

# Shannon Bodsford



Shannon shares with you her inspiring journey about returning back to school. Shannon is a part of the 49er Finish Program, which assists former undergraduate UNC Charlotte students with completing their degrees through personalized advising services. Using a concierge approach, the program aims to make the transition as smooth as possible for 49er Finish students returning to UNC Charlotte. If you are a former UNC Charlotte student, we want you back! Read about Shannon's return below.

I decided to return to school at UNC Charlotte for a few reasons. I had been working and volunteering abroad in Peru for the better part of three years, when I finally reached a point of involvement with challenged communities where I felt I was being signaled to return to complete my degree. I wanted to get myself back on the graduate school track and in courses that could help me focus on how to resolve some of the issues the Peruvians face. However, I was hitting a ceiling with what progress I could make in helping them based on my own limitations. I knew without further education and training, I would not be able to do continue to help change lives and reach my career goals. That's when I returned to UNCCCharlotte to pursue my degree in Anthropology, focusing specifically on how I could apply it to use with NGO's. Today, I'm proud to say that I have completed my degree and have been officially admitted to the Masters in Anthropology program at UNCC. I also have received some awards and scholarships since returning.



The Office of Adult Students and Evening Services (OASES) assisted me through my academic journey at Charlotte. OASES really tied up loose ends and kept me abreast of financial aid and scholarship opportunities via email. I often stopped through their office to get answers to questions not easily answered in other departments. UNC Charlotte is large, and sometimes the disconnect in offices leaves even faculty lost as to where to direct a student. OASES has nearly always been able to make those connections for me. OASES also helped me get things done remotely while I was abroad in Peru and working on course work online. Lastly, OASES always has a stash of fruit, breakfast bars, water and coffee which helped out immensely when I was stuck on campus researching and writing or on the run and had forgotten about my own sustenance for the day. This really made a huge difference sometimes by saving me hours in trips off campus to get a snack or meal in as well as saving a bit of money.

I think the best part of my academic journey has been the support I received from faculty in the Anthropology department. I faced several personal challenges throughout my school career including being hit by a car as a pedestrian and struggling alone through the economic recession. Trying to keep bills covered, working full time to part time, as well as attending UNCC is really quite exhausting, both physically and mentally. The Anthropology department faculty, having been made aware of these situations, has shown a great deal of understanding and faith in my abilities to overcome these adult obstacles and finish my studies. Honestly, this alone has served as a great motivation to stay dedicated and work as hard as I can to complete above average course work. I know I can now move through

Masters and PHD work in my chosen focus with clarity as well as more faith in my own self no matter what's going on in life off campus.

My advice for adult students looking to return to school is to usurp all the help offered, big and small, from OASES and your own faculty from within the department for your field of study. It makes a big difference and can relieve some of the difficulties that you will face as an adult student trying to balance a real life and school life workloads together.

My next steps in my career are to now finish a Masters, PHD and certifications that will aid me in the planning and execution of a non-governmental organization starting back in Peru. This will help me complete research in how to better help others struggling in developing nations to help themselves. I hope that because of the design of the program, it will also one-day serve as a study abroad option for other students like myself interested in international humanitarian efforts and hands on work-study in applied social sciences and more.

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The OASES team sends our congratulations to Shannon, and wishes her the best of luck in her graduate studies and beyond!!

We hope you've enjoyed reading more about one of our many talented returning adult students! If you are interested in sharing your journey or success story with us, please visit: <http://oases.uncc.edu/student-information/student-success-stories> to learn how.

To learn more about the 49er finish program and check to see if you may be eligible to participate, visit [49erfinish.uncc.edu](http://49erfinish.uncc.edu).