Elizabeth Underwood

UNC Asheville has named Elizabeth Saxman Underwood as senior director of alumni relations, and the 2001 UNC Asheville graduate will return to her alma mater to begin work on July 14.

Underwood comes to Asheville from the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith (UAFS) where she has served as associate vice chancellor for government and university relations for the past two years, culminating more than a decade of service to the University of Arkansas system that included leading the UAFS alumni affairs office.

“We are thrilled to welcome Elizabeth Underwood home to her alma mater as the senior director of alumni relations,” said Carla Willis, UNC Asheville vice chancellor for university advancement. “Elizabeth brings more than a decade of experience and best practices in alumni and university relations to this role. She is uniquely positioned to build upon the firm foundation of our current alumni relations model to create a world-class program here at UNC Asheville.”

After earning a B.A. in literature from UNC Asheville in 2001, Underwood worked as a member services representative for the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce for two years. She then moved to Arkansas to pursue a master’s degree in higher education at the University of Arkansas, which she completed in 2005, while working for that university’s alumni association, coordinating student programs. Underwood completed her Ph.D. in public policy, also at the University of Arkansas, in 2012. In 2013, she earned a Fulbright Scholarship to study higher education in Germany.

Underwood’s work in alumni affairs included two years as associate director of the Arkansas Alumni Association at the University of Arkansas. She then became executive director of alumni affairs for UAFS, where she later assumed government and university relations duties and was promoted to associate vice chancellor.

Underwood has won many awards and plaudits of her own. In 2016, she was among the 10 who were named Most Powerful Women statewide by the Arkansas magazine, About You. She was given the Award of Excellence in 2011 for Integration of Social Media by CASE, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. In 2009, she was given the Outstanding Staff Team Award by the Staff Senate at the University of Arkansas.