Meet a Board Member: Allison Schlobohm

New to the Carolina Union Board of Directors this year, Dr. Allison Schlobohm is an Assistant Professor of Management and Corporate Communication at UNC’s Kenan-Flagler Business School. Dr. Schlobohm shared a bit about her background and goals for service on the Board:

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I'm from the suburbs of St. Louis and grew up in Ferguson, Missouri. The suburbs of St. Louis are a very racially segregated yet diverse place. I went to school in a very diverse high school, and yet, always had this disconnect, because of which specific schools you're going to. And then I went to college at Truman State University, which is a small, liberal arts university in northern Missouri. It was cool because it gave merit-based scholarships, where if you had a certain GPA, or a certain class rank and a certain ACT score, you were guaranteed to go for to go for free. So I went to college with just a lot of smart people who weren't accumulating debt, and so that was a unique environment.

I got to know quite a few of my professors. As part of that scholarship, I had to be a research assistant. I knew professors on a one-on-one level, which was special and unique. And I worked a camp for junior high students coming to college. They came for a month and had a college experience, which was fun.

And then after I graduated, and all these students who don't know what they're gonna do, I'm like, ?I promise you, you'll figure it out!?

What organizations were you involved in during college?

I was in Alpha Phi Omega, which is the service fraternity, but I quit, because they wouldn't change the term for members from brothers to anything else. I hated the stupidity of that. Then I started our campus Better World Books so we collected used textbooks and shipped them to a central headquarters that sold some of them online, so you can buy us textbooks from them, or anything that they didn't sell, they donated to another cause. And so me and my friends, and we were all women, just working dollies boxes full of books. It was really fun.
I ran for student government and I did a lot of volunteer work in college as well. And I was part of this kind of under the radar radio station, like it was run out of a dorm. We would go around and try and get sell ad space to people and, and because it was like an alternative one, like we went to the sex stores and all kinds of places to sell ads. And I was big into voting. So I did Rock the Vote. I just always wanted to be doing something productive.

**So what did you do after college?**

I joined AmeriCorps for the year after college, and ended up going to an elementary school, just 10 miles away from the one I went to when I was a kid. But while there, I learned that it was two entirely different school, like educational systems in our country, because it was the St. Louis City public school system, and just in the world was different. And it was really eye opening to see that sort of inequality and inequity. I'm just like, I lived my whole life in this city and had no idea what was occurring 10 miles down the road because of the segregated lives that we live. Right. And so from that experience, I wanted to be part of the solution but you learn the system is much bigger than you.

**And then you came to UNC for graduate school?**

I came to UNC for the Communication Department, because it was a critical cultural studies department, where I knew I can study topics and issues that matter to me, but come at it with the lens of critical race studies. And also, I've always been interested in communication. That was my major when I was an undergrad. I said it this way to a friend the other day, I want to figure out the right thing to say, and the best way to say it in order to try to make it better.

And as I went on to get my PhD and I was really interested in the ways that messages about racial difference just surround us. They're the materials we make sense of ourselves and our world by, and I feel like we need to be noticing them and interrupting them and every at opportunity that we have.
And professional communication has also just always interested me because it's how we get things done. I'm very interested in the ways how we get things done. The status quo, our everyday lived reality perpetuates oppression. And so when a job opened up at the Business School that I heard about, I felt really excited. I really wanted to stay at UNC because of my commitment to public schools, I had gone to public schools, I had worked at that elementary school. And I love the Carolina Covenant, just this in the commitment in the constitution of the state that 80% of students have to come from North Carolina, and I think just shifts the entire meaning of what it is to work for an institution. And so I got this job at the Business School, I was lucky enough to get it. So now I got my masters, my PhD, and now I work at UNC, which is pretty rare, actually.

**How do you think that perspective helps you as a Union Board member?**

I've seen the Student Union from the Graduate Student side because I was 23 or 24 when I came here. So I've been to CAPS, I've gone to the football and basketball games, I celebrated on Franklin Street. And I can kind of relate seeing the institution from both sides is kind of a really, I think, a unique and empowering experience, because I can relate to the student experience. And I can see how the structures and systems work that shaped that student experience.

**What goals do you have as a board member?**

Especially in 2020 it's about looking at these systems and who typically has power, and if I can use my privilege or access to resources to help create what Darian Abernathy's vision is, then that's what I want to do. That sounds really meaningful to me. And I also just love collaboration, which you don't get enough of as a professor, there's a lot of working by yourself. It's very hard to make grading or lesson planning a collaborative adventure. Getting to work with students is just my joy. So the opportunity to be part of a group of people who are committed to you and see students who are representing organizations that also just there because they care about each other, and really work on things and get my elbows dirty while I'm helping.

When I was in college, I was in I had a different club meeting every week, every day. I like, and I started my own club, and I was I ran for student government. I just always loved the creativity and the possibilities that come when you're doing collaborative work at Union. Like it feels like the possibilities are really big, which is a very lovely feeling.