WOFFORD

Wofford College

STUDENT-FACULTY COLLABORATIVE AND MENTORED SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Summer 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Summer is an ideal time for students and professors to engage in research and creative works. This past summer was no exception. We kicked it off with the one-day Institute for Collaborative and Mentored Undergraduate Research. The event welcomed collaborative research teams and provided attendees great opportunities to discuss community-building and share best practices for mentorship and undergraduate research.

This year's research teams featured in the pages that follow include professors from more than 15 disciplines and students from more than 22 majors.

I have high gratitude to all the students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, donors and friends of the college who have contributed and who have made this creative scholarship possible.

Go Terriers!

Dr. Ramón Galiñanes Jr.

Director of undergraduate research and post-graduate fellowships

STUDENT BIOGRAPHIES

Mariam Ali '28 is a biology and chemistry double major with a minor in Arabic on the pre-med track from Columbia, South Carolina. She worked with Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins and three peers on "Living with a Disrupted Climate: Amplifying Voices in Spanish and English." Over the summer, their team interviewed community members and leaders about changing weather patterns, allowing Ali to build trusted relationships and deepen her understanding of Spartanburg's evolving climate and its effects on local residents. The project created a space for residents to express their perspectives, emotions and experiences related to climate issues. She hopes that their work helps to raise awareness of changing environmental patterns and further establish connections between Wofford and the Spartanburg community.

Faculty collaborators and mentors: Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, professor of Spanish, and Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Philosophy

Rylee Ashley '28 is a biology major with a concentration in neuroscience from Anderson, South Carolina. She conducted research on drug-induced cardiotoxicity using zebrafish as a model organism. Her project focuses on two second-generation antihistamines, astemizole and terfenadine, which were withdrawn from the market due to their potential to cause serious cardiac side effects. By exposing zebrafish embryos to these compounds, she investigated their effects on heart rate, morphology and overall cardiac function. Her work highlights the utility of zebrafish in early-stage drug screening and contributes to a broader understanding of how certain pharmaceuticals impact developing vertebrate hearts.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Kelli Carroll, assistant professor of biology

Will Berger '26 is a pure mathematics and physics major from Hillsborough, North Carolina. Working with Dr. Thomas Wright, he researched and collected data on the distribution of admissible prime tuples that are missing one or more primes. Using this data, they developed a predictive heuristic, based on ideas from the Hardy-Littlewood Conjecture, to predict the frequency of incomplete admissible tuples within a given range of numbers. This project contributes to our understanding of the overall structure and distribution of the prime numbers.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Thomas Wright, associate professor of mathematics

John Bolinger '26 is a chemistry and government double major from Spartanburg, South Carolina. He worked with two other Wofford students at Furman University this summer. His research focused on the development of new methods of making amines (nitrogen-containing molecules). The major issue with conventional amine chemistry is the multi-step synthesis it requires, which ultimately leads to a lower yield of the desired product. A more favorable method for the synthesis of amines is hydroamination. Hydroamination is the addition of a nitrogen-hydrogen bond to a carbon-carbon multiple bond. This methodology is a single-step synthesis that would decrease chemical waste and increase overall yields. To do this, Bolinger synthesized a novel aminotroponiminate-based ligand that incorporated hydrogen bond acceptors that would promote intermolecular hydroamination. Amines are important in pharmaceuticals and agrochemicals because of their immense biological functions. While this project is ongoing, the ultimate goal is to provide chemists a novel way to synthesize new pharmaceuticals and agrochemicals.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Robert Harris, assistant professor of chemistry

Katelyn Boyle '27 is a biology and German double major from Lexington, South Carolina. She was a part of a research team studying the impact of urbanization on crayfish living in local streams. The first half of this research consisted of a field study where she collected data from various streams in Spartanburg county; after the data was taken, Katelyn and her group would collect crayfish and measure them to discern the density and health of crayfish at that site. The second half of the summer was spent on a lab study, where the group branched out to take on individual projects. Her study consisted of two experiments focusing on if artificial light sources impact crayfish activity during the night, as crayfish are nocturnal.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Jonathan Davis, assistant professor of biology

Anneka Brannon '26 is a theatre and humanities double major from Inman, South Carolina. She worked alongside Professor Abigail Dillard and four other students to explore the way that historical and sociological research influence a theatrical production process and bring fullness to storytelling and directing. Several topics were focused on, including the development of forensics since the Edwardian era, Edwardian fashion and an intersectional approach to telling the stories of murder victims. Their research culminated in the full-scale production of a play, "The Drowning Girls."

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Abigail Dillard, assistant professor of theatre

Rebekah Briggs '28 is a biology major from Boiling Springs, South Carolina. She worked with Dr. Camille Bethea for her ongoing research project focusing on Afro-Brazilians and the Black Rio movement that emerged in Brazil. This includes specifically how Black American entertainers and activists influenced Rio's own Black movement. Additionally, it investigates how these influences from Black Americans contributed to not only the political aspect of Brazil but, most importantly, the social aspect of Black identity in Brazil. With Bethea, Briggs researched many sources and read articles to conduct an annotated bibliography. Overall, the project

aims to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the connection between the Afro-diasporic experience, its relevance and the Black identity.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Camille Bethea, professor of Spanish

Alex Burnett '26 is a biology and environmental studies double major from Lexington, South Carolina. This summer she has worked with Dr. Robin Lewis to study the flow of information between different herbaria in Europe and North America. Herbaria are where dried plant specimens are stored and then used to advance research and knowledge. This summer they analyzed loan records to better understand if there are certain relationships between the origin herbaria and what we know about bryophyte specimens (mosses, liverworts and hornworts). With the information collected from the loan records, they have run statistics to analyze the potential relationships and create different visualizations such as flow maps, chord diagrams and stacked bar charts.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Robin Lewis, visiting assistant professor of environmental studies and biology

Peyton Burnett '27 is a biology major on the pre-med track from Greenwood, South Carolina. He spent the summer analyzing freshwater stream health with Dr. Amelia Atwell and Dr. Grace Schwartz by finding and identifying macroinvertebrates while also collecting and analyzing chemical properties. Based on what species of macroinvertebrates are present, the research team determined the health of the stream. The chemistry of the stream was looked at to determine if certain levels of nitrogen, phosphate and even mercury concentrations were present in low, medium or high volumes. Burnett was especially interested in the concentration of E. coli in the streams. The team collected water samples and, using imperishable plates, put them in an incubator for 24 hours to see if there were any "purple dots" present. These "purple dots" count as one colony of E. coli present. With this, the researchers deemed some sites to have extremely high concentrations of E. coli.

Faculty collaborators and mentors: Dr. Amelia Atwell, assistant professor of biology, and Dr. Grace Schwartz, assistant professor of chemistry

Winsabell Cheung '28 is a chemistry major from Boiling Springs, South Carolina. She and four other students, with the assistance of Professor Abigail Dillard, presented a production of "The Drowning Girls" along with undertaking dramaturgical research. The production dives into research, exploring the historical and social influences related to the murder case that the production was inspired by ("The Brides of the Bathtub"). She focused mainly on Dr. Bernard Henry Spilsbury's objectification and sexualization of the drowned women during the court autopsy report. In addition to the case, she researched more about Spilsbury's reputation and controversial ethics in his career.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Abigail Dillard, assistant professor of theatre

Liliana DeLatte '26 is a chemistry and French double major with a minor in mathematics from Clover, South Carolina. With Dr. Amelia Atwell and Dr. Grace Schwartz, DeLatte has investigated the impacts of urbanization on the local Spartanburg watershed. They have tested streams with different urbanization levels to determine specific impacts from anthropogenic use and development. They are determining stream health by looking at a variety of factors, such as macroinvertebrate diversity, metal contaminants in sediment samples, nitrate and phosphate concentrations, and E. coli levels. Thanks to certification in the SC Adopt-a-Stream testing protocols, the researchers are able to upload data to the state's database to help create baseline data for the local watershed. DeLatte's focus in this project is on different metal contaminations, like mercury and lead, in sediment samples. She is looking into what conditions could lead to an increase/decrease in metal leeching from surrounding areas into stream water. DeLatte will also be experimenting with an XRF (X-ray fluorescence) instrument to detect other trace metals in the sediment sample.

Faculty collaborators and mentors: Dr. Amelia Atwell, assistant professor of biology, and Dr. Grace Schwartz, assistant professor of chemistry

Nevaeh Dominick '27 is a biology major and philosophy minor from Spartanburg, South Carolina. She worked with Dr. Matthew Cathey to chart King George III's mental decline by transcribing journal entries from his Royal Physician and analyzing the various treatments and noted symptoms to create a more detailed biography and diagnosis.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Matthew Cathey, professor of mathematics

Rachel Dozier '26 is a history and Chinese double major from Georgetown, South Carolina. This summer she is researching a Korean Horyeop-do folding screen held in Wofford College's collection with Dr. Youmi Efurd. She will be analyzing its artistic style, function and socio-political significance within the late Joseon dynasty. This research will contextualize Wofford's screen through a comparative study of similar works, an analysis of historical records and an examination of stylistic and compositional elements. The findings of this research will contribute to the understanding of Horyeop-do within Joseon Korea, shedding light on its political and cultural implications. Additionally, this research will support the development of interpretive materials for the artwork's future digital and physical exhibitions at Wofford College.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Youmi Efurd, curator of the Richardson Family Art Museum

Amelia Dowling '26 is a chemistry major and mathematics minor from Memphis, Tennessee. This summer, she worked at Furman University under Dr. Robert Harris exploring the synthesis of antioxidant modified poloxamers F127 and P188, specifically the addition of ascorbic acid, or Vitamin C, to these poloxamers. The modified poloxamers aid in cell membrane healing and reduction of free radicals in the body at the same time, giving them applications as therapeutic agents for chemotherapies and burn treatments.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Robert Harris, assistant professor of chemistry

Sophie Freeman '27 is a psychology major with an economics minor from Florence, South Carolina. She worked with a research team led by Dr. Katherine Steinmetz on a project exploring the relationship between mood, emotion and cognition. Her work focuses on how a person's mood when it's formed versus when it's remembered may impact memory performance. Over the summer, she has recruited participants both on campus and in the greater Spartanburg-Greenville area and has been learning a new software language to analyze and interpret data. She hopes the findings will contribute to the broader scientific understanding of emotion and memory. She has greatly enjoyed applying what she has learned in a lab setting and deepening her understanding of cognitive processes.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Katherine Steinmetz, associate professor of psychology

Jacob Funk '27 is a physics major and Mathematics minor from Charlotte, North Carolina. Working with Professor Jason Lonon, he helped to prototype a mechanical oscillator using a raspberry pi pico microcontroller. A mechanical oscillator is used in general physics labs to show the relationship between frequency and wavelength using the produced standing wave patterns. While these are able to be purchased, they can cost hundreds of dollars, often creating a barrier for smaller labs. However, using off-the-shelf and 3D-printed parts, they were able to create their prototype for well under $50. To begin, Funk and Lonon focused on programming a rotary encoder to adjust the frequency of vibration, while expressing these changes through an LCD screen. The pair then focused on improving the quality of the wave patterns by upgrading physical parts, the design and their code. Finally, Funk designed and 3D printed a housing for the prototype. While only one prototype was produced, the physics department plans to build enough for an entire lab classroom.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Jason Lonon, instructor and lab manager for the physics department

Lyrical Dream Gist ‘26 is a studio art major from Spartanburg, South Carolina. Her research this summer focuses on examining nostalgia, forgotten memories and the passage of time through the lens of art, specifically painting. This research was awarded the Whetsell Fellowship and aims to prepare her for her solo exhibition to come in January 2026.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Rebecca Forstater, assistant professor of studio art

Owen Gilley ‘26 is a biology major from Spartanburg, South Carolina. This summer, he worked with his fellow students under Dr. Grace Schwartz and Dr. Amelia Atwell, his second summer working alongside Atwell. He was part of a research project monitoring the water quality of streams in and around Spartanburg, using both chemical testing and biological monitoring. A broad variety of streams, representing areas with different levels of urbanization and forested cover, were chosen in order to compare chemical and ecological differences between them. Building off his previous experience, Gilley’s research focused primarily on macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects, crustaceans, snails, etc.) collected from the streams, using their biodiversity patterns and pollution tolerance levels to assess stream health.

Faculty collaborators and mentors: Dr. Amelia Atwell, assistant professor of biology, and Dr. Grace Schwartz, assistant professor of chemistry

Miles Goodale '26 is an environmental studies major and film and digital media minor from Columbia, South Carolina. He received a grant from the college to spend the summer in New York City, immersing himself in the local film scene while researching and writing a screenplay with Dr. Julie Sexeny. Living in NYC, Goodale served as both a production assistant and an actor for a series of biography videos featuring LGBTQ+-focused providers within Northwell Health, and he worked closely with German filmmaker Jules* on their debut documentary film. The documentary, "The Seed You Planted," is an exploration of the legacy of Marsha P. Johnson and her impact on trans activists in New York today, with a special focus on trans and BIPOC activists. Goodale was the first person to join the team and served in many roles for the documentary, including assistant director, production sound mixer and interviewer. In addition to his work on sets, Goodale worked with Sexeny to write a screenplay examining how women in the 1950s responded to the return to normalcy after World War II. They are particularly interested in why women during this period chose to join convents. Were convents seen as an escape from the heteronormative lifestyle America was desperately trying to return to? Or perhaps an opportunity to live in community with others, away from the prying eyes of society? Exploring how women in the past rebelled against the system in a pre-Roe v. Wade era can offer insight into how to navigate the turbulence of women's rights in the modern day. Today, when people are often divided by political lines and lack in-person connections, community is more important now than ever, an idea that Goodale and Sexeny drive home in their screenplay. Returning to Wofford in the fall, they will revise their screenplay and submit it to film festivals.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Julie Sexeny, associate professor and chair of English

Dallas Green '26 of Spartanburg, South Carolina, is an accounting major. This summer, he worked alongside Dr. Clayton Whisnant and one other student to conduct and record oral interviews concerning the integration of Carver and Spartanburg High Schools in 1970. Through networking, scheduling and in-person conversation, different perspectives were documented to ultimately find out whether or not the process of integration in Spartanburg could be deemed a success story.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Clayton Whisnant, Chapman Family Professor of Humanities and chair of history

Wilton Grice '26 is an environmental studies major with a concentration in data science from Clover, South Carolina. Grice worked with Dr. Jennifer Bradham to research the urban heat island effect in Spartanburg. The project involves collecting and analyzing data from three trails — Rail Trail, River Birch Trail and Three Creeks Trail — to examine how factors like tree canopy cover and surface type influence air temperature and surface temperatures in urban environments.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Jennifer Bradham, assistant professor of environmental studies

Blythe Haan '27 is a studio art and art history major from Greenville, South Carolina. As the 2025 Hackney-Haight Fellow, she worked alongside Professor Rebecca Forstater and Lyrical Dream Gist, creating new bodies of work and developing her own artistic style and practice. The group visited several museums and galleries throughout New York City to explore and immerse themselves in contemporary art topics and exhibitions. Throughout the summer Haan worked on expanding and developing her own artistic practice through material testing, studio visits and group discussions. As the Hackney-Haight Fellow, she was also able to delve deeper into her artistic research by participating in a two-week art course at Penland School of Craft.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Rebecca Forstater, assistant professor of studio art

Millie Hatchette '26 is a biology and Spanish double major from Spartanburg, South Carolina. She researched the reproductive success of the Eastern bluebird and the current status of grassland bird species in the Spartanburg area. Throughout the summer, the research team monitored nest boxes at Milliken Arboretum for information on bluebird nesting activity. Data was collected on the number of eggs laid, egg hatching success and fledging success of the hatched young. Eastern bluebird nestlings were also banded during the season, and their mass and wing measurements were recorded. This study is an ongoing project from years prior that is intended to continue for several years. Hatchette is also conducting a study that addresses the concerning decrease in grassland bird species throughout South Carolina. She has conducted song surveys in rural areas in Spartanburg County, hoping to collect data that will show the current state of grassland bird populations in Spartanburg.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Lori Cruze, associate professor of biology

Abby Herpel '26 is a biology major and accounting minor from Columbia, South Carolina. She worked with a team on two projects related to emotion, mood and cognition. Since the summer of 2024, she has contributed to a study investigating the effects of mood induction on cognitive performance and is currently involved in analyzing the data and working toward writing a paper for publication. This summer, she also helped lead in the development of a new project examining how the order of emotional information affects first impressions of faces. This study includes an eye-tracking component to explore visual attention patterns during the encoding stage of the study. She was involved in helping design the experiment, program the software, set up the eye-tracker and revise the study protocol. Participant testing for the new study will begin during the fall 2025 semester, and she will continue working on both projects throughout her senior year.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Katherine Steinmetz, associate professor of psychology

Taylor Jordan '27 is a sociology and anthropology and theatre double major from Florence, South Carolina. She worked with four other students to put together a production of "The Drowning Girls." The show follows the true story of the lives of three women who were murdered by their husband. She played Margaret Lofty and was also the light designer. Her research focused on the role patriarchal structures play in gender-based violence along with common tropes found in media when portraying stories of femicide and violence towards women that are harmful to victims.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Abigail Dillard, assistant professor of theatre

Jackson Kleiderlein '26 and Dr. Geoff Mitchell are studying heat tolerance in symbiodinium. They have look at the different amino acid sequences and resulting proteins that two different clades of symbiodinium contain and determined the functions of each protein. After that, the researchers see which proteins are used for heat tolerance and determine the level of heat tolerance that each symbiodinium clade has. They are trying to determine which protein is best for heat tolerance depending on the prevalence of the protein in the symbiodinium clade with a higher heat tolerance.

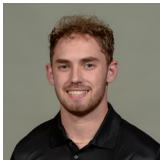
Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Geoff Mitchell, associate professor and associate chair of biology

Jayden Loftis '27 is a double major in environmental studies and art history from Greer, South Carolina. His research project is an exploration into the world of field recording to further understand and document a place. Through the mentorship of Professor Eric Kocher, a diverse use of audio equipment has been used to collect an archive of sounds. The results of the research will reflect a better understanding of field recording and how audio can be used as sense of place and understand our personal, cultural and environmental meaning of a place.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Eric Kocher, assistant professor of environmental studies

Collin Martin '26 is a computer science major from Columbia, South Carolina. Over the summer, he collaborated with Dr. Lilly Trotter on a faculty-student research project examining the historical expansion of stock market access in the United States. His work focused on digitizing archival New York Stock Exchange directories from 1868 to 1933, organizing and cleaning the data and mapping trends in brokerage firm growth leading up to the Great Depression. Through this research, Martin engaged with historical financial records, honed his data analysis skills and contributed to a deeper understanding of how increased access to financial markets influenced local economic development.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Lilly Trotter, assistant professor of economics



Aiden Morris '27 is a physics major and mathematics minor from Mooresville, North Carolina. He worked with Dr. Carolyn Martsberger this summer on research that bridged both physics and health-related disciplines. His work supported investigations into the physical principles underlying biological systems and helped advance understanding in areas where science and medicine intersect.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Carolyn Martsberger, associate professor and chair of physics

Caris Mitchell '27 is an accounting major with a minor in studio art from Spartanburg, South Carolina. She collaborated with a team of undergraduate researchers in religious studies to explore the diverse and recontextualized uses of Psalm 23 in contemporary American spiritual, artistic and cultural landscapes. The study focused on how select phrases from the psalm, such as "the valley of the shadow of death" and "the Lord is my shepherd," are abstracted from their biblical origins and repurposed in hip-hop, public speeches, visual art and personal testimonies. The research uncovered well-known references such as Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise" and Tupac's "So Many Tears," where the phrase "the valley of the shadow of death" transforms into an description of the hood, rather than a pastoral metaphor. This shift highlights a broader cultural change in the psalm's

role in shaping spiritual identity, particularly among marginalized communities. The project also examined the work of public figures like Tyler Perry. These examples and references to Psalm 23 use fragments of the text to navigate and express personal and collective experiences of trauma, nostalgia, resilience and transcendence. By tracing how Psalm 23 appears in both secular and sacred contexts, the project emphasizes the psalm's role as a versatile cultural text. This research contributes to scholarship on spiritual poetics, demonstrating how Psalm 23 serves as a site of memory.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Ingrid Lilly, associate professor of religion

Brittany Moore '26 is biology major with a neuroscience concentration on the pre-medicine track from Stoney Hill, South Carolina. She worked with a team of students on two projects this summer, focusing mainly on one that studies how memory is affected when emotion changes between encoding and retrieval. After analyzing the data related to how valence impacts memory quality, the team will write the paper to complete the study. She has worked on this project since spring of 2024, having helped develop the pilot study on which the current study is based. The team hopes this study will help understand how eyewitness testimony and PTSD are influenced by the mood a person is in when experiencing something for the first time.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Katherine Steinmetz, associate professor of psychology

Emma Moore '26 is a psychology major with a neuroscience concentration from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She worked with a team on two projects related to mood, emotion and cognition. She helped to analyze and score data regarding the impact of valence on memory quality. The team will begin writing a paper on this following the completion of analyses. Additionally, she helped to design and program a study assessing how the learning order of social information impacts both eye gaze and cognition. She will continue her work with this study into fall 2025 and spring 2026 as participant testing and data analyses begin. She has greatly enjoyed working in the lab this summer to better understand the nuances of memory and cognition.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Katherine Steinmetz, associate professor of psychology

Mary Tracy Moorhead '27 is a chemistry major and mathematics minor from Anderson, South Carolina. She worked on a research project throughout Summer Session II. They will collaborate on potential next steps to further this research, including other effects on activity and possibly also crystallization of the protein.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Ramin Radfar, professor of chemistry

Emma O'Brien '26 is a double major in chemistry and Spanish from San Antonio, Texas. She spent the summer expanding a project with Dr. Kelli Carroll to characterize the role of the TANGO6 gene in zebrafish embryonic development. Although this gene's effect is largely unknown, the Undiagnosed Disease Network has identified it in multiple human cases, causing disruptions to craniofacial and gastrointestinal development. Using genetic manipulation tools, she has worked on comparing and studying embryos with a functioning TANGO6 gene and those with a dysfunctional TANGO6 gene. The results of this research could eventually lead to understanding the role TANGO6 plays in development and which developmental processes are affected when they are nonfunctional.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Kelli Carroll, assistant professor of biology

Meera Patel '28 is a chemistry major from Charlotte, North Carolina. She spent Summer Session I working on protein purification of the enzyme cytochrome c oxidase. This enzyme is involved in the process of cellular respiration and is specifically responsible for the final step in making ATP. She used a bovine heart and implemented several different yet common methods of protein purification to isolate the enzyme and test its activity in the collected samples. Without sufficient presence or functioning of cytochrome c oxidase, a variety of consequences can occur. Another student is continuing the project, and they will collaborate on potential next steps to further this research, including other effects on activity and possibly crystallization of the protein.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Ramin Radfar, professor of chemistry

Hayden Pendergrass '26 is a Spanish and psychology double major with minors in sociology and anthropology and government. He is from Columbia, South Carolina. His project "American Soul Music Influence in Brazil" expresses the connection between American soul music and the cultural, social and political impact of Brazil during the 1970s. Additionally, the project bridges the connection between the Black Power movement of the 1970s and its influence on Brazil's political and cultural landscape. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on American political activists and musicians who contributed to the development of the Black Consciousness Movement in Brazil.

Faculty collaborator: Dr. Camille Bethea, professor of Spanish

Darcy Phillips '27 is a philosophy and international affairs double major from Birmingham, Alabama. She spent the summer interviewing members of the Wofford and Spartanburg communities on their perspectives of the Confederate flag, its history and its impact. She also visited museums and historical sites containing Civil War artifacts and met with historians on the subject to gain deeper background knowledge on the history of these topics. She has analyzed prior data and research conducted on the Confederate flag and Confederate monuments to describe changing trends and create predictions for future flag usage. Her research project seeks to explain shifting attitudes towards the Confederate flag as well as its impacts on belonging and membership within a community.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Ramón Galiñanes Jr, director of undergraduate research and post-graduate fellowships

Darien Pisacano '26 of Charlotte, North Carolina, investigated the role of community involvement and service in shaping longevity and well-being in one of the world's five Blue Zones — Sardinia, Italy. Blue Zones are regions where people live significantly longer, healthier lives due to a combination of lifestyle, diet, social connection and sense of purpose. Through over 20 in-depth interviews with university students in Cagliari, Pisacano explored how helping others, staying socially active and forming strong connections across different groups of people influence personal purpose and may help expand social circles. The project also examined whether university students viewed community service as a burden or obligation, with the goal of highlighting the personal benefits — such as fulfillment, belonging and identity — that can come from giving back. These conversations shed light on the evolving role of service in young adults' lives and how it can shape both individual growth and community strength, while also potentially influencing life expectancy.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Dawn McQuiston, professor of psychology

Sarah Ratcliffe '26 is a psychology major from Nassau, Bahamas. She worked with a team on two studies related to mood, emotion and cognition. The team worked in parts for the two studies. One of the studies was in the beginning stages. The team worked on setting up and programming the study as well the eye tracker. After the study has been prepared, the team will begin to test participants, a process that will continue into the academic year. She has enjoyed working on the study in its design phase and expanding her knowledge in cognition.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Katherine Steinmetz, associate professor of psychology

Marc Rivera '26 is a chemistry major with a concentration in biochemistry from Spartanburg, South Carolina. This summer, he collaborated with three Wofford students on a research project at Furman University focused on zinc-catalyzed hydroamination. Hydroamination is the direct addition of amines across carbon-carbon multiple bonds and is a highly atom-economical method for forming carbon-nitrogen (C-N) bonds, which are essential in the synthesis of many pharmaceuticals and agrochemicals. Traditional amine synthesis often involves multistep processes that reduce overall yield and generate more chemical waste. In contrast, hydroamination offers a more efficient, single-step alternative that improves yield and sustainability. Rivera's research specifically investigates chiral catalysis and enantioselectivity in zinc-catalyzed hydroamination reactions. A major challenge in this field is achieving high levels of enantioselectivity, particularly in intermolecular hydroamination. To address this, his project focuses on the design and synthesis of amino acid-derived ligands that coordinate with zinc to form chiral catalytic complexes. Over the summer, Marc successfully synthesized a ligand aminotropinamate-based ligand featuring phenylalanine. The next phase of his research will evaluate the ligand's ability to control stereochemistry during hydroamination reactions.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Robert Harris, assistant professor of chemistry

Sukhmeet Saggu '26 is a biology and art history double major from Spartanburg, South Carolina. She collaborated with Dr. Karen Goodchild to research a Dutch Baroque painting from Wofford's museum collection. Over the course of five weeks, she worked on a "Portrait of a Lady" by Michiel van Mierevelt for in-depth analysis of the painting. Her research focused on 17th-century Dutch Republic fashion and how clothing and accessories in portraiture signified wealth, virtue and social status. Guided by Goodchild and working from minimal prior scholarship, she concluded her project with a research paper and bibliography, contributing new insight into Dutch Baroque portraiture and its cultural context in Wofford's collection.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Karen Goodchild, Chapman Family Professor of Humanities

Mary Fields Spratt '28, from Fort Mill, South Carolina, is an environmental studies and Spanish double major who worked with Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins and three peers on "Living with a Disrupted Climate: Amplifying Voices in Spanish and English." Over the summer, their team interviewed community members about changing weather patterns, allowing her to build trusted relationships and deepen her understanding of Spartanburg's evolving climate and its effects on local residents. Their work provided a platform for residents to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding weather-related issues. She hopes that their work helps to raise awareness of changing environmental patterns and further establish connections between Wofford and the Spartanburg community.

Faculty collaborators and mentors: Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, professor of Spanish, and Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Philosophy

Sarah Stahl '27 is biology major from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She spent the summer researching an ongoing project of studying the role of the gene TANGO 6 in embryonic development using zebrafish as a model system. While TANGO 6's role in development is not well understood, it is thought to play a key role in development of craniofacial structures and

the gastrointestinal intestinal system. Using CRISPR technology and Morpholinos she compared phenotypes of embryos with functional TANGO 6 genes and dysfunctional TANGO 6 genes. This research could eventually be helpful in deciphering the role of TANGO 6 in development and potentially leading to treatment of dysfunctional TANGO 6 genes in humans with undiagnosed diseases.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Kelli Carroll, assistant professor of biology

Katie Stewart '26 is from Hartsville, South Carolina. She worked with a research team to assess Spartanburg stream health by studying local crayfish populations through field work and behavioral studies. In the field, she collected crayfish samples and conducted habitat assessments to understand how urbanization affects freshwater crayfish, then brought samples to the lab for behavioral analysis. Her specific focus is crayfish thermoregulation, a process by which she identifies the preferred temperature zones for three crayfish species and examines how invasive crayfish displace native species from these zones. The team's goal is to understand how urbanization and climate change impact stream health and crayfish communities in Spartanburg County.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Johnathan Davis, assistant professor of biology

Ava Stricklen '28 is a biology major on the pre-veterinary track from Spartanburg, South Carolina. She worked with three other students throughout Spartanburg County to gather residents' and community officials' experiences of the changing weather patterns. Significant weather events, such as Hurricane Helene, severely impacted several communities in the Carolinas, one of them being Spartanburg County. The team's aim was to get more involved in the community and gather personal accounts of how residents have been experiencing the changing weather patterns in both their personal and their professional lives to gain a better understanding of how our community is being impacted and how we can better prepare for impending weather events. This team fostered critical community contacts with hopes to further involve Wofford College in community engagement.

Faculty collaborators and mentors: Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, professor of Spanish, and Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Philosophy

Claire Taylor '26 is a religious studies and government double major from Greenville, South Carolina. Her collaborative research project revolves around the famous Psalm 23 and the different ways that it is used in American culture and spiritual diversity. Claire's research has focused on the symbols from the psalm of the shepherd, rod and staff. She has primarily been looking at the ways that these symbols have been lifted from their biblical context and placed as a justification for forceful gun ownership with the second amendment.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Ingrid Lilly, assistant professor of religion

Madison Tolomea '26 is a humanities and English major with art history and sociology and anthropology minors from Charleston, South Carolina. She worked alongside Dr. Stacey Hettes to practice, record and produce an audiobook version of Hettes's memoir, "Dispatches from the Couch." The pair spent most of their time reading through the book in order to perfect the auditory experience. Other parts of their research included diving deeper into the publishing industry to produce a resume suitable for

graduate school applications, creating questions and guidelines for a book club discussion and discussing how the book could be used in a college course.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Stacey Hettes, professor of biology

Sebastian Torres '28, a biology major with a minor in philosophy from Cowpens, South Carolina, collaborated this summer with Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, Dr. Christine and three fellow students on "Living with a Disrupted Climate: Amplifying Voices in Spanish and English." Their project focused on interviewing local community members about shifting weather patterns and the real life impacts of climate change on daily routines and working lives. Through these conversations, Sebastian built meaningful relationships and gained a deeper understanding of how climate change is affecting Spartanburg residents. The project created a space for individuals to share their experiences, insights, and concerns, bridging academic research with community storytelling. Sebastian hopes their work not only raises awareness about environmental changes but also strengthens the bond between Wofford and the Spartanburg community, while inspiring future advocacy and improved climate policy.

Faculty collaborators and mentors: Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, professor of Spanish, and Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Philosophy

Wade Toth '27 is a biology and history double major from Knightstown, Indiana. He worked with another Wofford student to conduct oral historical interviews on those who experienced integration between Carver High School and Spartanburg High School. This required background research on the 1960s and 1970s to be done through reading, watching documentaries and other media. The product of this work is the preservation of eyewitness accounts in four transcripts that capture the academic, cultural, emotional and social outcomes of the two schools merging.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Clayton Whisnant, Chapman Family Professor of Humanities and chair of history

Lily Vandagriff '26 of Clinton, Tennessee, is a double major in environmental studies and sociology and anthropology. She worked on website development and data organization for the Imagining Spartanburg research project. This project utilizes ethnographic research methods to understand youth's actual and dream neighborhoods. With the development of this website, data is more accessible to Spartanburg community members. Additionally, her research included meeting with various Spartanburg leaders and organizations to identify how the Imagining Spartanburg research intersects with other efforts within the community and to establish collaboration opportunities for the future of the research project.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Alysa Handelsman, assistant professor of anthropology and community sustainability specialist

Aayush Verma '26 is a biology and Spanish double major from Greenville, South Carolina, and he worked along with students from Wofford, Furman and MUSC in the P188 Poloxamer Project at Furman University on an NSF REU research grant. The project focused on the synthesis of a drug that could protect cell membranes in cases of radiation and burn wounds. His research focused on end-group modification of the drug to increasing the antioxidant ability of the drug.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Robert Harris, assistant professor of chemistry

Evie Walker '27 is a theater major from Charleston, South Carolina. She worked with four other students to put together a production of "The Drowning Girls," a play by Beth Graham, Charlie Tomlinson and Daniela Vlaskalic that follows the lives and deaths of three women who were murdered by their husband in the 1910s. She played Bessie Mundy and was also the costume designer. Her research focused on fashion during time of the show, specifically the structure of undergarments.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Abigail Dillard, assistant professor of theatre

Jocelyn Williams '27 is a German and English double major with a concentration in film and digital media from Simpsonville, South Carolina. She was part of a team of five undergraduate students who explored a series of murders that took place in 1910s London, through the method of dramaturgy. Delving into the role of Alice Burnham, Williams acted in and managed props for three performances of "The Drowning Girls" by Beth Graham, Charlie Tomlinson and Daniela Vlaskalic. For the entirety of the summer term, she researched Alice Burnham, the other wives of George Joseph Smith, medical processes and hysteria in the 1900s, producing papers that complemented and established context for the play.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Professor Abigail Dillard, assistant professor of theatre

Abigail Zagar '27 is an environmental studies major from Central, South Carolina. She worked with Dr. Johnathan Davis and two other students to study the impacts of urbanization within Spartanburg's watersheds and how it impacts crayfish populations. This summer has consisted of five weeks of field work across 15 different study sites, and five weeks of collaborative lab-based research and data analysis. During the five weeks of field work, this team learned how to measure, identify, catch and handle crayfish and recorded over 300 crayfish across four different species.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Johnathan Davis, assistant professor of biology

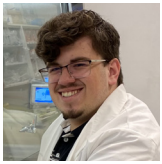
PAPADOPOULOS SCHOLARS

Nathan Hopkins '26 is a biology major from Greenville, South Carolina. He assisted the research department at Southern College of Optometry as they conducted multiple clinical studies this summer. While here, he helped write a scientific paper for a concluded study for a new contact lens. He also helped recruit patients for other studies by engaging with faculty, staff and patients in the clinic and by using ICD-10 codes and Excel to organize and classify eligible patients from an electronic health record. Hopkins hopes to attend SCO after graduation.

Faculty collaborators and mentors at SCO: Dr. Christopher Lievens, OD, MS, FNAP, FAAO; Dr. Morgan Bromley, MPH; and Elaine Turcotte

Lydia Lupo '26 is a psychology and Spanish double major from Greenville, South Carolina. She worked at MUSC this summer with a team of psychiatrists to research and refine Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) to enhance treatment outcomes for families facing behavioral, emotional or developmental challenges such as autism and ADHD. The treatment works using audio instruction and visual coding of behaviors by the clinician to guide the parent through healthy interactions with the child. The aim of the study is to improve telehealth-based treatments to establish approachable healthcare for impoverished and Hispanic families. Psychiatric telehealth emphasizes preventing long-term behavioral and emotional problems by reinforcing the importance of early childhood intervention. She will continue her work throughout the school year to research the need for a parent substance abuse-focused PCIT geared towards improving parent behaviors and support before early childhood intervention is needed.

Faculty collaborator and mentor at MUSC: Dr. Alexis Garcia



Devin Ruppe '26 is a triple major in mathematics, physics and chemistry, with concentrations in biochemistry, applied math and computational science and is part of the data science and medical physics programs. He is from Gaffney, South Carolina. This summer, he investigated the antagonism and deactivation of liver receptor homolog-1 (LRH-1), a protein that performs a litany of tasks throughout the body. One harmful role the protein plays is the proliferation of breast cancer cells. Current treatments for breast cancer target estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors and the HER2 protein. However, an aggressive form of breast cancer known as triple negative breast cancer (TNBC) has none of these. Ruppe discovered small molecules and investigated their binding/deactivation of LRH-1 to formulate a treatment for TNBC and other forms of cancer using computational and experimental methods in vitro. Some of these methods include molecular dynamics simulations, x-ray crystallography, fluorescence polarization assays, molecular docking, RT-qPCR, Luciferase reporter assays, differential scanning fluorimetry, surface plasmon resonance and bio-layer interferometry. Ruppe is conducting this research at Emory University in Atlanta as part a Papadopoulos Scholar.

Faculty collaborator and mentor: Dr. Eric Ortlund, professor and vice chair of biochemistry at Emory University

FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. Amelia Atwell, assistant professor of biology, received a bachelor's degree in biology from Dalton State College, a master's degree in environmental sciences from University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and a Ph.D. in environmental sciences from Arkansas State University. For her master's degree, Atwell examined the effect of urban and agricultural land use on water quality features and aquatic insects in a watershed in Northwest Georgia. In her Ph.D., she continued investigating how land use influences water quality features in a watershed that has been severely impacted by row crop agriculture and lead pollution in Northeast Arkansas. Instead of aquatic insects, Atwell focused on fish communities and the impacts of agriculture and lead. During that time, she also worked in an EPA-certified lab that conducted toxicological studies and analyzed samples for other environmental contaminants like nitrogen and phosphorus. While she has training in environmental chemistry, toxicology and stream ecology, my primary area of research focus is on the water quality and using aquatic insects and water chemistry to gauge stream health.

Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, professor of Spanish modern languages, literatures and cultures, is an environmental humanist who specializes in Latin American literary and cultural studies and place-based qualitative research. She served as co-president (2020-2021) and co-diversity officer (2017-2019) for the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. She has authored two monographs, "Writing Women in Central America" (Ohio University Press, 2003) and "Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction" (University Press of Florida, 2011), as well as numerous articles on literary and cultural studies, teaching and partnerships in higher education. She is professor of modern languages, literatures and cultures at Wofford College; co-founder of the Place Collaborative; and serves on the boards of EMERGE Family Therapy & Teaching Clinic Board, the Mary Black Foundation and United Way of the Piedmont.

Dr. Camille Bethea '91, professor of Spanish and coordinator of the Latin American studies program, holds a B.S. in Spanish and psychology from Wofford College, an M.A. in Latin American studies from Vanderbilt University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Spanish and Latin American literature from UNC-Chapel Hill. Her areas of research include the 20th-century Latin American narrative with an area focus on Mexico and exploring methodologies and creative pedagogies in the teaching of language, culture and literature. As the instructor of the Latin American program seminar courses, her teaching includes topics on the peoples and cultures of Latin America, the legacy of slavery and colonialism, power dynamics, Afro-Latino identities and the African diaspora as it pertains to Latin America and the American South.

Dr. Jennifer Bradham, assistant professor of environmental studies, earned a B.S. from College of Charleston, an M.S. from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. She is a quantitative ecologist who evaluates how large mammals interact with their environment and how these interactions may be altered in response to anthropogenic land use modification and climate change. While most of her research occurs in the Neotropics, she has also developed a local research program based in data science and focused on equity. In collaboration with incredible Wofford colleagues and community partnerships, this work has included interdisciplinary assessments of greenspace equity, quantification of the impacts of condemned and abandoned properties and modeling the severity of the urban island heat effect in Spartanburg.

Dr. Kelli Carroll, assistant professor of biology, graduated from Davidson College with a major in biology and a concentration in neuroscience. She completed her Ph.D. in developmental and regenerative biology at Harvard University, where her work focused on the role of estrogen signaling in the induction, specification and proliferation of hematopoietic (blood) stem cells. She then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the molecular biology department at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, where she developed a method for postnatal cardiac gene editing using CRISPR/Cas9 and investigated the role of several uncharacterized genes in cardiac and skeletal muscle development and function. After spending four years on the faculty at Austin College, she joined Wofford in 2023. She currently has an ongoing collaboration with a bioengineering lab at the University of Texas at Dallas investigating the use of zebrafish as a model system to study cardiac arrythmias. In addition, her lab uses patient data to characterize the role of genetic mutations in pediatric congenital disorders.

Dr. Matthew Cathey, professor of mathematics, earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics and music from the University of the South (Sewanee), a master's in statistics from Texas A&M University and a Ph.D. in discrete geometry from the University of Tennessee. His research interests lie where mathematics and statistics intersect with other disciplines, especially history. In addition to coauthoring two textbooks for undergraduates, Cathey has also contributed to publications in biology, veterinary science, psychology, physics and professional wrestling.

Dr. Lori Cruze, associate professor of biology, earned a bachelor of science degree from the University of Tennessee and a Ph.D. from the University of Florida. Prior to joining the faculty at Wofford College in 2015, she was a research professor in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the Medical University of South Carolina. Cruze is a reproductive biologist by training and is broadly interested in reproductive physiology, endocrinology and ecotoxicology. Cruze's collaborative project focuses primarily on the reproduction of the Eastern bluebird. Eastern bluebirds

typically nest in tree cavities created by woodpeckers or natural decay, but they readily accept nest boxes as an alternative breeding site. Nest boxes are not only crucial for the conservation of cavity-nesting birds, but they are also a valuable tool for studying reproduction. In 2022, Dr. Cruze launched a long-term study to examine the productivity and survivorship of Eastern bluebirds in the Upstate. Several environmental factors, including the timing of breeding, have been proposed to influence the reproductive success of songbirds. The proposed project is a continuation of a long-term, longitudinal study that examines the reproductive output and success of the Eastern bluebird.

Dr. Johnathan Davis, assistant professor of biology, earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife and fisheries science from Mississippi State University, a master's degree from Nicholls State University in marine and environmental biology and a Ph.D. from Tennessee Technological University in environmental science. He spent 11 years as a faculty member at Young Harris College before joining Wofford in 2022. In his research, he has studied aquatic organisms in various ecosystems across the southeastern U.S., including bowfin in Louisiana bayous, largemouth bass in Mississippi lakes, imperiled minnows and darters in eastern Tennessee streams and redhorse suckers and crayfishes in the north Georgia mountains. His recent research focused on the effect of urban development on native fishes and crayfishes in Spartanburg.

Professor Abigail Dillard, assistant professor of theatre, earned her bachelor of arts in theatre from Centenary College of Louisiana and an M.F.A. in directing from Baylor University. Prior to joining the faculty at Wofford College, she served as an assistant professor of theatre at the University of North Alabama. Her creative work explores ensemble-based performance, devised theatre and movement-centered directing practices. Recent directing credits include "The Amateurs," "Concord Floral," "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" and "The Folklore Project," a student-devised piece. She maintains an active artistic practice, and her work can be found at www.abigaildillard.com.

Dr. Christine Sorrell Dinkins, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Philosophy, teaches courses in philosophy in practice, ancient Greek philosophy, Socratic-hermeneutic research methods, phenomenology and a first-year seminar on climate justice, beauty and Hope. She is co-editor of "Listening to the Whispers: Re-thinking Ethics in Healthcare" (University of Wisconsin Press) and co-author of "Our Dissertations, Ourselves: Shared Stories of Women's Dissertation Journeys" (Palgrave Macmillan). Her current scholarship applies Socratic-hermeneutic methods in phenomenological, community-engaged research in collaboration with Wofford students, faculty and community partners. Recent faculty-student research studies, in collaboration with Dr. Laura Barbas Rhoden, include "Inclusive Place-making in Spartanburg, SC: Amplifying Latinx Voices through Community-Based Research," "Contextualizing Kindergarten Readiness Data: A Qualitative Research Study of Forest Park Neighborhood in Spartanburg, SC" and "Climate Stories of South Carolina." Dinkins consults as a Socratic facilitator for strategic visioning and team development and leads workshops in Socratic pedagogy for educators in nursing and allied health.

Dr. Youmi Efurd, curator of the Richardson Family Art Museum, organizes exhibitions and manages the college's fine arts collection. Originally from South Korea, she holds a Ph.D. in history of art from the University of Kansas, specializing in Chinese art. Her research explores the dynamic nature of religious art in response to shifting political, religious and social contexts in Chinese history. Trained in Asian languages and societies, she brings a broad, culturally informed perspective to the study of significant objects. In addition to her curatorial work, she teaches museum studies and develops educational programs that enhance visitor engagement.

Professor Rebecca Forstater, assistant professor of studio art, her bachelor's degree in studio art from James Madison University and a Master of Fine Arts in studio art from Syracuse University. Her creative practice explores the production of contemporary histories within digital landscapes, with a focus on how collective memory is shaped by pop culture, user-generated

content and artificial intelligence. She works across digital sculpture, video performance and algorithmic processes. Her artwork has been exhibited nationally and internationally, with recent shows at ArtFields in South Carolina, Hangaram Design Museum in Seoul and Future Fair in New York City. She currently serves on the board of the New Media Caucus and is a member of the artist-run collective Tiger Strikes Asteroid GVL.

Dr. Ramón Galiñanes Jr., director of undergraduate research and post-graduate fellowships, holds a bachelor's degree in history from Montclair State University, a master's of philosophy in politics, democracy and education from the University of Cambridge (England) and a master's degree and Ph.D. in political science from the University of Florida. His research examines questions about civil conflict, democratization, migration, civic engagement, ethnic politics and social movements. He has received grants and fellowships from the American Political Science Association, the National Security Education Program, the U.S. State Department of Education's Foreign Language and Area Studies Program and the Gates Cambridge Trust. Galiñanes has taught social science and humanities courses and has organized and directed several study-away courses to Washington, D.C., and New York City. Galiñanes is a first-generation college student who is passionate about encouraging and empowering students to develop as scholars and civic leaders.

Dr. Karen Goodchild, Chapman Family Professor of Humanities in art history and Interim coordinator, avidly pursues research and wants to share that passion with students. Currently, she is finishing an article tying the important 16th-century art theorist Giorgio Vasari to developments in garden theory in the 16th century. This article will be published in the premier English language garden journal, Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes, after which she will finish an article investigating the way comic literature of the 16th century reflected the real material environment and semi-fictional artistic history of Florence. As a research mentor, she oversees all art history capstone projects and has been a mentor for her department's recent honors projects as well as for several South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) research projects and many independent studies.

Dr. Alysa Handelsman, assistant professor of anthropology and community sustainability specialist, has been engaged in ethnographic research projects in Ecuador for the past two decades, focusing specifically on children and youth cultures and publishing on girlhood, motherhood, poverty and decolonial research design. Since she moved to Spartanburg in 2018, she has engaged in Spartanburg-centered programming and research projects. Her Community Sustainability Seminar runs over 20 programs across the city and parts of the county in partnership with a series of local schools and organizations. Her first collaborative faculty-student research grant was awarded during the summer of 2022, leading to two years of active working with community partners in the Una, Saxon and Arcadia neighborhoods to study the intersection of condemned properties and neighborhood wellness. Last summer, she was part of a research team that looked at development in the Drayton community from the perspective of its residents. She is currently working with Spartanburg Housing and a team of Wofford students to better understand resident perspectives on employment across public housing communities in Spartanburg. Handelsman is also part of a mixed-methods research team engaged in a multiyear project across District 7 schools that explores how youth imagine the future of their neighborhoods.

Handelsman was named the 2019 Paul Harris Fellow by the North Spartanburg Rotary Club. She received the Sullivan Foundation's 2023 Faculty Regional Service Award. Handelsman was featured at the 2023 Mary L. Thomas Leadership Luncheon for her civic engagement in Spartanburg, and she was nominated for the Young Democrats of Spartanburg County's 2024 Liz Patterson Civil Service Award. She was also recognized at the Spartanburg County Foundation's Women's History Month exhibit as a "Women's History Maker." Handelsman continues to learn and grow from the transformative power of collaborative research projects with students and community partners and is grateful for another summer funding opportunity. She and her students have learned so much alongside residents of the Camp Croft and Victoria Housing communities this summer on the city's Southside and Northside.

Dr. Robert Harris '09, assistant professor of chemistry, graduated from Wofford College with degrees in chemistry and mathematics. He completed his Ph.D. in organometallic chemistry at Duke University and an HHMI postdoctoral fellowship at Emory University, where he studied the mechanisms of transition metal catalyzed carbon-nitrogen bond-forming reactions. Before returning to Wofford in 2019, Harris joined the faculty at the College of Wooster as a visiting assistant professor in chemistry. His research interests include curriculum reform in undergraduate chemical education, the development of transition metal complexes to catalyze new reactions in organic chemistry and the synthesis and modification of polyalkylene oxides with applications as cell healing agents.

Dr. Stacey Hettes, professor of biology, earned her bachelor's degree in biology from King's College and her Ph.D. in neuroscience from the University of California, Riverside. She teaches Human Physiology as well as courses included in Wofford's interdisciplinary program in neuroscience. Her scholarly interests center around the experience of trauma and how it impacts brain function. In the spring of 2025, she published her first work for a general audience, "Dispatches from the Couch, A Neuroscientist and Her Therapist Conspire to Reboot Her Brain" (Apprentice House Press). This summer, she is working with Madison Tolomea, a humanities and English major with a minor in sociology and anthropology, to rehearse, record and produce an audio version of her book as well as supplemental materials, including a discussion guide for book clubs and a curriculum guide for use in clinical psychology courses.

Professor Eric Kocher, assistant professor of environmental studies, has a B.A. from SUNY Binghamton and an M.F.A. from the University of Houston. He is the author of "Sky Mall," selected as a winner of the 2024 Rattle Chapbook Prize, and his poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in 32 Poems, Boston Review, Coma, Gulf Coast and Oversound. His courses focus on the intersection of the environmental humanities, storytelling and writing, encouraging students to explore how narrative deepens our complex relationship with the natural world. His research investigates the role of soundscapes in shaping our sense of place, examining how the sounds — whether natural or human-made — inform our connections to the environments we inhabit.

Dr. Robin Lewis, visiting assistant professor of environmental studies and biology, graduated with honors from Miami University with bachelor's degrees in botany and geography. She completed her Ph.D. in geography at the University of Arizona, where she was awarded a Fulbright grant to investigate the politics of sustainable forest management in Peninsular Malaysia. Lewis has also conducted curriculum-based sustainability education research and facilitated collaborative research with local community members to identify sustainable

solutions for local environmental issues. Her current research project focuses on knowledge production and circulation in the field of bryology (the study of mosses, liverworts and hornworts). Working alongside collaborators at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and the University of Twente, Lewis investigates the ways in curations practices at herbaria (biodiversity collections of dried plant specimens) impact which specimens are used and by whom. This summer, she has been collaborating with Alex Burnett ’26 to examine the movement of bryophyte specimens among herbaria around the world.

Dr. Ingrid Lilly, associate professor of religious studies, is leading a project conducting discovery research on diverse American cultural poetics of the Bible in collaboration with two students, Caris Mitchell and Claire Taylor. The project explores quotes and references to the poetics of Psalm 23, the famous funeral poem and shepherd song, in diverse media and creative works. Our research contributes to reception history studies of biblical literature and presents a new opportunity for Lilly to theorize how biblical poetics of first-person speech has circulated in diverse American cultural constellations, from artistic lineages, to embodied practices, ideological rhetoric and in histories of experience.

Professor Jason Lonon, instructor and lab manager for the physics department, earned his bachelor’s degree in engineering physics from the University of Oklahoma and worked for the U.S. Department of Energy on the Superconducting Supercollider Project until it was cancelled in 1993. After this, he earned a master’s degree in science education from East Carolina University, with a research focus on using the newly created World Wide Web to form professional development communities for science teachers. Between 2001 and 2018, he traveled around the East Coast teaching faculty workshops on how to successfully integrate laboratory skills into the mainstream high school physics curriculum. Since coming to Wofford, his interests have switched to researching the undergraduate lab experience.

Dr. Dawn McQuiston, professor of psychology, holds a Ph.D. in experimental psychology from the University of Texas at El Paso. Her work focuses on the intersection of psychology and the law, with specific interest in courtroom decision making, the reliability of eyewitness testimony and vicarious trauma experienced by courtroom decision makers during/after trial. Her research has resulted in numerous scholarly articles and book chapters, conference presentations, invited talks and trainings for both academic and legal audiences, and funding from the National Institute of Justice. She is co-coordinator of Wofford's pre-law program and in 2022 founded the South Carolina Innocence Initiative, which promotes education and advocacy for justice reform surrounding causes of wrongful conviction. Some of McQuiston's recent teaching and research focus on the factors that promote societal well-being and social connection, particularly in Scandinavia and other culturally rich regions known for their high quality of life.

Dr. Geoffrey Mitchell, associate professor and associate chair of biology, left his home in Maine and came south to earn a B.S. in biology from Furman University. He went on to pursue a Ph.D. in cancer biology at the University of Arizona, where he studied methods of protecting normal tissues during radiation therapy. At the same university, he worked as a postdoctoral researcher studying cellular decision making. At the end of his postdoctoral appointment, Mitchell joined the faculty of Colby College as a visiting assistant professor of biology before landing at Wofford. At Wofford, his research program — driven by his love of the ocean and SCUBA diving — focuses on the pressing environmental problem of coral bleaching that is occurring at an alarming rate across the globe. He and his students have published this work in leading academic journals and presented at regional, national and international conferences.

Dr. Ramin Radfar, professor of chemistry and biochemistry, earned his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina and subsequently worked for a year at Schering-Plough Research Institute. In August 2001, he joined the faculty at Wofford College, and since then he has supervised summer research projects of more than 40 students. Radfar has

excellent experience with expression, purification, protein characterization, crystallization and structural studies of proteins and enzymes.

Dr. Grace Schwartz, assistant professor of chemistry, holds bachelor's degrees in chemistry and philosophy from Virginia Commonwealth University. She earned her Ph.D. in environmental engineering from Duke University, where she researched arsenic, mercury and selenium leaching from coal ash materials. She then completed postdoctoral fellowships at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center and Oak Ridge National Laboratory, focusing on mercury methylation in the environment and strategies for in situ mercury remediation in contaminated soils. She joined the faculty at Wofford in 2020 and teaches general chemistry and environmental chemistry. Schwartz's latest research is a collaboration with Dr. Amelia Atwell exploring the impacts of urbanization on water and sediment quality and macroinvertebrate biodiversity in streams around Spartanburg.

Dr. Julie Sexeny, professor and chair of the English department, received a bachelor's degree in English from Barnard College, a Ph.D. in culture, history and theory with concentrations in film studies and psychoanalytic studies from the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts at Emory University, and an M.F.A. in screenwriting from Columbia University, where she received a fellowship to teach in the Department of English and Comparative Literature. At Wofford, she teaches courses in screenwriting, directing, sexuality and surveillance, and worked to establish the film and digital media program in 2016. Recently, she introduced the Semester Cinema Program to Wofford, enabling students to study and apprentice filmmaking with industry professionals on a semester-long feature film production. Her research focuses on relational theories of gender development, mutual recognition and intersubjective dynamics, especially as they are represented in cinematic narratives. She has worked as a director, screenwriter and producer on both short and feature films.

Dr. Katherine Steinmetz, associate professor of psychology, received her undergraduate degree in psychology and neuroscience from Allegheny College, where she participated in the neuroscience in the humanities program and wrote a thesis that investigated the electrophysiological changes caused by learning words in emotional contexts. She went to graduate school at Boston College. Working with Dr. Elizabeth Kensinger, she used neuroimaging (fMRI), eye-tracking, electrophysiological and behavioral techniques to investigate the neural mechanisms that influence memory for emotional events. She also did a postdoctoral fellowship focusing on the influences of stress and sleep on memory at Boston College and Notre Dame. Her laboratory focuses on understanding the neuroscience behind how emotional processing influences attention and memory. By combining techniques — including behavioral testing, event-related potential (ERP) recordings and salivary hormonal assays techniques — her research examines both the cognitive (thought-level) and neural (brain-level) processes that guide attention toward, and memory for, emotional information. She also is interested in how these processes may be influenced by factors such as stress and anxiety.

Dr. Lilly Trotter, assistant professor of economics, earned her bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University and her master's and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. Her research combines her interest in quantitative macroeconomics and history. Her dissertation focused on how expanding access to the stock market through employee stock ownership programs during the Great Depression affected worker effort and firm performance. Outside of historical, empirical research, she has published articles on the history of economic thought and about changes in the accuracy of statements made by Federal Reserve officials over the past few decades. Her current research focuses on studying the expansion of stock brokerage firm locations across the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries. This topic coincides with her broader research agenda about understanding how expanding access to financial instruments can impact households, businesses, and communities.

Dr. Clayton Whisnant, Chapman Family Professor of Humanities and chair of history, earned his B.A. from Rice University and his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin. Whisnant has published two books on queer identities and sexuality in twentieth-century Germany: “Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-1969” (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and “Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945” (Harrington Park Press, 2016). He is currently writing a book on Cold War Europe and is beginning a project on Spartanburg county’s school integration.

Dr. Thomas Wright, associate professor of mathematics, earned his Ph.D. in mathematics from Johns Hopkins University in 2009, and he joined the Wofford math department in 2011. Wright studies number theory, specializing in prime numbers and fake prime numbers. He has published in numerous journals across the world, and he wrote his first book, “Trolling Euclid: An Irreverent Guide to Nine of Mathematics’ Most Important Problems,” in 2016. Outside of mathematics, Wright is a professional jazz saxophonist and composer who has released multiple albums and has shared the stage with Grammy, Pulitzer and Emmy Award-winning musicians.

SPECIALS THANKS TO

Dr. Justin Bailey

Kent Brannon

Tim Brown

Lynne Casalino

Dr. Caroline Glick ’21

Dr. Jameica Hill

Dr. Krista Hughes ’94

Kendra Ivins

Ann Jenks

Cynthia Moberly

Dr. Dwain Pruitt ’95

Dr. Nayef Samhat

Michelle Smith

Dr. Tasha Smith-Tyus

Dr. Tim Schmitz

Dr. Natalie Spivey

Dr. James Stukes

Emily Witsell

Career Center in the Mungo Exchange

Center for Community-Based Learning

Members of the community who have supported these research projects

Members of the Faculty Development Committee

Office of International Programs

Office of Marketing and Communications

The Gus and Maria Papadopoulos Endowed Scholarship Fund

Office of the Chaplain

Office of the Provost

Office of the President

Office of Student Success

Interested in learning more about summer collaborative research opportunities and/or undergraduate research at Wofford College?

Please contact Dr. Ramón Galiñanes Jr., director of undergraduate research and post-graduate fellowships, at galinanesr@wofford.edu.

wofford.edu

429 N. Church St.
Spartanburg, SC 29306