



BRIDGING DISCIPLINES PROGRAMS

Dear BDP Student,

Welcome to the Bridging Disciplines Programs! On behalf of the BDP staff and faculty, I want to congratulate you on your admission to the program. We are excited that you've chosen to pursue a BDP certificate, and we're looking forward to getting to know you as you progress through the program.

One of my favorite parts of working with BDP students is seeing how much students are able to grow and accomplish through the program. If there's one lesson I would hope that you, as a new BDP student, would take from the students who have preceded you, it would be that the possibilities for what you can achieve during your time at UT are endless. BDP students have done research all over the world, they've interned everywhere from the US Congress to non-profits in Austin to the United Nations, and they've participated in research with many of UT's most distinguished faculty members. What you take from your BDP experience is limited only by what you put into it, and I would encourage you to take advantage of the resources the BDPs offer to help you not only achieve your goals, but exceed them.

In becoming a BDP student, you are not only choosing to pursue a certificate, but you are also joining a community of students and scholars. The relationships you build through your BDP experience—whether with faculty who mentor you in connecting experiences, with your BDP advisor, or with other BDP students—can be just as rewarding as your individual accomplishments. I hope you will take advantage of this community and participate actively in the social, professional, and academic events the BDP sponsors to help you get to know other students and faculty. As you will learn in moving through the program, part of being an interdisciplinary student is listening to and learning from others who bring different perspectives, knowledge, and skills to the topic or problem you are considering. Being part of the BDP community will help you learn not just from your classes, but also from your peers.

This handbook and your BDP orientation session will provide you with much more information about how to be a successful BDP student and take advantage of the resources available to you. The BDP advisors and staff are here to help you make the most of this experience. I hope you'll consider the BDP office one of your homes on campus—we're always happy to see you!

Sincerely,

Jeanette Herman
Director, Bridging Disciplines Programs

Contact Information

Office Hours and Location

Flawn Academic Center (FAC) 338 (3rd floor)

Monday–Friday 8 am–5 pm

Please call 512–232–7564 if you need an appointment with your advisor!

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Interdisciplinary Studies: A Short Introduction

As the name “Bridging Disciplines Programs” suggests, one of the central goals of the BDPs is to teach you how to approach complex subjects from interdisciplinary perspectives. At a surface level, the interdisciplinary structure of the BDPs is the reason why you can’t fulfill your BDP requirements by taking courses from just one department. We want you to broaden your view of your BDP topic by finding out what different disciplines have to say about it.

At a deeper level, however, the BDP should help you develop more sophisticated ways of thinking about complex problems by integrating the different forms of knowledge, the different perspectives, and the different methodologies and tools offered by multiple disciplines. The purpose of this introduction is to get you started thinking across disciplines and to define some key concepts that will help you as you pursue your BDP.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLINE?

In order to understand what it means to be interdisciplinary, it’s important to first have an understanding of what a discipline is and how disciplines have structured the way we approach the creation of knowledge in higher education. Here are some basic definitions of a discipline:

- A discipline is a branch of knowledge or study.
- Disciplines are often seen as subjects or majors. Many of the departments that structure the university today are disciplines in this sense—Sociology, Biology, etc.
- **Disciplines help shape the way their practitioners see the world.**

“The term discipline signifies the tools, methods, procedures, exempla, concepts, and theories that account coherently for a set of objects or subjects. Over time they are shaped and reshaped by external contingencies and internal intellectual demands. In this manner a discipline comes to organize and concentrate experience into a particular ‘world view.’ Taken together, related claims within a specific material field put limits on the kinds of questions practitioners ask about their material, the methods and concepts they use, the answers they believe, and their criteria for truth and validity.” (Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, Practice*, 1990)

“It is easy for students ... to be confused about the disciplines. They are often seen simply as ‘subjects’: courses to take with discrete texts and teachers, in order to pass certain requirements. To the extent that disciplines are simply presented as sets of facts, concepts, or even theories to be committed to memory, students may remain innocent of their powers. After all, facts themselves are discipline neutral: they acquire their disciplinary colors only when they have been pieced together in a certain way and placed in the service of a particular theory.

For the disciplines inhere not primarily in the specific facts and concepts that make up textbook glossaries and indexes ... and all too often, weekly tests. Rather, the disciplines inhere in the ways of thinking, developed by their practitioners, that allow those practitioners to make sense of the world in quite specific and largely nonintuitive ways. Indeed, once mastered and internalized, the disciplines **become** the ways ... in which experts construe the phenomena of their world.” (Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind*, 2000)

Learning Objectives for the BDPs

The BDPs are designed to teach you not only about the specific BDP topic you choose to study, but also more broadly about how to think about complex topics through an interdisciplinary, hands-on approach. As you progress through the BDPs, we expect you to demonstrate the following learning objectives:

Disciplinary Awareness. Before you can successfully apply an interdisciplinary perspective, you must first understand what it means to study a topic through disciplinary perspectives. Demonstrating disciplinary awareness involves referring to disciplines relevant to the topic you're addressing and accurately applying the perspectives, methodologies, and knowledge offered by those disciplines.

Interdisciplinary Awareness. Demonstrating interdisciplinary awareness involves referring to multiple disciplines relevant to a given subject, and demonstrating that you understand the value of the different perspectives, methodologies, and knowledge offered by those disciplines.

Thinking Across Disciplines. Beyond showing that you are aware of multiple disciplinary perspectives, you should be able to demonstrate that you are able to bring these perspectives together in order to come to a more complex or sophisticated understanding of a topic. Demonstrating that you are able to think across disciplines might involve comparing the perspectives, methodologies, or tools offered by different disciplines, or it might involve integrating multiple perspectives for a more complete understanding.

Transferring Knowledge and Skills Across Contexts. You should be able to articulate how knowledge or skills that you have developed in one context have impacted your understanding in another. You might, for example, demonstrate that something you've learned in the classroom has been helpful to you in a research or internship experience, or that something you've learned in a connecting experience has caused you to reevaluate or come to a deeper understanding in the classroom.

Reflecting on Your Interests, Strengths, and Goals. The BDP experience should be one of self-reflection, where you use your experiences to reflect on your interests and strengths and how they might connect to possible intellectual and professional goals for the future.

Developing Understanding of Your BDP Topic. Part of the purpose of the BDP is to allow you to develop a secondary area of expertise over and above your major. By the time you graduate with your BDP certificate, you must be able to demonstrate that you understand the interdisciplinary topic of your BDP.

WHAT ARE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES?

“Interdisciplinary studies may be defined as a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession ... [Interdisciplinary studies] draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective. In this manner, interdisciplinary study is not a simple supplement but is complementary to and corrective of the disciplines.” (Klein and Newell, “Advancing Interdisciplinary Studies,” 1998)



“Now consider the ... figure of the young-old woman.... The old woman is looking down and to the left. The young woman is looking away from the viewer and to the left.... Notice how ... what is focal for one interpretation becomes tacit for another. Note too how the cognitive concept seems to give meaning to the lines or parts of the drawings rather than the other way around. Imagine what it would be like to be a member of an interdisciplinary group discussing a problem in which the young-old woman, or something analogous, played a part. What would happen if your discipline allowed you to see the young woman, while another’s discipline interpreted it as an old woman and you didn’t realize the difference? Would you be tempted to retreat to your own narrow discipline and categorize those other folks as just silly? My suggestion here is quite simple. It often happens that when different disciplines look at the same thing (the same lines on the paper) they *observe* different things. Thus, it is necessary for people engaged in interdisciplinary work to understand each others’ observational categories.” (Hugh Petrie, “Do You See What I See? The Epistemology of Interdisciplinary Inquiry,” 1976)

“Interdisciplinary study should be understood to start with the confrontation of the interdisciplinarian with the world, be it a problem, event, or even a painting. Out of that phenomenological confrontation comes a question, one which is too broad to be answered by any single discipline. The strategy of the interdisciplinarian is to bring the relevant disciplines (or schools of thought) to bear upon the question, one at a time, letting each illuminate that aspect of the question which is amenable to treatment by the characteristic concepts, theories, and methods of the respective disciplines. Out of the resulting disciplinary insights, the interdisciplinarian fashions a response to the question that would ideally be a complete answer but which as the least leads to a greater appreciation of the nature and complexity of the question. What distinguishes interdisciplinary study from simple eclecticism is that disciplines provide much more than pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that the interdisciplinarian need merely arrange in proper order. Disciplinary insights are often conflicting, and when the disciplines are chosen from more than one area, such as the natural sciences and the humanities, their insights are of a qualitatively different nature as well.... The interdisciplinarian, then, may not simply combine disciplinary insights; rather, each world view and its assumptions underlying those insights must be illuminated and then evaluated in the context of the question at hand, before an interdisciplinary answer can be attempted.” (William H. Newell, “The Case for Interdisciplinary Studies,” 1983)

CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERDISCIPLINARIANS

“Students of interdisciplinary studies are marked by their willingness not simply to challenge, but also to cross, traditional disciplinary boundaries.” (Giles Gunn, 1992)

“Of course, successful people [in interdisciplinary endeavors] are very much like successful people in any endeavor, but several characteristics, attitudes, and motivations stand out. The person must, first of all, be secure in his or her original endeavors. Interdisciplinary efforts seldom work if the participants are not fully competent in their own fields. Second, the participants must have a taste for adventure into the unknown and unfamiliar, i.e., they must not be tied too closely to their secure home base.... Third, their interests must be fairly broad, if not in terms of their spheres of competence, at least in terms of what they feel is of importance.” (Hugh G. Petrie, “Do You See What I See? The Epistemology of Interdisciplinary Inquiry,” 1976)

Some characteristics of interdisciplinarians:

- Flexibility
- Patience
- Resilience
- Sensitivity to others
- Risk-taking
- Having a thick skin/strong sense of self
- Preference for diversity
- Preference for new social roles
- Initiative and assertiveness
- Tolerance for ambiguity

What employers like about interdisciplinary studies students:

- Ability of students to think conceptually
- Ability to identify and solve problems
- Ability to understand other value systems
- Ability to evaluate alternatives
- Ability to decide on a course of action
- Ability to change one’s opinion in the light of facts
- Effective written and oral communication skills
- Effective skills in working collaboratively with a team
- Ethical sensitivity
- Ability to respond constructively to criticism

(Both lists adapted from Tanya Augsburg, *Becoming Interdisciplinary*, 2005)



Advising Syllabus

One of the benefits of the BDPs is access to individualized advising. The BDP advisors are:

Christine Anderson

canderson@austin.utexas.edu

- Cultural Studies
- Global Studies
- Human Rights & Social Justice
- Public Policy
- Social Inequality, Health & Policy

Rose Mastrangelo

r.mastrangelo@austin.utexas.edu

- Digital Arts & Media
- Environment
- Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits

Lauren Contreras

lauren.contreras@austin.utexas.edu

- Children & Society
- Conflict Resolution & Peace Studies
- Ethics & Leadership (Business; Health Care; the Media; and Law Politics & Government)
- Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship

BDP ADVISING PHILOSOPHY

The BDP advisors practice academic advising that is student-centered and that grows out of a commitment to each student's development as a thoughtful, purposeful, and life-long learner. We use an individualized, proactive approach to advising as we assist students in exploring and articulating their interests, developing meaningful educational plans, exploring opportunities and resources, clarifying academic and career goals, and accomplishing objectives. We see ourselves as student advocates who play an integral role in giving undergraduates the tools they need to creatively shape their college experience. In keeping with the mission of the Bridging Disciplines Programs, we support students in becoming versatile thinkers who are able to bring together the perspectives, tools, and skills of multiple disciplines to come to a more sophisticated understanding of complex issues and questions.

APPOINTMENTS

Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Walk-in hours: Thursdays 1:30-4 p.m.

Please call 512-232-7564 to make appointments with your advisor.

As a BDP student, you need to be an active participant in your education and take responsibility for all that you do in your college career. BDP advisors look forward to forming a partnership with you as you work to achieve your goals. In order to work in a collaborative effort and have successful advising sessions, please remember to:

- **Come prepared for your appointment.** This means being knowledgeable about your degree plan and BDP requirements, having ideas about your future coursework and connecting experiences, and being willing to discuss your current and future goals.
- **Keep the advising appointments you have made and be punctual.** If you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be asked to reschedule. Please notify our office as soon as possible if you need to cancel or reschedule, and we will make sure to reciprocate with the same courtesy.
- BDP advisors are extremely busy certain times of the year. **We ask that you schedule appointments as early as you can and be patient about email responses.**
- Feel free to speak to your BDP advisor about any non-academic issue you may have. Although we are here to advise you for your academic program, we will always work to help you resolve the issue or refer you to other resources when appropriate.
- Visit us often for any reason and consider the BDP office your 'home base' on campus. We always enjoy seeing you and hearing about the great things in your life!

CONTACT & COMMUNICATION

- **Keep your email address current and read all correspondence from the BDP office and your BDP advisor.** We will use email to notify you of registration information, progress toward certification, and events within and outside of the BDP.
- You will be placed on a BDP student listserve, as well as one for your individual BDP.
- You will receive the BDP Bulletin via email, which will have reminders, announcements, and other important information.
- Announcements about possible internship or research opportunities are posted to the BDP Opportunities Blog. We will also make announcements through our Facebook page.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

As a BDP student, we expect you to:

- Be proactive, take initiative, and own your academic experience.
- Identify your interests and career goals, and learn how these connect to academic resources at UT.
- Come prepared for advising sessions by thinking about courses or connecting experiences before your appointment.
- Actively follow up on ideas and/or referrals you and your advisor discuss in an advising appointment.
- Coordinate your BDP requirements with those of your degree plan, and utilize advising in your major or college to work toward completing those requirements.
- Use BDP experiences to refine future goals and plans and reflect on these experiences in writing.
- Remember that advisors are available for more than just registration—we are here to assist you in both academic and non-academic advising.

ADVISING EXPECTATIONS

BDP advisors are here to:

- Promote your involvement in interdisciplinary experiences.
- Help you take advantage of university resources, such as working with faculty members, getting involved in research, studying abroad, and participating in internships.
- Help you integrate your degree requirements with your BDP certificate.
- Help you connect your academic interests with your post-graduate plans and goals.
- Promote your ability to identify disciplinary perspectives and understand complex interdisciplinary issues.
- Help you select courses and experiences that will enhance your understanding of your BDP subject area and the benefits of addressing a topic through multiple perspectives.
- Help you draw connections between knowledge and skills learned through coursework and those learned through research and internship experiences.
- Provide you with individualized guidance, support, and advocacy.

Students and Advisors assume shared responsibility for the advising process

University of Texas at Austin Honor Code and Standard of Academic Integrity

As a student in the Bridging Disciplines Programs you are expected to follow the University of Texas at Austin *Honor Code* and *The Standard of Academic Integrity*. Please take time to read them.

Honor Code

The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

The Standard of Academic Integrity

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin, as emphasized in the standards of conduct. More specifically, you and other students are expected to "maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work" undertaken at the University (Sec. 11-801, Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities). This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's Honor Code. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- * acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- * complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- * follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- * avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to Chapter 11 of the Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities.¹

What is Scholastic Dishonesty?

In promoting a high standard of academic integrity, the University broadly defines scholastic dishonesty—basically, all conduct that violates this standard, including any act designed to give an unfair or undeserved academic advantage, such as:

¹ http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

- * Cheating
- * Plagiarism
- * Unauthorized Collaboration
- * Collusion
- * Falsifying Academic Records
- * Misrepresenting Facts (e.g., providing false information to postpone an exam, obtain an extended deadline for an assignment, or even gain an unearned financial benefit)
- * Any other acts (or attempted acts) that violate the basic standard of academic integrity (e.g., multiple submissions—submitting essentially the same written assignment for two courses without authorization to do so)

Several types of scholastic dishonesty—unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, and multiple submissions—are discussed in more detail on this Web site to correct common misperceptions about these particular offenses and suggest ways to avoid committing them.²

² http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_what_is.php

Connecting Experiences

What are Connecting Experiences?

- 3-credit hour semester-long internship, research, or creative project related to your BDP topic
- Register and receive a grade for this opportunity
- Offers you a way to make connections between coursework and BDP topic

Connecting Experiences Definitions

Check-ins—one online and one in-person check-in are required during the semester. BDP wants to make sure you are on the right track!

Creative Project—a digital media project. It's the Connecting Experience option for Digital Arts & Media students only.

Faculty Mentor—a faculty member you choose to help you during your Connecting Experience. You ask the faculty member to be your mentor. He or she will assign your grade at the end of the semester.

Internship—find a volunteer position, practicum, or internship that connects to your BDP topic. You'll need to complete 160-180 hours of work to receive credit.

Proposal—consists of a contract, one-page statement, and your faculty mentor signature. Turn this in to the BDP office by the deadline. See calendar on BDP website for dates.

One-page statement—describes the potential experience, how it relates to your BDP, and what you hope to gain from the experience. Also addresses why you have selected your faculty mentor.

Reflection Essay—A 3-5 page essay written at the end of your Connecting Experience to articulate what you've learned during your opportunity, how it connects to courses you've taken, and how what you've learned has enhanced your educational experience at UT.

Research—be a research assistant to a faculty member or conduct an independent research project connected to your BDP topic.

Connecting Experience Step-by-Step Guide

1. Planning

- Find an opportunity
- Find a faculty mentor
- Find funding
- Complete and Submit Connecting Experience Proposal

2. Completing

- Register for your Connecting Experience
- Meet the Grading Requirements and Communication Expectations agreed upon by you and your Faculty Mentor
- Earn Credit for your Connecting Experience

I. Planning for Connecting Experiences

Finding an opportunity

- Clarify your interests and objectives relative to your BDP topic and strand
- Use our self-assessment worksheet to guide you (available on our website)
- Meet with your BDP advisor

BDP Resources

BDP Connecting Experience Spotlights. Click on the link for your BDP to read about Connecting Experiences from past students.

Link: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/bdp/current/experiences>

BDP Opportunities Blog. We frequently list possible internship and research sites from on and off-campus. Posts are tagged and the site is searchable.

Link: <http://sites.utexas.edu/ugs-bdp/>

BDP Opportunities Database. Our office maintains a searchable database of research and internship sites both in the Austin and abroad. Schedule an appointment to search the database with your BDP advisor.

UT Research & Internship Resources

AccessUT. AccessUT is a recruiting and job/internship search site. New internships are posted almost daily, and you can search the web site by college, job type, and a variety of other options.

Link: accessut.utexas.edu

Environmental Science Institute Opportunities for Undergraduates. This site is maintained by the Environmental Science Institute at UT and posts various opportunities for students related to the environment.

Link: <http://www.esi.utexas.edu/students/overview-student-opportunities/103-opportunities-for-undergraduates>

Internship Site Review on COLA Career Services Website. This College of Liberal Arts Career Center site lets you click on specific internship sites to review descriptions and feedback from UT students who have held internship positions at these sites.

Link: www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/lacs/Students/Coaching/SiteReviews.php

LBJ Online Resources for Locating Internships. This is a very extensive list of online resources for locating internships, including links to specific agencies and organizations such as the Smithsonian, Environmental Protection Agency and USAID.

Link: www.utexas.edu/lbj/internships/links

UT Events Calendar. List of on-campus events updated daily. Good place to check for new research projects or networking events.

Link: <http://calendar.utexas.edu/>

UT Research Units. This is a comprehensive list of research units on campus.

Link: <http://www.utexas.edu/research/units>

I. Planning for Connecting Experiences

Other Resources

Making the difference. Making the Difference is a list of federal job and internship opportunities. The site allows you to search by a variety of filters including location, field of interest and availability.

Link: www.makingthedifference.org

Idealist. Idealist is a site that connects people with organizations, job openings, volunteer opportunities and internships. They list opportunities with non-profit organizations exclusively and you can search by location, keyword or opportunity type.

Link: www.idealist.org

Internships.com. This site lists internships offered by businesses and non-profits across the United States. It lets you search by keyword, location and even by a specific company.

Link: www.internships.com

Volunteer Match. Volunteer Match connects people with opportunities at non-profit organizations and civic-minded businesses. The site allows you to search by location and keyword. For example, type Austin and the keyword Internship and you'll get a list of internships in the Austin area!

Link: www.volunteermatch.org

Email Lauren Contreras if you have any internship resources
you'd like to share with BDP: lauren.contreras@austin.utexas.edu

Finding a Faculty Mentor

Your Faculty Mentor should be someone whose background is a good match for your Connecting Experience so he/she can help you draw correlations between experiential work and coursework. You should set up a meeting to speak in person about your project and what kind of assistance you think you might need.

Search for a mentor:

- Consider current or previous course instructors
- BDP Faculty Panels (<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/bdp/programs> click on the program, then Faculty Panel in the left navigation menu)
- Network with faculty at events on campus
- Talk to your BDP advisor
- Search the EUREKA database (<http://www.utexas.edu/research/eureka/>)

I. Planning for Connecting Experiences

Sample Emails to Potential Faculty Mentors

Important Tips:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep it brief!• Mention your major and BDP• Use “Professor” in the address | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say how you found the professor• Briefly describe your project• Suggest a meeting to discuss |
|--|--|

Internship

Dear Professor Sollee,

I’m a Psychology junior pursuing a Bridging Disciplines Programs certificate in Children & Society. I have secured an internship with the Office of Family Initiatives in the Office of the Attorney General and was hoping to discuss my upcoming internship with you.

I found your name through the Office of Undergraduate Research’s Eureka website and am interested in your research on Public Policy related to children and families. I would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss your academic work and the possibility of having you as a faculty mentor for my internship.

Is there a convenient time I could come meet with you?

Thank you for your time,
Alexi Murdoch

Independent Research

Dear Professor Smith,

I’m a History junior pursuing a Bridging Disciplines Programs certificate in Human Rights & Social Justice. I am interested in conducting independent research on the history of humanitarian aid in post-conflict Bosnia and Kosovo.

I read your article on humanitarian aid, and I found your comparison of governmental and non-governmental aid very interesting. I would like to speak with you about your research and the possibility of having you as a faculty mentor for my project. Is there a convenient time I can stop by your office?

Thank you!
Ally MacBeal

I. Planning for Connecting Experiences

Sample Emails to Potential Faculty Mentors

Research Assistant

Dear Professor Snape,

I'm a Geography sophomore pursuing an interdisciplinary certificate in Environment through the Bridging Disciplines Programs. I am writing to you today regarding my interest in researching the global warming.

I read your article called "Polar Bears: Our Disappearing Friends", and I found your comparison of hunting and natural selection very interesting. I would like to speak with you about your research and the possibility of having you as a faculty mentor for my project.

Is there a convenient time I can stop by your office?

Best,
Pansy Parkinson

Creative Project

Dear Professor Bell,

I'm a Radio-Television-Film major, and I am pursuing a Digital Arts & Media certificate with BDP on campus. I am hoping to speak with you about the possibility of being my faculty mentor for a creative project that's a required part of my certificate.

For my creative project, I plan to create a digital comic book with animated scenes. I think your expertise in film animation will be invaluable. Is there a convenient time to meet with you?

Thank you,
Studious Student

I. Planning for Connecting Experiences

Funding your Connecting Experience

BDP Connecting Experience Scholarship

We have scholarships available to support you during your Connecting Experience. Complete and submit the application Connecting Experience proposal deadline.

Link: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/bdp/current/experiences/funding>

Be sure to include as much detail as possible in your application. It's important for the committee to have an accurate picture of your financial situation. Scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis, and both financial need and merit will be considered. See budget section of the application for common expenses.

UT Scholarship Resources

BDP Opportunities Blog

We frequently list scholarships, along with possible Connecting Experience opportunities, on our blog.

Link: <http://blogs.utexas.edu/ugs-bdp/>

College of Liberal Arts Research Scholarships

Many are scholarships listed are open to undergraduate students conducting research under the supervision of a faculty member.

Link: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/student-affairs/Programs/Scholarships.php>

College of Natural Sciences Research Fellowships

The College of Natural Sciences funds and/or administers a number of fellowships for students doing research. Many outside sources of funding for students engaged in research are also listed.

Link: <http://cns.utexas.edu/honors/scholarships-fellowships/current-students/research-fellowships>

Senate of College Councils Undergraduate Research Grant

This \$1,000 award seeks to encourage students to get involved in research early in their undergraduate experience. Eligible applicants include students assisting a faculty member on that faculty member's research project and students conducting independent research.

Link: <http://utsenate.org/urg/>

Study Abroad Office Scholarships

The Study Abroad Office offers a thorough list of funding opportunities to students seeking to study or conduct research abroad.

Link: <http://world.utexas.edu/abroad/funding>

Awards for Undergraduate Research

Roy Crane Award in the Arts

The Roy Crane Award in the Arts is given to a student of The University of Texas at Austin for unique, creative effort in the performing, literary and visual arts.

Link: http://www.utexas.edu/provost/initiatives/undergraduate_awards/crane/

University Co-op / George H. Mitchell Undergraduate Student Awards for Academic Excellence

The University of Texas at Austin, with the generous support of the University Co-op, annually recognizes nine UT undergraduates for superior scholarly or creative achievement. Five students receive awards of \$2,000 each, three students receive awards of \$5,000 each, and one student is awarded the grand prize of \$20,000.

Link: http://www.utexas.edu/provost/initiatives/undergraduate_awards/mitchell/

National Resource

National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates

The National Science Foundation funds a large number of research opportunities for undergraduate students at universities across the United States. Students apply directly to the program at the host university. To search for available programs, visit the web site listed above. Students selected to participate in these programs are granted stipends and, in many cases, assistance with housing and travel expense.

Link: <http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/index.jsp>

I. Planning for Connecting Experiences

Important Connecting Experience Proposal Deadlines

Complete Connecting Experience proposals, including the documents listed below, are due to FAC 338 by the appropriate deadline (consult the chart).

- ✓ Completed contract for creative project, research, or internship
 - ✓ One-page statement
- ✓ Scholarship application (if applying for funding)

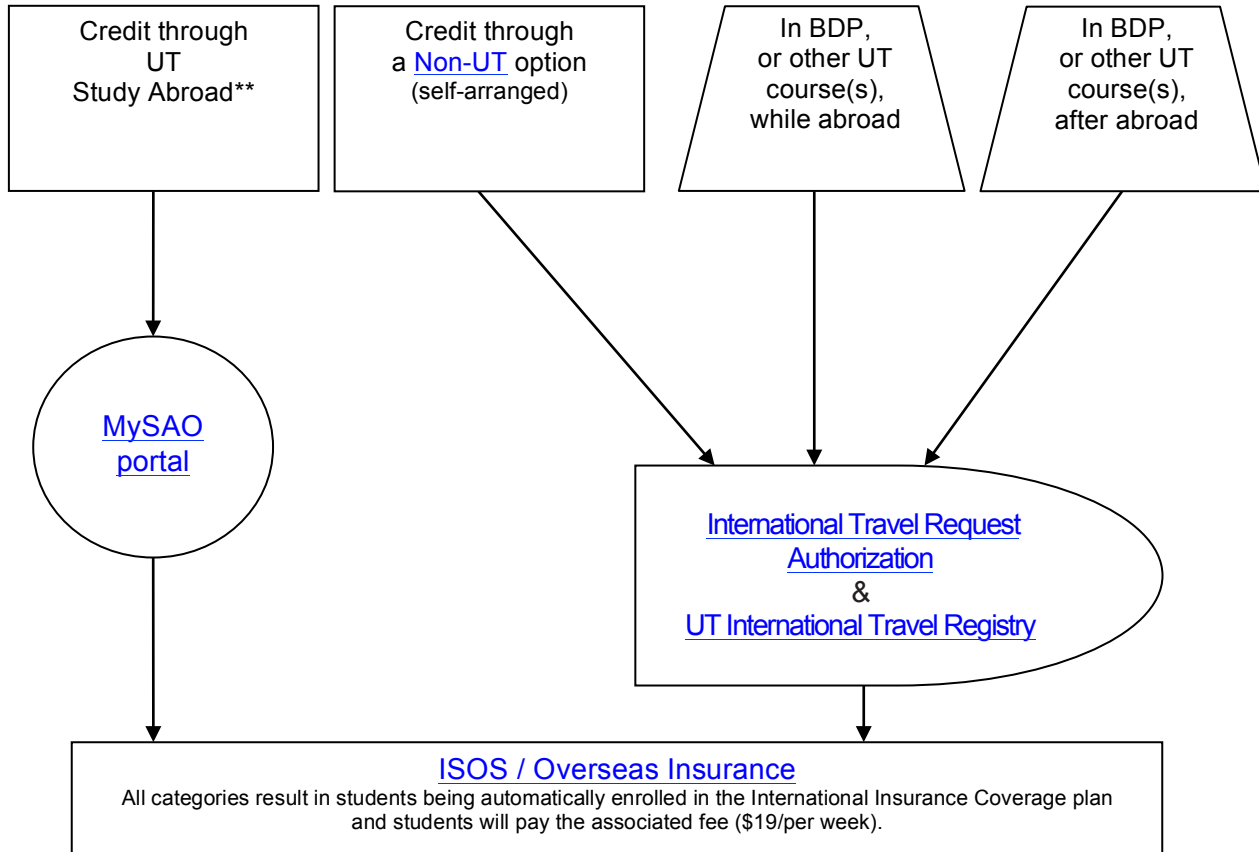
Location of Experience	Fall	Spring	Summer
U.S.	On the 4 th class day	On the 4 th class day	On last day of Spring Finals
Abroad	August 1 st	November 1 st	April 1 st

I. Planning for Connecting Experiences Abroad

Plan **early** to complete a Connecting Experience abroad! Meet with your advisor to discuss your plans. See the chart below, developed by the Study Abroad Office, to learn more about the steps you need to take to get clearance for travel from their office.

BDP Connecting Experience - [Student Travel Policy for International Locations](#)

Note: All students are subject to the [UT Travel Policy to Restricted Regions*](#)



NOTES:

*[Restricted Regions](http://world.utexas.edu/risk/travelpolicy): <http://world.utexas.edu/risk/travelpolicy>

**Any UT program: Maymester, Faculty-led, Exchange, or Affiliated Studies. More about [Program Types](#) (including non-UT options): <http://world.utexas.edu/abroad/programs/types>

Other notes:

- A non-US citizen studying in their home country will not be charged the overseas insurance fee.
- International students should inquire further for more information to determine best path for obtaining credit.
- BDP students are eligible for IEFS and other Global Assist scholarships, please use program code 300999

Chart with interactive links available online: www.tinyurl.com/CE-abroad

2. Completing Connecting Experiences

Registration

If you are receiving BDP credit, your BDP advisor will register you in the appropriate BDP course number by the deadlines on the chart below. If you are receiving departmental course credit, register yourself for the appropriate course by the deadline using the chart below. If you have any questions about registration, please contact your BDP advisor.

Location of Experience	Fall	Spring	Summer
U.S. & Abroad	By the end of the 12 th class day		By the end of the 1 st class day of the summer session I Pay your bill on the first class day or your registration will be canceled, and you may be charged a late fee.

2. Completing Connecting Experiences

Grading Requirements & Communication Expectations with Faculty Mentor

Be sure to follow the guidelines set by you and your faculty mentor to communicate and complete grading requirements. See the front page of your contract in Section II for assignments you agreed to complete in addition to your creative project, internship, or research.

Need help during your Connecting Experience?

CONTACT YOUR BDP ADVISOR! We are here to help you work through any issues. Don't wait until the end of your experience to let us know about your concerns. Call, email, or make an appointment.

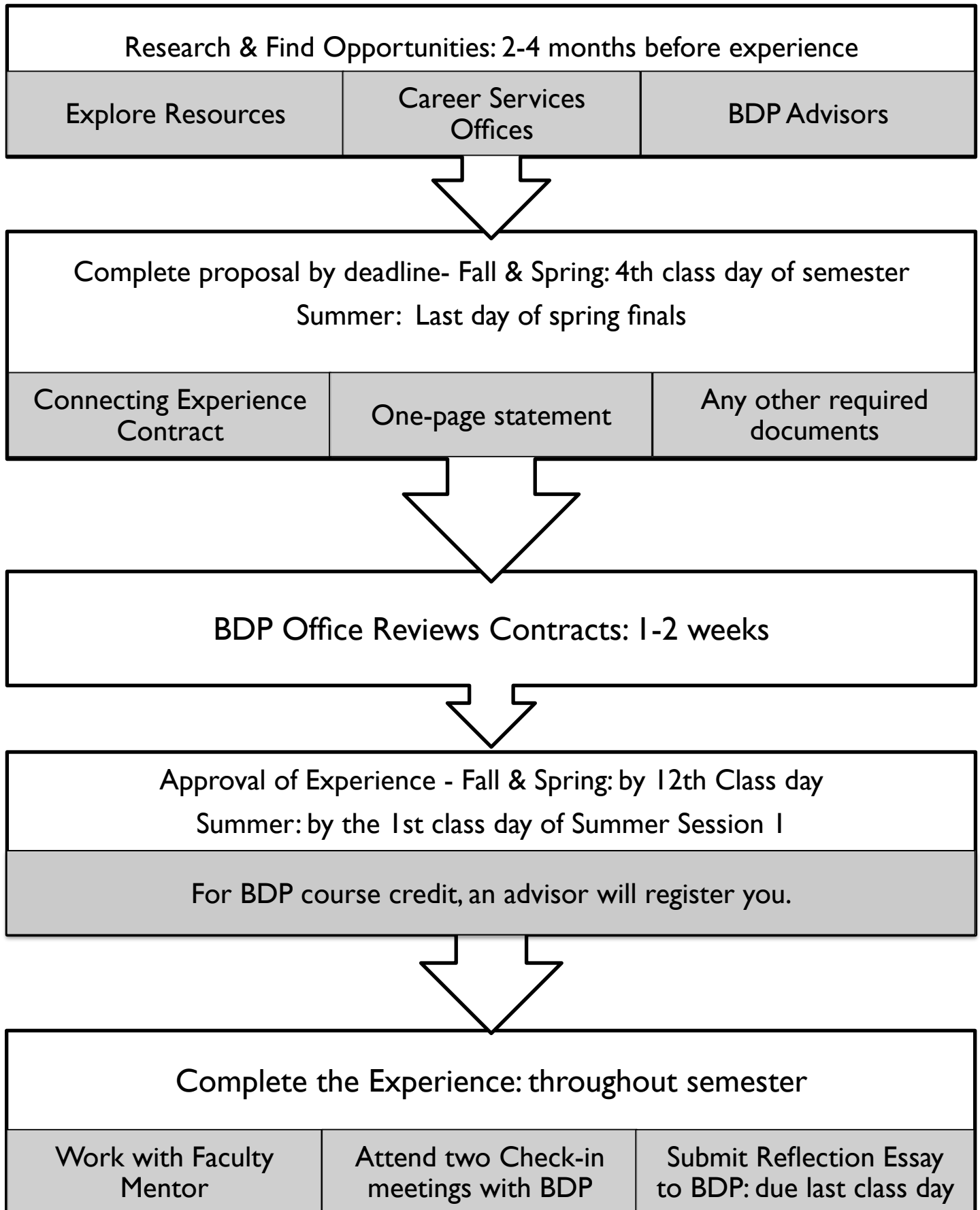
Receiving Credit for your Connecting Experience

Attend **two** Connecting Experience **Check-in meetings** during the semester. Check-in 1 is online, and Check-in 2 is in-person. If you are away from Austin while completing your experience, your advisor will contact you about completing Check-in 2.

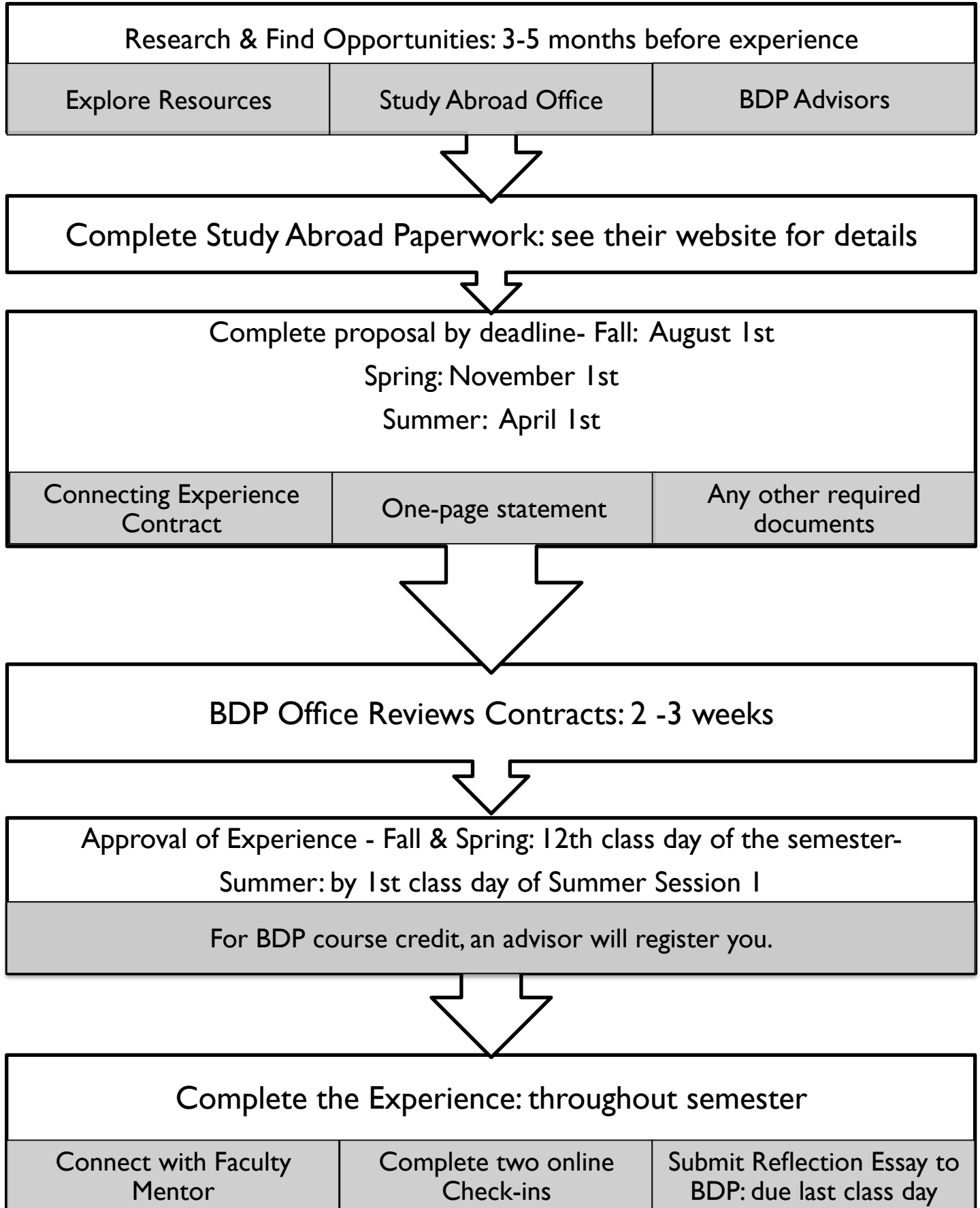
Submit a **Reflection Essay** by the last class day. You'll upload this on the BDP website.

Earn a **C- or better** for the experience. If you earn an incomplete, contact your BDP advisor and faculty mentor to establish a plan to complete.

Connecting Experiences U.S. Process Overview



Connecting Experiences ABROAD Process Overview



Examples from Reflection Essays

Disciplinary Awareness

“The research I did this summer focused on sorption of cesium and strontium by soils. These two chemicals are commonly found in chemical contaminants... My research also focused on the distribution coefficient which is a measurement of how much of a solvent is [absorbed] by a geologic medium.”

“I found that many of the readings I came across regarding abortion seemed to convey a strong belief in human rights, which was demonstrated by the dichotomy of “pro-choice” versus “pro-life” beliefs. Both of these stances entail issues surrounding a woman’s right to choose when to give birth as well as a fetus’s right to live, which fall under the realm of reproductive rights.”

“The Attorney General can have an impact on public policy when he issues opinions on the legality or constitutionality of proposed or enacted laws. Attorney General Abbott discussed how he established a Cyber Crimes Unit, a Fugitive Unit, and expanded the Medical Fraud Control Unit. He also discussed how he appeared before the Supreme Court in order to defend the constitutionality of the 10 Commandments display on the Texas Capital grounds... The Attorney General can become involved with high-profile public policy, which can leave the office in the public eye.”

Interdisciplinary Awareness

“To understand how a contaminant moves through the soil, you have to understand **geology**, **mineralogy**, **environmental engineering**, and a little bit of **nuclear chemistry**. If I did not research the **mineralogy** of my soil sample, I would not have understood what was absorbing the cesium and strontium ions. If I didn’t know some about **nuclear chemistry**, I would have not understood radioactive liquid tracers that are used to measure distribution coefficients. The **engineering** work comes in to play in designing and implicating experiments with the implementation of a solution method after.”

“While I was reading about abortion policies, I was able to apply a **government** and **international perspective** to my research. I also visited health clinics which allowed me to view this issue from a **healthcare perspective** as well as a **social work perspective** by witnessing the effects and implementation of governmental policies. Finally, in reflecting about my experience, I was able to apply a **women’s studies perspective** that reflected patriarchal ideals which makes accessing healthcare difficult for some women.”

“**Journalism** played a role in my research, because I had to go through many news articles finding relevant materials for my research... **Social Justice** is a very important part of my research, and I found out through this connecting experience that there are many organizations dedicated to the cause of Social Justice and they employ the same scientific methods in seeking out the truth... I learned that most things involve multiple disciplines like my research. For example, for **politics** to reach the people, the **media** has to first organize the information in ways that the people can understand.”

Interdisciplinary Comparison

“A difference that can be observed of different disciplines is their purpose. The **environment** side is trying to keep the planet clean and sustainable. The purpose of **economics** (there are many depending on which side one looks from) can be seen as the study of the human behavior and their consumer habits with respect to monetary values. Despite the differences between the two subjects they intersect since **policies** tend to depend on the **economics**. A common underlying similarity between disciplines is the expansive nature of things. No discipline is one sided, there is always more to what it seems. They all analyze concepts and come to a conclusion, which can be influenced by their moral purpose.”

“The most striking realization I came to was that **sociology** and **psychology** relate to each other in more complex ways than I had thought. Previously, I built on the analogy of the natural sciences to think of **sociology** as the emergent outcome of **psychology**, like biology arises from chemistry, which itself comes from physics. However, in Spain I realized this is an oversimplification. **Psychology**, identity, and (therefore) action, are constructed through relationships with existing **social structures**. Since we are born into societies with existing power and normative relationships, **sociology** influences **psychology** very strongly.”

“Through this research, I saw the connection these three topics had with each other. One aspect of **politics** is the process of making **laws**, and **laws** can be made to ensure **Social Justice**. In the case of my research, one of the bills I was researching was about putting regulations on the payday industry and the industry was giving a lot of campaign contributions to stop this bill.”

Transfer of Knowledge and Skills

“I have some basic coursework in geology which gave me a broad introduction to some of the mineralogy work I performed. My chemical engineering coursework in transport phenomena also gave me some background information in liquid and solid movement.”

“I found that I was also well versed in women’s reproductive health issues, such as pregnancy, contraceptives, and pregnancy because I had just taken a Women’s Reproductive Health course the previous semester that focused on the sociological and biological perspective of these issues. Because I had this background, I felt that I had a strong foundation regarding these issues as I began my research which allowed for a further understanding of these subjects.”

“Knowledge I have gained in previous experiences and courses affected the way I understood my connecting experience with Consumer Protection Division. Previously, I interned with city government and a majority of my work involved Internet research. I learned how to summarize the research, pull out the important points, and present it to my supervisor. All of these skills transferred to my experience with CPD and were further developed with my research on Children’s Online Privacy Protection (COPPA).”

Self-Reflection

“Before my internship I knew I wanted to attend grad school, but I always said I want to work two years then figure it out. My coworkers pushed and poked my brain to really determine what I want to do now. They made me realize how hard it is to start working and go back to grad school. I have now figured out that I want to start my master’s degree the following fall. I have also decided that not only do I want to get my Master’s in Environmental Engineering but I also want to get my Master’s in Business Administration.”

“I discovered that as I continued to learn about the area of reproductive rights, I was drawn to the social work perspective because of my interest in a “hands-on” approach to aiding women accessing these services. I also learned that I am much more interested in the practical application of this research, such as social work practice, rather than performing the actual research. I feel that this experience has furthered my knowledge in women’s reproductive health issues and will be beneficial for me when I apply to intern at a local women’s health clinic in the fall.”

“I have discovered many different aspects of myself through my connecting experience. While working with Children’s Online Privacy Protection (COPPA) I realized that I do have an interest in the laws that regulate the Internet. I enjoyed my assignment and would like to see how the act develops and how it is enforced in the future... Through my connecting experience, I have been able to refine my professional goal of becoming a lawyer. The experience has allowed me to observe the public service career path and now I believe it is a path that I want to take... The experience taught me that I can do both and I do not have to rule out one or the other. The experience also taught me that I want to go into an area of law that allows me to prepare and present cases in court.”

Understanding of Subject

“The whole idea of conservation and sustainability is important to the field of environmentalism. At Environment Texas their mission is to have clean air, clean water and open spaces... There were various bills that Environment Texas was supporting such as an extension to the Clean Water Act that would apply to intermittent water ways, support for a limit on mercury emissions, a push for more electric cars and better building codes. All the campaigns had a common goal of bettering the environment through different means such as more stringent codes and regulation or using more environmental resources.”

“I learned that a social justice view explores the conventions of how local policies reflect issues of morality rather than medical facts about women’s health, and how these policies negatively affect women seeking these services. I observed that these perspectives of human rights and social justice remain relevant within the realm of women’s reproductive health as local policies reflect, or fail to reflect these ideals.”

“Social Justice, Politics, and Law are all relevant disciplinary perspectives to my connecting experience. By interning with the Consumer Protection Division, I actively participated in social justice by aiding the CPD lawyers in protecting Texas consumers and the business community. I quickly learned that consumer complaints formed the basis of many investigations and legal actions that brought companies performing deceptive business practices to justice. One of the activities I participated in included consumer complaint review and analysis.”

Presenting And Publishing Your Work

Communicating your findings to others is a crucial and exciting aspect of research. Undergraduates often present their work in one of the following ways:

- Scholarly poster presented at a conference/symposium
- Oral presentation given at a conference/symposium
- Research paper published in a journal

There are opportunities to present your work both on-campus and at the regional or national level. As a BDP student, you are strongly encouraged to consider presenting your work at the annual BDP Poster Session held each Spring as part of Research Week.

Several other resources are provided below, but keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list. When exploring possibilities, a valuable resource is your faculty supervisor. Ask if there are regional or national conferences or other venues specific to your discipline where you might be able to present your work. Also, make sure to talk to your professors and departmental academic advisors about opportunities in your college or school.

Presenting your Work at a Conference or Symposium

Undergraduates may choose to present their research findings at a conference, symposium, or other research-related event or forum. Typically students communicate and present their work in the form of a scholarly poster or an oral presentation.

Listed below are several undergraduate research events, conferences, and resources. There are many opportunities to present your work through departmental and college programs. Make sure to talk to your academic advisors and professors, and search the internet for the latest and most complete offerings.

Your faculty mentor may have recommendations about where you can present your work.

On Campus Undergraduate Research Events and Resources

- Bridging Disciplines Programs Annual Poster Session (<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/bdp>)
- College of Engineering Undergraduate Research Resources (<http://www.engr.utexas.edu/research/undergraduate/>)
- College of Liberal Arts Undergraduate Research Resources and Annual Opportunities for Presentation (http://www.utexas.edu/cola/student_resources/undergraduate_research/)
- College of Natural Sciences Undergraduate Research Resources (http://cns.utexas.edu/current_students/research/)
- College of Natural Sciences Annual Undergraduate Research Forum (http://cns.utexas.edu/current_students/research/forum.asp)
- EUREKA: Web-based Guide to Undergraduate Research Information and Opportunities (<http://www.utexas.edu/research/eureka/index.php>)
- Office of Undergraduate Research Poster Resources (<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/ugr/>)
- Research Week (<http://wwwtest.utexas.edu/ugs/ugr/researchweek/>)

National Conference on Undergraduate Research

- National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (<http://www.ncur.org/>)

The National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) is dedicated to promoting undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity in all fields of study by sponsoring an annual conference for students.

Publishing Your Work in a Journal

When your research experience culminates in a paper, you may want to consider submitting it to a journal for publication. Listed below are a number of undergraduate research journals to consider. If you have been collaborating with a faculty member or a research team, be sure to clear your proposed ideas with your faculty supervisor. Your supervisor might have recommendations about where you submit your work. Depending on the quality and significance of your work, your supervisor may recommend you submit it to the professional journal specific to the discipline.

When working on your submission to a journal, remember that the **Undergraduate Writing Center** in the Flawn Academic Center 211 (471-6222) offers services for writers on a drop-in basis or by appointment.

UT Undergraduate Research Journals

- *Analecta* (<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/analecta/>)
Analecta is UT's literary and arts journal, open to undergraduate and graduate students.
- *Ex Nihilo* (http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/philosophy/undergraduate/ex_nihilo/)
Ex Nihilo is a student-run philosophy journal that publishes undergraduate philosophy essays of exceptional quality.
- *Texas Neuroscience Review* (<http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/tnr/index.html>)
The *Texas Neuroscience Review* is a student-run scientific journal published at UT. It is a compilation of review articles highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of the field of neuroscience.
- *University of Texas Undergraduate Research Journal* (<http://www.utexas.edu/research/student/urj/>)
The *University of Texas at Austin Undergraduate Research Journal* is a student-edited and published multidisciplinary journal of undergraduate studies and research.

Other Undergraduate Research Journals (Important Note: This is only a partial list of the existing journals; be sure to search the internet for the most up-to-date and complete listing of opportunities.)

- *The Dualist: Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy* (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/dualist/>)
- *Pittsburgh Undergraduate Review* (<http://136.142.181.181/~pur/index.php>)
- *Psi Chi Journal of Undergraduate Research* (<http://www.psichi.org/pubs/journal/>)
- *American Undergraduate Journal of Politics and Government* (<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~psalpha/journal/>)
- *Journal of Young Investigators* (<http://www.jyi.org/about/>)

BDP Poster Session

All BDP students are encouraged to present a poster of their research and/or internship experiences at the annual BDP Poster Session, held each April as part of Research Week.

What is a poster?

A poster is a visual communication tool. It is a large document that allows you to present your research in a clear, concise, graphic format. Posters can be made at any stage of research. Effective posters attract attention, convey information clearly, and initiate conversations.



Why make a poster?

- Communicating your ideas and findings is a critical and exciting step of the research process.
- Participating in a poster session gives you public speaking experience and prepares you for graduate school and/or a career.
- A poster can be created at any stage of the research project. Your project does not need to be complete.
- Unlike traditional oral presentations that create a lecture atmosphere, a poster session allows for discussion of the topic in a more relaxed, informal setting.
- As a BDP student, you will have access to workshops and individual advising to help you through all steps in making the poster.



What happens at the BDP poster session?

The BDP Poster Session is an event where students display the posters they've created about their research and internship experiences. Attendees—including BDP students, faculty, and staff, as well as other invited guests—walk up and down the aisles viewing posters and discussing projects with presenters.

It's also a great opportunity to find out more about other BDP students' Connecting Experiences.

I've never made a poster. How do I begin?

First, speak with your BDP advisor. Let the advisor know you're interested in presenting your work. Your advisor will give you information on the annual poster session and connect you with the resources available to BDP students.

Each spring, the BDP's and Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) host a series of workshops for students interested in presenting a poster. Advisors will work with you through all steps of the poster-making process. To find out more about poster-making, visit the OUR web site at <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/ugr>.

Integration Essay Guidelines

To complete your BDP and earn your certificate, you must write a 3-4 page integration essay that draws together the various parts of your experience.

You might think of your integration essay as the **roadmap** to your BDP—your opportunity to **reflect** for yourself and **articulate** for others how your coursework, your research and internship experiences, and your other experiences on and off campus have together shaped your intellectual and professional interests, accomplishments, and goals.

REFLECT FOR YOURSELF

Writing is not just putting down on paper what you already know; rather, the writing process can be a powerful means of coming to a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of what you know and believe. Your integration essay is a piece of reflective writing through which you should come to a more sophisticated understanding of what your BDP experience has taught you.

You might think of your BDP application essay as the first step in a longer process of defining yourself as an interdisciplinarian. Your integration essay is the culmination of this process, and it should allow you to reflect on how you've grown and changed through your experiences in the BDP and at UT.

ARTICULATE FOR OTHERS

The integration essay is very similar to two other kinds of writing you will have to do as you continue in your academic and professional careers: the personal statement you write for graduate school applications, and the cover letter you write for job applications. In all of these types of writing, you have the challenging task of telling an outsider in a short piece of writing not only *what* you have accomplished, but also *who* you are and *how* you will be a valuable addition to the program or organization. Your integration essay should be able to tell someone who doesn't already know you what you have accomplished in your BDP and what those accomplishments tell about you.

INTEGRATING YOUR BDP EXPERIENCE

As the name suggests, the primary purpose of the integration essay is to integrate, or draw connections among the disparate experiences and disciplinary perspectives that you have brought together through your BDP. Some of the questions you should consider as you write your essay include:

- How has your BDP allowed you to make connections across different disciplinary perspectives?
- What issues, problems, or questions related to your BDP topic have you been able to understand more fully by seeing them from multiple perspectives?
- How have your research and/or internship experiences connected to your BDP coursework? What has this first-hand experience taught you that the coursework could not? And conversely, how has what you've learned in class made you a stronger researcher or intern?
- Has your BDP experience impacted your future career goals? How?
- How has your BDP connected to your major? What have you learned through the BDP that you would have missed if you had not had this experience?

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR ESSAY

1. Your integration essay is due to the BDP office no later than the deadline for applying to graduate from the university in your last semester at UT. (Please consult the BDP web site or office for the actual deadline during the semester you plan to graduate.) You may either drop off a hard copy at the front desk in FAC 1, or you may email your essay as a Word (.doc) attachment to bdp@austin.utexas.edu.
2. Your essay will be read by the BDP staff and by members of the faculty panel for your BDP. Please keep in mind that the faculty members are part of your audience.
3. If the faculty panel determines that your essay does not reflect the level of knowledge, understanding, or articulation expected for earning the BDP certificate, you may be asked to revise your essay. The integration essay is a requirement for earning your certificate.
4. Use examples in your essay to give specificity to your discussion.

We will be reading your essay with the following criteria in mind:

- **Essay is well-written.** Both in terms of structure and organization, and at the sentence level, your essay must be clearly and effectively written for the appropriate audience.
- **Essay demonstrates disciplinary awareness.** Your essay should refer to disciplines relevant to your BDP focus, referring to questions or issues that might be addressed through a particular discipline and demonstrating understanding of disciplinary perspectives, tools, or methods.
- **Essay demonstrates interdisciplinary awareness and ability to think comparatively across disciplines.** Your essay should bring together the perspectives offered by more than one discipline relevant to your BDP focus, demonstrating understanding of the perspectives, methodologies, and knowledge offered by different disciplines related to your subject and showing how awareness of multiple disciplines has helped you to understand the subject in a more sophisticated way.
- **Essay demonstrates ability to transfer knowledge and skills from one context to another.** Your essay should articulate how knowledge you have gained in one context has impacted your understanding in another. You might discuss how what you have learned in the classroom has been useful in your hands-on connecting experiences, or you might describe how your connecting experiences have enlarged your understanding of something learned in the classroom.
- **Essay demonstrates self-reflection.** Your essay should reflect on how your interests have developed through your BDP and other UT experience, including how your experience has helped you shape or refine your goals for the future.
- **Essay demonstrates understanding of the BDP subject.** Your essay should discuss issues related to questions, knowledge, or skills relevant to the BDP subject, showing an understanding of what it means to study the BDP topic.

BDP Integration Essay

In my Bridging Disciplines application essay I stated that the goal of my participation in the program was to contribute to my pre-medical education something beyond biological systems and infectious diseases. My biology degree and upper-division biology courses to me were excellent preparation for the technical aspect of medicine but lacked “the roundedness of the medical field in general.” I therefore joined the Bridging Disciplines Program in order to understand the complex social, political, and economic issues surrounding the healthcare practitioner. It truly has been amazing how every course, seminar, and research experience I pursued under the BDP Social Inequality, Health, and Policy strand and Public Health area of study has contributed uniquely to my current awareness of health and healthcare, which I continue to explore in my final connecting experience.

The integration of all my BDP experiences must begin with an appreciation for where I started educationally and where I currently stand; the Bridging Disciplines Program gets credit for everything in between. Before joining the BDP, a typical semester consisted predominantly of upper-division natural sciences courses such as developmental biology, organic chemistry, and vertebrate physiology. Although I did enroll in courses outside of the Natural Sciences department, I had never, for example, taken a sociology course. All my research experiences had been in a microbiology lab working with genes, enzymes, and solutions; I knew next to nothing about Medicare and Medicaid.

It has been almost two years since I joined the Bridging Disciplines Program in the fall of 2007, and I am currently finishing my certificate with a connecting experience with the Texas

Department of State Health Services. I work there as an intern and an author on a paper titled *The Systems Dynamics of Teen Pregnancy and STI Risk in Texas: 2005 to 2015* that is being submitted for publication and presentation at the 2009 Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists Conference. The paper aims to build a mathematical model that predicts STI and pregnancy rates in Texas using sociological as well as biological variables. It delves into population-specific factors, infectious properties, the ethics of data collection methodology, state and federal-sponsored surveys and programs, etc. It is truly an interdisciplinary undertaking.

I would have undoubtedly been overwhelmed in approaching this project simply as a Dean's Scholars Biology student. However, over the years Bridging Disciplines Program courses and research experiences have contributed greatly to my interdisciplinary education and allowed me to tackle the many complex topics of my current project both individually and holistically. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the BDP was in an area best captured by the title of a BDP-listed course I took my first semester with the program—the Sociology of Illness, with Dr. Marc Musick.

In simple terms, the sociology of illness, or medical sociology, is the study of disease prevalence in specific populations according to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc, and the reasons that specific populations might be affected disproportionately by different diseases. To me these were completely new concepts. As a biology student illnesses and diseases existed within an individual. They were caused by a pathogen. Dr. Musick's class opened me up to population-based study; to the idea that illness is a dynamic, complex concept

consisting of many layers that extend from culturally-based behaviors to bad neighborhoods. It was something that added new dimensions to my understanding of disease and illness. I had never thought of social justice and health insurance as important elements in the health of a population.

The concepts of medical sociology are strongly related to the field of public health. However, the disciplines of public health and medical sociology are themselves an amalgam of many different disciplines. Public health was therefore not an area that I became familiar with through a single course in college. My experiences in BDP 101: Health Inequality in Childhood/Adolescence, SOC 319: Introduction to Sociology, and especially researching the population of aging Hispanics with Dr. Angel provided different perspectives critical to my overall familiarity and understanding of public health.

BDP 101 focused on adolescent populations and how simple illnesses in this sensitive age group could have a ripple effect that expands through adulthood and old-age. Introduction to Sociology provided a perspective on sociology on the international level, such as culturally-directed beliefs in Africa that serve as a barrier to AIDS public health directives. With a more hand-on approach, Dr. Angel helped me apply the concepts I learned in class by providing me with a research project focused on the elderly Hispanic population and physical disability. In addition to exploring first-hand the disparate health conditions of this specific ethnic and age group and the unique factors within this population that give rise to these disparate health conditions, Dr. Angel guided me in adding a legislative layer to my exploration of public health. In exploring state and federal funding to programs such as the Area Agencies on Aging and the

services they provide, I realized how the immense task of creating and guiding a public policy that effectively addresses the health needs of all the different groups is handled politically and legislatively. Ultimately, these experiences with social inequality and health policy would be replicated in my current internship and re-applied to sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy.

It's important to note that the BDP contributed to my proficiency in the more subtle areas of my internship as well. The M 316 Statistics course, part of my foundation BDP course requirement, was instrumental in my understanding of survey techniques as well as sampling methods, which were used extensively in data collection and the mathematical model at the heart of the project. Also, the ethical debate surrounding monetary incentives for participants in respondent-driven sampling contained many familiar elements thanks to the special BDP 329 course "Ethics, Law, and Healthcare" presented by Dr. William Winslade. I felt comfortable debating with my supervisor the pros and cons of this sampling method with regards to injection drug-users.

The interdisciplinary connections between all my BDP experiences are indeed too many to include in this essay. Suffice it to say that the completion of my Bridging Disciplines Program certificate has allowed me to understand healthcare on a level I never would have been able to achieve with a simple biology degree. It has led me course by course, experience by experience, from being strictly an academic, biology student to a public health researcher. I am currently in the position to attend UT Southwestern Medical School starting the Fall of 2009 should I not get better offers in the upcoming months. I am honored to have this opportunity and I truly

attribute it to an awareness of health and healthcare that I was able to deliver in my medical school application and interviews. It's an awareness that not only prepares me as a physician for the challenges ahead but also opens my eyes to career opportunities that take my role beyond the operating table and into the community. It's an awareness I owe almost exclusively to the Bridging Disciplines Program.

International Studies BDP
Integration Essay

The Bridging Disciplines Program has been an invaluable part of my college experience, even though I only joined this year. Conceptualizing my classes as part of an International Studies Certificate instead of an assortment of electives has caused me to draw connections between the classes that I would have ordinarily regarded as independent. Not only have I gained a better overview of international studies than I would have otherwise, but I have also been better able to utilize what I have learned by applying my knowledge across various disciplines and hands-on situations.

The interdisciplinary nature of the program showed me the importance of examining an issue from a variety of perspectives. My first two connecting experiences are very different, even though they both explore facets of international trade. While I was studying abroad in Switzerland, I participated in an independent research project that culminated in a 30-page report. I was encouraged to interview leading experts instead of researching China's economic ties to the Middle East in the library. The report included the insights of economists at the Vienna Institute for International Studies, oil market analysts at the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), US State Department officials, and corporate executives. Conversely, my terrorism research project has taken a quantitative approach. I am helping analyze terrorism-related data that will be applied to theories that have previously only been explored qualitatively. Not only have both projects given me a deeper understanding of international trade, but they have also challenged me to use new research methods.

I have synthesized these two methodologies in my third connecting experience, my Plan II thesis. I am examining how China's growing demand for oil impacts US foreign policy considerations. I recognized the benefits of the approaches I had used previously, as well as the limitations of using them independently. For example, when I explored China's oil diplomacy with Iran and the effect that its business deals have on its

UN Security Council votes, I looked at China's voting record and foreign direct investment figures. However, the statistics are misleading by themselves, because they do not show how China has used veto threats or the influence of its Security Council position in diplomatic and economic activities. As a result, I also interviewed an International Atomic Energy Agency official. While his opinion by itself would be considered biased, it was very helpful in painting a fuller picture overall. Therefore, I have incorporated interviews with officials and economic data into my thesis, instead of doing typical library research. I also analyzed primary source documents, like presidential speeches, as a way of showing the changes in foreign policy over time – a skill that I learned in my History of East Asian Relations class. I feel that without my first two connecting experiences, I would have had a much more superficial understanding of my topic area, and that I would not have had the confidence to explore Chinese oil diplomacy in different ways.

I have also used the lessons I have learned through the Bridging Disciplines Program and applied them to activities outside the scope of my certificate. For example, I acquired a scientific understanding of HIV / AIDS in a microbiology class. Instead of writing this class off as a mere general requirement needing to be satisfied, I have used this technical knowledge in a number of situations. While I was studying in Geneva, Switzerland, I had the opportunity to visit a number of trade organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). There, my understanding of the way antiretroviral drugs are developed and work allowed me to see the debate surrounding the agreement on Trade and Intellectual Property Rights from a new angle. My visit to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV / AIDS (UNAIDS) put a face on the AIDS crisis by discussing humanitarian issues, not science or trade statistics. It also highlighted the importance of education and prevention methods in addition to pharmaceutical research. When I returned to the US and participated in a public debate on conditional aid to African

countries, I was better prepared than the other participants because I had a more complete understanding of the issue; I was able draw from my scientific, economic, and humanitarian background knowledge in order to evaluate the impacts that various foreign assistance policies have on African countries fighting AIDS. The Bridging Disciplines Program showed me how to view education as a continuous process that does not stop once the semester is over. This outlook caused all of my experiences to be more rewarding.

My Bridging Disciplines experience has also altered my future plans. My classes and connecting experiences heightened my interest in international law, but my visits to international organizations in Switzerland underscored the need for good leadership and management skills when working with these types of institutions. Since I am also getting a Business Foundations Certificate, I was really intrigued by the role business skills, like negotiation, budgeting and public relations, play in international organizations. As a result, I have decided to work for a year to strengthen some of those skills, instead of jumping straight into law school. As a result of my participation in the program, I might actually be making a difference in the world four years from now, instead of working in an office. Regardless of my individual impact on foreign affairs, though, I am confident that my Bridging Disciplines experience has changed the way I will approach any problem or project.