

Summer research uncovers mysteries

August 11, 2015 10:00 AM Mary Sparacello
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Tulane University student Hannah Hoover sifts dirt in search of artifacts from an excavation square inside the remnants of Fort San Juan at the Berry Site, in western North Carolina. (Photo from Warren Wilson College archaeology program)

Budding archaeologist Hannah Hoover participated in her first dig this summer in North Carolina at the site of a 16th-century Native American village and Spanish fort.

“Something as small as a clay bead provided so much personal context that I felt like I was living and breathing in history with each sifting of dirt,” says the Tulane

University rising sophomore.

Her experience was possible because of the [Jean Danielson Scholarship](#), named for well-known professor and honors program director at Tulane University, the late Jean Danielson, who helped [Newcomb-Tulane College](#) students find life-changing opportunities inside and outside the classroom.

Hoover is one of three scholarship recipients this summer.

Rising seniors Rachel Butler and Savanna Bailey also received Danielson Scholarships. Butler traveled to Mexico to examine sex education policies from the 1930s through the end of the 20th century. Bailey traveled to Romania, where she analyzed adult and juvenile skeletons from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Hoover's experience in North Carolina, where she worked with Chris Rodning, associate professor in the [Department of Anthropology](#) at Tulane, has motivated her to become an archaeologist.

As exciting as it was to find pottery sherds and mysterious rocks, Hoover learned during the monthlong dig that the world of archaeology is about more than material finds. It also involves hypothesizing cause and effect, testing out possible solutions, analyzing laboratory samples, and mapping and taking elevations.

Called the "Berry Site," the dig site includes the Native American village of Joara, which thrived in the 16th century, and neighboring Fort San Juan, an early Spanish settlement that was destroyed 18 months after it was built. The 1568 destruction of the fort is a subject of speculation and study, and Hoover is certain that answers lie beneath the surface of the earth.

"My curiosity about the mysteries that have yet to be uncovered are so strong that I hope to return next summer and resume right where I left off this summer," Hoover says.

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