

THE BIS CONNECTOR

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- BIS Alumni Spotlight: Kim Ruff, Alan Howe and Walter Via
- Farewell to Aaron Winter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BIS Scholarship Creator Karole McKalip	2
Next Steps for BIS Alumni	3
Spotlight: Kim Ruff	4
Spotlight: Alan Howe	5
Spotlight: Walter Via	6
2012 BIS Student Awards	6
BIS Students Selected for URSP	6
BIS Faculty Updates	7
Support BIS!	8

Letter from the Director

Spring has come early to Northern Virginia. The lovely cherry blossoms for which



our area is famous passed their peak before April 1! I live about four miles from campus and have enjoyed biking to work since September 2011. My ride is now punctuated by stunning dogwoods and magnolias (and pollen). Students are hard at work this time of year, especially those in their final BIS classes: BIS 390 (The Research Process) and BIS 490 (Senior Capstone). It always seems a bit unfair to have the best outdoor weather coincide with the most demanding part of the academic calendar.

There are a few changes on the horizon for BIS. First, the

office will be moving to a suite in Aquia Building. This new space will give us enough offices to have all the advising staff together in one location. Adjunct faculty also will have a space to meet with students and prepare for classes. The date of this move has not been set, but we anticipate it happening early this summer. We will share more news about the move as it becomes available and host open houses to welcome current students and alumni to our new quarters.

Second, I will be stepping down as BIS Director after this academic year. As of June 10, I will assume my new responsibilities at Mason as Dean of Student Academic Affairs, Advising and Retention. I was selected for this position after a national search and feel honored to be offered this opportunity. I have a deep commitment to BIS and will remain an ally. We will keep you posted on developments for a new BIS Director.



Jeannie Brown Leonard, BIS Director
Photo courtesy of Arwa Badri, BIS '11

This issue of *The BIS Connector* highlights the accomplishments of our students, alumni, and faculty. Page 8 offers instructions on how you can keep the BIS program and the University up to date on your address and activities. Our web site continues to improve. Recent additions were provided by BIS alumna Arwa Badri who produced a video for BIS and provided professional headshots for the faculty and staff photos. Visit www.bis.gmu.edu to see the new look! Enjoy this issue of *The BIS Connector* and please keep in touch.

BIS Advisors Nominated for Advisor of the Year

BIS Advisors Linda Hemm, Janet Poirot, and Mark Sitek were nominated by students for the 2012 Advisor of the Year Award. Congratulations!



Karole McKalip and the BIS Scholarship

This article highlights Karole McKalip, a Mason alumna from the College of Education, former GMU Director of Academic Advising and BIS Academic Advisor. She and her husband, Diehl McKalip, made it possible in 2004 to create a BIS Scholarship Endowment Fund. This fund provides a \$1000 scholarship to BIS students each year.

Karole graduated in 1981 with a Master of Education Degree in Counseling and Development. She worked part-time as an advisor in the Department of Academic Advising while doing her graduate work. In 1985, she began working full-time and became the Assistant Director in the Academic Advising and Orientation program office. Two years later, she became Director of Academic Advising and Orientation and served as Director until 1997 when she retired.

Shortly after “retiring,” Karole came back to Mason and joined the BIS department as a part-time academic advisor. She was very interested in working with adult students whom she found to be extremely committed and dedicated to finishing their degrees. She enjoyed working with the BIS staff and believed BIS was a strong academic program, often a “breeding ground” for new majors such as the MA in Telecommunications. Karole states that the BIS program is “cutting edge” not only for the creation of new majors but for new ways to pursue degree completion.

Following her retirement as an academic advisor for the BIS program in 2002, Karole contacted the Development Office at Mason regarding the possibility of a BIS scholarship from donations made by students and alumni. She was told there was not enough money to sustain a yearly scholarship. It was at this time that she and her husband donated the money necessary to create a scholarship endowment fund. Since 2004, a yearly BIS scholarship has been awarded. Since 2004, Karole and her husband have continued to contribute to the fund as well as to the Mason library.

We extend a hearty thanks to both Karole and Deihl McKalip for their service and generosity!

BIS Scholarship Winners

Winners of the BIS Scholarship for 2012 are:

Meaghan Bassiri—concentration: A Psychosocial Approach to Gender Studies

and

Kathleen Rose—concentration: Women in Work

Please help us support more current BIS students by giving to the BIS Scholarship Fund.

See page 8 of this newsletter for details on how to give. Thank you for your support.

NEXT

STEPS For BIS Graduates

Whether it's plans for graduate studies, a new job, or traveling the world—we want to celebrate our BIS graduates successes and adventures!

Alumni Find Success After BIS

Best of luck to...

John Larkin—MS Technology Management

Wayne Travis Campbell—MS Applied Information Technology

In December 2011, alumna **Susan Kilday** (BIS '10, Organizational Leadership) completed her MS in Organization Development & Knowledge Management at the GMU School of Public Policy.

Darren Blue (BIS '09, Federal Program Management) states that completing BIS was more than just "checking the degree block." In Darren's words: "I feel that my BIS coursework helped [me] to think differently about the value of education and exposed me to pertinent concepts that have been personally/professional valuable." Darren was appointed to the Senior Executive Service and is now an Associate Administrator for the U.S. General Services Administration. Darren also recently completed a MS in National Resource Strategy at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Jill Jones (BIS '09, English Education) found success after the BIS program when she began teaching for Fairfax County Public Schools after completing her degree. Although she has relocated to another state, Jill attributes her ability to quickly find another teaching position to her completion of the BIS program.

Kevin Sullivan (BIS '11, History Presented Through Video) is owner/operator of ETS Productions & Research, LLC, a company that conducts research on military-related themes at the National Archives. The company also has video production service for hire.

BIS Students Invited to Join Phi Kappa Phi

The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi is the oldest honor society in the United States. Membership celebrates exceptional academic achievement in any discipline. The following list of BIS students have qualified for PKP membership in spring 2012:

Adriane Ackley
Vivian Bolt
Friderike Butler
Christina Coulson
Tina Dec
Shannon DeSario
David Eddy
Elizabeth Egbert
Yolanda Friendly

Andrea Garcia
Debra Heitmann
John Henry
Keri Hill
Cynthia Hollingsworth
Robert Alan Howe
LeeAnne Kanuit
Kathy Milburn
Robert Nissen

Anne O'Brien
Jane Osborne
Alice Quatrochi
Martina Sestak
AJ Street
Lyle Swihart
Juanita Tougias
Helga Yunker
Matthew Morgan

BIS Alumna Kim Ruff...Life and BIS

Written by: Kim Ruff

John Lennon's words "You might say that I'm a dreamer" ring true to my experience with BIS. After an honorable discharge from the military, working as a government contractor, and starting a family, I returned to college. I wasn't happy with just any job; I wanted a career – my dream career of teaching creative writing at a college level. I searched the job market, applied for writing jobs, and received numerous rejections stating that my personal experience was great, but with no degree, companies weren't interested in hiring me. Although I was older than the average student and didn't think attaining my dream job was a possibility, the folks in BIS made it a reality. I knew the BIS program was a good match for me when the first question they asked was, "What are you passionate about?" I wished many times for this type of question to be asked of me in an academic setting. The BIS program provided a space for me to answer that question. My concentration in Applied Music Cognition: Rhetoric and Writing, allowed me to explore ideas associated with enhancing a college student's writing process by adding complementary elements, like music, to assigned writings. My research caught the attention of professionals in various fields like English, Psychology,

"The BIS program helped me reach goals that I always hoped I would, but never imagined I could later in life, especially as a busy family woman."

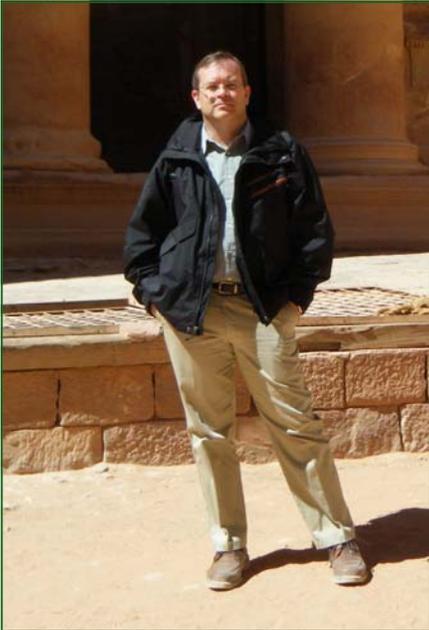
and Music. The attention that my work received gave me the strength of mind to be aggressive in following my dream. While in the BIS program, I became a peer tutor at Mason's writing center, was awarded a fellowship in the Undergraduate Apprenticeship Program for research focused on students' revision processes, was assigned as a writing expert to a class for the duration of one semester, published a personal essay in the Virginia Foundation of the Humanities journal, (had a baby) and applied to Mason's Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing: Nonfiction program. In an interview for the MFA program, the director told me that my undergraduate research piqued his interest and he inquired about my work and the BIS program. Since the BIS staff provided a strong theoretical and practical background in interdisciplinary learning, I was able to offer an in-depth and exciting conversation about my work as an undergraduate.



I graduated from the BIS program in the summer of 2011 and started that fall in the MFA Nonfiction program at GMU. I started work as a graduate tutor in the writing center and was awarded a Teaching Assistantship. I will begin teaching two English composition courses this fall. (Only steps away from reaching my dream of teaching a creative writing course!) The BIS program helped me reach goals that I always hoped I would, but never imagined I could later in life, especially as a busy family woman. My friends in the BIS office and peers from class provided a community. I found that the classes became a home-away-from-home, where students became peers who could relate to, rely on, respect, and motivate each other. Because if there's one thing that the BIS program has shown me, it's that people may say that I'm a dreamer, but "I'm not the only one."

Interdisciplinary Learning and Research in Action

Written by: Robert Alan Howe



Many of our most challenging problems require an interdisciplinary approach. I have the good fortune of working on two of these related problems.

After I retired from the Air Force and spent nearly two years trying to shift the Senate debate on Iraq from volleys of “withdraw” and “chaos,” to an honest discussion of national security interests, I was urged by a close friend to look at the humanitarian costs of the war. At that time, the United Nations High Commis-

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sioner for Refugees estimated the number of Iraqi refugees and Iraqis displaced within Iraq at nearly 4.8 million. (The UNHCR now thinks the number is about 3.4 million.)

There is no university program in this area that prepares one to address the plight of the Iraqis. However, through the BIS program, I was able to pull together disciplines and experiences in a Middle East Displacement Studies degree that makes me a useful advocate. For example, I used courses in Government, History, Anthropology, and Literature to study the Palestinian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon and advance our understanding of the challenges faced by a group (the Iraqis) that has been little-studied and inadequately helped.

After starting the Working Group on Displaced Populations with faculty and

students, I used a BIS internship to advance the effort to create a Center for Displaced Populations (CDP) and to establish the CDP Watch news blog (cdpwatch.blogspot.com) as a repository for displacement stories. The working group, and we hope the CDP, is committed to improving the response to displacement through research, instruction, coordination, and awareness. Mason could be a local, national, and perhaps global leader in this field.

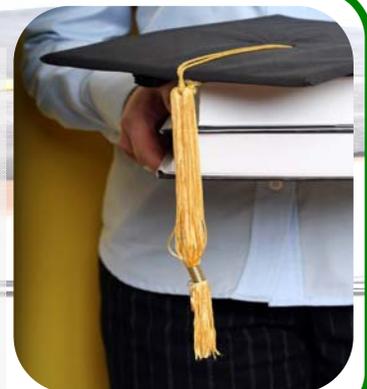
Today, I am using my interdisciplinary background to try harnessing the cultural dimension of Power Distance (the degree to which a society expects and accepts an unequal distribution of power) to predict events like the “Arab Spring.” Middle East experts were caught by surprise when these rebellions began. As a consequence, when violence erupted in Libya and refugees began pouring across the borders, no one was prepared to help them. Severe hardships resulted, and hundreds lost their lives trying to escape Tunisia for Europe. A broader perspective from interdisciplinary studies has led me to see the potential for social and political unrest that escaped experts focused on the region. That advanced warning may save lives.

ATTENTION BIS 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.



2012 BIS Student Project Award Recipients

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

Walter Via, Atlantic Bluefin Tuna: How Humankind is Eating the Species off the Planet

Most Creative BIS Project

Kevin Sullivan, Air Warrior: Evolution of the Flight Helmet

Outstanding BIS Project in the Public Interest

Laura Poisson, An Analysis of the Effect of Climate Change on Respiratory Ailments and Development of a Climate Change Health Model for Use in Community Adaptation Efforts

BIS 390 Proposal Writing Award

Laura Poisson

BIS Student Projects Selected for Undergraduate Research Scholars Program

“The Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (URSP) is Mason's program to give undergraduates an authentic research, creative, or scholarly experience under the guidance of a mentor.” (For more information: <http://oscar.gmu.edu/>)

Two BIS students were selected for the program for Spring 2012:

Jordan Higgins is working with Robert Youmans (Psychology) on *Design and Eye Movements*.
and

Alan Howe is working with Daniel Anderson (Cultural Studies) on
Predicting Social/Political Unrest by the Cultural Dimension of Power Distance.

Jordan Higgins credits the support and encouragement he received from his BIS Faculty Mentor, Dr. Youmans, for his success in being selected for the Spring 2012 Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (URSP). The URSP director, Dr. Bethany Usher noted in her message to Jordan that the spring was “more competitive than previous semesters,” and remarked on the “high quality and clear description” of Jordan’s project proposal.

Read more about Alan Howe’s work on page 5.

BIS Student Walter Via Presents at International Conference

Walter Via is our 2012 Robert T. Hawkes Outstanding BIS Project award winner. Walter completed the BIS program in spring 2011, with a project titled, “Atlantic Bluefin Tuna: How Humankind is Eating the Species off the Planet.” Walter was then invited to present his work at the 2nd International Marine Conservation Conference in British Columbia in 2011. His paper has been read and shared by consultants in the industry and arguably had quite an influence on the Bluefin tuna issue internationally. Walter is currently pursuing a graduate certificate in Fisheries Management, preparing his paper for publication in an international science journal, and plans to return to Mason for a master’s degree.

Walter’s paper is available for review on the BIS website.

Farewell to Professor Aaron Winter

Dr. Aaron Winter who joined the BIS faculty as a term assistant professor in the Fall 2010 will be leaving this position in Summer 2012. He has been an instructor for the BIS required courses BIS 390 and 490.

When asked about leaving, Aaron said he is proud to have been a small part of the BIS program for two years. One of the most rewarding aspects of being a BIS instructor for him has been attending the 490 presentations, the culmination of BIS students' studies in their concentrations. As Aaron stated, "It's really amazing to see the students make the most of everything they've worked for over the course of a year (or more). To see how eloquent they are and how confident they are about their research ideas in that moment . . . It's just really inspiring."

In addition to teaching, Aaron is a freelance writer and marketing consultant for The Motley Fool, Think Global School, LivingSocial, 9Lenses, Sport Science USA, MicroRate and Cinderblock House. He is also working on his MBA and plans to complete his degree in May 2013.

We would like to thank Aaron for his interest in working with BIS students, his knowledge, patience and wisdom. Our students have been very grateful for having him as an instructor. The BIS staff has enjoyed working with Aaron and we wish him the best. We hope to see him back as a BIS instructor in the future!



"It's really amazing to see the students make the most of everything they've worked for over the course of a year (or more)."

BIS Student Nominated for the CHSS Dean's Challenge Award

"The Dean's Challenge was established in 2007 to acknowledge exceptional undergraduate and graduate students who have excelled while making academically challenging choices. The recipients of this award receive a stipend to help with their educational expenses, funded by generous donations from friends of the college."

(For more information: <http://chss.gmu.edu/about-the-college/deans-challenge/about>)

Congratulations to **Frederike Butler**, the 2012 Dean's Challenge nominee from BIS.





Bachelor of Individualized Study
George Mason University
4400 University Drive, MS 5A9
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Phone: 703-993-4556
Fax: 703-993-9476
E-mail: bis@gmu.edu
Website: <http://bis.gmu.edu>

Learning without Limits

Support BIS!

Your contributions help us continue to enhance the BIS program.

If you would like to make a financial contribution, visit

<http://chss.gmu.edu/alumni/support/how-to-donate>

Be sure to specify Humanities and Social Sciences and write-in either BIS Program Fund or BIS Scholarships!

Thank you for your generosity.

For information about Alumni Affairs, visit:

<http://alumni.gmu.edu>

Be sure to keep your information up-to-date in the Alumni Directory in order to receive future alumni newsletters from BIS!



NEWS

BIS participates in Mason's Military Alliance Program

Mason has made the list once again as one of the most military friendly schools in the country by *GI Jobs Magazine* (2012). Special mention of BIS transfer opportunities is made in the review. Since so many of our students are veterans, members of the BIS advising staff, Janet Poirot and Linda Hemm, attended MAP veteran services training offered by Mason's Office of Military Services. MAP (Military Alliance Program) is geared toward training advisors and faculty members to assist veterans as they ease into a university setting. The Office of Military Services, located on the second floor of the Johnson Center, offers numerous services to military students. For more information please visit their website: military.gmu.edu.

We thank our military students and alumni for their service. We will continue to do what we can to support you.

Upcoming Events

BIS Senior Capstone Presentations: May 15th 4:30-7:30 p.m.

JC 3rd Floor Conference Rooms

CHSS Convocation (BIS Graduation):

May 18th, 10:00 a.m.

Patriot Center

BIS Convocation Reception:

May 18, 12:00 p.m.

Mason Hall, First Floor, Room D

BIS Friends and Family are Welcome!

GMU Commencement:

May 19, Patriot Center

Doors open at 9:00 a.m. for guests, students arrive at 8:45 a.m.

Save the Date for Alumni Weekend!

October 5 - 7, 2012