

# UNC Sends Five to ACC Leadership Symposium



After a weekend of listening, sharing, and collaboration, five UNC students who attended the ACC Leadership Symposium in Louisville, Ky., are prepared to apply new strategies to achieve social change at Carolina and beyond.

The ACC Student Leadership Symposium is an annual leadership conference that brings together students from across Atlantic Coast Conference member schools. This year's conference, held February 28 to March 1, explored the theme of "Reaching Social Change Through Storytelling." The symposium had students craft and share stories that promoted their vision for social change and justice.

The Carolina Union's office of Student Life & Leadership (SLL) sent five student delegates to the symposium: seniors Cam Brown and Rebecca Menard; junior Tyler McNeil; and sophomores Erin Lee and Abigail Pearson. Anthony Wright, Leadership Development Program Coordinator in the SLL office, accompanied the students as their advisor.

Students returned from the weekend in Louisville ready to implement the practices and strategies they learned from their symposium experiences.

Menard, a Human Development Studies Major at UNC, said that she appreciated the opportunity to build meaningful connections with fellow students. "This year's focus on storytelling as a tool for social change emphasized the importance of starting and continuing conversations with people we otherwise wouldn't think to through the

sharing of compelling narratives," Menard said. "I've grown close to people up and down the coast and I've been able to walk away with valuable skills on how to share my own story."

For Pearson, who majors in Global Studies and Management and Society, the symposium altered her understanding of storytelling. "I've learned that what constitutes a "story" is not deterministic and is at the discretion of the author," Pearson said. "We were exposed to varying storytelling mediums--from information science, to poetry. I am grateful for this opportunity to not only investigate a new strategy for social change, but to have conversations across geographic differences."

Lee, a Global Studies and Peace, War, and Defense double major, took inspiration from the strength of those who shared the stories of their own circumstances. "By attending the symposium I learned so much about how to apply myself in professional settings and think critically about the way stories take many different shapes and forms," Lee said. "One of the speakers in particular inspired me to explore tools I hadn't previously considered, and my fellow students had a lot to share about their own circumstances and courage. I am grateful for this opportunity and look forward to encouraging others to apply for ACC in the future."

The Carolina students were accompanied by advisor Anthony Wright, Leadership Development Program Coordinator in the Carolina Union's office of Student Life & Leadership. Wright says students had an opportunity to both embrace and personalize this year's theme around social change.

"People sometimes think social change has to happen on grand or global scale," Wright said. "This is an opportunity to look at it through personal storytelling and what can be shared through stories. It's a chance for students to reflect on their own stories and others, and bring those stories back to their respective campuses."



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