

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

- **SAVE THE DATE!** The BDPs will be celebrating the program's 10th anniversary in the fall on Friday, September 28th, 2012. There will be a video contest that will allow current student and alumni to submit content to help tell the BDP story. Further details about the celebration and contest will be sent out during the summer via email.
- Our **highly successful spring recruitment season** yielded over 160 applicants! Special thanks to BDP Advising Coordinator Lauren Campbell, who coordinated recruitment, in addition to our graduate assistants and BDP Student Advisory Council who made visits across campus.
- A new forum seminar, **BDP 101: Public Policy: Race-Immigration-Citizenship**, will be offered in the fall semester as part of the LBJ School of Public Affairs' effort to offer more courses for undergraduate students. Dr. Edwin Dorn, current faculty member and former Dean of the LBJ School, will teach the course.
- Congratulations to Ethics & Leadership BDP alumna **Karen Azeez** as she begins a Master's of Environmental Management program at Yale University in the fall. Karen is currently a Junior Professional Associate at the World Bank in Washington, D.C.
- Congratulations to Ethics & Leadership BDP student **Holly Heinrich**, who completed a Connecting Experience internship with the Texas Tribune during the spring semester. One of Holly's articles, "For Some Texas Inmates, Familiar Voices Over the Air," was published in *The New York Times*.
- Congratulations to **Leslie Chang**, the recipient of the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, which supports students with outstanding potential who intend to pursue careers in mathematics, science, or engineering. Leslie is a Biochemistry Honors major, pursuing a Social Inequality, Health & Policy BDP certificate.
- Congratulations to **Ana Laura Rivera**, who was awarded the Texas Exes Presidential Leadership Award. Nominated by her faculty mentor, Henry Dietz, Ana Laura was one of two juniors who received this award. Ana Laura is pursuing a BDP certificate in Human Rights & Social Justice, she is a double major in Government and Humanities, and she is a McNair Scholar.
- Congratulations to Global Studies BDP alumnus **Preston Nix!** Preston was the 2012 recipient of the Cactus Goodfellow Award and the Dean's Distinguished Graduate Award in the College of Liberal Arts. Preston is a Bill Archer Fellow, and he is currently seeking community development opportunities in Mali.

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Rapoport Foundation Grant Educates Students about Responsible Community Engagement

By Farhana Rabbi, Human Rights & Social Justice BDP

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 enhance community engagement across the BDPs, develop resources and content for human rights and social justice curricula, and develop an integrative capstone course pertinent to all BDP students.

Since September 2011, Ph.D. candidate Charlotte Nunes has made great strides to fulfill this mission in her position as a BDP Graduate Assistant. One of her goals is to develop resources and workshops to support students preparing for their Connecting Experiences. She also acts as a liaison between the BDPs and the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice at the UT School of Law.

This semester, Charlotte launched a four-part workshop series for BDP students who are planning their Connecting Experiences. Topics ranged from how to pursue undergraduate research and internship opportunities to responsible engagement with a new community. Charlotte is currently planning another set of workshops for the fall 2012 semester with the support of BDP staff members.

Within the workshops, it is important to Charlotte that students learn about the range of possibilities for research and internship projects and how to develop enriching and fulfilling Connecting Experiences. It is also important to Charlotte that students have the opportunity to orient themselves ethically before they start their Connecting Experiences: "We really want to encourage the enthusiasm that students bring to their research and internship projects. At the same time, we advise students to approach their projects with a spirit of respect and self-awareness. If a student is planning a Connecting Experience with a local non-profit, for instance, we would encourage the student to conduct thorough research about the organization in advance of the internship, and to approach the experience with a good sense not only of what the student hopes to gain, but also of what he or she has to offer the organization in terms of skill sets and expertise."

As a way to help students find meaningful Connecting Experiences, Charlotte is also creating an internship resource database. The database will serve as an advising tool for BDP and Rapoport Center students pursuing local, national, and international internships related to civic engagement, service, and social justice.

Charlotte will also develop an integrative capstone course for graduating seniors in the BDPs. We expect this course to be available for BDP students in spring 2013. "The concept is still developing, but the idea is to help graduating seniors process what they've accomplished and think about how they can frame these experiences for potential employers and graduate programs," Charlotte said. "We want BDP students to excel not only in their programs here but also in their post-grad careers, and this course will help them make that transition."

Bernard Rapoport, who founded the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Foundation in 1986, died this April at the age of 94. He was a passionate champion of higher education, social justice, and human rights, and the BDPs are honored to fulfill one small part of the incredible legacy he has left behind.

Connecting Experience Spotlight: Anti-Defamation League

By David Loewenberg, Human Rights & Social Justice BDP

“When people are arguing I feel sad and I say let us live in a hopeful and peaceful world. Let us learn how to live in love and forgiveness and learn how to respect ourselves [sic] and the world!” This statement was written by a fourth grader participating in the Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL) No Place for Hate® initiative, one of the many programs I was fortunate enough to work on during my time with the ADL.

The Anti-Defamation League is a 100-year old international civil rights organization with a mission to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment to all.” As a Government major and someone who has done considerable work related to politics, it was very rewarding to delve into the non-profit field. As an intern, I worked very closely on No Place for Hate®, an initiative that facilitates the implementation of anti-bias and diversity education in K-12 schools. Much of my time was spent managing a database for the 200 schools that participate in the program, processing paperwork, and contacting teachers, counselors, and administrators of participating schools.



I also had the opportunity to attend Austin Independent School District meetings, visit a campus that participates in No Place for Hate®, and help organize an event that featured Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel. I also had the fortunate opportunity to delve into what I call the “business of social justice” by working closely with the Anti-Defamation League’s development director. I quickly learned that while programs such as No Place for Hate® carry out ADL’s mission of social justice, they are only as strong as the financial support behind them. While a non-profit is not in the business of turning large profits for personal gain, they are still very much a business and must be operated as such.

My internship with the Anti-Defamation League really taught me how the message of human rights and social justice can be put into action and spread across a community. The No Place for Hate® program is founded upon the premise that if we can raise a generation that is accepting, respectful, and committed to rooting out hate, then our world will become a better, more just place. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to contribute to such a noble cause, and the ADL has reinvigorated my interest in working for a non-profit that advocates for a more equal, fair, and just society. I hope to pursue work that somehow promotes these ideals and that encourages our overall progress as a community and society.

Faculty Highlight: Dr. Michael Granof

Interview Conducted By Charlene Lam, Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits BDP



Dr. Michael Granof serves on the faculty panel of the Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits BDP and has been a Professor of Accounting at UT Austin since 1972. He teaches in the McCombs School of Business as well as the LBJ School of Public Affairs, and he is a member of The University of Texas Academy of Distinguished Teachers. In the McCombs School of Business, his appointment is endowed by the Ernst & Young Distinguished Centennial Professorship of Accounting, and he is the Distinguished Teaching Professor of Business and Public Affairs.

Q: How did you get involved with the Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits faculty panel?

A: I was asked to join the panel because I teach courses related to non-profit organizations and government accounting.

Q: What do you study and why do you think it is important?

A: My main field is government accounting. When I first came to UT, I had no experience in government accounting. I had never worked for the government, but the professor here at UT, who was a real expert in the subject, was leaving just as I was arriving. There was no one specializing in government accounting, so I found it as a niche.

I'm interested in public policy and issues of economics, and government accounting has so many public policy implications. The efficiency and effectiveness of government is directly tied into government accounting. One cannot understand the current issues facing the government without an appreciation and comprehension of revenues, expenses, assets, and liabilities of governments. It is important in trying to be effective in finding a solution.

Q: What are you engaged in outside of the classroom?

A: I spend most of my time serving on two boards—the Government Accounting Standards Board, which sets accounting rules and standards used by all state and local governments, and the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board, which sets standards and rules for federal government and agencies. Currently the issue we are most concerned with is pensions.

Q: Why do you think the BDPs are important/valuable for students?

A: The BDPs point students in an interesting direction, one in which they can really make a difference. It's always a pleasure to see students who are concerned with improving the world, rather than merely improving their own financial condition.

Q: What advice do you have for BDP students?

A: Hold fast to your ideals. Also, from my experience, the courses that benefited me the most in my college years were a series of courses on writing. I believe it is absolutely critical that students learn how to write. Today it is a major deficiency; students do little writing on their own. Whatever success I've enjoyed, it's been through my ability to write reasonably well. Learning how to read is also important. It is an activity that not only provides worthwhile recreation, but also is necessary to be an intelligent and thoughtful person.

Q: Would you ever change your career?

A: I wouldn't change it for the world. I have the best job in the world.

Catching Up with Michelle Robinson

By Erin Thomas, Associate Academic Advisor



Michelle Robinson is a former BDP student who is now a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. While at UT, she majored in Sociology and earned a BDP certificate in Social Inequality, Health & Policy with a concentration in Social Inequality.

Michelle Robinson has long been a face for the Bridging Disciplines Programs. Her photo is printed on hundreds of outreach posters, bookmarks, and postcards that have been distributed campus-wide in classrooms, buses, hallways, and bulletin boards. What the outreach literature cannot capture are the reasons for which Michelle was chosen as an exemplary student to represent the BDPs and why we are proud to call her an alumna.

I decided to catch up with Michelle five years after graduation to highlight her achievements as a BDP student that led to her path as a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison today. Based on her experiences in a disadvantaged and lower performing school district, Michelle knew early in her time at UT Austin that she wanted to study educational issues from a sociological perspective. Former BDP advisor Patty Micks described their first encounter. “I was so impressed with Michelle’s maturity and enthusiasm for education after

our initial BDP meeting that later the same day I emailed her to tell her so. It is invigorating as an advisor to meet with a student who is so full of life and so engaged in making the most out of her college career.”

Michelle saw the BDPs as an opportunity to lend structure to her degree plan, and she points to her Connecting Experiences as being particularly influential. Through a summer program, Michelle worked with the UT Population Research Center through the Research Experience for Undergraduates program. She went on to intern with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, working on an assessment team to review the remedial aspects of higher education. Finally, as a Bill Archer Fellow in Washington, D.C., Michelle interned at the National Center for Educational Statistics, an organization within the U.S. Department of Education. Of these experiences, Michelle says, “They provided me practical and important skills for what I do as a doctoral student doing quantitative research. I was able to cultivate skills earlier than most undergraduate students.... It gave me a leg up in preparing me to go straight from undergrad to graduate school.”

Perhaps most rewarding for Michelle were the relationships she formed with faculty. She hopes that current BDP students will take her advice for fostering productive faculty-student mentoring relationships. “Be open about your interests. When you show an interest in what you do, [faculty] invest in you, and your aspirations.... They provided me with access to resources and graduate students who mentored me. The relationship went beyond letters of recommendations.” In an effort to pass on the value of mentoring, Michelle now serves as a mentor with the Boys and Girls Club, as well as with the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has also served as a tutor for the Pre-College Program at Madison Technical College.

Above all, the BDPs helped prepare Michelle for the Educational Sciences Fellowship she was awarded at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which is inherently interdisciplinary. As a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology, Michelle works closely with other sociologists, in addition to economists, psychologists, and political scientists who all study education. Her dissertation is focused on how state policy shapes education stratification. In addition to her own research, Michelle has served as an assistant on several projects, presented nationally and internationally, and published an article in the multidisciplinary journal *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

As she looks forward to her future goal of actively addressing systemic social inequality in education, Michelle aspires to teach at a research university, preferably one that is connected to or partnered with a Historically Black College/University or a Hispanic-Serving Institution. In declaring her vision for education, Michelle said, “Public, compulsory schools are one of the greatest innovations that the United States has exported to the world, and I desire that our schools remain free and public, and that they one day actually fulfill the democratic ideas that they were founded on.”

Spring 2012 Admissions Profile

In spring 2012, we welcomed 125 students. Our newly admitted students are motivated and passionate 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	14
Conflict Resolution & Peace Studies	4
Cultural Studies	4
Digital Arts & Media	17
Environment	10
Ethics & Leadership	12
Global Studies	7
Human Rights & Social Justice	9
Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship	14
Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits	16
Social Inequality, Health & Policy	18
Total	125

The Bridging Disciplines Programs web site will be updated frequently with Connecting Experience profiles as the students embark on these exciting opportunities.

Spring 2012 Graduate Profile

At the close of the spring semester, nearly 70 students across the BDPs graduated with certificates. Representing over 40 areas of study, this outstanding group of students completed 63 internships, 60 research projects, and two independent creative projects.

The graduates wrote integration essays prior to graduation, offering thoughtful reflections on their experiences and confirming the value their interdisciplinary coursework brought to their studies. To all May graduates, we bid you farewell and best wishes in your future endeavors.

In August, we will report on what our May 2012 graduates have been up to since graduation. To stay connected, BDP alumni are encouraged to join the UT Bridging Disciplines Alumni Network on LinkedIn.

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Bridging Disciplines Programs-UT Austin



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