

Read by current students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and friends of the Bridging Disciplines Programs, The Bridge is a platform for program successes, changes, and events. The Bridge also serves to share news among the BDP concentrations.

As we begin 2012, we welcome 130 new students, and we also bid farewell and congratulations to our December 2011 graduates who accomplished extraordinary things as a part of the Bridging Disciplines Programs. Read more about our newly admitted students and graduates on page 6. In this issue, we also feature faculty, current student, and alumni perspectives on the Children & Society, Digital Arts & Media, and Ethics & Leadership BDPs. A special acknowledgement goes to the BDP Student Advisory Council, who conducted interviews to contribute to this edition of *The Bridge*. The Council, consisting of twelve highly engaged, energetic students from across the BDPs, had an active semester of helping with new student recruitment, participating in research initiatives on campus, and brainstorming new ways to engage BDP students in the program.

News & Updates

This semester we welcomed **two new staff members** to the Bridging Disciplines Programs—Katie Matteson and Rose Mastrangelo. Katie, our new administrative associate, is a UT alumna who joined the BDPs from the Registrar's Office at UT. Rose serves as the coordinator for the Archer Program at UT Austin and advises for the Digital Arts & Media, Environment, and Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits BDPs. She joins us from the Center for Strategic Advising in UT's School of Undergraduate Studies.

With **generous support** from the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Foundation, we have hired graduate assistant Charlotte Nunes, who is working to create a workshop series for BDP students who wish to complete internships and research projects that relate to human rights and social justice issues. In May, we will feature a story on Charlotte and her work during the 2011-2012 school year.

In December 2011, the **Film Studies** faculty panel decided to suspend the Film Studies BDP, which will no longer be accepting new students. Currently enrolled students will continue pursuing their certificates.

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Faculty Highlight: Dr. Keryn Pasch

Interview Conducted By Neeraja Prabhakaran, Social Inequality, Health & Policy BDP



Photo courtesy of The College of Education

Dr. Keryn Pasch is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a Master's of Public Health degree in Health Behavior and Health Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She earned a Ph.D. in Behavioral Epidemiology with a minor in Interpersonal Relationships Research from the University of Minnesota. Dr. Pasch serves on the faculty panel for the Children & Society BDP and has been a faculty mentor to many students in the Children & Society and Social Inequality, Health & Policy BDPs.

Q: How did you get involved with the Children & Society faculty panel?

A: I learned about the BDPs when I served as a guest lecturer for the forum seminar, *Health Inequality in Childhood and Adolescence*. Soon after, I was on a committee to create a new major in the College of Liberal Arts with Dr. Jeanette Herman, the director of the Bridging Disciplines Programs. Through her, I was introduced to the idea of serving on a faculty panel.

Q: What do you study and why do you think it is important?

A: I am an epidemiologist by training, and epidemiologists study the frequency and distribution of diseases and exposures in a population. Currently, I study how media influences youth behaviors. Media is pervasive in our lives and everyone seems to be affected by it to some degree, especially given all the new digital media. If we study the link between media and health behaviors, we can answer questions like how children are influenced by advertising. I also study the co-occurrence of risky behaviors. I try to think more broadly about the co-occurrence of behaviors like energy drink consumption, sleep, diet, and obesity-related behaviors. There is a current epidemic of obesity in the US, and the best way to fight this is to understand root causes of obesity so we can focus on earlier interventions and better prevention methods.

Q: What advice do you have for BDP students?

A: My best piece of advice would be to just get involved early. I didn't really take advantage of the opportunities the University of Illinois at Chicago had to offer, and I wish I was more engaged in my classes. I took some really interesting classes that I would love to be in now, but back then I didn't realize how lucky I was to have those opportunities and didn't necessarily make the most of them.

Q: What do you enjoy doing outside of teaching and research?

A: I'm generally pretty busy with teaching and research, but I do like to watch television and read. I like to spend time with my friends as well, and visit family when I can.

Q: What do you spend your time reading—for scholarship and for fun?

A: I wish I had more time to read! For scholarship I read literary articles on public health, obesity, and youth behaviors in general. As far as fun reading goes, I like to read what I call "bubblegum fiction" – basically light books that let me relax and read without having to do a whole lot of serious thinking. Jane Green books are great.

Q: If you could choose another career what would it be?

A: Something in television, whether it's on the acting side or the production side. I love comedy, so probably something related to that as well. If money was no object, I would start my own animal rescue.

Connecting Experience Spotlight: Advertising Texas Creative Sequence

By Daniel Barajas, Digital Arts & Media

Advertising major Daniel Barajas joined the Digital Arts & Media Bridging Disciplines Program in his first semester at UT Austin. For his Connecting Experience, Daniel completed an independent creative project for the Texas Creative Sequence in the Department of Advertising. Daniel graduated in December 2011 and is currently seeking job opportunities in Seattle, WA.

In my search for an independent creative project I was directed to Ryan Romero, a new lecturer in the Department of Advertising. He already had a foothold in digital marketing, a career path that has since interested me. Together we brainstormed some potential directions and decided on producing a short promotional video for the Texas Creative sequence in the Department of Advertising. I pitched my creative project as a “title sequence” showcasing each of the seven classes offered in the sequence.



Photo courtesy of Daniel Barajas



Photo courtesy of Daniel Barajas

It was important to develop some form of narrative and consistency throughout the video while capturing the essence of each of the seven courses. I played with some of the iconic elements of the Texas Creative sequence, such as the Sharpie sketches, with which every Creative student is intimately familiar. I also saw this project as a perfect opportunity to utilize the various skills and techniques I learned from my BDP classes. Many of the Digital Arts & Media courses I took fell under the RTF department, so making a video was an easy way to bridge my Advertising degree with digital media. Animated text, chroma key, and dynamic transitions were just a few of the techniques I tackled.

Using primarily Adobe After Effects to edit this video, I shot most of my footage in front of a green screen. When I was unable to rent a professional green screen, however, I improvised and turned to Walmart for a cheaper alternative. As a result, the majority of my creative project was shot in front of a green king-sized sheet pinned to my bedroom wall.

I was conveniently enrolled in classes during the semester with both my faculty mentors, making them easily accessible when I had questions. They had the same amount of enthusiasm in seeing the video put together as I did, which contributed to an ideal partnership. I have since given the video to faculty of the Texas Creative Sequence, where it has been shown during introductory classes. The video's intended use is to entice more Advertising students to apply for Texas Creative.

Through my Connecting Experience this semester and the BDP as a whole, I was able to apply my knowledge of digital art to my work in the Texas Creative Sequence. I was also able to take my Advertising portfolio to a new level, from static print ads to dynamic videos. *To view Daniel's work, visit: <http://vimeo.com/32942799>.*

Connecting Experience Spotlight: United States Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in Washington, D.C.

By Christina Wright, Ethics & Leadership BDP

Christina Wright is a senior majoring in Government and Corporate Communication. She is pursuing a BDP certificate in Ethics & Leadership, with a strand concentration in Social Justice, Politics & Law. She spent the fall 2011 semester in Washington D.C. as a Bill Archer Fellow.



Photo courtesy of Christina Wright

My experience interning on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. offered me an unparalleled opportunity to understand the intricacies of the American government, policy, politics, ethics, and leadership. Through the highly esteemed Bill Archer Program, I worked with the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, where I attended various Congressional hearings, briefings hosted by different organizations, and several staff meetings. Through each of my assignments, I gathered more insight into how politics works in D.C. and how politicians navigate our political system. In many cases, alliances were formed and allegiances were established, mainly along two political parties—Republicans and Democrats. For me, the opportunity to witness this was unnerving. As votes came up on the Senate and House floor, I watched as each congressperson submitted his or her vote. I wondered to myself sometimes if they cast votes based on their service to their own constituents, based on their loyalty to their political party, or both.

With the past 2010 election bringing in a tide of new Republicans, in my opinion the polarization within Congress has only increased. This was definitely noticeable during my time spent on Capitol Hill. I watched as political leaders worked tirelessly to keep their parties aligned. As a BDP student studying the Social Justice, Politics, and Law strand of Ethics & Leadership, I questioned how ethics and leadership work on Capitol Hill. For example, is it ethical to have such a strong party leadership presence on Capitol Hill, where there can be serious repercussions for a member who chooses to not vote along party lines? Or maybe the real issue is redistricting? Maybe districts are being drawn in such a way that moderate politicians are no longer able to win in political elections; thus, only candidates who represent solid Republican or solid Democratic ideals are being elected.



Overall, I gained a greater understanding about key issues being debated in our political arena, such as the solvency of Social Security, the current state of our economy, payroll tax cut extensions, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act renewal, unemployment, and trade agreements, to name a few. Interning in Washington, D.C. has allowed me to experience a new environment, to work and intern with other students from various academic and cultural backgrounds, and to match what I have been learning in

my government classes to what actually happens in Congress on a daily basis. This experience sparked my interest in social services and I also discovered that I want to be a liaison connecting policy makers to grassroots organizers and community leaders. I could not have asked to live with a better group of Archer students, and I could not have asked for a better experience interning in Washington, D.C.

Catching Up with Samantha Hollon

By Sydney Cruz, Digital Arts & Media BDP

Samantha Hollon is a former BDP student who now works as a post-production assistant on the TV show Warehouse 13 on the Syfy Channel in Los Angeles, California. While at UT, she majored in Psychology with a minor in English and earned a BDP certificate in Digital Arts & Media.

As a freshman, Samantha knew she wanted to work in the entertainment industry. Unable to minor in Radio-Television-Film but interested in communication courses, she did some research and joined the Bridging Disciplines Programs. She was then able to take courses that interested her, but for which she could not otherwise register for. During her time in the Digital Arts & Media BDP, Samantha interned with CBS 11 News Dallas/Fort Worth in their Creative Services Department and at Warehouse 13, which eventually led to her current job. Between the two internships, she gained critical industry skills and knowledge of software that allowed her to become successful in post-production.



Photo courtesy of Samantha Hollon

Samantha found her interdisciplinary education very valuable. Through the Bridging Disciplines Programs, she obtained vital experience in her two Connecting Experience internships and communication courses that were part of the BDP curriculum. With this experience and her Liberal Arts background, she gained an understanding of the workings of a script in written form and its visual portrayal. “English and Psychology created a foundation for everything I learned in Radio-Television-Film and I felt like I could appreciate the material in a different way,” Samantha stated. Furthermore, she explained that as an editor, it is essential to have the ability to take a writer’s script and a director’s footage and package them into an assembly of audio and video to provide a product that will resonate with an audience.

Samantha also benefitted from her interdisciplinary experiences in that she once knew her interests, the Bridging Disciplines Program helped her expand her knowledge in those subject areas. Samantha concluded our talk with some advice to current BDP students: “Take as many BDP classes as you can, especially if they wouldn’t be available to you outside of the BDPs. Also, take advantage of the internships, because you can only learn so much in the classroom. Don’t be afraid to take risks. College is definitely the time when you’re in a very safe environment to try something new and maybe different. If there’s something you’ve always wanted to do, and you can do that through the BDPs, go for it. Don’t ever feel like it’s too late. It’s only too late if you never try. Even as a junior or senior in the BDPs, don’t be afraid to try something new.”

Tell Us Your BDP Story

Our “Catching Up With...” column gives alumni the chance to share their stories about how their BDP experience played a role in their graduate education or professional career journey.

If you would like to share your story with current students, faculty, and other alumni, email us at bdp@austin.utexas.edu

Fall 2011 Admissions Profile

In Fall 2011, we welcomed 130 new students to the Bridging Disciplines Programs. The students represent nearly 60 academic majors—with significant representation from International Relations and Global Studies, Computer Science, the College of Fine Arts, and the School of Undergraduate Studies. Our new admits are motivated and passionate about complementing their fields of study with an interdisciplinary education. Take a look at the representation across BDPs:

Bridging Disciplines Program	Number of Admits
Children & Society	12
Conflict Resolution & Peace Studies	2
Cultural Studies	3
Digital Arts & Media	21
Environment	9
Ethics & Leadership	11
Film Studies	2
Global Studies	10
Human Rights & Social Justice	12
Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship	11
Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits	16
Social Inequality, Health & Policy	21
Total	130

During the application process, these students expressed ambitions to intern with influential government agencies, entertainment production companies, educational institutions, and corporations, in addition to non-profit organizations in other countries. Furthermore, their research interests include architecture in Russia, conservation efforts in Latin America, creative art therapy techniques, and the use of persuasion theory. Students also expressed interest in developing business plans for their personal entrepreneurial ventures, producing video games, and designing iPhone applications. The Bridging Disciplines Programs web site will be updated frequently with Connecting Experience profiles as the students embark on these exciting opportunities.

Fall 2011 Graduate Profile

At the close of the fall semester, 17 students graduated with BDP certificates. This outstanding group of students completed 16 research projects, 2 independent creative projects, and 17 internships. Their Connecting Experiences spanned the country and covered the globe, from Illinois to Australia, and students also traveled to Washington, D.C., India, France, Brazil, Puerto Rico, England, and Albania.

As part of completing their BDP requirements, the graduates wrote integration essays, offering thoughtful reflections on their experiences and confirming the value their interdisciplinary coursework brought to their studies.

To see what our alumni have been up to since graduation, visit the BDP website. To stay connected, BDP alumni are encouraged to join the UT Bridging Disciplines Alumni Network on LinkedIn.

Visit us online at www.utexas.edu/ugs/bdp