March 16, 2021 - Tiffany Chinwuba cares deeply about the barriers that many experiences, particularly within the healthcare sector. That’s why she decided that her first research project at UCF would be to look at the overwhelming impact COVID-19 has had on nonprofit organizations over the past 11 months. She’ll be presenting her work during this month at the Student Scholar Symposium during Student Research Week, March 29–April 2.

Chinwuba, who is majoring in biomedical sciences and nonprofit management, is taking a closer look at the specific ways life during COVID-19 has altered some nonprofit organizations in Central Florida, while also understanding how these groups have transformed the livelihood of local communities. The economic recession triggered by COVID-19 has busted open the doors in regard to clientele, Chinwuba says.

“This is unlike any other recession we have seen before,” she says. “Nonprofits are doing the best they can with the resources they have.”

It is no surprise that nonprofit organizations, which rely upon grants and donations for sustainability, would have to rethink the ways in which they keep their organizations afloat during a recession without precedent. And this is at the heart of Chinwuba’s research, thinking within and beyond a global pandemic to understand how best to position aid agencies to survive through disaster situations now and in the future.

On top of this, she is seeking to understand the gaps that the nonprofit sector fills. She has found that in a pandemic where many are encountering financial loss, joblessness and the threat of homelessness, that the nonprofit sector has been leaned on much more than it ever before. For instance, one of the organizations she has interviewed has been providing fresh groceries to hundreds of families each week, as well as free medical and dental visits and homelessness prevention services.

The research isn’t complete because we won’t see all of the effects on the economy for a couple of years, but the current information has the potential to help nonprofits become more resilient and better serve clients, Chinwuba says.

In the future she plans to attend medical school and hopes to work with low income and at-risk communities.

“The nonprofit sector does a really good job of trying to alleviate suffering and remove barriers to increase quality of life,” she says. “In a way a physician does the same thing the nonprofit sector does just in a different way. Remove barriers.”

To find out more about Chinwuba’s work and that of other undergraduate and graduate students, check out the Student Scholar Symposium during this year’s virtual Student Research Week. Hundreds of students will be presenting their work. Those with a valid UCF email are welcome to attend virtually. For details and schedule of all events click here.