

THE BIS CONNECTOR

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

On April 19, 2011, BIS student Bethny Scheuerman will present her research at the 2011 CHSS Undergraduate Research Symposium. Congratulations, Bethny!

See page 7 for event details

CAMPUS NEWS

Dr. Alan Merten will retire as President of George Mason University, effective June 30, 2012.

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Letter from the Director

I learn something new every day, usually from my students. BIS continues to thrive with talented, engaged students testing the boundaries of conventional disciplines. I want to share a few of BIS concentration titles to give a sense of the diversity represented among our students:

- Climate Change and Community Health
- Educational Psychology
- Corporate Communication
- International Conflict Studies
- Criminal Psychology
- Film and Theatre Arts Administration

Students continue to find meaningful ways to connect their life experience and future goals with their academic programs of study.

A new student who completed BIS 300 in fall 2010 shared with me his one complaint about BIS: "Not enough people

know about it!" I agree with this observation and welcome the ideas of alumni and current students on ways to creatively address this publicity problem. When we ask prospective students how they learned about BIS, the overwhelming response is "word of mouth." Please spread the word about BIS to neighbors, friends, and colleagues. If your employer sponsors a career or education fair, please let us know so we can be represented at that event. Our alumni are among our strongest assets.

This issue of The BIS Connector includes an introduction to the first BIS Distinguished Alumna/i Award winner. We are pleased to recognize Ms. Margaret Blasinsky for this honor. Read more about her below. We continue to celebrate the successes of our alumni, faculty, and students. You can read more about alumnus Dave Alberg, Ellen Oh's amazing book contract, and the research exploits of current students Karen



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

Bontrager and Walter Via.

Page 7 offers instructions of how you can keep the BIS program and the University up to date on your address and activities. Enjoy this issue of The BIS Connector and please keep in touch.



Alumna wins BIS Distinguished Alumni Award

Congratulations to Margaret Blasinsky winner of the 2011 BIS Distinguished Alumni Award. Ms. Blasinsky earned the Bachelor of Individualized Study (BIS) degree in 1992 and her MAIS in 1997. She has had an impressive career as a researcher and small business owner. In 2006, she started her own company, The Madrillon

Group, that conducts program evaluations and research in health and social science fields. Among her clients is the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Ms. Blasinsky has published extensively in journals related to health administration.

After completing her degrees and raising two children, Ms.

Blasinsky began running. She completed a half marathon, winning 3rd place for her age group. She volunteers with Northern Virginia Girls on the Run, a running program for girls in grades 3 through 6. Ms. Blasinsky also actively mentors women interested in starting their own businesses. Congratulations to Margaret Blasinsky.

First No Fear in Love 6-Mile Race



BIS student, Karen Bontrager, turned her vision into a reality on Saturday, February 26, 2011. Karen has created a concentration in Domestic Violence and Youth Advocacy. Her research and intellectual passion centers on promoting healthy relationships among 16-24 year olds. Step one is awareness. This inaugural road race is her first step at promoting awareness of a very important issue.

The race took place on the Prince William campus of George Mason University at sunrise. The timing of the event was symbolic; it is time to emerge from the shadows and into the light when it comes to supporting young adults in defining relationships that are free of fear and abuse. Karen, always the optimist, persevered in launching this event with modest university support. She believes in her mission and the power of one. In her own words, "One person can make the difference..."

Participants appreciated donated fruit, hot chocolate, donuts, and sweet rolls as well as the cash prizes for the top two finishers. A sense of community formed around the event.

Karen has proven to be a successful trailblazer in ushering the idea of this race into a reality. She greatly appreciates the support she received from race participants, volunteers, faculty, and peers. We would not be surprised if plans are already in motion for the Second Annual No Fear in Love race in 2012. Great job, Karen!

A circular poster for the "No Fear in Love" 6-mile race. The title "NO FEAR IN LOVE" is written in large, stylized, purple letters at the top. Below the title, a male and female runner are depicted in white tank tops and red shorts, running towards the right. The background is a purple gradient with a sun rising on the right and a moon on the left. Text on the left side of the poster provides details: "PLACE: GMU Prince William campus", "DATE: Saturday, February 26, 2011", and "TIME: Join us for a sunrise (6:45 a.m.) race and a dedication (6:30 a.m.)". Text on the right side says "DEDICATED TO: 16-24 YEAR OLDS" and "COME HAVE FUN, GET AN OFFICIAL T-SHIRT AND WIN PRIZES". At the bottom, it says "REGISTER AT: www.nofearinloverace.org". At the very bottom, in small text, it reads: "JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THE FIRST EVER '2011 NO FEAR IN LOVE 6-MILE RACE' RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MONEY FOR DV SURVIVORS TO GO TO SCHOOL".

PLACE: GMU Prince William campus
DATE: Saturday, February 26, 2011
TIME: Join us for a sunrise (6:45 a.m.) race and a dedication (6:30 a.m.)

DEDICATED TO:
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COME HAVE FUN,
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REGISTER AT:
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JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THE FIRST EVER "2011 NO FEAR IN LOVE 6-MILE RACE"
RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MONEY FOR DV SURVIVORS TO GO TO SCHOOL

Dave Alberg: 1995 BIS Graduate in Museum Studies

Written by: Dave Alberg,
Linda Hemm graduated in 1995, with

a BIS degree in Museum Studies and wrote his BIS 490 Senior Project on "Geology Collections Management." Currently he is the Sanctuary Superintendent of the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary in Newport News, Virginia. He manages the conservation of thousands of artifacts recovered from the wreck of the USS Monitor which sank on New Year's Eve 1862 and was located off the coast of North Carolina in 1973.¹

Mr. Alberg has a passion for protecting and preserving the history of our country for future generations. He has an extensive background in cultural resource management, museum work and exhibit development. He began his museum career in 1992 as the first curator for the Virginia Air and Space Center in Hampton, Virginia and went on to serve as the Director of Exhibits and Collections for the US Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, AL. Following the 1967 Apollo fire that took the lives of astronauts Virgil Grissom, Ed White and Roger Chaffe, he led the effort to preserve the Apollo One Spacecraft that was involved in the fire. Most recently, he served as the Deputy Director for Nauticus, the marine-themed museum and science center, in Norfolk, Virginia, where he was instrumental in the expansion of the NOAA

(National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and Nauticus partnership.²

Mr. Alberg's community and professional service activities include his current work on the Advisory Council in Underwater Archaeology for the Society for Historical Archaeology. In 2009, he volunteered three weeks in Tunisia to work with the World Wildlife Foundation and NOAA to develop management plans for conservation. Students from thirteen mid-eastern countries attended the conference. In 2008, he spent two weeks teaching basic ecosystem management and conservation practices to business leaders, law enforcement officials and citizens in a small district in Cambodia. He enjoys providing information and assistance to other nations working in marine conservation.³

Mr. Alberg stated, "The BIS degree I earned from GMU has indeed contributed to my personal and professional goals and has in a very real sense helped secure the course my professional career has taken. It allowed me to pursue a field of study that was in direct support of my personal goals, not in an abstract way, but rather in a very tangible and measurable way. Without the BIS degree I earned and the knowledge and skills that I gained from a very tailored and focused course of study, the professional opportunities that opened up for me would not have been possible. My

degree at GMU led to professional opportunities that have and continue to exceed my greatest expectations. They have also served as a stepping stone for greater academic success as I went on to earn a master's degree at the College of William and Mary in 2005. I think often of GMU and am proud to consider myself an alum of both George Mason University and the BIS program."⁴



"The BIS degree I earned from GMU has indeed contributed to my personal and professional goals ..."

1 Monitor National Marine Sanctuary website: http://monitor.noaa.gov/about_us/welcome.html.

2 Ibid.

3 George Mason Alumni Inquiry - BIS December 13, 2010

4 Ibid.

Photo credit:

http://monitor.noaa.gov/about_us/welcome.html

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.

Undergraduate Apprenticeship Program



Congratulations to Walter Via and Karen Bontrager, BIS students who were selected to join the Undergraduate Apprentice Program (UAP). The UAP 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" (<http://uap.gmu.edu/>).

Walter is working with Dr. Chris Parsons from Environmental Science and Policy. His BIS concentration is in Conservation Biology and his research interests include protecting the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna from over fishing. Walter will present his research as a poster at the Society for Conservation Biology's International Marine Convention in May 2011. He is a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature – Commission for Ecosystem Management.

Karen Bontrager is working with Dr. David Anderson as an undergraduate apprentice. Her research interests include studying social norms theory as a possible tool for changing the expectations around healthy relationships among 16 – 24 year olds. Karen wants to understand the dynamics around teen dating violence to allow her to design interventions to promote healthy relationships

For more information regarding the Undergraduate Apprenticeship Program, please visit their website: <http://uap.gmu.edu/>.

Ellen Oh: BIS Instructor and Writer

Written by: Linda Hemm

You may have noticed that Ellen Oh, our respected and often requested adjunct professor for BIS 300, 390 and 490 has not been teaching this semester and is not scheduled to teach in the near future. At the beginning of this year, Ellen learned that the book she has been working on, *Prophecy: The Dragon King Chronicles*, was accepted for publication by Harper Collins Children's Press in early 2013.

Ellen writes in a short summary of her book that the story is set in ancient Korea. "Kira Kang is an elite warrior and bodyguard to her cousin, the young

prince. As the only female warrior of the Saulabi Army and a bona fide demon slayer who has the unusual ability to sense the presence of demons, she is feared and mistrusted by all except a select few who know of her powers. With the assassination of several kings and the Yamato invasion of the peninsula, Kira finds herself racing north, part of a small group dedicated to protecting her cousin Taejo, the crown prince of Hansong, who may or may not be the legendary Dragon Musado fated to reunite the Seven Kingdoms."

Ellen organizes her day to give herself time to write:

"My writing day is that I get up and get the girls ready for school and then I write from 9 to 2:30. I pick up the girls from school, take them to all their afternoon activities, feed them dinner and then I write from 9 to 12 or later, depending upon how the writing muse is flowing that night. Sometimes the words fly out and other times it says, go watch Top Chef instead. I'm currently working on book 2 of the trilogy and also working on another sci fi/horror book at the same time. So I'm keeping quite busy."

Best wishes, Ellen! We miss you in BIS.

David Arditi, Graduate Lecturer in BIS

Written by: Janet Ha

David Arditi is teaching BIS 300 for the first time this spring. As a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies, his research lies at the intersections between music, politics and technology. Since arriving at Mason, David has been very active on campus from serving as the first president of the Graduate and Professional Student Association to currently serving as the

Graduate Representative to the Board of Visitors. This summer his first publication, "Disciplining the Consumer: File-Sharers under the Watchful Eye of the Music Industry," will be published in the book *The Internet & Society*. David also teaches GLOA 101 (Introduction to Global Affairs) and CULT 320 (Globalization and Culture) at GMU.



Photo courtesy of University Relations

Internships: Experiential learning at its best!

Selected internship experiences pursued by BIS students.

Fall 2010

Michael Sahouri interned with Arab Americare

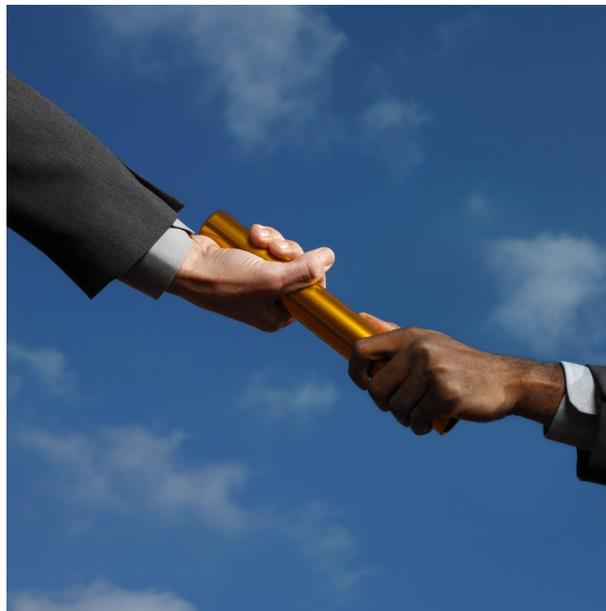
Spring 2011

Sallay Banya is interning at Fairfax County Public Schools

Yolanda Garrahan is doing web and graphic design with the American Institute of Implant Dentistry

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!

Bachelor of Individualized Study

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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** for winning a Critical Language Scholarship to study Arabic this summer.
- Congratulations to **Kimberly Ruff** who is a Writing Fellow for the Spring 2011 semester.

Honors in BIS

Congratulations to **Diane Haight** (December 2010), the most recent graduate with Honors in BIS.

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

Upcoming Events

2011 Undergraduate Research Symposium

- April 19, CHSS Undergraduate Research Symposium, 12:00–3:00 PM, Dewberry Hall.

Spring 2011 Senior Capstone Presentations

- May 17, 2011 from 4:30–7:00 PM Johnson Center 3rd floor, rooms A, C, D, E, F

Spring 2011 CHSS Undergraduate Convocation

- Friday, May 20 at 10:00 AM Patriot Center.

Spring 2011 Convocation Reception and Awards Ceremony

- BIS Reception immediately following the CHSS ceremony, Mason Hall room D3 A & B.

44th Annual University Commencement Ceremony

- Saturday, May 21, 2011, 10:00 AM Patriot Center

