

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.

News & Updates

- Congratulations to Assistant Dean for Academic Initiatives and BDP Director Dr. Jeanette Herman, who was awarded the Cale McDowell Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Studies.
- In April, BDP Advisor Rose Mastrangelo received an Outstanding Staff Award from the President's Office. Rose advises the Digital Arts & Media, Environment, and Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profit BDPs, and is also the UT Austin coordinator for the Archer Fellowship Program.
- Also in April, 15 BDP students met with accomplished professionals in the digital media career field. The students had an opportunity to present their work and seek career-related advice.
- Congratulations to Global Studies BDP alumnus Kevin Martin, who was awarded a Fulbright grant to teach English in Malaysia. Kevin, an admissions counselor for The University of Texas, will relocate to Malaysia in January.
- Current student Jordan Metoyer was awarded the Harry S. Truman Scholarship, a competitive national award given to college juniors who demonstrate leadership and plan to pursue careers in public service. Jordan is an Economics and Urban Studies double major, pursuing certificates in Social Inequality, Health & Policy and Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits.
- In the upcoming academic year, eight BDP students will participate in the Bill Archer Fellowship Program. Exclusive to UT System undergraduate students, the program provides 46 juniors and seniors with the opportunity to live in Washington, D.C., attend classes, and participate in full-time internships.

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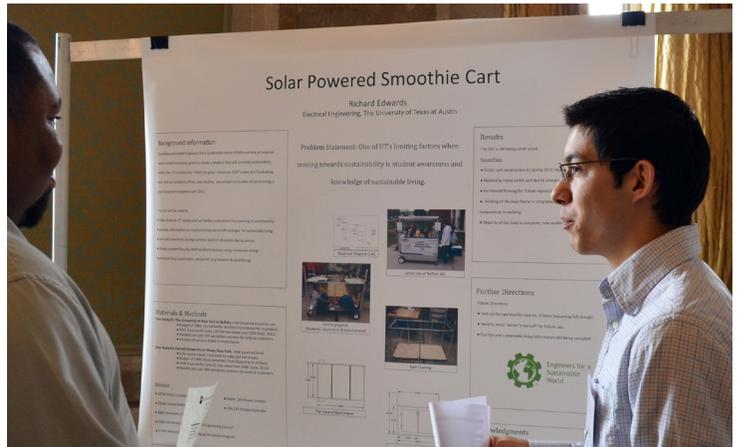
Connecting Experience Spotlight: Solar-Powered Smoothie Cart

By Richard Edwards, Environment BDP

Richard Edwards is a senior electrical engineering major pursuing a BDP certificate in the Environment. During the spring 2013 semester, Richard served as the project lead for the student organization Engineers for a Sustainable World. He led a team in the construction of a solar-powered smoothie cart. Professor Michael Garrison in the School of Architecture served as his faculty mentor.

In an effort to promote and encourage sustainability on campus, the Engineers for a Sustainable World (ESW) student organization constructed a solar-powered smoothie cart, which will be used to distribute eco-tips and sell healthy fruit smoothies. As project lead, my team and I brainstormed several ideas before deciding to build the cart. Ultimately, we wanted to construct a product that would attract Longhorns and serve as a fundraising tool for ESW.

Before the cart could be constructed, funding and expert advice was needed. My team and I received funding from SunEdison, the Bridging Disciplines Programs, and the Student Engineering Council. We sought advice from Dr. Michael Garrison from the School of Architecture, as well as a number of other UT faculty and staff. With the help of Dr. Garrison, we were able to quickly resolve issues that arose and make enhancements to the original design of the cart. For example, in order to prevent the possibility of battery acid leaking from the cart, Dr. Garrison recommended that we build a safety box consisting of gypsum board, wood, and EPDM backing.



Courtesy of the Bridging Disciplines Programs



Courtesy of Richard Edwards

In April, I presented our work at the annual BDP Poster Session during Undergraduate Research Week. By the end of the spring semester, we completed the cart frame and body. This summer, I will continue serving as project lead, and we will spend the next few months testing the solar panel and power electronics, in addition to painting the cart. Our goal is to serve our first customers in time for the start of fall semester.

Before this Connecting Experience, I always had a very technological approach to resolving issues. I thought the key to creating a more sustainable environment lay in the advancement of science and technology. I've come to realize, however, that the determining factor for sustainability lies in human behavior and social norms. Over the past three semesters, through the Environment BDP, I have had the opportunity to take courses

related to sustainable design and the human impact on the environment, which have lead me to understand the connections between engineering and the environment.

Also prior to this Connecting Experience, I felt my passion for the environment drew me closer to a career working with renewable energy, but the more I see the limitations of technology with respect to human behavior, the more I am compelled to steer my future towards resource recovery and system optimization. As a result, I have begun looking for internships with consulting agencies that specialize in resource recovery or building retrofits. I believe we are called to be stewards of this world, sustainable in every way so as not to jeopardize future generations' abilities provide for themselves. Overall, this Connecting Experience allowed me the means to do my part to create a more sustainable campus before I graduate from The University of Texas at Austin.

Connecting Experience Spotlight: Texas Civil Rights Project

By Gwen Cubit, Human Rights & Social Justice BDP

Gwen Cubit graduated in May 2013 with a degree in social work and a BDP certificate in Human Rights & Social Justice. During the spring 2013 semester, Gwen interned for the Texas Civil Rights Project. Clinical Assistant Professor Dede Sparks in the School of Social Work served as Gwen's faculty mentor.

My internship experience at the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) offered me the opportunity to engage in work that was both challenging and rewarding. The mission of the Texas Civil Rights Project is to promote racial, social, and economic justice through litigation, education, and social services for low/moderate-income persons least able to defend themselves.

My focus as a social worker has been public policy and social justice advocacy, so the TCRP was a great fit. The relationship with my faculty mentor, Assistant Clinical Professor Dede Sparks, kept me grounded and offered me a different perspective throughout my experience. As a social worker, she taught me to always defend my point of view.

During my internship with the TCRP, I worked with the Prisoners' Rights Program. The program works to improve conditions in Texas prisons and jails through litigation and advocacy. Over 200,000 people are incarcerated in Texas, and most do not have access to attorneys. Prisoners report horrific stories of wrongful deaths, denial of medical care, violations of due process, and excessive force on a daily basis. The Prisoners' Rights Program concentrates on cases that will have a broad impact by changing policy or creating other systemic relief. The TCRP also helps incarcerated veterans through their Justice for Veterans Campaign, a program for military veterans who struggle with physical and mental health conditions related to their service, and who also find themselves struggling within the criminal justice system. The TCRP provides resource manuals that help veterans make a successful reentry into society.

As a part of the Prison Litigation Team, my most rewarding experiences were when I traveled to various prison units with attorneys to conduct interviews with inmates who had either been a victim and/or a witness to a civil rights violation. Some of the cases included excessive heat, excessive force, and even death. A majority of the cases were class action lawsuits, which means that the prisoners agreed to no monetary gains. Overall, the most challenging aspects of my internship with the TCRP were times when I thought we should be defending a case that the attorneys knew they could not win.

Throughout my experience at the TCRP, I learned that human rights are not guaranteed and we must advocate for people who are denied these rights through social action, lawsuits, and even marches and rallies at the Capitol. This semester, I actively participated in social justice by aiding the attorneys in protecting Texas prisoners. I learned that prisoner complaints formed the basis of many civil rights investigations and legal actions that have prevented the Texas Department of Criminal Justice from violating the first and eighth amendment rights of prisoners.



Courtesy of Gwen Cubit

Alumni Feature: Sophie Eckrich

By Erin Thomas, Associate Academic Advisor



Courtesy of Teysha Social Enterprises

Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits alumna Sophie Eckrich is the co-founder of Teysha Social Enterprises, a platform for cross-cultural exchange through social entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. Sophie graduated from UT Austin in August 2011 with a bachelor's degree in sociology.

Sophie Eckrich recalls that she became aware of poverty at a very early age during family trips to Mexico. She frequently witnessed children selling chewing gum on the street. "From a young age, I thought, 'Something doesn't sit right about this; I don't understand it. I developed a drive to do something to help others.'" After graduating from high school, Sophie spent four months in Costa Rica

working with a non-profit organization to promote reforestation and environmental education. It was in Costa Rica that she was introduced to the concept of international development.

During her sophomore year at UT Austin, Sophie was admitted to the Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits BDP. She appreciated that the program challenged her to make connections with faculty, engage in research, and pursue internship opportunities. For one Connecting Experience, Sophie spent a summer in Arequipa, Peru, where she interned with Pro Mujer, an international women's development and microfinance organization. The following fall semester, Sophie enrolled in GOV 365N: Issues in Third World Development, a course that helped her draw theoretical connections to her internship in Peru. Sophie credits her BDP experience for allowing her to explore international development from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. "BDP really helped me find my passion, and what I deeply cared about," Sophie notes. "It allowed me to feel like I could make a difference in the world, regardless of whether or not I knew exactly what I was going to do."

"[Starting a business] may help you land a job after college, or it may be what you do after college."

After working for six months as an internship coordinator for a local non-profit organization, Sophie and her boyfriend Travis Breihan decided to spend three months in Panama with the goal of helping a local community and providing an opportunity for people in the United States to learn about other cultures. In Panama, Sophie and Travis took note of the intricate molas, or clothing tapestries, created by the local Kuna women. They began meeting with the women to learn more about their work and their culture. The two left Panama with a powerful idea that would begin to transform the lives of local artisans throughout Latin America.

Sophie and Travis returned to Austin with shoe models made from the fabric produced by the Kuna women. *Kuna Kicks*, as they were later named, began to draw attention. Early customers were not only drawn to the aesthetics and comfort of the shoes, but also felt a connection to the women who were given an international stage for their artwork, and compensated with fair wages and trade policies. With *Kuna Kicks* came Teysha Social Enterprises, an international development company co-founded by Sophie and Travis. The company exists to create opportunities that will alleviate poverty and improve lives through social entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.



Courtesy of Teysha Social Enterprises

(Continued on page 5.)

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In May 2012, Teysha Social Enterprises launched pop-up shops at Sno Beach on Barton Springs Rd. and HOPE Farmer's Market in East Austin. For the first time, the Austin community was able to purchase Kuna Kicks, hear the story of the Kuna women, and learn about the mission of Teysha. Through YouthTrade, an organization that provides socially conscious entrepreneurs with access to large retailers, Sophie and Travis met with senior buyers from Nordstrom. In December, Kuna Kicks debuted at Nordstrom in Los Angeles. During this time, Teysha also expanded its reach to Guatemala and began working with Mayan weavers and boot makers. The result was *Guate Boots*, and the process allows customers to take an active role in customizing their shoes.

In two short years, Teysha has attracted many volunteers, including recent UT graduates and current BDP students. In addition to Nordstrom, Kuna Kicks has also been picked up by local Austin retailers. For each launch, Sophie and other Teysha representatives meet with customers to share the story behind Teysha and Kuna Kicks. At the end of the day, it is important to Sophie that Teysha is not defined as a shoe company. "We want our products to be a physical representation of [Teysha's mission] to create sustainable income and sustainable jobs."

Reflecting on her college experience, Sophie advises current students—especially those who want to be entrepreneurs—to take advantage of the resources available at the university. "College is an amazing place to start a business," she said. "There are so many grants and business competitions that are only available to students. Even if [the business] starts small, starting it is important. It may help you land a job after college, or it may be what you do after college."

Where Are They Now?

August 2012 & December 2012 Graduates

In August and December 2012, 26 students graduated with BDP certificates. Following is a report on what some of those graduates have been up to since graduation.

Dana Al-Hasan, Social Inequality, Health & Policy
Master in Public Health Candidate
University of Texas School of Public Health (Austin, TX)

Sarah Daniel, Global Studies
External & Government Affairs Assistant
BHP Billiton Petroleum (Houston, TX)

Russell Gellman, Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship
Financial Analyst
Dell (Austin, TX)

Meg Green, Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits
Public Ally
Public Allies (Hartford, CT)

Michelle Horsley, Children & Society
Demand Supply Advisor
Dell (Austin, TX)

Katie Koehler, Ethics & Leadership
Accountant
Ernst & Young, LLP (Denver, CO)

Tia Leone, Ethics & Leadership
Elementary School Teacher
Teach for America (Houston, TX)

Brittany Long, Ethics & Leadership
J.D. Candidate
University of Texas School of Law (Austin, TX)

Jazmin Perez, Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits
Internet Marketing Associate
Texas Instruments (Dallas, TX)

Erin Scott, Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits
Admissions Counselor
CEA Study Abroad (Phoenix, AZ)

Michael Slater, Digital Arts & Media
Assistant
Kintop Pictures (Los Angeles, CA)

Fanny Trang, Global Studies
Dossier Specialist
Children of All Nations (Austin, TX)

Caleb Wiley, Ethics & Leadership
Staff Assistant
U.S. House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.)

Goli Zarchi, Digital Arts & Media
Inside Account Executive
SHI (Austin, TX)

Spring 2013 Admissions Profile

In spring 2013, we welcomed 97 students who are excited 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	11
Conflict Resolution & Peace Studies	9
Cultural Studies	1
Digital Arts & Media	15
Environment	6
Ethics & Leadership	5
Global Studies	12
Human Rights & Social Justice	4
Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship	10
Social Entrepreneurship & Non-profits	14
Social Inequality, Health & Policy	10
Total	97

Spring 2013 Graduates Profile

At the close of the spring semester, over 60 students across the BDPs graduated with certificates. Representing over 40 areas of study, this outstanding group of students completed 53 internships, 55 research projects, and eight creative projects.

At the BDP Certificate Ceremony, each student was asked to announce his or her future plans after graduation. Microsoft Xbox, Americorps, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Austin Chronicle were among the list of future employers. One student will be moving to South Africa as a Fulbright Fellow, and several students will be pursuing graduate and professional degrees at schools across the country, including the University of Texas at Austin, Duke University, Rutgers University, Northwestern University, and the University of Illinois.

In our September issue, we will report on what our May 2013 graduates have been doing since graduation.

Connect with us online...

www.utexas.edu/ugs/bdp

 **Bridging Disciplines Programs-UT Austin**

 **UT Bridging Disciplines Programs Network**