

THE BIS CONNECTOR

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

* BIS admitted 63 new students for Fall 2010!

* 2009 alum, Fernando Menendez received the Grad of the Last Decade (GOLD) award from College of Humanities and Social Sciences during Mason's [Alumni Weekend](#) celebrations!

* On October 8, 2010, the BIS program hosted the fall meeting for the Association of Virginia Interdisciplinary Studies Administrators (AVISA)!

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Letter from the Director

Welcome to the new BIS Connector Newsletter. This issue is the first with a new name. "Connector" is an appropriate label on many levels. Through this publication the BIS program seeks to connect with current students, alumni, and colleagues. Alumni connect with each other and with current students through the stories we carry. We also celebrate the impressive connections students are making in their interdisciplinary academic work. Please stay connected to us. This publication is sent only electronically; please update the Alumni Office with your contact information so we can stay in touch (see p. 7 for directions).

One way you can contribute to making connections is to volunteer to be a mentor to current BIS students. We are seeking graduates of BIS and senior students interesting in contributing to the sense of community in BIS. The training for this program is still under development,

but we are ready to collect the names of prospective mentors. Please send us a quick note of interest to bis@gmu.edu if you would like to participate.

In part because of a successful academic program review last spring, BIS was given the resources to hire a new term assistant professor. We share this position with the English department. We are fortunate to have Dr. Aaron Winter in this role. He is teaching BIS 390 and 490 this fall to rave reviews. See page 6 for a profile on Dr. Winter and the other new faculty in the BIS program.

Our program goals for the 2010-2011 academic year are ambitious. We are inviting BIS students who have stopped out of the program to resume their studies. We are expanding our connection to alumni through this Newsletter, the web site, and fund raising. As always, we are celebrating student achievement by giving senior project awards and now have a new



Jeannie Brown Leonard, BIS Director
Photo courtesy of University Relations
George Mason University

recognition for best BIS proposal. We continue to improve opportunities for student to student and student to alumni networking and expect to launch a formal mentoring program soon. BIS also is contributing to the dialogue on adult degree-completion programs in the region and the nation.

BIS continues to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. Take time to identify a neighbor or colleague who might benefit from learning more about BIS. Refer them to www.bis.gmu.edu for more information. Most of our students hear about us through referral – spread the word about BIS!

'09 Alumna wins 'Name This Newsletter' contest!



Congratulations to 2009 BIS alumna, Virginia Belcher, for submitting the winning entry to the "Name this Newsletter" contest announced in spring 2010.

After careful review from BIS faculty and staff, Virginia's entry of "BIS Connector" was selected for its communication of the newsletter's purpose –to connect BIS students past and present. As the contest winner, Virginia will receive a \$100 gift card to Barnes & Noble! Virginia enrolled in the BIS program in summer 2004 and

graduated with honors in Summer 2009, receiving her BIS degree in Performing Arts Management. After graduation she taught dance classes part-time and volunteered at the Potomac Arts Academy. Virginia currently teaches ballet and works in a dance studio office. She and her husband welcomed their first child in May 2010.

“Even with all her responsibilities, she still took the time to provide insightful and in-depth feedback for my project.”

*~ Susan Kennedy,
‘09 BIS alumna*

2010 Outstanding BIS Faculty Mentor

Congratulations to **Dr. Linda Chrosniak** from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) Psychology Department! Dr. Chrosniak was presented with the Outstanding BIS Faculty Mentor award at the BIS Graduation Reception on May 15, 2010. An experienced faculty mentor with BIS, Dr. Chrosniak was nominated by 2009 BIS alumna, Susan Kennedy. “Even with all her responsibilities, she still took the time to provide insightful and in-depth feedback for my project,” said Susan. The faculty and staff of the BIS program feel Dr. Chrosniak’s skills, expertise and dedication to the students she mentors epitomizes the role of a BIS faculty mentor.

2010 Student Project Award Recipients

Mark Van Pelt

The Robert T. Hawkes, Jr. Award for Outstanding BIS Project

IT Governance in Federal Project Management

Ashley Morgan

Most Creative BIS Project

Community Policing Education: A Communications Curriculum for Basic Police Academy

Dina Ahtzener

Outstanding BIS Project in the Public Interest

Data Breaches within the Federal Government



Pure Happenstance: How Robert Flanagan found BIS and much more

Written by: A lot of things happened in 1979: Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize, the nuclear accident at 3-mile Island in Pennsylvania, Margaret Thatcher became the first female British Prime Minister, the Pittsburgh Steelers beat the Dallas Cowboys at Super Bowl XIII, and Sony introduced the Walkman. But one headline wasn't printed on a newspaper or in a magazine; instead it was printed on a diploma. In 1979, Robert Flanagan reached the goal that all students coming to BIS work so hard for...he completed his bachelor's degree.

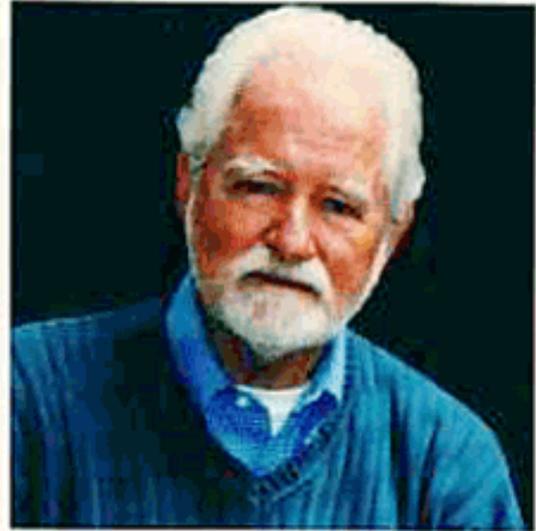
Like all BIS students, Robert came to BIS with a wealth of experiences. After graduating from high school in 1954, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps, serving from 1954 to 1958. When he was discharged from the Marine Corps his intent was to go to college but, with a new baby and family to care for, life took him in a different direction. Robert worked as an insurance investigator and a city policeman before returning to the military in 1960. He joined the Army Security Agency and served sixteen years. During that time, Robert's career was mainly focused in the intelligence arena where he studied engineering, Russian language, lived abroad in Germany, Italy and Morocco, and deployed twice to Viet Nam. He retired from the Army Security Agency in January 1976.

In the fall of 1977, when Robert found himself at the doors of BIS, he recalls, "according to my advi-

sor, the time, my age, education and 'life experiences' made me perfect for that program. I was 41 years of age and wanted to finish my college bachelor's degree before I became too old to hold the vision." So, while working at E-Systems, Inc. (now Raytheon Company) Robert began taking evening classes at George Mason to pursue a degree in writing. As is the case with most BIS students, Robert had no aspirations of continuing on to graduate work post BIS, but that is exactly where he found himself and received both a Master's of Arts in English and a Master's of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. Robert states, "I think only the BIS program could have contained my ambitions...what I expected and wanted out of a degree. But then it grew and launched me into the graduate programs which prepared me for the past 19 years as a writer."

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After graduating from BIS and completing his graduate studies, Robert continued working for E-Systems, Inc. and was transferred to a management role as manager of the Publications department. A satisfying change, Robert managed the publishing facility within the corporation, which included writers, word processors, artists, videographers, draftsmen, photographers, print operators, and technical editors. After retiring from E-Systems, Inc., Robert relocated to West Virginia and for the past 11 years has written a weekly newspaper column for the *Hampshire Review*. Additionally, he writes often for major magazines and has published several collections of novels and short stories. When asked for his thoughts or reflections on the BIS program as



BIS grad '79, Robert Flanagan. Photo provided by Mr. Flanagan.

a student, Roberts advises, "Be completely candid and forthcoming with your BIS advisor. Look upon BIS as an extra card in your hand to play. Not exactly a magic potion, maybe not a 'Get out of Jail Free' card, but certainly a means to facilitate passage through what might otherwise be a supremely challenging process."

Published works by Robert Flanagan

- Bits & Pieces* (2001)
- Peripheral Visions* (2003)
- Involuntary Tour* (2009)
- Dragon Bait* (2010)
- Residue* (due 2011)

www.connemarapress.org

ATTENTION ALUMNI

Alumni Profiles are a project of the BIS program to tell the personal stories of alumni, their experiences in BIS and beyond. The purpose is to highlight the many accomplishments of our alumni and to engage the alumni community in illustrating the BIS program to current and prospective students.

If you would be interested in contributing your story, please email bis@gmu.edu.

NEXT STEPS

BIS Class of 2010

Next Steps is a space to announce the next steps for our recent BIS alumni. Whether it's plans for graduate studies, a new job or traveling the world—we want to celebrate it. Join us in congratulating the following BIS graduates from the class of 2010 and wishing them well in the steps they will take post-BIS:

Susan Kilday

Since graduating in spring 2010 with her BIS degree in Organizational Leadership, Susan was accepted and is enrolled in the George Mason School of Public Policy's M.S. in Organizational Development and Knowledge Management (ODKM) program. The ODKM program is an 18-month cohort program that addresses the changing needs of organizations in the 21st century, including change management, governance and policy, organizational development and strategic knowledge management. Susan states, "The ODKM program is expressly designed to address the needs of the new organization. I'm very excited to be part of a program that is so timely and relevant."

Brian McLendon

Brian McLendon received his BIS degree in Mathematics Education in Summer 2010. After a 23 year career with the United States Air Force, Brian recently retired and has plans to move to Texas with his family. On October 1, 2010, he presented to the entire populace at the Norwood School in Bethesda, Maryland, during a chapel ceremony on responsibility. This presentation was a follow-up event based on a field observation he'd conducted for one of his class assignments. After relocating, Brian plans to apply to Texas Christian University's Master's of Arts in Education and complete the certification requirements to become a teacher. "None of this would be possible at this time if not for the BIS program. Thank you."

Ethan Rumrill

Ethan received his BIS degree with a concentration in Intercultural Communications in spring 2010. Since then, Ethan has been accepted into the Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies for Spring 2011. Ethan will be pursuing a Master's in Liberal Studies with a concentration in International Relations.

Virginia Holloway

Virginia "Ginny" Holloway received her BIS degree with a concentration in Early Childhood and Adult Education in the Summer 2010. Ginny is now enrolled in the George Mason Graduate School of Education and is pursuing the Master's of Education (M.Ed.) in Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction. Along with completing this 30 hour program, Ginny hopes to earn an 18-hour certificate in College Teaching. Aside from her two evening graduate classes this fall, Ginny operates a family child care business, which she has done for the past 21 years.



Aaron Winter, Term Assistant Professor, BIS & English

Written by: Linda Hemm

Dr. Aaron Winter joined the BIS faculty in the fall 2010, teaching BIS 390 - The Research Process, BIS 490 - Senior Project, and two freshman level English classes. He recently moved to the Washington, D.C. area after completing a year of teaching at the National Tsing-Hua University in Hsinchu, Taiwan. While teaching English at the university, his wife, a journalist, did freelance writing including sections for the Michelin Guide to Taiwan. Aaron is a graduate of Wake Forest University with a B.A. in English and a minor in philoso-

phy. In 2008, he received his Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Irvine after completing his dissertation in Nineteenth Century American Political Satire.

When asked what he enjoys most about teaching, Aaron responded that teaching is unpredictable and he learns a lot from his students, especially BIS students who are professionals and have a lot of interests. As a BIS professor, he feels he is more of a "rudder" to help guide students than an engine to pull them along as is often the case with freshman students

who are just beginning their studies.

Aaron is an avid baseball fan. When he teaches on game nights, he will need to program his VCR correctly to record the games. He likes to cook and garden and he and his wife love to travel. They have been to over 40 countries. They are both happy to be back in the metropolitan area where his wife's family lives.



Cynthia Lehman, Adjunct Professor, BIS & Communication

Written by: Stephanie Barnett

Cynthia Lehman joined BIS as an adjunct faculty in spring 2010, teaching BIS 491, the BIS program's senior project presentation course. What makes Cynthia such a great fit for the program is that she is a BIS alumna herself; graduating in 2003 with a concentration in "Public Affairs Management." After finishing her BIS degree, Cynthia continued into the Master's of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies program at George Mason, graduating in

spring 2005 with a concentration in "Women in the Media." This fall, Cynthia is teaching another section of BIS 491 and loves it. "The students appreciate connecting with someone who is currently using this degree," she says. Outside of BIS, she is part of the Communication department at Mason, teaching courses in videography and public speaking. Beyond Mason, Cynthia is part of the Board of Directors for [The Women's Center](#) in Vienna, VA and participates in their Women's Leadership Confer-

ence each March. In the time she has left, Cynthia works as a licensed realtor with Long and Foster in the Centreville office, enjoys volunteering in the community to raise money for cancer research, and travels internationally and domestically every chance she can get!



Simone Daleo, Graduate Lecturer, BIS

Simone Daleo is teaching BIS 300 this fall. Simone specializes in the arts, culture and society. A Ph.D. student in Public Sociology at George Mason, she's served on the faculty of the University of Virginia, teaching Writing for both the Curry School of Education and the School of Continuing and Professional

Studies. A former professor of Dance and Theatre (Wesleyan University and Sonoma State University), she holds a Bachelor's from Trinity College with a self-designed interdisciplinary major: Verbal/Nonverbal Expression in the Arts, and a Master's in Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University

(Health, Human Ecology and the Arts). Her background as writer, dancer, performing artist and storyteller has led to an interest in narrative, visual and media culture.



Interning to a New Career: Current BIS Student Finds New Ground with AARP

Written by: Julie Allstrom, a current student in the BIS program, is working on a concentration in workplace employment studies and the aging workforce. To get into this new field of interest, one of Julie's first goals was to do an internship related to this area of study.

In an article about careers written by Mary Kearn in the August issue of *Forbes* magazine, Julie's recent experiences in the workforce are highlighted. Two years ago, she lost her job as an executive assistant with several decades of office experience with a professional sports team in Virginia. Following this experience, she was encouraged by her family to return to college to finish her degree after having given it up when she married. In Fall 2009, she enrolled at

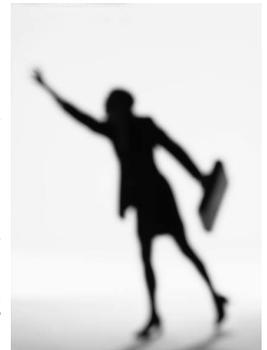
George Mason University.

In Spring 2010, Julie found an unpaid internship at the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), a national non-profit advocacy organization in Washington DC. The internship helped Julie meet her objectives of "having current experience on her resume and building a network of new contacts."

Julie plans to graduate in May 2011. She is now volunteering for AARP to extend her internship. She was asked to continue with the organization through the end of the year. She will attend the annual four day AARP conference in Orlando, FL where she will be working as an unpaid staff member in the career center with career counselors, instructors in interviewing, resume writing and job searching skills for those age

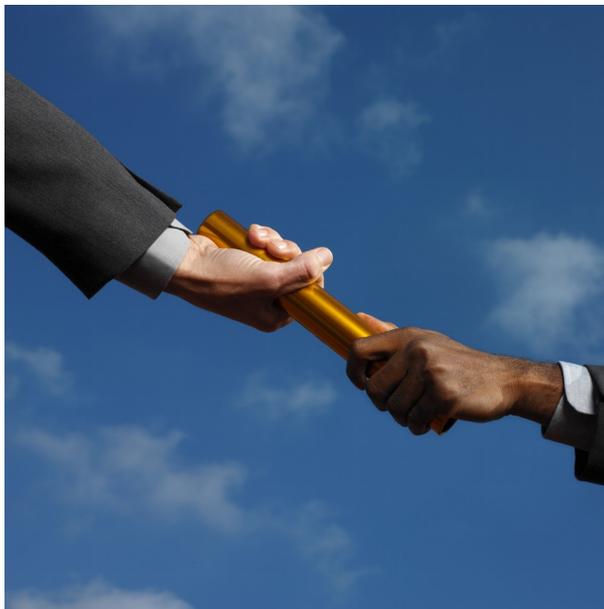
50 and over. All of her expenses for the conference are being paid by AARP including airfare, hotel and meals.

Julie states she has a good working relationship with the director and eight others on the team. Her focus for the conference will be to seek new opportunities and do things of value for the AARP organization. Through her many contacts, she hopes this experience with AARP will lead to employment when she finishes her degree at GMU. She also plans to continue graduate study following completion of her undergraduate degree.



Help Wanted: BIS Peer Mentors

The BIS program is planning a peer mentoring program to help integrate new BIS students into the BIS community and the larger GMU community. Through this program, current BIS students and BIS alumni will offer information, advice and support to new students who express an interest in talking with an experienced BIS student. The support offered by BIS students will not replace information and guidance provided by BIS staff or faculty mentors.



If you have an interest in mentoring a new BIS student, please send a message to bis@gmu.edu or call (703) 993-4556.



Support BIS!

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Your contributions help us continue to enhance the BIS program. If you would like to make a financial contribution, visit <http://supportingmason.gmu.edu/contribute.html>. Be sure to specify either BIS Program Fund or BIS Scholarships! Thank you for your generosity.

For information about Alumni Affairs, visit: <http://www.gmu.edu/alumni>. Be sure to keep your information up-to-date in the [MASONline Alumni Directory](#) in order to receive future alumni newsletters from BIS!

Learning without Limits



Student Recognitions

- Congratulations to Jeremiah Foxwell—Spring 2010 winner of the Outstanding Achievement Award for Beginning Arabic from the Department of Modern and Classical Languages!
- Congratulations to current student, Pamela Martin, for winning the 2010 Dean's Challenge Award and for presenting at the American Educational Research Association's conference!
- Congratulations to BIS alumna, Juanita Turner, and current BIS student, Karen Bontrager, who were both honored at the 2nd Annual Women's Studies Tea during the Spring 2010 semester!

Upcoming Events

- 2010 Moments of Truth Lecture: Annie Leonard—October 20, 2010, Johnson Center Cinema, 3:00pm.
- Fall 2010 Senior Capstone Presentations—December 16, 2010. Further event details TBA. Visit the [website](#) for more information as the event date nears.