Educational Highlights: By virtue of hard work, superb instruction, and a little luck, I have managed to achieve a cumulative 3.97 GPA. I am a member of both Psi Chi and Phi Kappa Phi national honors societies and have received academic and presidential scholarships from the College. My work within Psychology, especially through my internship and independent study, has afforded me the opportunity to enrich my own intellectual development and serve the community at large, and for that I am extremely grateful.

Research Focus or Project: I am most interested in the mental, physical, and social changes that accompany the aging process, especially how they are manifested in elderly populations. I worked as an intern at Bishop Gadsden Retirement community under the tutelage of Psychology professor Dr. Rhonda Swickert and Cynthia Marterre, activities director for the community’s assisted living residents. The internship allowed me to engage one-on-one with and observe the daily life and relationships of a very old, very wise group of individuals. I had the privilege of working at Bishop Gadsden again, this time as part of independent research study program led by Dr. Swickert. Our research examined the phenomenon of post traumatic growth, wherein the experience of traumatic or challenging events in individuals’ lives promotes beneficial changes in their post-trauma world. I am greatly indebted to this project for revealing that the study of psychology need not be dominated by a pathological framework, but that to fully understand and appreciate a person, it is necessary to explore the positive aspects of their lives as well.

Future Plans: I’ve applied and hopefully will be employed this summer as a research assistant at a mental health nonprofit in Washington, D.C. If this position is not available I plan on interning at a science and public policy organization advocating for the application of scientific standards and technologies in service of human rights legislation and implementation.

This award presented by Cynthia Lowenthal, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Department of Psychology at the College of Charleston on the 8th day of May 2009.