

# Bachelor of Individualized Study

SPRING NEWSLETTER

April 20, 2010

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

On April 27, 2010, the following BIS students will be presenting their research at the 2010 CHSS Undergraduate Research Symposium; click on the student's name for their project descriptions:

- [David McAbee](#) (Oral)
- [Ashley Morgan](#) (Oral)
- [Hattie Barker](#) (Oral)
- [Susan Kilday](#) (Oral)
- [Brian James St. Ledger](#) (Poster)

See page 7 for event details!

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## A Message from the Director

The BIS program at George Mason University is thriving. This publication showcases BIS students, faculty, and alumni who contribute to making BIS strong and vibrant. As a program, we are interested in strengthening our relationships with alumni. Please make sure your address and email are up to date with the alumni office (see p. 7 for instructions) and take a few minutes to let us know what you are doing in your post-BIS life. We are eager to know!

This spring we will celebrate the achievements of 68 graduating students, including two students who will complete their degree with honors in BIS. Our new departmental honors program recognizes talented students who want the additional challenge of conducting original research as part of their BIS 490 capstone project. Congratulations to our first honors graduates.

As we say farewell to some stu-

dents, we also welcome new faces to the BIS program. This fall 80 new students joined BIS and an additional 49 entered the program in January. Tell your friends and colleagues to visit [www.bis.gmu.edu](http://www.bis.gmu.edu) to learn more about us. BIS is dedicated to serving returning adult students in northern Virginia.

The major fall project in BIS was the preparation of our Academic Program Review self-study. This report requires thoughtful analysis of a range of data on our curriculum, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Designed to be a formative assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, one of the most productive aspects is using data to inform program goals and future directions. In many ways, this report affirmed what we suspected. We knew some of our students were not producing capstone projects that met our expectations so we revised our curriculum to support students better. The results are striking. In spring 2009, 69% of



Dr. Jeannie Brown Leonard

BIS 390 project proposals were evaluated as highly competent or competent. By fall 2009, 95% of proposals were rated as highly competent or competent. More students are being successful at creating research proposals that demand an interdisciplinary investigation.

Through our self-study, the program has identified alumni as a key resource for promoting and developing the program. In the short time I have been Director of BIS, it is apparent that our students and alumni do remarkable work. On behalf of all the staff, thank you for your continued support of BIS.

## Alumni Profiles: Tell Us Your Story

To communicate how BIS has helped students complete their undergraduate degrees, we have developed a section on the BIS website for alumni profiles called "Meet an Alum." Alumni Profiles are the personal stories of some of our alumni that tell how they came to BIS, where they are now and how BIS helped them get there.

Current BIS student, Pamela Martin created the profiles. Since debuting on the BIS website in the Fall 2009, these profiles have been a great resource in helping prospective students understand and visualize their opportunities within the program. The profiles have also served as place for our alumni to visit and remain con-

nected to the program. If you haven't had a chance to view the profiles, visit our [website](http://www.bis.gmu.edu).

If you would be interested in telling your story, please send an email to [bis@gmu.edu](mailto:bis@gmu.edu) and we will contact you to start the interview process. We look forward to hearing from you!



## Student Tackles Economic Environmental Policy in Undergraduate Apprenticeship Program

**Contributed by:** Congratulations to David McAbee who was selected to join the Undergraduate Apprentice Program (UAP). The Undergraduate Apprentice Program is designed to foster a commitment to intellectual inquiry and creative expression among George Mason University's undergraduate students. It pairs high achieving undergraduate students with faculty mentors to undertake original research or creative projects. Each apprentice receives a \$1,000 stipend for the semester or summer to enable them to undertake twelve hours of research-related activities each week and \$100 to cover materials, such as posters, lab supplies, and equipment. A committee of four faculty members from diverse disciplines meets to review applications and select apprentices.

**“I wanted to create a research project that would attempt to find the areas of truth in this debate,” McAbee says.**

ducting a literature review to identify the key assumptions made by sustainability and will critically analyze those assumptions from an economic and historical perspective.

Sustainability is the guiding principle of the United Nations Environment Programme and many of the policy initiatives that have emerged from it will require people to trade some of their personal liberty for the sake of environmental protection. My goal is to find a balance between environmental protection and human rights, by exposing what I feel are misconceptions about the cause and effect relationship between American individualism and hyper-consumption.

For more information regarding the Undergraduate Apprenticeship Programme, please visit their [website](#).



Creative Services photo

**ATTENTION ALUMNI**

**Let us know what you're doing. We want to hear from you!**

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**[bis@gmu.edu](mailto:bis@gmu.edu)**

David's BIS concentration is in Economic Environmental Policy and his UAP project title is, *The Environmental Effects of American Individualism*. Here is what David had to say about his project: During my course of study at George Mason, I discovered that there are several fundamental disagreements in the fields of economics and sustainability about the nature of environmental degradation. I wanted to create a research project that would attempt to find the areas of truth in this debate. I am con-

## BIS Student Exhibit Opens

BIS senior, Judy Kelly, unveiled her exhibit "Torture at the Workhouse" on Saturday, April 10, 2010 at the Occoquan Workhouse Museum in Lorton, VA. The exhibit tells the story of the women suffragists who were force fed at the Occoquan Workhouse in 1917 during a hunger strike to protest their arrest. This exhibit will help visitors understand the ordeal of these courageous women in gaining passage to the 19th Amendment.

The museum is open Wednesday through Friday from 1pm-3pm, and Saturday and Sundays from 1pm-4pm.

# Faculty Features

## **Prof. Alan More**

Adjunct BIS instructor Alan More has a variety of pursuits outside Mason. He is using his 32-year career in the CIA to help authors write compelling and plausible spy novels. Recently, Alan advised Gayle Lynds, a long-time bestselling author, who has co-authored three novels with Robert Ludlum (of Jason Bourne fame) and written another dozen of her own. For *The Book of Spies*, Alan provided extensive information on the realities of the spy business and offered ideas for many of the scenarios in her book. One character, Tucker Anderson, is loosely-based on his own experiences in clandestine operations and analysis.

In addition to teaching with the BIS program, Alan serves as Employer in Residence for US Government Programs with University Career Services. He is working toward his doctorate in Higher Education at George Mason.

## **Prof. Ellen Oh**

Ellen Oh has been an adjunct professor with the BIS program since spring 2007. A graduate of New York University and Georgetown University School of Law, prior to teaching with BIS Ellen was practicing in corporate and securities law and entertainment law in New York and Washington, D.C. She held positions with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and for the National Wildlife Federation. "I moved from contracts for Elmo to contracts for whales and dolphins," she says in reference to her work in educational-based programming.

In her not-so-spare time between teaching and managing her busy family of five, Ellen devotes her time to research and the writing process. When asked what she enjoys most about teaching for BIS she says, "The students. These are students who I know will go far in life because they are smart and hardworking."

# Sea Kayaking with Mason Veterans

Written by:

Linda Hemm & Michael Lillie

The Veterans Society of GMU is an active organization that advocates for student veterans. It was founded in the Fall of 2006 by an enthusiastic group of veterans on campus who wanted to start a professional and social network dedicated to helping veterans transition to college and be successful after graduation. As stated on the Veterans Society website, [www.vetsoc.org](http://www.vetsoc.org), the purpose of the organization is to:

1. Provide a professional and social support group to help veterans become successful in civilian and college life
2. Raise awareness of veterans issues
3. Provide mentorship to veterans
4. Provide community service and volunteerism by organizing events related to veterans needs and issues
5. Establish professional networks to aid veterans in their career goals.

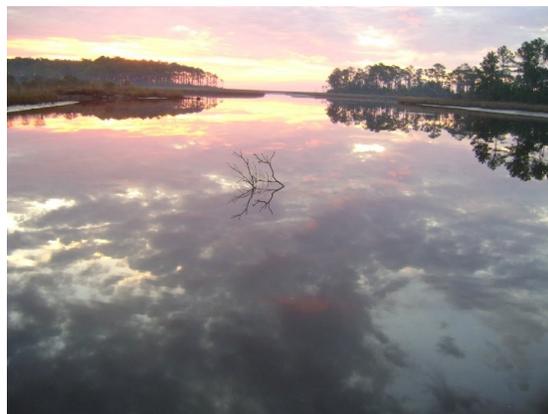
For Spring break 2010, the Veterans Society announced an all expenses paid wilderness expedition offered through Outward Bound and funded by the Sierra Club Foundation. Michael Lillie, a veteran Mason student, coor-

inated this trip for interested Mason vets. Through sea kayaking challenges and weathering nature's elements, the 6-day trip provided an environment for George Mason veterans to share experiences and develop teamwork. At the end of each day, time was set aside to share life experiences with one another and discuss a variety of topics and issues.

During the Outward Bound trip, Michael learned how the BIS degree program could meet his educational needs (including accepting Military education credits) from several current BIS students and fellow veterans. He attributes joining the BIS program to these vets and in his own words, "...thinks the Bachelor of Individualized Study degree program is the University's best kept secret!"



Photos By:  
Michael  
Lillie



# Getting BIS-y with internships!

BIS alumni and current BIS students have taken advantage of experiential learning opportunities by including formal internships in their individualized BIS concentrations. These opportunities have added value to their degree programs and provided a resume boost at the same time. Current students can earn up to 9 semester credit hours through internships. Whether they are part of a formal internship program such as the Kennedy Center's Education Internship program, or develop an individual internship plan with an organization, students take an active role developing a learning plan with their faculty mentor and the internship site supervisor.

Current students, to learn more about how an internship may fit *your* individualized degree plans and to get started, you are welcome to schedule an appointment with Mark Sisteck in the BIS office. Also, the BIS website has detailed information and downloadable forms regarding the [BIS internship program](#) (BIS 495) here at Mason.

Alumni, did you participate in an internship as part of your BIS degree plan? Let us know how it helped you and what you would recommend to current students who are considering an internship.

## Internship Participants Past, Present and Future:

### **Fall 2009**

Courtney Ferrington interned with Clear Channel/DC101

David McAbee interned with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety

### **Spring 2010**

Julie Allstrom is interning with AARP

Michael Sahouri is interning with Arab Americare

Domonicque Tatum is interning with Department of Veterans Affairs

### **Summer 2010**

Gail Cariota will be interning with *USA Today*



## Support BIS!

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.

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For information about Alumni Affairs go to:  
<http://www.gmu.edu/alumni>

Stay connected with the Alumni Directory:  
<http://alumni.gmu.edu/alumnidir.html>

**Learning without Limits**



### Honors in BIS Graduates

Congratulations to the BIS program's first graduates with departmental honors: Hattie Barker and Abel Roasa.

In the program, students create their honors-level research proposal in BIS 391, The Research Process for Honors. Honors students implement this research via BIS 490, taken as an individualized section with their faculty mentor.

To learn more about the Honors in BIS, and how to apply, visit <http://bis.gmu.edu/bishonors>.

### Recruitment

One of the goals we have for BIS is to increase enrollments to the point where we have at least 100 graduates each year.

Despite consistent outreach efforts to local community colleges, military bases, and admissions events, many students find us by word of mouth.

Please spread the word about BIS and direct interested students to our website ([www.bis.gmu.edu](http://www.bis.gmu.edu)) for more information. We host information sessions almost every Wednesday from 6:30 - 7:30 PM in room 318 ENT. Again, interested students should check the website for the current schedule of information sessions.

### Upcoming Events in BIS

#### **2010 Undergraduate Research Symposium—April 27**

- Student Oral Presentations, 12:20 - 3:00 p.m., Johnson Center, Gold Room
- Student Poster Presentations, 1:00 - 3:30 p.m., Johnson Center, Dewberry Hall
- Awards Ceremony, 3:30 p.m., Johnson Center, Dewberry Hall

#### **Spring 2010 BIS Senior Capstone Presentations**

- Monday, May 10, 2010, 4:30-7:30pm, Johnson Center, 3rd floor, rooms B, D, G

#### **Spring 2010 CHSS Undergraduate Convocation**

- Friday, May 14, 2010, 10am-12pm, Patriot Center

#### **Spring 2010 Convocation Reception and Awards Ceremony**

- Friday, May 14, 2010, 12pm-3pm, Mason Hall, D3 rooms A & B

#### **43rd Annual University Commencement Ceremony**

- Saturday, May 15, 2010, 10am-12pm, Patriot Center