

# Trial, reward accompany honors theses

BY PATRICK WINN  
STAFF WRITER

Last summer, UNC senior Lydia Guterman had to share a bamboo house with nine women, two pigs and a slew of chickens in Oaxaca, Mexico. Otherwise, she wouldn't have

been able to finish her undergraduate thesis.

One of about 350 undergraduates writing an honors thesis, Guterman set out to determine how the media affects indigenous peoples. She ended up living with native Zapotec women in a weav-

ing cooperative community which had no plumbing and sporadic electricity.

"I feel like living with those women was the only way to do them justice in my thesis," the journalism major said.

Whereas Guterman got her hands dirty, Natalie Phillips had to clean hers thoroughly to research her paper.

In a rare book library near Boston, the UNC English major carefully handled the personal letters of Elizabeth Browning with sanitized fingers to explore the Victorian poet's gender anxiety.

"I went through each letter, seeing how she wrote in the margins ... how she wrote on the envelope to save money," Phillips said.

"It really added a unique perspective to writing my thesis."

Phillips is one of the fortunate few who put together her paper with the help of a large grant. Of her \$4,600 grant from the Smallwood Foundation, \$1,000 went to recruit a graduate student

for assistance, \$600 funded her trip to a library at Massachusetts' Wellesley College and the rest kept her afloat financially so she could devote long hours to research.

"Unfortunately, there's not enough money for everyone to experience that," she said.

In order for UNC students to graduate with honors, they must complete a thesis that is overseen by professors in students' various departments.

Projects vary in format among departments, spanning from traditional research papers to art exhibitions to presentations of live music and drama.

Whatever the topic and the presentation style, however, one common thread remains: the year-long, research-intensive process of completing a thesis is extremely difficult work.

The time commitment of research, writing and meeting with a faculty mentor rivals that of a part-time job, anthropology and

*"Some days I couldn't look at (my honors thesis). ... But I loved it — it reconfirmed that I want to go into anthropology."*

ERIN MAHAFFEY, SENIOR

biostatistics major Erin Mahaffey said.

"Some weeks, I couldn't look at it," said Mahaffey, who haunted libraries and coffee shops to chip away at her paper, which examined the concept of infinity in Western culture and in New Guinean tribes.

"But I loved it — it reconfirmed that I want to go into anthropology," she said. She also said it confirmed that she has a passion for research.

Derek Farias, who soon will finish his paper on Rhode Island zoning restrictions and their implications for affordable housing, learned just the opposite.

"It taught me that I don't want to do research for a career," said the public policy major, who also learned that he'll be putting a few years between himself and graduate school.

Working on a thesis paper proved more stressful than he imagined and hasn't been fully gratifying, he said.

"It really depends on which day you ask me," Farias said.

Undergraduate theses complement UNC's role as a premier research university, said James Leloudis, associate dean of the Honors Program. Each student's

paper is given a card catalog listing and is archived permanently in Wilson Library.

"It's the perfect capstone to an education at an elite research institution," Leloudis said.

The end of the school year can be extremely stressful, as students are required to turn in their research for evaluation so their department can assign them "highest honors" or "honors."

Most students also must undergo a rigorous oral defense of their work.

The experience of creating an honors thesis runs the gamut of emotions among soon-to-be honors graduates, but most share the same feeling upon completing their projects: relief.

Though Guterman's unfunded research had her bathing in a bucket on a dirt floor, she regards her experience as "extremely rewarding."

"My thesis couldn't have happened without that trip," she said.

"I learned more living (with the Zapotecs) for three weeks than I could have reading all the books ever written about them."

Contact the Features Editor at [features@unc.edu](mailto:features@unc.edu).



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**TODAY AT CAROLINA**

**Baseball vs. High Point**  
6pm at Boshamer Stadium

**SPORTS SHORTS**  
Students & Faculty Admitted FREE w/ID!



**Coca-Cola. CAMPUS RECREATION UPDATE**

**Intramural Sports** TODAY IS THE LAST DAY TO SIGN UP FOR—



**WHIFFLEBALL**  
• One-day event:  
Sunday, April 13, 2pm  
• 6 Players



**CO-REC KICKBALL**  
• One-day event:  
Saturday, April 12  
• 8 Players



**GIMGHOUL GARDEN GALLOP**  
• Fun Run  
• 1-day event: April 16, 4pm  
Sign up: April 7-Apr. 15



**SPLASH AND DASH TRIATHLON**  
• 465-yard swim, 3.1 mile run, & 13.5 mile bike  
• One-day event: Sunday, April 13, 9am  
• Open to UNC students, faculty/staff & UNC non-affiliates Sign up: Mar. 31-Apr. 9

Sign up for ALL Sports & Events in 203 Woolen Gym. Call 843-PLAY for more info.

**Sport Club Spotlight** **Sport Clubs**

Carolina's Water Ski Club consists of students of all skill levels - from those who have never stepped foot on the water to those who compete on a national level. We slalom, trick, jump, and wake board at April Coble's ski school in Lillington, NC. Members who choose to compete travel to four tournaments throughout the southeast each fall and spring. Our remaining spring schedule is as follows:  
April 12-13: Milledgeville, GA  
April 26-27: Spartanburg, SC

If you are interested in learning more about our club, join us at one of our meetings every Monday night at 7 pm in Woolen Gym, room 303 or email John Jordan, [john\\_g\\_jordan@hotmail.com](mailto:john_g_jordan@hotmail.com).

**SPORT CLUB ACTION:**

**Saturday April 12**  
Carolina Cardboard Boatrace  
11am Koury Natatorium  
Tae Kwon Do Meet  
10:30am Fetzer Gym A  
Men's and Women's Rugby Alumni  
6pm Hooker Fields

**Sunday April 13**  
Women's Soccer-Rams vs. George Washington  
2pm, Finley Fields  
**Monday April 14**  
Roller Hockey  
10pm, Sportsplex

**Student Recreation Center**

Get Movin' Come to the Student Recreation Center



**FREE Fitness Orientations**  
SRC Fitness Staff are available by appointment for Fitness Orientations (individual or group instruction) to the Cybex equipment and various cardiovascular machines. This service is available FREE to students and facility use card-holders. Call 962-4SRC for more info.

Water bottles are now available to Target Fitness Reward Program participants. (Limited supply. Prizes will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.)

**Carolina Adventures**

**Rock Climbing III ~ Linville Gorge**  
Date: April 17-20

**Description:**  
Whether you're a beginner wanting a taste of outdoor climbing or a veteran wanting to advance your skills, this weekend will provide plenty of opportunities for challenge!

Linville Gorge "the Grand Canyon of the East" will provide a dramatic setting for an exciting weekend of top-rope climbing! Participants will learn the basics of setting up a safe belay system including anchors, how to place natural protection and rappelling. The varied routes of the "Chimneys" area allow you to practice on routes from 5.5 - 5.11.

**Pre-Trip Meeting:** 4/15, 7 P.M. OEC  
**Student/Staff:** \$120/160  
**Spaces Left:** 7

More info. go to: [www.campusrec.unc.edu/OEC/trips.html](http://www.campusrec.unc.edu/OEC/trips.html) or email: [dyeagan@email.unc.edu](mailto:dyeagan@email.unc.edu)

at the OEC



OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTER

**"Miles for Smiles" 5K**  
April 12 at 10 am

Registration is \$10 (includes a t-shirt) • Register in the Pit April 2-11 from 12-2 pm  
Race begins and ends at the bricks between Woolen and Fetzer

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