The Social Determinants of Health are the conditions and places in which people live, work, play and age that influence health outcomes. This project aimed at allowing LINC Scholars to explore different social determinants of health in different settings around Eastern North Carolina, and to report back on the various health indicators that were explored.

We focused primarily on food/nutrition access for residents of the town of Tarboro, North Carolina. Access to nutritious food is a unique social determinant in that it is heavily influenced by many other social determinants as well, such as economics and access to transportation.

Kiane and I traveled to Tarboro and conducted our Windshield Tour on Thursday, July 2nd. We had spent several days preparing for the trip by researching the different social determinants of health associated with Tarboro, taking special note of food access and spiritual health. While we were in Tarboro, we took pictures of different resources that we found. We also walked around the main street area and into the Visitor Center. We used a map of the town and the town website to locate resources for our project. After our trip we compiled our findings and reported on the strengths and challenges of the town to our LINC Scholars group.

Tarboro, NC is a large town with a population of 10,715, representing a 48.8% Black or African American and 44.9% White populace. Despite having access to Edgecombe Counties Vidant affiliate hospital, the area is falling behind as with respect to the rest of the region. Economic factors affecting Tarboro include a 13.5% unemployment rate, and a median household income nearly $20,000 less than the state average ($32,532 compared to $52,413). 12.5% of households also report having no access to a vehicle. So even if the town did have access to healthy foods, a large percentage of the population would still be unable to obtain them. One unique strength of Tarboro is its religious affiliations, with the town being home to over 20 places of worship. Only one of those churches currently sponsors a Meals on Wheels program for the town.

Tarboro could benefit from several ECU/Vidant programs. Firstly, having Vidant sponsor bus services to the area would ensure not only better access to healthcare, but to healthy food as well. ECU could make a difference by sponsoring local churches with start up funds to create more Meals on Wheels programs in the community. They could also bring together local agricultural workers to create a farmer’s market for the town. Tarboro represents a large population that Vidant Edgecombe and ECU could greatly help by using their pull to create better food access in the area.

SOURCES
North Carolina Social Determinants of Health by Region
http://nc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=def612b7025b44ea1e0d7af43f4702b

Town of Tarboro
http://www.tarboro-nc.com/

Health Systems Science
By Skochelak, Hammoud, and Lomis