

Inaugural Undergraduate Research Conference at Brevard College a 'Smashing Success'

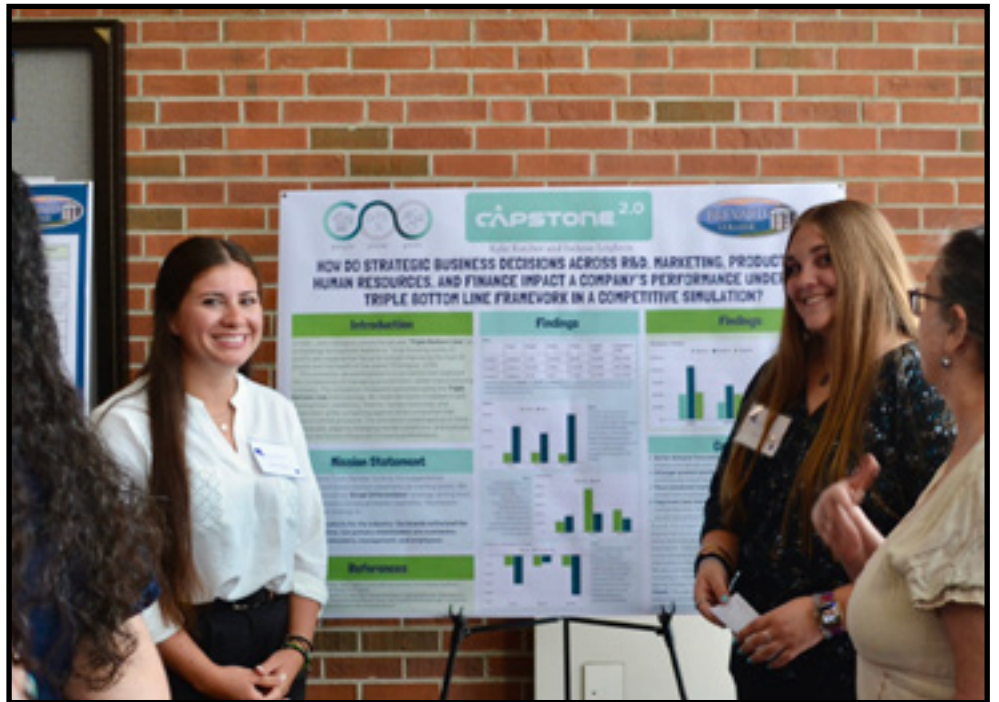
Brevard College marked a major academic milestone with its inaugural Undergraduate Research Conference held on Saturday, April 25, a campus-wide celebration showcasing the work of more than 60 students. The event featured a wide range of presentations spanning the breadth of the College's undergraduate academic programs.

"The work of the students on display at the inaugural Undergraduate Research Conference was tremendous," said Dr. Bradley J Andrews, president of Brevard College. "The profound influence of our faculty on the intellectual and creative development of our students was evident throughout the event. With admiration and appreciation, I am grateful to the students, faculty, and staff whose hard work and collaboration made this inaugural conference a meaningful success for our campus community."

The conference underscored not only the strength of student research but also the hands-on mentorship and experiential learning that shape the Brevard College student experience. By working closely with their faculty, students produced work that combined academic depth with clear, confident presentation—reflecting the College's experiential, liberal arts education.

"Our launch of the inaugural Undergraduate Research Conference was a smashing success," said Dr. Jennifer Frick-Ruppert, Brevard College vice president of academic affairs and dean of faculty. "It was evident from the quantity and quality of the presentations that our students combined scholarship and research with practiced, clear delivery. Furthermore, this conference demonstrated how strong student-faculty relationships at Brevard College lead to meaningful student success."

In total, the conference featured 35 oral presentations, 22 poster presentations, and nine



Students Ivelysse Leighton (left) and Kylie Katcher presenting at the inaugural Brevard College Undergraduate Research Conference—photo by Kendall Hubbard '28.

artistic presentations. Winners were announced at the conclusion of the event, with awardees receiving cash prizes and plaques.

Hannah Sonneberg received the Outstanding Artistic Presentation award for "Exploring Borne's Carmen Fantasy." Olivia Ervin earned honorable mention in artistic presentation for "The Love of L'Histoire: An Examination and Performance of Multi-Percussion through the 20th Century."

The poster "Classifications of Microplastics: IR Spectroscopy and Turbidity Method Development" by Zoe Herber won Outstanding Poster

Presentation. "The research conference was a great first experience," Herber said. "It laid the groundwork for future experiences in which I can share my research. I enjoyed seeing everybody talk passionately about their interests; it really showcased the diversity at Brevard College. Winning an outstanding poster presentation gave me confidence in my work and motivated me to continue working hard."

Amelia Payne received honorable mention for "The Queer History of Jazz and the Harlem Renaissance."

Outstanding Oral Presentation was awarded to

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The Inaugural BCURC

Continued from page 1

Martin Moguel Aguilar for “Sports, Spectacle & Statecraft: How Mexico Used Sports to Sustain Its Perfect Dictatorship”. Honorable mentions in oral presentation were awarded to Joy Yousef for “Senior Internship at BenchMark and Fyzical Reflection” and Sevi Smith for “Music and Psychology: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Special Education.”

The inaugural General Education Reflection Awards were presented to Angelena Martino and Madeleine Pollock, with Julia Lusk receiving honorable mention, for their reflections on how Brevard College’s general education curriculum has shaped their intellectual development, personal growth, and preparation for life after college. Additionally, the inaugural General Education Faculty Service Award was bestowed upon Dr. James Everett, associate professor of English.

More than half of the Brevard College faculty participated in the event in advising and coordinating roles, with Dr. Jordan Kuck and Dr. Sarah Maveety serving as co-chairs of the research conference’s 10-member planning committee.

“The inaugural Brevard College Undergraduate Research Conference was unquestionably one of the best moments in my career,” said Dr. Kuck. “To see such high-quality work from our students—and so many faculty members and staff in attendance—was the kind of environment that embodies the spirit and intellectual vibrancy of a liberal arts college. I can’t wait for next year’s event.”

“This event was a success due to the strong community at Brevard College: the collaborative efforts of students, staff, and faculty leading up to and during the conference were genuinely impressive,” added Dr. Maveety. “It was such a delight to watch it all unfold.”

2026 Undergraduate Research Conference Award Winners

Outstanding Artistic Presentation: Hannah Sonnenberg (senior, music), “Exploring Borne’s Carmen Fantasy”

Honorable Mention Artistic Presentation: Olivia Ervin (senior, music), “The Love of L’Histoire: An Examination and Performance of Multi-Percussion through the 20th Century”

Outstanding Poster Presentation: Zoe Herber (junior, chemistry/environmental studies), “Classifications of Microplastics: IR Spectroscopy and Turbidity Method Development.”

Honorable Mention Poster Presentation: Amelia Payne (senior, music), “The Queer History of Jazz and the Harlem Renaissance”

Outstanding Oral Presentation: Martin Mo-



The inaugural Undergraduate Research Conference, held on April 26, showcased the work of more than 60 students—photo by Kendall Hubbard ‘28.

guel Aguilar (senior, communication/history), “Sports, Spectacle, & Statecraft: How Mexico Used Sports to Sustain Its Perfect Dictatorship”

Honorable Mention Oral Presentation: Joy Yousef (senior, exercise science), “Senior Internship at BenchMark and Fyzical Reflection”

Honorable Mention Oral Presentation: Sevi Smith (senior, music/psychology), “Music and Psychology: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Special Education”

General Education Reflection Awards: Angelena Martino (senior, history), Madeleine Pollock (junior, communication/english)

General Education Reflection Honorable Mention: Julia Lusk (graduate, art teacher licensure)

General Education Faculty Service Award: Dr. James Everett

Student Presentation Participants

Musical Performances

- Olivia Ervin
- Amelia Payne
- Sevasti Smith
- Hannah Sonnenberg

Film Presentations

- Camile Bonnie

Gallery Talks

- Nicole Bradbury

- Rachel Cooke
- Mia Diaz
- David Phillips

Poster Presentations

- Jolize Beukman
- Lyric Contarino
- Summer Crist
- Zoe Herber
- Amberlyn Hernandez
- Evy Higdon
- Kylie Katcher & Ivelysse Leighton
- Karis King
- Kelly Lawson
- Kayleigh Marr & Wyatt Harsha
- Angie Martino
- Elias Murray with Bee Fulton & April Lee
- Amelia Payne
- Ariel Podlogar
- Louise Rodrigues
- Imani Singleton
- Kyla Smith-Fondall, Tyler Mangrum, Emerson Peck, & Kayla Philbrick
- Marcella Steele
- Lillie Teague
- Tristan Troutman
- Kamren Washington
- Regan Winkler with
- Alyssa Boris, Victoria

Continued on page 3

Research Conference Sees Over 60 Participants

Continued from page 2

Sylvester, & Chelsea Fritog

Oral Presentations

Savannah Anderson
Chloe Banner
Alexander Bolton
Juan Chavez
Summer Crist
Malik Graham
David Hoyle
Libby Huffman
Zoe Hughes
Aidan Kearns

Tyler Mangrum
Angie Martino
Elise McIntosh
Martín Moguel Aguilar
Emma Murray
Emerson Peck
Roxanne Petryshak
Kayla Philbrick
Madeleine Pollock
Rowyn Roberts
Etta-Leigh Rose
Liam Smith
Matthew Smith

Sevi Smith
Jane Steele
Avalon Sweet
Victoria Sylvester
Signe Thorsen
Ava Thrift
Elissabeth Tinsley
Mary Grace Vallentine
Courtney Wall
Rebecca Webb
Liliana White
Joy Yousef

FYE Celebration: In Photos

All photos via Brevard College on Flickr.



A Slow Start, A Stronger Finish: My Second Take on King of Wrath

Ivelysse Leighton
Staff Writer

The first time I picked up ‘King of Wrath’ by Ana Huang, I didn’t get very far. I DNF’d it around the first quarter because it felt slow and a little too predictable, and I wasn’t fully invested in the characters yet. The setup was clear, but it didn’t immediately pull me in, and I ended up putting it down. Still, the premise stuck with me, so I decided to revisit it later, and that second attempt completely changed my experience.

The novel centers on Dante Russo, a powerful, highly controlled CEO, and Vivian Lau, a jewelry heiress and socialite whose life is shaped by expectations and image. Their relationship begins as an arranged engagement, orchestrated for business and social advantage rather than love. That dynamic drives the story, creating tension between obligation and choice, and setting up a romance that has to grow out of something transactional.

One of the reasons the book feels so familiar is that it leans into well-known romance tropes while remaining engaging. At its core is the arranged marriage trope, which forces Dante and Vivian into close proximity and builds tension from the start. It also fits into the billionaire romance category, with Dante embodying that controlled, emotionally guarded male lead who values power and order. There are hints of Grumpy X Sunshine, though more subtle, since Vivian isn’t overly soft or naive, but she still contrasts Dante’s rigidity with a quieter warmth and adaptability. The story also relies on forced proximity and a slow-burning structure, allowing the relationship to develop gradually instead of rushing into emotional payoff. As the first book in an ongoing five-book series, it also sets up a larger, interconnected world where each story focuses on a different couple, making these tropes feel part of something bigger rather than isolated to one narrative.

Dante initially comes across as emotionally distant and rigid, which is part of why I struggled early on. In the first quarter, especially, he can feel almost too controlled, like you’re waiting for something to break through that hasn’t happened yet. But once I pushed past that section on my second read, his character started to feel more intentional. His restraint becomes something the story slowly works against, especially through his interactions with Vivian. He shows care in quieter, more understated ways, and those

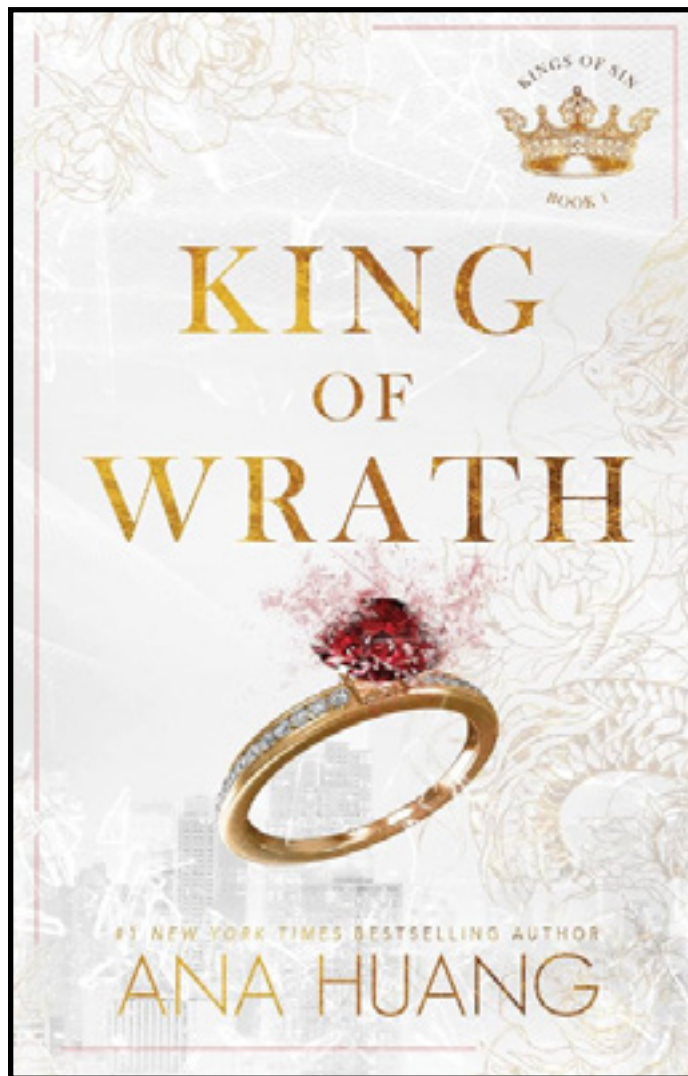
moments land more when you stay with the slower development.

Vivian ended up being the character that held my attention the most. She is polished and composed, yet she is clearly aware of how she moves through her world. She understands the expectations placed on her and knows how to meet them, but she is not entirely defined by them. What worked well for me is that her growth feels steady rather than dramatic. She does not completely reject her world, but she learns to navigate it on her own terms, which gives the story a stronger emotional center.

The pacing is still one of the book’s weaker aspects, especially in that first quarter where I originally stopped reading. It takes time to establish the relationship and the stakes, and if you are not immediately drawn in, it can feel like it drags. However, once the story moves past that initial setup, it becomes much easier to stay engaged. The tension between Dante and Vivian grows, and the emotional progression feels more natural.

In terms of plot, it does not stray far from what you would expect in this genre. Many of the major developments are predictable, especially if you read a lot of arranged marriage or billionaire romances. However, the book’s strength lies in how it develops those familiar elements rather than reinventing them. The relationship builds gradually, and when it finally shifts, it feels earned.

The writing style is easy to move through, which helps once you are invested. It does not rely on overly complex language, and the dialogue does a lot of the work in building tension between the characters. While some emotional moments could have been pushed further, the



writing’s simplicity keeps the story accessible and engaging.

What ultimately changed my experience was adjusting my expectations. This is not a fast-paced or plot-heavy romance. It is more focused on control, expectation, and the gradual shift from obligation to something real. Once I leaned into that slower development, the story felt more intentional rather than frustrating.

Overall, I would give ‘King of Wrath’ a 3.5 out of 5. It did not hook me the first time, and that opening section is still a challenge, but giving it a second chance made a difference. It is not perfect, but it delivers a solid, character-driven romance that becomes more enjoyable once you settle into what it is trying to do.

Protecting your peace during finals week

Autumn Jones
Editor in Chief

Finals season has arrived. While the pressure to perform can feel overwhelming, maintaining your mental health is a must for academic success.

When your brain is in a state of high stress, your ability to engage in complex problem-solving and long-term memory retrieval is significantly impaired.

To combat the burnout, consider shifting your perspective from how much you study to how you study.

Staring at a textbook for six hours straight leads to diminishing retrievals. Your brain

requires downtime to consolidate information. Instead of a passive break (like scrolling on your phone), try an active break, like the 50/10 rule. Study for 50 minutes, then move for 10. Walk around the quad or stretch.

Try to change your scenery. If you've been in the library all day, move to Bill's or a hammock outside.

A more challenging one: prioritize sleep. Sleep deprivation severely impairs cognitive function and memory recall. During sleep, your brain flushes out toxins and moves information from short-term to long-term memory. Aim for at least 7 hours of sleep. A well-rested brain at 80% preparation will almost always outperform a sleep-deprived brain at 100% preparation.

Passive reading is one of the least effective ways to retain information. To engage your brain more deeply, try to make it more hands-on. You could create a practice test to simulate the exam environment, which will build test stamina and reduce anxiety through exposure.

Anxiety thrives on uncertainty. Mapping out your week can provide a sense of control.

Remember that you are more than a GPA. While these exams are important, they do not define your worth or your future. Take a breath, stay hydrated, and remember that summer is just a few exams and projects away.

Final Exam Schedule

THE CLARION

SENIOR STAFF

Editor in Chief **Autumn Jones**
 Managing Editor **Zoe Hughes**
 Copy Editor. **Madeleine Pollock**
 Layout & Design **Emma Murray**
 Faculty Advisor **John Padgett**

STAFF WRITERS

Abigail Callahan Ivelysse Leighton
 Danniell Huestis Jordan Ramey

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All correspondence should be mailed to:
 The Clarion, Brevard College, One Brevard College Drive, Brevard, NC 28712, or send E-mail to clarion@brevard.edu
clarion.brevard.edu

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BREVARD COLLEGE BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA

Final Reflection & Exam Schedule – Spring 2026 May 3-6 (Sunday-Wednesday) Plus Wednesday April 29

Wednesday, April 29		
All classes that meet on Wednesdays will hold their final exams on the last (15 th) regular class period.		
Saturday, May 2 – No exams or mandatory activities may be scheduled on this day.		
Sunday, May 3		
	1:30-4:30 PM	6:00-9:00 PM
	Class Meeting Time (Block 2) MTH 9:30-10:45 AM	Class Meeting Time (Block 3) MTH 11:00 AM- 12:15 PM
Monday, May 4		
9:00 AM -12:00 PM	1:30-4:30 PM	6:00-9:00 PM
Class Meeting Time (Block 7) TF 9:30-10:45 AM	Class Meeting Time (Block 4) MTH 12:30-1:45 PM	Class Meeting Time (Block 5) MTH 2:00-3:15 PM
Tuesday, May 5		
9:00 AM -12:00 PM	1:30-4:30 PM	6:00-9:00 PM
Class Meeting Time (Block 8) TF 11:00 AM- 12:15 PM	Class Meeting Time (Block 9) TF 12:30-1:45 PM	Class Meeting Time (Block 10 or 15) TF 2:00-3:15 PM
Wednesday, May 6		
9:00 AM -12:00 PM	1:30-4:30 PM	6:00-9:00 PM
Class Meeting Time (Block 6 or 14) TF 8:00-9:15 or 8:30-9:20 AM	Class Meeting Time (Block 1) MTH 8:00-9:15 AM	Class Meeting Time (Block 16) MTH 7:00-9:30 PM

NOTES

All courses will meet at the scheduled exam time to conduct final testing or to accomplish some other meaningful educational activity. The exam time counts toward the total instructional time for each course. Wednesday classes hold exams during the final (15th) meeting period because this 15th period completes the required total instructional time. Classes that meet more than three hours per week or do not fit into the regular class block schedule should use the earliest appropriate exam period.

OLEE Immersion students return from 21-day expedition

Madeleine Pollock

Copy Editor

On Monday April 14, students in Immersion in the Outdoor Leadership and Experiential Education Program returned to campus from their 21-day expedition.

“Just being in the field for 21 days can be a challenge in itself. However, adding the responsibility of taking on leadership, teaching lessons, and keeping up with course work while still being a productive member of a group really compounds that challenge,” OLEE Professor Ryan Degarmo says. “This crew really rose to that challenge. It wasn’t easy but they figured out how to tolerate this adversity and still grow and ultimately thrive in their roles.”

Seven students participated in the immersion semester and the trip: sophomores Charley Chastain, Matthew Harris, and Jake Montroy; juniors Jackson Lee, Delores McDowell, and Elliot Salisbury, and senior Jimmy McKinley.

The group backpacked over 100 miles, which included hiking Mount Mitchell, the highest point East of the Mississippi River. They also spent multiple days working on their climbing skills in Linville Gorge, and had to cross multiple creeks and rivers.

“We went out on a five day backpacking trip early in the semester as well as a four day sea kayaking trip. Both of which helped prepare them for an expedition mindset,” DeGarmo says. “The also planned every bit of this trip from the



Immersion students posing at a scenic overlook in Pisgah National Forest.

route, land access to equipment, food, and many other things”

One way the team worked together and uplifted each other during the trip was through having a “Leader of the Day,” where one student took responsibility for providing directions and leading the group.

“I’ve always felt most comfortable being the Robin to someone else’s Batman. But, over the course of the semester, I’ve gained a lot more confidence with taking on leadership roles myself,” McDowell says.

The importance of community was demonstrated throughout, with the group even receiving a friendly sheriff’s escort through a closed section of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The team became experts at finding and retrieving water, navigating, setting up tarps, and concocting creative backcountry meals. They even created their own pasta dish, called “bus pasta,” that consists of pesto, tomato powder, spices and canned chicken.

DeGarmo stayed on trip for the first 18 days to ensure the students were adequately prepared, and then they completed the last three days without any assistance from OLEE faculty.

“As the immersion semester progresses, I get so excited watching students seek less direction and grow more self-aware,” Degarmo says. “It is amazing to see them start to confidently make sound decisions while taking on responsibilities that puts the group’s needs and goals first.”



The team of seven students hiked over 100 miles over the course of the trip.



Students taking in the view and eating a snack on their 21-day expedition.

OLEE | Leave No Trace

LEAVE NO TRASH UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

2026 Stats

What is it?

This is a global Earth Month initiative started by Leave No Trace and facilitated by the OLEE department

Objective

To remove trash from campuses and communities, with the main goal of educating the public about ethical waste practices.

Key Locations

- Brevard College Campus
- French Broad River in Rosman
- Pisgah National Forest
- Highway 64 in Brevard
- Silversteen Park, Brevard
- South Broad Park, Brevard
- Champion Park, Rosman

Conclusion

The second annual Leave No Trash University Challenge was a success!

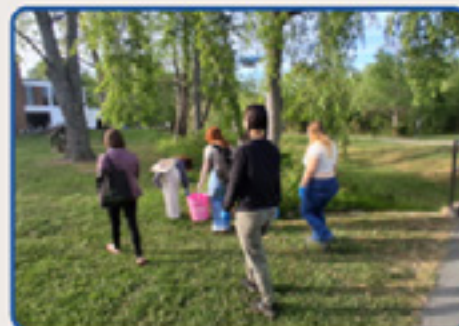
Methodology

Trash was measured in five gallon buckets and reported on the CitSci Website, along with photos



Key Statistics

- 141 gallons of trash collected
- 85 participants
- 6 large cleanups (10-23 people)
- 4 small cleanups (1-7 people)
- OLEE, HPE, IWIL, & VOR Cleanups
- IWIL First Year: most participants & most trash collected
- OLEE: most cleanups
- OLE 249: highest volume of XL trash



The BESPYS: in Photos

All photos via Brevard College on Flickr.

