

2016-2017: Nathan Kirse

UNC- Asheville senior Nathan Kirse was a physics major from Winston-Salem with minors in astronomy and computer science. Nathan was also a Lookout Observatory docent.

In addition to his work as a docent, Nathan conducted astronomical research at the Lookout Observatory on campus, which is operated in partnership by UNC-Asheville and the Astronomy Club of Asheville. "My research has involved the detection of exoplanets - planets that orbit stars other than our own; an alien planet in essence," said Kirse.

"I wanted to detect the known exoplanet WASP-33b but my professor was skeptical about my ability to do that using Looking Observatory. As it turned out, I was successful. This motivated me to attempt to do actual research on unconfirmed exoplanets. What is so captivating to me about this research is that I am literally dealing with other worlds, potentially just like Earth, right at my fingertips. No other field in science gives you that sense of awe. I would like to go to graduate school for astronomy, and continue doing research in the field. After that, I am not too concerned where I end up, as long as I get to exercise my love for space."