A Message From the New BDIC Director, Michael Sugerman

I am a lecturer in the Anthropology department specializing in the Archaeology of the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean. Since arriving at UMass in 2001, I have also taught in the departments of Classics and Judaic and Near Eastern Studies at UMass, and in departments of Anthropology, Humanities, Religion, and Natural Sciences at the other schools in the Five Colleges. From my undergrad days all the way through attaining my PhD my education was extremely inter-departmental, including coursework (and sometimes even degrees) in Biology, Classics, Economics, Geosciences, History, Religion, and, of course, Anthropology. Because of that experience, I know how important BDIC is within the UMass community. It's not always possible to find what you want in the programs that already exist; the pathways that so many other students have already followed.

This early in the year, I'm still on the steep uphill learning curve of BDIC. I'm trying to learn its history and culture (not to mention its budget and paperwork). A big part of what I'm doing is trying to figure out what's working and what isn't; what's helping you to make progress, and what's getting in your way. I hope that you'll feel free to meet with me, email me, or talk with me at the upcoming BDIC events so that you can let me know what you think about the program and how you think it might be made even better.

You can find me in the BDIC office in Goodell most Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays between 11:00 and 1:00. Please come up and see me.
Registration

Inviting all BDIC and Proposal Writing students to meet about classes and other concerns! Registration for spring semester starts November 14, but you can make an appointment with Linda now by calling the BDIC office at 545-2504. Students with academic holds or RACs must see Linda before registering. It is also a good idea for seniors graduating in February or May to come in and make sure they are on track.

For Honors-related questions, please make an appointment to see the BDIC Honors Program Director, Dr. Susan Ware. She has hours in the BDIC office Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

If you need ISOM classes for spring, you can put your name on the ISOM “wish list” located in 607 Goodell. This will help expedite your getting into the classes. You will need the course department and number, the Spire ID five digit number for the spring semester, any classes you have already taken and the number of credits you have completed including the fall semester. To be eligible for any upper level ISOM courses you must have at least 57 credits.

The junior year writing sign-up sheet will also be available at the reception desk in BDIC.

Those of you who need to satisfy the new Integrative Experience gen ed, the BDIC IE class, 394, is called Integration and Innovation. You can sign up for it on spire.

If you are interested in enrolling in Introduction to Entrepreneurship, it will be listed as Sch-Mgt 397A for spring registration rather than BDIC 397A. You can still add it on spire since it will be open to all majors.

Remember, May graduates, Senior Summaries are due on April 1, 2013

Good luck with adding the perfect classes for spring! Please stop by BDIC. We’d love to see you.

Sponsor Recognition Night

The BDIC Student Advisory Board will be hosting a Faculty Sponsor Appreciation Night on November 7th, from 4:30pm to 6:30pm at the University Club. Please join us for a night of conversation and celebration as we welcome our new BDIC Director, Michael Sugerman. Do not miss this wonderful opportunity to not only meet Professor Sugerman, but also to network with Faculty Sponsors and other BDIC students. To RSVP, please email Stephanie Ozahowski at sozahows@student.umass.edu.
The BDIC Student Advisory board is a unique opportunity for students to get involved in BDIC. Our mission is to create a platform for developing community among BDIC students, provide a collective voice for students to influence the direction of BDIC, and bridge the gap between students, faculty and alumni. For interested students, the Student Advisory Board meets on Mondays at 2:00pm in the BDIC office. All BDIC students are welcome to attend.

Honors Independent Capstone through BDIC
By Joey Costello, ’13

Similar to most BDIC students, I am an incredibly independent person and enjoy taking the individualized road less traveled by. Consequently, when my senior year approached, I opted to complete my Honors Capstone Experience requirement by developing an independent research thesis. To give you some context, I am earning dual degrees in Economics and BDIC with a concentration in Labor and Development Studies; additionally, I am completing a minor in Anthropology. My academic interests center on community economic development and the organization of economies, and my career interests rest in the economic development field—working with small businesses and facilitating regional development strategies. My capstone taps into these interests and blends the knowledge and skills I have developed from my academics with my relevant professional experience.

My capstone, entitled “Strategies for Community Economic Development in the Pioneer Valley,” is interdisciplinary and compares economic development theory with actual strategies being implemented in the Valley. Although I have always maintained an interest in this topic, I did not have a specific plan to incorporate it into a thesis until I worked over this past summer at the Franklin County Community Development Corporation in Greenfield, Massachusetts, a local community economic development organization. That experience helped me develop a strong basis for my research and provided me with a window into pragmatic economic redevelopment efforts. Over the course of the summer, I hashed out the specifics of my research proposal according to the Honors College guidelines, and I reached out to professors whom I felt would be constructive and worthwhile sponsors.

Once the fall semester began, I finalized my proposal and met with the professors who would later comprise my advising committee. Keeping with the underlying interdisciplinary theme, my sponsors Professor Nancy Folbre and Professor Henry Renski respectively hail from the Economics Department and the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department. Over the course of the semester, I will be meeting with my advisors to track and evaluate the progress of my research, as well as to discuss
my findings. My research will consist of poring through economic development studies and academic articles to gain an understanding of the theories that lend credence to methods for development being utilized. I will also study influential development organizations and interview individuals who bring theory to life in the Pioneer Valley. In the spring, I will organize my findings and formally write a thesis. Though the Capstone Experience is a daunting task, it feels like a natural culmination to my time in BDIC and at UMass Amherst. I finally have the opportunity to delve into what interests me the most and reflect on what I have learned over the past four years.

Email Etiquette
By Shari Moona, ‘13

I am Shari, a senior here at UMass and a receptionist in the BDIC office. My concentration is the Psychology of Marketing and the Consumer. We all can sympathize that class registration is undoubtedly one of the most stressful times of the semester for BDIC majors. We all know the routine: emailing teachers in hopes of convincing them you are a good candidate for their class, then playing the waiting game for their response.

Although this is a tedious routine to repeat every semester, why not make the best out of it? I have a few tips on constructing the perfect email to increase your likelihood of getting the classes you need. First, start the message with either, “Good morning,” “Good afternoon” or “Good evening” rather than “Hello” or “Hi.” This illustrates professionalism. Second, which may be a bit obvious, do a little research on their educational background and ALWAYS address them by either Dr. or Professor; they have worked extremely hard for their title and acknowledgement of that shows respect. Next, give a bit of background information about yourself, such as your year and concentration. Then explain why their class relates to your major and how it will positively influence your studies. Lastly, thank them for their time, and offer to meet during their office hours for any further discussion.

On occasion professors are unable to give you permission into a class for various reasons, but do not get discouraged. Try to find another similar class offered in the 5-College consortium or even show up the first day of class and speak with the professor afterwards; it exemplifies dedication and strong interest.

By following these guidelines I have managed to have a very high success rate with getting the classes I need for my concentration. Good luck all!
At Your Service: New Honors Program Director

By Susan Ware
Commonwealth Honors Program Director
Lecturer, BDIC 197A

Serving as the new Honors Program Director this year, I am growing quite impressed with the BDIC students I’m meeting. If we have not had the pleasure of meeting yet, please do not be shy to introduce yourself. My designated office hours are Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 in the back office of BDIC.

I offer services for all BDIC students. What I most enjoy is hearing about your interests as they evolve. My own background combines the study of religion with the practice of values-based investing services. Nestled in the offices of BDIC, I feel less like a freak and more like an innovative thinker! Like yours, my curiosity is broad. If you’d like to drop by to tell me about your course of study, you will find an eager interlocutor.

My freshman class on designing your own major (BDIC 197A) is open to everyone, and it should give participants a leg-up in preparing to create a customized major – both intellectually and procedurally. We address questions such as, “What does a Faculty Supervisor do? How do I find one?” and “How do I know which academic journals have authority in the disciplines I’m combining?”

For students considering applying to Commonwealth Honors College, I can discuss that decision and guide you through the application process. For students already in CHC, I help you connect the dots between the requirements of BDIC and those of CHC. A common question I field is: “What’s the difference between Departmental Honors and Multi-Disciplinary Honors?”

I hope to encourage all BDIC students to aim high, to consider kicking it up a notch with your aspirations and seeing just how much you can achieve – be it in applying for post-graduate fellowships, deciding in what term to take an especially challenging class, or shaping your dreams for life after college.

Together, we can cultivate the life of the mind. As we do, we almost navigate your personal path through the requirements of this most interesting major.

Why BDIC is made for the sciences:

By Guillaume Pagnier, ’13

Science is quickly becoming an interdisciplinary field of study. Indeed, it has always been typical for science majors at college to be the most straightforward; there is the potential for the least individual tailoring for the typical science majors such as biochemistry or biology. However, the
The interdisciplinary nature of BDIC is extremely applicable to the sciences here at UMass Amherst. For example, analyzing the biochemical mechanism of a neuron firing requires knowledge from several fields, such as neuroscience, biology and even physics. Though the individual subject classes do their best to convey this interdisciplinary knowledge, it is obvious that being independently familiar with the basics of each subject provides the most thorough education. Indeed, this was my reasoning when I designed a BDIC concentration titled Neurobiology. My concentration incorporates aspects from biology, psychology, chemistry and even sociology to glean a more thorough understanding of the brain and how it operates at a neuro-chemical level.

A BDIC science focus can also be immensely helpful with the humanities. From Proposal Writing student, Daniela Kucher’s, point of view, a BDIC degree provides the freedom to meld an interest in social justice with a fascination with neuroscience; more specifically the mix of sociology, psychology, and biology classes will give her a primarily scientific understanding of how the media and society can affect us. Another example is Kurt Schultz ’14, also a Proposal Writing student, whose scientific BDIC concentration allows him to analyze the brain’s plasticity in response to meditation. These specific examples represent a mere fraction of what a science oriented BDIC major can accomplish.

New BDIC Peer Advisors

Lily Strassberg, ‘14

I am a self-discovered academic masochist at UMass Amherst, loving every moment of my BDIC B.S. in Animal Behavior. I have been working in dog rescue and rehabilitation since I was eleven years old. Though I prioritized shelter work over school work in high school, I found a perfect blend of behavioral study and application with the BDIC program. My classes are broad-based in the animal science, biology, and psychology departments. I have accredited several independent studies towards my major, including work in a behavioral neuroscience lab, comparative psychology lab, and canine cognition lab. At sixteen I studied at Cornell’s Shoals Marine Laboratory, and taught a green crab how to ring a bell. I worked at the American Humane Association when I was seventeen as a research intern for the Animal-Human Education Branch. I shadowed a board-certified veterinary behaviorist at the Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine when I was 18, and I spent this past summer at Duke University conducting cognitive research on bomb detection dogs in the military. I have fostered upwards of one hundred dogs in their transition from shelter to home life over the years, and I continue to foster and rehabilitate dogs while at school. Negating my academic record, I am a simple dog-lover through and through. The recipe for my meaningful career, whatever that may be, consists of applied research in animal behavior,
communication, perception, animal-human relations, and veterinary science. I match every academic stepping stone with a real-life application: shelter work, veterinary psychiatry, military working dogs, fostering and reconditioning programs, etc. I love what I am learning and I love the process; each semester here shines a new light on the capacity I have to educate people and reform our approach to animal-human relationships.

Emma Mulvaney, ‘15

Emma recently joined our Student Staff as a Peer Advisor this Fall 2012. A Sophomore BDIC Major with a Concentration in Higher Education Administration, Emma is taking classes through the Psychology Department, the School of Education, and the Isenberg School of Management. Interested in working in Student Affairs at the University Level, she has chosen Dr. Lynn Pasquerella, President of Mount Holyoke College, as her Faculty Sponsor. As Emma continues her education, she hopes to take advantage of all that the University has to offer, while sharing her love of BDIC with her students.

The Non-Traditional Student Experience
By Kyle Rodd, ‘13

Coming to UMass as a non-traditional student I knew that I would pursue a BDIC degree. After leaving high school in 2000 I travelled the country, followed my passions, explored new interests, and discovered who I was as outside of once-familiar family and hometown dynamics. Upon returning to school I knew that fitting myself into a predesigned major would be difficult at best: I needed to channel my unique life experiences into my own self-designed degree. Having heard about BDIC from friends who had graduated the program, I sought more information. After my acceptance into UMass, and after finishing the proposal writing class, I was working towards obtaining my Ecopsychology degree and advising others as a peer advisor on how to hone their proposals to turn their ideas into realities.

However, being a non-traditional student is not without its challenges. Being very close in age to many of my instructors can complicate the usual teacher/student dynamic, and being more than ten years older than many of my fellow students has me often feeling disconnected from the UMass community. Add a marriage, family, and a career to the equation and you have a much different experience from the usual UMass student. But, despite these challenges, BDIC is definitely the place for me.