

CULTIVATING A SUSTAINABLE CAREER



In the past four years at UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics, Annias Bailey '22 (Marketing) has learned a lot about growth.

As a Bryan School scholar, he's grown and developed in the classroom, on the soccer field, and through corporate internships. He also landed a marketing job with a company that is focused on a more literal kind of growth – cultivating nutritious produce to improve health and address global food shortages.

Bailey, who graduated with a marketing degree in May, exhibits the type of purpose-driven leadership and dedication to sustainability that defines his alma mater.

"The Bryan School offers a great amount of support through scholarships as well as helpful professors who connect students with people and places that provide

extraordinary opportunities," he says.

Bailey's experience led him to a full-time role as digital marketing manager at Grow Local -- a Charlotte-based startup -- after graduation. The company offers a tabletop system that uses water to grow beans and microgreens very quickly, yielding nutrient-rich food in 48 hours to five days. It also markets a commercial-sized, multi-tiered system to schools, restaurants, gyms, and grocery stores. The products could ultimately provide much-needed nourishment in developing nations, food deserts, and areas plagued by natural disasters or war.

The firm's focus on sustainability, health, and humanitarian benefits was highly attractive as Bailey searched for a job.

"I knew I wanted to work in marketing, but to end up at a company that's as altruistic as this one is all the better," Bailey said.

Seeds of Hope

Bailey's path to this role and to his business degree was a winding one. Born in New Orleans, he was just 5 when his family moved to Charlotte in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. He grew up playing travel soccer, and pursuing that sport quickly became his lifelong dream. After a tournament, he met UNCG's coach at the time and began some initial conversations. He opted to graduate high school a semester early so he could get additional playing time in Germany.

The next year, he was invited to train with the UNCG team. Between that – and earning the UNCG Chancellor's Scholarship and the Bryan School Blue and Gold Scholarship – choosing UNCG was a "no-brainer" in his college decision-making process, Bailey said.

"The scholarships meant I did not have to work to start paying off student

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loans or to cover the cost of bills and groceries," he said. "I could continue my passion for playing soccer."

After several coaching transitions, Bailey ultimately did not receive a spot on the college team and opted to play club soccer instead. While disappointing at first, he believes the trajectory and his scholarships gave him more free time to pursue school interests and internships. He served as a Peer Academic Leader at UNCG and participated in JP Morgan Chase & Co.'s Financial Services Institute in New York. After gaining additional work experience as the marketing manager for a friend's clothing and shoe store, Bailey was one of three students hired in Grow Local's first internship program. By his senior year, he had been promoted to digital marketing coordinator.

"We gave him some challenges far outside what we would normally

present to interns, and he rose to the challenge," says Chris Mau, Grow Local's CEO. "Annias is eager to learn, has a positive attitude, and has a level head. He takes things in stride and was cool, calm, and collected every step of the way."

Growth Spurt

As part of his work with Grow Local, Bailey was able to complete his capstone project for a Bryan School class in Advanced Marketing Management. He and a team of students analyzed data, did market research and developed important components of the company's marketing strategy, which they then presented to the CEO.

Just as with any capstone project, this one was time-intensive and challenging. But the Bryan School's preparation helped Bailey develop as both a problem solver and someone committed to improving his

community, which are vital qualities for hiring managers, Mau says.

"We have found that people are looking for purpose in their job search, more than just a paycheck or fringe benefits," he says. "They want to actually do something that matters."

Bailey is eager for the challenge. With UNCG in his background, he is ready and looking forward to his next chapter.

Written by Dawn Martin

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