“I’ve always been interested in anthropology from the socio-cultural perspective, not so much from the physical side. But that first semester, a professor got me to go to a meeting of the South Carolina Archaeological Society, and I was hooked.”

Almost immediately, Olivia got invited to participate in fieldwork at Charles Towne Landing, one of the original European settlements in the Carolinas. “The team working there has a limited budget, so there are lots of opportunities for volunteer researchers.”

She was also asked to assist with research at a plantation site. “We were digging, brushing and sifting in an area thought to have contained slave cabins. That experience really solidified my interest.” Olivia started racking up resume-building experience. Her second semester, she was part of an independent study that used ground penetrating radar to locate kitchen foundations at a site right on campus. And then came the trip to France.

“My advisor put me in touch with a colleague who runs a dig in southern France. We corresponded and set it up. It was interesting, hands-on work – digging, cataloguing and cleaning specimens. We lived in tents, and the best part was – it didn’t cost me anything. His grant paid for our food, and I was awarded the John Morter Scholarship, which supports student fieldwork.

“That was great experience. It taught me that I’m OK with doing the repetitious tasks that often come with archaeological fieldwork. Even if I have to do that same thing for a month, I still love this field – the cultural and the physical.”