

# MIND OF MINERVA, SPIRIT OF SPARTA

The new Minerva Graduate Scholars Program is one of the highest recognitions a doctoral or MFA student at UNCG can receive. “The idea,” says Vice Provost and Dean Kelly Burke, “is to bring our top student scholars out of the silos of their disciplines, to exchange ideas, inspire each other, and grow.”

Chosen based on academic potential, achievement, and work and life experiences, the inaugural cohort of 44 students will participate in cultural and professional development opportunities together throughout their time on campus.

Meet three of our new Minerva Graduate Scholars below.



Originally from Salt Lake City, **NATHAN SOUTHWICK** is a doctoral student in musical arts who carries his 250-year-old violin around campus in a colorful, sticker-strewn case. It’s a souvenir of his time studying in Austria, which he describes as difficult but transformative.

“The real takeaway is what the violin teaches you about life,” he says. “No one makes sound on my violin but me. If something’s not right, I have to change it.”

It’s a lesson he shares. “It’s an honor to teach students this type of self-efficacy.”

One of Southwick’s research interests is little-known American virtuoso violinist Maud Powell, who formed the first all-woman string trio and toured the country in the early 1900s. “She was an incredible human being who was all about bringing her art to people and serving underrepresented people through her work. That resonates with me.”

**JOSEPH GAZING-WOLF** was born in Egypt in a town that was, he says, mostly a landfill. At age 5, he was recruited to farm the fertile grounds along the Nile.

“The transition from Garbage City, which is about as far away from nature as you can get, to living on the banks of the Nile River, was like being on a different planet,” says the rangeland ecology student. “Discovering this ecologically rich world gave me new life in some sense. I study savannas because it’s where I feel I was truly born.”

Wolf was brought to the U.S. at age 10 by adoptive, Lakota parents, who raised him on their ranch. “My goal,” he says, “is to advocate for those who can’t advocate for themselves, to give voice to the forgotten. On the range, these are the plants and animals upon whose lives our lives depend.”

After completing her undergraduate degree with honors at UNCG, Raleigh native **INDYA WALKER** worked for three years with a Greensboro-area mentorship program for African American boys.

“I saw students grow and thrive despite their circumstances, but I also saw a lot of gaps in the research around mentorship. There wasn’t much focus on African American youth. It’s mainly a Eurocentric view,” says Walker. “That led me back to grad school. I want to shed a spotlight on these individuals and give them a voice.”

The Human Development and Family Studies student plans to focus on resilience in black families. “Looking back at my own life as a first-generation college student, I’m wondering what factors contribute to growth and success.”

By *Todd Lohrenz*

Learn more at [grs.uncg.edu/minerva-scholars](https://grs.uncg.edu/minerva-scholars)