/depts/our](http://www.unc.edu/depts/our) or email us at [our@unc.edu](mailto:our@unc.edu).

March 7, 2013

## OUR News and Events

### OUR Blog:

- Carolina alum [Carlos Manuel de Castro IV](#) reflects on his undergraduate research experience.

### GRC Blog:

- See what [advice](#) former GRCs offer to new GRCs. There are important considerations for faculty, too.

### OUR News:

- Watch for the chance to vote in our new [Research Madness Bracket](#) contest.
- The deadline [for Science and Math Achievement and Resourcefulness Track Program](#) (SMART) applications is March 18, 2013.
- If you are an undergraduate with substantial research experience, consider applying to serve as an [OUR Ambassador](#). The application deadline: March 19, 2013.

### OUR People:

- Meet [GRC alum Dr. Alixandra Yanus](#).

### Other Events and News:

- “Getting Involved in [Undergraduate Research in Biology](#).” Discover the research opportunities inside and outside the Biology department. Open to first years, sophomores and juniors. Speaker: Dr. Gidi Shemer; Thursday, March 7, 2013, 6:00-7:30 PM in Coker Hall Room 201.

### INSERT SOHP PIX

- On Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup> from 5pm-7pm, the [Southern Oral History Program](#) is offering “Conducting Oral History: Arts and Methods of Interviewing,” a two-hour workshop, specifically geared for undergraduate students. This hands-on workshop will teach basic methods and approaches to

## OUR Events

- The [Celebration of Undergraduate Research](#) is April 15, 2013. Submit your [abstract](#) to share your research with the campus community; deadline for submission is March 25, 2013.

### Pictures from previous Celebrations:



interviewing, as well as introduce students to the resources of the Southern Oral History Program. We will use examples from recent social movements and local history interviews and allow students to experiment with interviewing



firsthand. Where: The Love House, 410 E. Franklin Street. Registration is required. Contact: Charlotte Fryar at

[ctfryar@gmail.com](mailto:ctfryar@gmail.com) or Elizabeth McCain at [mccain89@gmail.com](mailto:mccain89@gmail.com).

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GRC Alum Profile: Ali

Yanus:

When [Dr. Alixandra B. Yanus](#) was a graduate student at UNC, she served as a Graduate Research Consultant (GRC) in two courses with [Professor Virginia Gray](#)— a first year seminar on Interest Group Politics, and an upper-division class on Advanced State and Local Politics. Recently we asked Ali to share some reflections about her experiences as a GRC with us.

We asked about the undergraduate student reaction to being expected to conduct research as part of their course requirements. Ali notes that “perhaps not surprisingly, the first year students struggled with the concept more than the more advanced students. The more advanced students were largely Political Science majors, and many had taken a political science research methods class. Thus, they had some idea about how to speak the language of research, even if they had not executed a research design before. The first years were a different story. The biggest hurdle with them was explaining that what they thought was a ‘research paper’ in high school wasn’t going to fulfill the requirements of the assignment for the purposes of



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The most important advice Ali would offer to new GRCs is to “develop a close working relationship with your faculty member; make sure the two of you are on the same page regarding expectations and course assignments.” And, she would definitely recommend that graduate students seek out opportunities to serve as a GRC, stating that “it fostered a working relationship between me and a faculty member that I would not have otherwise had the opportunity to work closely with, especially in my final years of graduate school. I continue to maintain a relationship with Professor Gray, and we will be presenting a research paper together at a conference this spring.”

Ali believes deeply in the need for undergraduates to have access to research experiences and wants to “underscore the importance of undergraduate students conducting empirical research, however crude and rudimentary, in order to build their critical thinking and problem solving skills.” She indicates that her experience working closely with students on conducting empirical research as a GRC encouraged her “to assign similar work to my own students and challenge them to expand their horizons.”

Ali is currently an Assistant Professor of [Political Science](#) at [High Point University](#) and teaches courses in American Politics, research methods, and the introduction to political science. She also teaches the department’s senior capstone project, which results in a 25-page empirical research paper with original data analysis. Ali serves as the Political Science Department’s liaison to the [Undergraduate Research](#)

our course.”

Ali spoke about one of the challenges she encountered in her work as a GRC: “It was very important to Professor Gray that students asked “why” questions. And, that was one of the biggest “why” questions I was asked was— why does it have to be a why question? Once students got over the initial hurdle of phrasing the question and outlining the paper in their mind, they were usually able to break the empirical research paper into pieces and tackle it in a less intimidating way. I also created a handout to help students with this part of the project— as of last semester, that handout was still being used in classes.”

(Continued in [column two](#))



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[and Creative Works Office](#) at HPU. In addition to incorporating undergraduate research experiences in her classes, Ali supports undergraduate researchers outside the classroom; she has taken several students to the [North Carolina Political Science Association](#) conference and is working with two students on potential publication of a section of their thesis research in HPU's undergraduate research journal.

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