

Read by current students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and friends of the Bridging Disciplines Programs, The Bridge is a platform for program successes, changes, and events. The Bridge also serves to share news among the BDP concentrations.

News & Updates

- Congratulations to **BDP Advisor Rose Mastrangelo**, who was the 2012 recipient of the School of Undergraduate Studies Staff Award. Rose advises the Digital Arts & Media, Environment, and Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profit BDPs, and is also the UT Austin coordinator for the Archer Fellowship Program.
- Farewell to **Academic Advising Coordinator Lauren Campbell**. After eight years at UT Austin, Lauren and her family will be relocating to Seattle. Lauren plans to continue working on her dissertation for her doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration.
- A special welcome to our **new Academic Advising Coordinator Emily Watson**. Prior to joining UGS, Emily was the Program Director for Advise TX, a program that places recent UT graduates in low-income high schools as college advisors.
- Congratulations to Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits BDP alumnus and Teysha co-founder Sophie Eckrich! Through Teysha, Sophie and her partner, Travis Breihan, purchase traditional tapestries from the Kuna women in Panama and use the tapestries to make shoes. **In early-December, Nordstrom launched the line of shoes** at its Los Angeles and Irvine, CA locations. Read the press release [here](#).
- In November, Dr. Edwin Dorn facilitated a focus group with UT Austin students to gauge interest in a new **Public Policy BDP**. Curriculum development and planning is underway—stay tuned for more details!

Fall 2012 Admissions Profile

In fall 2012, we welcomed 119 students. Our newly admitted students are excited about complementing their fields of study with an interdisciplinary education.

Take a look at the representation across BDPs:

Bridging Disciplines Program	Number of Admits
Children & Society	11
Cultural Studies	4
Digital Arts & Media	18
Environment	10
Ethics & Leadership	14
Global Studies	8
Human Rights & Social Justice	7
Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship	10
Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits	17
Social Inequality, Health & Policy	20
Total	119

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Rapoport Foundation Grant Supports BDP Integrative Capstone Course

By Neha Ali, Ethics & Leadership BDP and Farah Mithani, Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship BDP

This article is a continuation of a story we featured in our June 2012 issue, titled “Rapoport Foundation Grant Educates Students about Responsible Community Engagement.” In December 2010, the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Foundation awarded a \$50,000 grant to the Bridging Disciplines Programs. The grant supports a graduate assistantship to (1) enhance community engagement across the BDPs, (2) develop resources and content for human rights and social justice curricula, and (3) develop a new integrative capstone course pertinent to all BDP students. Our June 2012 issue discussed the first two initiatives, and this article will highlight the third.

In spring 2013, the Bridging Disciplines Programs will offer BDP 129: Bridging Disciplines Programs Integrative Capstone. The course will concentrate on integrating the interdisciplinary components of a student’s BDP experience so that students can better articulate their career interests, strengths, and goals. Graduate Assistant Charlotte Nunes will be teaching the class.

The primary goal for the course is to help graduating seniors articulate what they learned from their BDP coursework and Connecting Experiences for potential employers and graduate schools. Assignments include personal statements, cover letters, and a poster presentation during Research Week in April. Furthermore, this interactive seminar-style course will allow students to discuss and offer constructive feedback on each other’s Integration Essays, a reflective piece of writing that every BDP student must complete prior to graduation. The course will also feature an interdisciplinary career panel that will include BDP alumni.

In addition to helping students approach issues from an interdisciplinary perspective, Charlotte Nunes believes that peer work will influence students in a positive way so they can have the opportunity to “develop a community within the class that is premised on interdisciplinary interests.” Because all of the students will be entering the course with unique experiences, they will have the opportunity to receive multidisciplinary feedback on their work and their undergraduate experiences as a way to transition into the inherently interdisciplinary professional world. The amount of interaction between the students and Charlotte will allow students to develop these skills, and receiving feedback will greatly enhance the quality of the interdisciplinary experience.

Overall, the goal of the Integrative Capstone is to capture the essence of a student’s BDP experience and translate it into skills and knowledge that students can carry into their professional and academic careers after graduation.

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Connecting Experience Spotlight: Texas Autism Project

By Milinda Hernandez, Children & Society BDP



Milinda Hernandez is a fourth-year Studio Art major. She is pursuing a BDP certificate in Children & Society with a concentration in Children, Health & the Arts. Interested in art therapy and psychology, Milinda spent her summer researching Autism Spectrum Disorders in order to create a customized art program for the Texas Autism Project (TAP). The four-session program ran throughout the fall 2012 semester. Professor Pamela Buchanan, lecturer in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education and Director of Programs for TAP, served as Milinda's faculty mentor.

As a Studio Art major, I have a passion for creating art. I also have a strong passion for helping others. I wanted to find a way to use art to help others express their ideas and cope with physical and mental disabilities. During the summer 2012 semester, Professor Pamela Buchanan introduced me to the Texas Autism Project (TAP), which is an organization that creates awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders by providing university classes, facilitating professional development workshops for practitioners, and offering programs for families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Professor Buchanan was always available when I needed her advice and expertise. She was very open to my ideas and left me in control of the decision-making. To run this program, I had to think about what supplies to buy, costs, curriculum, location, date, class fees, and more. Throughout the fall 2012 semester, I facilitated four art classes. I named the series

Capturing Artists Within, which was later shortened to TAP Art.



The lessons included basic concepts in drawing, collage, ceramics, painting, and printmaking. I had different tools and brushes to emphasize fine motor activity and art exchanges to encourage social growth. Each child had their own mentor who was always available, and I had volunteers from the art department who helped initiate conversations. Each session was divided to give the children breaks for physical activity, stretching, and snacks.

The most rewarding part of my experience was getting to know each child and learning about their interests. Each child always brought a smile to my face. These young artists have amazing talents and working with TAP has been a wonderful experience.

Though I had never taught a class prior to this experience, my passion for art and helping others made it easy for me to feel comfortable in front of the class. The entire experience has given me more confidence in speaking, planning, and teaching. In the spring 2013 semester, I will be conducting another set of classes using what I have learned from this experience.



Connecting Experience Spotlight: Forum 2000 Foundation

By Aileen O'Leary, Global Studies BDP



Aileen O'Leary is a senior Government major who is pursuing a certificate in Global Studies with a concentration in International Political and Economic Development. She spent the fall semester in Prague, Czech Republic interning with the Forum 2000 Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to "[support] the values of democracy and respect for human rights, [assist] the development of civil society, and [encourage] religious, cultural and ethnic tolerance. It provides a platform for global leaders, as well as thinkers and courageous individuals from every field of endeavor, to openly debate and share these critical issues." Dr. Robert Jensen, professor in the School of Journalism, served as Aileen's faculty mentor.

My internship in Prague during the fall 2012 semester was as much about living alone overseas as it was about the work I did at the Forum 2000 Foundation. The Foundation taught me the technical and interdisciplinary aspects of working at a non-governmental organization, but living overseas taught me a lot about myself. Having been through this trying yet rewarding experience, I know what my strengths and weaknesses are. I have become stronger, more understanding, and more mature over the last semester.

Seeing the inner workings of a non-governmental organization brought home the importance of an interdisciplinary education. The two conferences with which I assisted had participants from across multiple professions and cultures, and the planning process itself required many people. The first conference, the Forum 2000 Conference, brought together participants from all over the world to discuss media and democracy. Delegates included civil servants, politicians, activists, filmmakers, journalists, students, and faculty.

The second conference, the Immovable Property Review Conference (IPRC), was a joint project among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, the European Shoah Legacy Institute, and the Forum 2000 Foundation. Because the IPRC was a smaller conference and took place later in the semester, I was able to see the conference planning from an early stage. Conference participants included historians, museum curators, delegations of diplomats, Holocaust survivors, Jewish religious and community leaders, economists, and faculty.

Working in an office that speaks three languages—Czech, Slovak, and English—I quickly had to become comfortable not understanding everything that was happening around me. With the language barrier, I also had to adapt to completing tasks with little guidance. Frustration was common but I was able to work through it and remain open-minded.

Before this experience, I decided that I did not want to work for the government and thought I would pursue opportunities with non-governmental organizations; however, I do not think that is the right path for me either anymore. What I enjoyed most about the conferences was the preparation. It was more rewarding to see all of the work come together than it would have been to simply attend either conference, so I may look for a role in project management or even conference planning.

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Overall, I am very grateful for the opportunity to pursue this Connecting Experience. I learned a great deal about myself, and about the interdisciplinary nature of government and public service. The scholarship I received from the Bridging Disciplines Programs also enabled me to focus on the internship and not worry so much about finances. My time in Prague was one of the most frustrating, exhausting, lonely, difficult experiences of my life, but it was also my most exhilarating, educational, and enjoyable experience too.

Catching Up with Brian Adornato

By Erin Thomas, Associate Academic Advisor

When Brian Adornato arrived at the University of Texas at Austin in the fall of 2002, he made it a point to search for opportunities across campus that would enrich his undergraduate experience as a Mechanical Engineering major. Interested in environmental issues and attracted to the opportunity to take natural science courses, Brian chose to pursue an Environment BDP certificate.

After graduating from UT Austin in 2006, Brian worked as a Legislative Aid in the 80th session of the Texas Legislature. In 2007, he attended The University of Michigan to pursue a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Master of Public Policy degree. He was a Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy fellowship recipient. While in graduate school, Brian worked part-time for the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In 2010, Brian was commissioned as Ensign for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Corps, a federal agency within the United States Department of Commerce focused on the conditions of the oceans and the atmosphere. He is currently serving as a Navigation Officer aboard the NOAA Ship Oregon II and spends 170 days out of the year at sea. His work plays a role in gathering data to inform policy makers and conserving and managing fisheries.

I caught up with Brian during his recent tour in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Florida.



What does your job entail as a Navigation Officer in the NOAA Corps?

The ship primarily conducts fisheries research in the Gulf of Mexico on everything from plankton to sharks. As a junior officer on the ship, my main job is standing navigational watches (driving the ship), but I also have administrative duties. My administrative duties include maintaining our navigational aids, ensuring our ship complies with environmental codes and tracking property (computers, printers, etc.).

In what ways did your BDP influence your career path?

Through coursework, lectures, and informal discussions with my fellow BDP peers, it became clear that most environmental issues have both a technical component and a policy component. I decided to further my education in both areas, and tailor my job search to environmentally focused agencies.

How have you transferred the skills and knowledge from your BDP coursework to the work that you are doing now?

My coursework in basic biology and chemistry has proven useful aboard the ship. Mechanical engineers typically do not take those courses, but I have enough knowledge of the subjects to “talk shop” with the scientists on board and understand the basic ideas behind their studies.

In what ways does your current position demand interdisciplinary thinking?

Ships are inherently interdisciplinary. They are small moving cities with their own power plant, sewage system, fire department and restaurant. My ship also happens to be a science lab that catches, weighs, measures, and preserves all types of sea life from plankton to sharks. As an officer, I am expected to have a working knowledge of all aspects of the ship. My time in the Bridging Disciplines Programs honed my skills in communicating with people that share a common interest but who have different perspectives.

What do you hope to accomplish in your career?

Eventually, I want to use my technical expertise to inform public policy, particularly with maritime issues. NOAA Corps has given me the critical experience of living and working aboard a ship. I would like to develop my technical skills while pursuing my interest in public policy.

What do you value most about your BDP experience?

The Environment BDP gave me an academic home within the University to customize my education. If I could give any piece of advice to current BDP students, I'd remind them that they go to a big university with a lot of resources and encourage them to take advantage of these resources.