

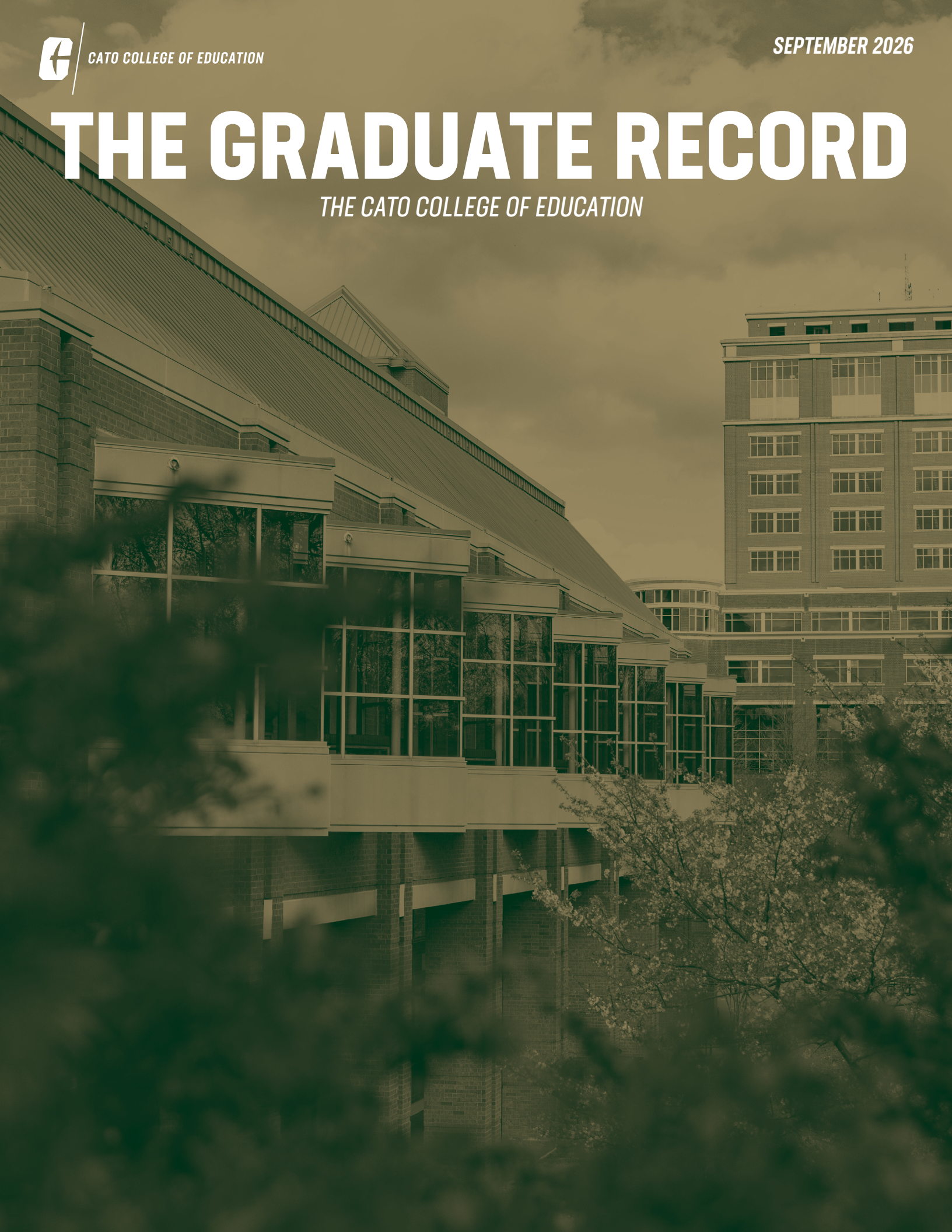


CATO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 2026

THE GRADUATE RECORD

THE CATO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



The **Graduate Record** has long been an important way to recognize the outstanding work of the Cato College of Education's faculty, staff, and graduate students. As we begin a new academic year, the **Graduate Record** will transition to a bi-monthly publication, allowing each issue to more fully showcase the breadth and impact of the research, scholarship, and graduate education taking place across our college. This expanded format creates space to share richer stories and connect our community with resources, opportunities, and the people behind the work.

In the spirit of collaboration, I invite you to help shape future issues by sharing your grants, publications, awards, presentations, community partnerships, and other scholarly achievements. Together, we can continue building a vibrant and collaborative research community that advances the mission of the Cato College of Education while demonstrating how our work is impacting schools, strengthening organizations, and enriching communities across North Carolina and beyond.

I look forward to using the **Graduate Record** to showcase the people, partnerships, and scholarship that advance the mission of the Cato College of Education and strengthen our research community.



SEJAL PARIKH FOXX, PH.D.

Sejal Parikh Foxx, Ph.D.

Interim Associate Dean for Research & Graduate Education

New NSF Award!

STAKEHOLDER*AI: A COLLABORATIVE CATALYST FOR ACCELERATING K-12 STEM ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH TEACHER-ENGINEER DESIGN PARTNERSHIPS

When North Carolina schools called for help adapting curricula to current science standards, UNC Charlotte answered. PI Prem Pugalenth and co-PI Regina McCurdy of Cato College will collaborate with co-PIs Hamed Tabkhivayghan, Joshua Dickenson, and Yi Cao from the William States Lee College of Engineering. This interdisciplinary team received Phase I funding through NSF's Finders Foundry initiative and is part of the inaugural cohort.

Together, they're creating Stakeholder*AI, an LLM that functions as a communication bridge between K-12 educators and university engineering design teams. While middle and high school science teachers are now required to teach hands-on engineering practices, many of them do not have the resources or time to build practical, interactive models for their lessons. University engineering students, however, not only have the resources, but the motivation: real-world client-facing build experience can build their resume for future job applications.

Stakeholder*AI acts as an automated translator between these groups. As an example, a middle school teacher would input their lesson plan and classroom needs to the AI tool. The AI would then translate this request into a technical engineering blueprint and pass it along to a university engineering student, who would then build the requested educational tool and send it to the teacher to use.

One of the most important parts of Stakeholder*AI is that the K-12 students will also have an opportunity to interact with the tool. They will be able to see the proposed learning tools and provide direct feedback, gaining early AI literacy skills and systems engineering exposure.



PREM PUGALENTI



REGINA MCCURDY

MARK D'AMICO

Mark D'Amico has researched different aspects of adult learning throughout his career - transfer student success, community college success factors, non-credit career development programs - but his latest work is perhaps the most high-profile: Workforce Pell. A pet project of the federal government, this initiative allows students to receive Pell Grants to enroll in "high-quality, short-term educational programs that prepare them for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand jobs." The intent is to strengthen the nation's workforce quickly and at little-to-no cost to the student, especially in high-need areas like skilled trades and tech industries.

But will it work? How do we even measure that? That's where D'Amico and his colleagues come in.



MARK D'AMICO

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: ELA ZIV, CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION, PH.D.

Ela Ziv, a doctoral candidate in the **Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction** program, was selected earlier this summer as the recipient of the **Lucille P. and Edward C. Giles Dissertation-Year Fellowship** for the **2026-2027 academic year**, becoming only the second doctoral student in the Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction program to receive this prestigious UNC Charlotte fellowship.

Ziv's dissertation explores teachers' perspectives on the use of **generative artificial intelligence** to support student learning in K-12 educational settings. Her research addresses a timely and significant area of educational research with important implications for teaching, learning, and educational policy.



ELA ZIV

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

FACULTY RESEARCH MENTORING PROGRAM

Congratulations to the faculty teams selected for proposal development funding through the **Faculty Research Mentoring Program**, where faculty with experience in extramural funding help guide a colleague with less grant writing experience in submitting a competitive funding proposal for a given project.

Each team submitted a NC Collaboratory Grant Proposal, and we eagerly anticipate the results of their submissions!

TEAM #1



MIRANDA FITZGERALD



KRISTEN BEACH

TEAM #2



CARMEN SERRATA



SANDRA DIKA

Faculty Recognitions

COMMON GROUND COLLABORATIVE COURSE ENHANCEMENT AWARD

Congratulations to **Dr. Ann Mickelson (SPCD)** on receiving a **UNC System Common Ground Collaborative Course Enhancement Award**.

The award supports faculty innovation through the development of courses that foster dialogue, discourse, and debate.



ANN MICKELSON

Congratulations to **Dr. Coreen Okraski**, recipient of the **2026 Foreign Language Association of North Carolina (FLANC) Higher Education Teacher of the Year Award**.



COREEN OKRASKI

2026 GERMAN AMERICAN SYMPOSIUM

The German-American research symposium began between the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the Pädagogische Hochschule Ludwigsburg in 1981 with a student and faculty exchange in the field of foreign languages. Over the years, symposia have broadened to include other subject areas, particularly in the field of education. The first faculty symposium occurred in Ludwigsburg in May 1995.

Since then, symposia have occurred each year alternating between Charlotte and Ludwigsburg. This tradition of collaborative, intercultural, interdisciplinary research and presentations continued this summer in Charlotte during the 31st German-American symposium on June 15-18, 2026. More than two dozen UNC Charlotte faculty and students shared their research, collaborated with research partners, and participated in a variety of cultural experiences.



CATO COLLEGE WRITING GROUP

Join colleagues for dedicated writing time.

Fridays | 9:00-11:00 a.m. | Virtual

Contact: Dr. Anne Cash

(annehcash@charlotte.edu) for the Zoom link.

CEME STATISTICAL CONSULTING

The **Center for Educational Measurement and Evaluation (CEME)** provides statistical consulting and research methodology support for UNC Charlotte faculty, staff, and graduate students.

Website: [Center for Educational Measurement and Evaluation \(CEME\)](#)

Service Request Form: [CEME Service Request Form](#)

RESEARCH SUPPORT TICKET SYSTEM

Researchers and research support personnel can submit tickets for assistance with:

- *Proposal development*
- *Award management*
- *Contracts*
- *IRB*
- *IACUC*
- *IBC*
- *Conflict of Interest (COI)*
- *NinerResearch*

Research Support Ticket: [Submit a Research Support Ticket](#)

RELEASE TIME REMINDER

Faculty expecting **release time or course releases charged to a sponsored project** this academic year should complete the required survey so post-award paperwork can be processed in a timely manner. Please complete [this survey](#) to submit your Fall 2026 and Spring 2027 release time request.

For questions, contact:

Jennifer Jones, jjone415@charlotte.edu

Grant Post-Award Business Services Coordinator.

FEDERAL RESEARCH UPDATES

Stay informed about executive actions and changes affecting federally sponsored research.

Learn more: [Executive Actions & Federally Sponsored Research Updates](#)

NEED SOFTWARE AND TOOLS TO SUPPORT YOUR RESEARCH?

Check out these applications and tools available to all faculty:

[Nvivo](#)

[G Power](#)

[SAS](#)

[Tableau](#)

[SPSS](#)

[Atkins Library GoldMine](#)

[Qualtrics](#)

[Atkins Niner Commons](#)

[Sudaan](#)

MERGER

Office of Sponsored Research Administration (OSRA)

- The Office of Research Services (ORS) and the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration (OSPA) have merged into one unified unit, OSRA.
- This merger creates a seamless, full-lifecycle approach to managing sponsored programs management. OSRA will work across teams to support PIs through every step of the process, from the initial proposal submission and all the way through award closeout.

Research Development and Engagement Office (RDE)

- The Research Development Office (RDO) is now RDE.
- The new name highlights an expanded focus that unites and accelerates our communication, engagement, and data analysis functions.
- RDE will still lead the core research development activities, including the Complex, Large, or Interdisciplinary Proposal Preparation (CLIPP) program, limited submissions, and internal funding programs.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

College Funding Opportunities

[Just-in-Time Research Funding](#)

Need funding to launch or complete a research project?

The Cato College of Education Just-in-Time Funding Program provides up to \$2,000 to support research supplies or core services needed to launch or complete research projects. **Next funding deadline: January 15, 2027**

[Faculty Research Mentoring Program](#)

Cato College of Education, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Application Guidelines

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I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Cato College of Education is pleased to sponsor the Faculty Research Mentoring Program (FRMP), which supports faculty-to-faculty mentoring by pairing a senior faculty member with a track record of extramural funding, and a faculty member with limited grant writing experience who wants to be mentored and commits to submitting a competitive funding proposal at the end of the mentoring period. The focus of mentoring activities must be on identifying funding sources and the development and submission of a strong extramural grant proposal.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE December 1 by 5 p.m.

For more information, visit:

<https://education.charlotte.edu/resources/faculty-resources/faculty-handbook/faculty-research-mentoring-program/>

College of Education Faculty Research Grants

The Cato College of Education (CoED) sponsors the Faculty Research Grants (FRG) Program, an internal seed grant designed to support well-defined, purposeful, and new research. The program's goals are:

To provide initial support for research projects.

To strengthen and incentivize competitive external funding proposals.

Call for Proposals (2026-2027 Cycle)

Deadlines: November 19, 2026 (all faculty - new and continuing) by 5 pm

February 4, 2027 (resubmissions by new assistant professors only) by 5 pm

For more information visit: <https://education.charlotte.edu/the-office-of-research-development-and-management/cato-college-of-education-faculty-research-grants-frgs/>

University Funding Opportunities

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Grants

The Call for Proposals is now open.

SoTL Grants support faculty research that systematically examines teaching and learning practices using appropriate research methods. **Deadline: October 1, 2026**

(Insert application link.) <https://teaching.charlotte.edu/services-programs/sotl/grants/>

EXTERNAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

AASA - Educational Administration Scholarships - Supports outstanding graduate students in educational administration who intend to pursue careers as school superintendents. Seven scholarships are awarded annually by AASA, The School Superintendents Association. Amount: \$2,500. **Deadline: September 30, 2026 (anticipated)**. Learn more

National Science Foundation - EHR Core Research (ECR: Core) - Supports fundamental research that advances foundational knowledge about STEM learning and learning environments, broadening participation in STEM, and STEM workforce development across formal and informal settings. Amount: Up to \$2.5 million; Level I up to \$500,000, Level II up to \$1.5 million, and Level III up to \$2.5 million. **Deadline: October 1, 2026**. Learn more

Simons Foundation - Simons Fellows in Mathematics Program - Supports productive, full-year sabbatical research leaves for faculty in theoretical mathematics by providing salary replacement and research-related expenses. Amount: Up to \$162,000. **Deadline: October 1, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. ET**. Learn more

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National Institute of Mental Health - Accelerating Solutions to Improve Access and Quality of Empirically Supported Practices for Youth Mental Health - Supports research to improve access to and the quality of evidence-based youth mental health practices, including work in schools, pediatric care, community organizations, social services, and juvenile justice settings. Amount: Budgets are not limited and should reflect project needs; maximum project period is five years. **Deadline: October 5, 2026 (new applications); November 5, 2026 (resubmissions and revisions).** Learn more

National Science Foundation - Mathematical Foundations of Artificial Intelligence - Supports interdisciplinary research that develops rigorous mathematical foundations for understanding, designing, validating, and improving current and emerging artificial intelligence systems. Amount: \$500,000-\$1.5 million. **Deadline: October 9, 2026.** Learn more

National Science Foundation - Research Experiences for Teachers in Engineering and Computer Science: Sites and Supplements - Supports authentic summer research experiences for K-14 educators and long-term partnerships among universities, community colleges, school districts, and industry to strengthen engineering and computer science teaching and pathways. Amount: Sites: up to \$600,000 for three years; supplements: up to \$15,000 per participating educator for one year. **Deadline: October 14, 2026. Learn more**

Russell Sage Foundation - Core Research Grants: Social, Political, and Economic Inequality - Supports investigator-initiated research on the causes and consequences of social, political, and economic inequality in the United States, including educational opportunity, mobility, civic participation, neighborhoods, and policymaking. Amount: Trustee Grants up to \$200,000; Presidential Awards generally up to \$50,000, with up to \$75,000 permitted for certain data-intensive or multi-PI projects. **Deadline: October 26, 2026 (proposal) or October 28, 2026 (letter of inquiry); additional 2027 deadlines available.** Learn more

Spencer Foundation - Small Research Grants on Education - Supports rigorous, field-initiated education research projects addressing pressing questions and opportunities in education. Projects may use any research topic, discipline, design, method, or setting. Amount: Up to \$50,000 for projects lasting one to five years. **Deadline: December 15, 2026; next anticipated deadline April 15, 2027. Learn more**

National Science Foundation - Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Directorate for STEM Education - Supports innovative and evidence-based approaches to undergraduate STEM teaching and learning, institutional improvement, broadening participation, workforce preparation, and collaborative research and development. Amount: Varies by project level; approximately \$61 million in anticipated program funding. **Deadline: January 20, 2027 (Level 1 and Capacity-Building); July 15, 2027 (Levels 1-3 and Capacity-Building).** Learn more

Spencer Foundation - Large Research Grants on Education Program - Supports rigorous, intellectually ambitious, field-initiated research that develops foundational knowledge and addresses compelling questions in education. Amount: \$125,000-\$500,000 for projects lasting one to five years. **Deadline: February 24, 2027 (preliminary proposal); June 23, 2027 (full proposal).** Learn more

PNC Foundation - PNC Grow Up Great Foundation Grants - The PNC Foundation supports a variety of nonprofit organizations with a special emphasis on those that work to achieve sustainability and touch a diverse population, in particular, those that support early childhood education and/or economic development. PNC Grow Up Great is a signature program. It is a multi-year, bilingual initiative that began in 2004 to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. **Deadline: You can apply for this opportunity at any time.** (Learn More)

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For a more comprehensive list of funding opportunities that align with areas of research interest and expertise in the Cato College of Education, please visit the curated list created in Pivot at the link provided below. You may be prompted to log in to Pivot to access these results. If you do not have a Pivot account set up, you can use your UNC Charlotte NinerNet credentials as the login when prompted.

https://pivot.proquest.com/curated_opps/9932

Have content related to graduate education, research, or grant writing that you would like to share in a future issue? Please contact Sejal Foxx sbparikh@charlotte.edu and/or Caroline Freeman cfreem66@charlotte.edu