

THE BIS CONNECTOR

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

* Next Steps: Where are BIS Graduates Now?

* 2011 alum, Ann McCarty's BIS research project was accepted for presentation at the Council for Exceptional Children conference!

* BIS students accepted to Phi Kappa Phi!

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Letter from the Director

Autumn is my favorite time of year. The air is crisp and the trees are flaunting their vibrant hues... and a new academic year has begun. We welcome new students to the BIS degree program and reconnect with continuing students.



One of our current BIS students, A.J. Street, shared with me his one complaint about BIS: Not enough people know about it. I agree with him and we are actively working to extend our reach and improve our visibility on campus and beyond. Prospective students tell us that they learned about BIS by word of mouth. Although we plan to

employ other promotional methods, we encourage you to share your stories with friends and colleagues. The authenticity of your endorsement of the BIS program is more powerful than any advertising we might create. What an amazing opportunity we have to support students in creating an interdisciplinary concentration that helps them connect their life experiences to their future goals. Spread the word about BIS. As alumna Alicia del Barrio said, the BIS degree program does "more than graduate people, [it] recovers people's lost lives."

Our students and graduates continue to reflect positively on George Mason and the BIS program. Be sure to share your news with us so we can celebrate your accomplishments in the next *BIS Connector*. Inside this edition you will hear about the accolades of current and recent graduates including the



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

appointment of a BIS graduate to George Mason University's Board of Visitors!

BIS is a community of opsimaths; we are people who are engaged in study a bit later in life...as compared to the 18 year olds just emerging from high school. The insights and contributions you all bring to the campus and your communities are enormous. Tell us about your activities by sending us a note at bis@gmu.edu. Visit our website at bis.gmu.edu to learn more about BIS. Thank you for all you do.

BIS Alumna Joins the GMU Board of Visitors

In July, **Karen O. Alcalde**, BIS '84, JD '87, was appointed to George Mason University's Board of Visitors by Governor Robert McDonnell. Ms. Alcalde is an attorney in Arlington, VA. We are delighted to have a BIS graduate serving on the Board and hope to have a more extensive profile on this distinguished alumna in a future issue of the *BIS Connector*.

See <http://news.gmu.edu/articles/6993> for more information on this appointment.



*Dr. McGill...
"reinforced my goal
of maintaining high
standards, more than
living up to my
expectations of a
mentor."*

*~ Diane Haight,
2010 BIS alumna*



2011 Outstanding BIS Faculty Mentor

Congratulations to Dr. Kathy McGill from the College of Humanities and Social Science (CHSS) History and Art History department. Dr. McGill was presented with the Outstanding BIS Faculty Mentor award at the BIS graduation reception on May 20, 2011. Dr. McGill was nominated by December 2010 BIS alumna Diane Haight. As a candidate for Honors in BIS, Diane worked closely with her mentor to craft an excellent capstone project titled: The Peculiar Sisterhood: The Relationship of White and Black Mothers of the Antebellum South. According to Diane, Dr. McGill "provided substantive recommendations for improvement. She reinforced my goal of maintaining high standards, more than living up to my expectations of a mentor." Thank you, Dr. McGill, for your exemplary service as a BIS Faculty Mentor.

2010 Student Project Award Recipients

Brian James St. Ledger

The Robert T. Hawkes, Jr. Award for Outstanding BIS Project
[Comparative Analysis of the Relationship
between Tribes and State in Modern Jordan and Yemen](#)

Judy Kelly

Most Creative BIS Project
[Torture at the Workhouse: An Exhibit Capturing the Significance of Forced-Feeding
in the Suffrage Movement at the Occoquan Workhouse Museum
in Lorton, VA](#)

Pamela Martin

Outstanding BIS Project in the Public Interest
[Response to Intervention: A Model In Progress](#)

In 2010-11, the BIS Program established a writing award linked to BIS 390/391, the Research Process. Students produce a research proposal for this class, which is designated as a writing intensive course. Instructors nominate student proposals for this award. The expectation is that the proposal meets traditional expectations and demonstrates exceptional skill in writing.

Congratulations to **Miyuki Nies**, the first
BIS 390 Proposal Writing Award winner
[Project Proposal](#)

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!

Ann McCarty-2011 Graduate in Educational Psychology

In her own words...

"After graduating from the BIS program I applied for and was selected to work as a special education teacher at James Madison HS's center for emotional disabilities (ED). My role at Madison is as the autism resource teacher.

Being able to design my major in educational psychology and having a decade or so of experience in education added to my credibility, thus putting me at the top of the list of potential candidates. But, a bachelor's degree is not enough for licensure in the state of Virginia. So, I am currently enrolled in GMU's School of Education graduate program seeking a master's degree in special education.

Choosing to enroll in the BIS program is the force behind making my dream of becoming a teacher a reality. The BIS program gave me the confidence and knowledge that I hope will benefit my students. It's hard work but well worth it because I have expanded my knowledge and increased my income potential tremendously."

Another piece of good news...Ann McCarty's BIS research project was accepted for presentation at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) conference in Denver, Colorado in April. Her faculty mentor, Dr. Lori Howard, has agreed to co-present with her.

Brian McLendon—2010 Graduate in Mathematics Education

Brian was accepted at Texas Christian University in July 2011 for a new Mathematics Education Graduate program. Here's a little information about the program from their website: By completing the program, students will enhance their mathematical knowledge for teaching and pedagogical content knowledge, understand the vertical alignment of the mathematics content areas in the Pre-K through 12 curriculum, and link research by practice by understanding how to use and conduct research to enhance teacher practice. With this knowledge, students will be able to establish themselves as teacher-leaders in their

respective schools and districts. Thanks to his BIS degree in Mathematics Education, he can now pursue his dream of teaching and getting inner city students passionate about mathematics. He is currently taking one class, Teaching Number and Operations, and working at Citibank as a Global Security Analyst.



Ron Adams: 2001 BIS Graduate in Public and Administrative Management

Written by: Linda Hemm

Ron Adams is a 2001 graduate of the BIS program. His concentration in Public and Administrative Management led to his final BIS 490 project on "How Managers Influence Organizational Systems."

Mr. Adams is a hospital administrator at the National Institute of Health and currently serves as the Senior Administrative Officer for Radiology and Imaging Sciences and the Positron Emission Tomography Department at the NIH Clinical Center. He began his career at NIH without an advanced degree when he was 22.

In 1999 he participated in two fellowship programs at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. When he returned to NIH, his children were approaching college age. He still had not earned a degree and did not want his children to think they could be successful, as he had been, without a degree.

Ron decided to put his NVCC credits toward a degree at GMU and applied



"By earning my degree late in life, I would let my children see how important it was to me."

to the BIS program.

As he stated in his George Mason Alumni Inquiry, "By earning my degree late in life, I would let my children see how important it was to me."

While in the BIS program, Mr. Adams took advantage of getting portfolio credit for knowledge he had gained from his work experiences. He earned 30 credits from Thomas Edison State College (TESC) for portfolios related to his administrative skills. He strongly recommends BIS students consider getting portfolio credit for their experiential learning. Mr. Adams also recommends to BIS students that they take

the BIS 300 class first. As he stated, "It won't be long afterward that you find yourself truly enjoying the experience, as well as meeting new friends. You will also find that the entire BIS program staff is committed to help you achieve your goal."

When asked what he enjoyed most about the BIS program, Mr. Adams replied, "I went into the military after high school and often, very often, regretted not going to college. I recall when I was in the military, many of my friends were walking the grounds of college campuses across the nation wearing shorts, t-shirts and enjoying the world of academia that only a college campus can provide. It was twenty-six years later, but I was able to have this experience when I attended classes at GMU on my way to a BIS degree. Yes, my hair was gray and I was a bit older than most of the students, but they accepted me as a "regular" student and we talked, laughed, studied together and yes, walked the campus wearing shorts and t-shirts."

BIS Students Inducted to Phi Kappa Phi



blogs.tamu.edu

In the 2010-11 academic year, George Mason University was granted permission to host a chapter of Phi Kappa Phi, a prestigious collegiate honor society for all disciplines. To learn more about Phi Kappa Phi, visit <http://www.phikappaphi.org/web/>. Congratulations to the BIS students who accepted the invitation to join Phi Kappa Phi in Spring 2011:

Karen Bontrager
Gail Cariota
Donna Dow

Clara Kelly
Kristina Martin
Catherine Myers

Tina Owens
Laura Poisson
Cynthia Revaz

A special induction was held on September 30, 2011, which included the following BIS Alumni: Rachel Noble Benner Patricia A.C. Ellison
Jill Lynn Jones Michelle J. Scaglione

2011 BIS Graduate in Middle East and North African Counter Insurgency

Written by: Jeremiah Foxwell



“As a veteran, similar to the generation after WWII, I am a part of the next ‘Greatest Generation’ and my BIS degree prepared me for this honor.”

I recently returned from an Arabic language immersion fellowship in Amman, Jordan under the US State Department’s Critical Language Scholarship initiative. In addition, my BIS capstone is pending publication in the academic Small Wars Journal. My BIS degree not only helped transform me from soldier to scholar it has shaped my professional identity. This identity makes me a valuable individual among the hundreds of thousands of fellow May 2011 graduates from across the nation.

Upwards to five thousand students across the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral collegiate body applied for the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) opportunity. Only ten-percent

of the applicants were selected for the Summer 2011 CLS Arabic program. I was selected primarily because of the interdisciplinary examination of the Middle Eastern North African region that makes up my BIS Capstone. My time in Amman, Jordan studying the Arabic language, the Jordanian culture and exploring my own American identity within an Arab nation was incredibly interdisciplinary. From five hours a day of Arabic grammar instruction to negotiating with a Palestinian cab driver to get across Jordan while visiting historic sights, I have become a life-long interdisciplinary learner without borders.

In my path to becoming a national security professional I am grateful that my foundation consists of the interdis-

ciplinary bedrock of International Conflict Resolution, National Security and the Arabic language. As a veteran, similar to the generation after WWII, I am a part of the next “Greatest Generation” and my BIS degree prepared me for this honor.

Even though I have graduated and I no longer frequent GMU’s campus I still utilize the BIS department as an asset. I am in regular contact with faculty mentor Alan More in regard to my professional development and finalizing my capstone project for publication.

By the way... if any students are interested in fellowships I recommend getting in contact with Dr. LaNitra Berger, Director of Fellowships, in the Honors College. She is an amazing resource.

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.

BIS 495 Offers Opportunities to Earn Experiential Credit

BIS 495 allows students an opportunity to earn experiential learning credit through internships. Students may earn a career maximum of nine credits, while taking no more than six credits per semester.

This semester we have two BIS students taking advantage of internship opportunities:



Mario Vejar is completing a third semester of internship at Roman Productions, Inc., in Alexandria, VA. Mario is primarily learning film and video production.

Alice Quatrochi is interning at the Krasnow Institute, as a member of a collaborative team of neuroscience researchers and visual artists.



Catherine Meyers: Dean's Challenge Scholarship Nominee

Congratulations to Catherine Meyers on her nomination for the
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
2011-2012 Dean's Challenge Scholarship!

"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" (chss.gmu.edu/awards). Each department and program in CHSS may nominate one student for a \$2000 scholarship.

Rachel Benner Works to Organize BIS Alumni

Rachel Noble Benner is working to establish an important link to past and present BIS students. Rachel Benner graduated the BIS program in 2008, with a concentration in Medical Ethics and continues her involvement at GMU through her work at GMU Student Health Services as the Case Manager and Special Projects Coordinator.

Rachel has a keen interest in extending the BIS network to include more alumni. She has been a key figure in the creation of a survey distributed to BIS seniors, which tracks contact information and areas of interest for future BIS activities. These include speaking to BIS 300 or 390 classes, arranging BIS alumni events, and networking for current and past students for careers and jobs. Rachel continues to support efforts to engage graduating seniors and former BIS students as mentors to current students in the program.

Tara Sheoran, Interdisciplinary Instructor *Par Excellence*

Written by: Linda Hemm

The BIS department is highlighting for the Fall newsletter, Tara Sheoran, one of our BIS instructors. Tara is a sixth year cultural studies PhD candidate at Mason and is also a BIS instructor teaching BIS 300 Understanding Interdisciplinary Studies and BIS 490 Senior Project.

Her dissertation title is “Emergency Contraceptive Advertising: Mediated Medical Knowledge and the (Re)Imagined “Family Planning” Project in Contemporary India.” Her studies have been distinctly interdisciplinary covering anthropology, communication studies, health communication, science, technology and medicine, feminist theory, cultural studies, and issues pertaining to India and globalization. This has prepared her well for teaching in an interdisciplinary program.



Tara won a competitive [Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant](#) from the National Science Foundation in July 2010. This award gave her up to \$15,000 for research in India.

Being well grounded in interdisciplinary studies, Tara recognizes that completing an interdisciplinary program is a daunting yet rewarding task. Unlike traditional students, BIS students are not given a specific list of courses to take; rather they must provide a rationale for the courses and title they select. Tara has found working with BIS students to be a great teaching opportunity. She finds her BIS 300 students eager and enthusiastic about the program. She commented that they are persistent, do not give up easily, tend to be “on top of” course requirements and are well prepared for class. They are focused and goal driven.

Similarly, her students in the BIS 490 Senior Project course are driven to finish their projects and are enthusiastic about graduating from Mason with their BIS degree. Tara has a range of students, and while some continue to deal with issues related to their faculty mentors others are well on their way to completing their projects.

Thank you, Tara, for your commitment to the BIS program!

- Jeannie Brown Leonard, BIS Director, presented at the Association for Integrative Studies annual meeting October 13 – 16, 2011 in Grand Rapids, MI. Her presentation was titled: *Integrative Learning in Undergraduates: A Grounded Theory*.
- BIS faculty members Alan More and Dr. Mary Zamon were inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi Alumni Chapter on Alumni Weekend. Congratulations, Alan and Mary!
- Jeannie Brown Leonard was elected President of the Association of Virginia Individualized Study Administrators (AVISA) at the fall meeting on October 7, 2011. She will serve a two-year term.
- Alan More has written a ‘mini-memoir’ about his CIA career along with nine other CIA officers, which will be published this coming winter by Scarecrow Press. Look for *The Craft We Chose: Reflections on an Intelligence Career* (Editor: Edward Mikolus).
- Alan More continues his consulting with spy thriller writers. Robert Bidinotto, an established true-crime writer, has taken a step into spy thrillers with Alan’s help. His new book, *Hunter: A Thriller*, published last month by Avenger Books, takes you “on a non-stop thrill ride from the top floor of the CIA to the mean streets of Washington.” (Avenger Books press release, 2011).





Bachelor of Individualized Study

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Learning without Limits

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If you would like to make a financial contribution, visit <http://supportingmason.gmu.edu/>.
Be sure to specify either BIS Program Fund or BIS Scholarships!
Thank you for your generosity.

For information about Alumni Affairs, visit: <http://alumni.gmu.edu/alumnidir.html>.
Be sure to keep your information up-to-date in the Alumni Directory in order to receive future alumni newsletters from BIS!



New Student Services Manger

I am Lenore Butcher Kuch and I joined the BIS staff in late April as the new BIS Student Services Manager. I am also a BIS graduate. I completed my program in the summer 2006, with a concentration in child welfare.

When I entered the BIS program several years ago I was impressed by the level of dedication that my fellow students maintained. It was that impression that inspired me to complete my program. I have managed children's educational programs and worked for other state and county agencies with a focus on informal learning environments for children. I am very excited to be where I am now, supporting students in a program that opened so many avenues to adventure for me. I welcome all questions and requests for assistance. There are so many details to address in the program. My hope is to be a resource for information, direction and support for busy BIS students.

Upcoming Events

- BIS Program Information Sessions are scheduled throughout the remainder of the semester on Mondays 6-7 PM for prospective students. Enterprise Hall—Room 418. Visit the BIS website for details.
- Celebration of Scholarship—Gala Reception Mason Hall Atrium—Oct. 24, 4-5:30 PM
- Whatever Happened to Journalism? Panel Discussion on the Past, Present, and Future of Journalism—CHSS—Johnson Center, George's Restaurant, 4th Floor, Oct. 25, 12:00 PM
- Revolutions: Past, Present, and Future—Humanities and Social Sciences Seminar Mason Hall, Edwin Meese Conference Room Oct. 26, 10:30 AM to Oct. 27, 6:00 PM
- Thanksgiving Recess—Nov. 23-25
- **BIS 490 Senior Capstone Project Presentations—Dec. 15, Johnson Center 3rd Floor**
- Winter Holiday Break—Dec. 23 to Jan. 2