I am excited to join the UMass Amherst community as BDIC’s new director. It is my honor to have taken the reins from Michael Sugerman, who successfully guided BDIC through its relocation in 2015 to our current home in Commonwealth Honors College (CHC). I suspect that we will see shortly the influence of Michael’s BDIC experience at his new berth, Binghamton University.

Last year was an excellent one for BDIC majors. Our program continues to provide UMass Amherst’s preeminent space for interdisciplinary, individualized education for undergraduate students. BDIC boasted 148 graduates in the 2016–17 academic year and currently has a critical mass of students—roughly 270 majors, with concentrations running the gamut from music therapy to entrepreneurial studies. We will add nearly 100 more majors through our fall proposal class. To support our students, BDIC drew on eight faculty supervisors and six peer advisors; every BDIC student received the individualized advising support we believe to be critical for student success. We also continued our growing collaboration with CHC, which is under the leadership of Dean Gretchen Gerzina. Last year, we joined CHC’s Scholarship Awards Reception to present scholarships and awards to BDIC recipients in front of hundreds of family members and students.

Our agenda for this year is multipronged. We are piloting electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) among students in BDIC’s proposal classes. The goal is to provide students with a space to curate their own “artifacts” reflecting both their individualized concentrations and their shared milestones as they progress through their BDIC majors.

We also continue to be a center for academic innovation on campus. In addition to our current incubation of the informatics area, we hope to grow several interdisciplinary areas—computational social science, law, and arts management—currently not served by specific departments. We are working hard to be good stewards of public monies, alumni gifts, and student tuition by focusing on operational efficiencies while ensuring that our students receive excellent teaching and advising. For example, this year we added Deepika Marya as a jointly appointed faculty member offering BDIC’s required junior-year writing and integrative-experiences courses.

BDIC was established as an official major in the fall of 1970 and given a two-year trial period. With our 50th anniversary approaching, we are beginning to reflect on the meaning of that milestone. Indeed, planning for BDIC, emerging out of a student-and-faculty conference, began as early as the fall of 1968, which would seem to call for special events next year. If you have any ideas or suggestions, we would love to hear your thoughts. And if you’d like to be part of an alumni planning committee, please let us know.

In the pages that follow, you’ll read about our wonderful students, alumni, staff, and faculty. Our program is unique. Its vitality, particularly in terms of student support, is enhanced by the generous donations by alumni and the families of BDIC students, past and present. Thank you.

—Tony Paik
RETIRED
José Ornelas Retires
José Ornelas, a longtime member of the campus community and a former director of the BDIC program, retired this spring after a long and illustrious career at UMass Amherst and was named professor emeritus of Spanish and Portuguese literature, culture, and film. Born in Madeira Island, Portugal, Ornelas emigrated to the United States in 1961. He received his PhD from the Graduate Center of City University of New York in 1976 and has been a professor at UMass since 1974. From 1999 to 2007, he was both chair and then director of Spanish and Portuguese; from 1997 to 2008, he was the director of the BDIC program. Since then, he has served as a faculty supervisor for the program.

Ornelas is a specialist in contemporary Portuguese narrative but has expanded the scope of his research to include gender identity, national identity and construction, and post-colonial studies, film studies, and cultural politics within a multicultural and transnational framework. His publications include two cowritten books and about 50 book chapters and articles in multiple journals. Ornelas has also been a guest lecturer for three different years at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, where he has additionally been asked to give several lectures, share his work at conferences, and participate in television and radio programs. Recently, Ornelas developed several volumes of Portuguese Cultural Studies, a UMass Amherst–based journal.

BDIC THROUGH THE GENERATIONS
Not many people think of BDIC as being multigenerational, but it is. Several current BDIC students have parents who completed BDIC degrees. One example: Ivy Noonan ‘18, religious studies, whose parents both found their passions within the BDIC program.

Ivy’s father, Dave Noonan, graduated from BDIC in January 1993 with a concentration in “A Study of Rhythm, Sound, Culture, and Anthropology.” Her mother, Cheli Mennella, graduated that same year with a concentration in “Creative Writing with a Focus on Children’s Literature.” Mennella has been a freelance writer for many years, finding numerous ways to pursue her passion for children’s literature. She has worked as a local librarian, freelance critic of children’s literature, and writer for local papers. Mennella also writes grant proposals to fund free, child-friendly craft events where she can teach sustainable crafts that engage with children and help them grow. She has also taught writing workshops at a local community college to help nurture and guide students who also want to study children’s literature.

Both Noonan and Mennella followed their passions and were able to study exactly what they wanted in the BDIC program. Now Ivy is doing likewise.
FogKicker's nanocellulose is derived from their work with a biopolymer called plant life, the most abundant organic polymer on Earth, nanocellulose. Nanocellulose is the building block of animal life, the most abundant organic polymer on Earth, and a vastly renewable resource. Marc and his team use it to make foams, composites, coatings, and much more. Their first product is FogKicker, a biodegradable antifog solution that can be coated on any surface, including glasses, goggles, bathroom mirrors, and car windshields to prevent fog.

Marc and his cofounders' early customer interviews and product testing revealed that, among the various groups bothered by fog, none are more bothered than scuba divers. Focusing on scuba divers as their beachhead market, the company launched FogKicker sales in November 2016 at the DEMA Scuba Diving Trade Show in Las Vegas, one of the biggest scuba diving trade shows in the world. In the few months since then, FogKicker has come to be sold in over 90 dive stores around the world and to be distributed by eight international dive-equipment distributors. Treaty LLC just opened its first lab and office in Springfield, Massachusetts, where Marc and his team will be manufacturing their complete line of FogKicker products and developing new nanocellulose applications.

This fall, Marc and the FogKicker team appeared on Adventure Capitalists on CNBC and were featured on the Today show.

WHAT ARE BDIC ALUMNI DOING NOW?

Marc Gammell '16, Sustainable Enterprise and Biotechnology
Marc’s academic BDIC curriculum included business management, entrepreneurship, ecology, natural resource conservation, biology, and biomimicry. His BDIC studies led him to some great opportunities outside the classroom. Marc was an ambassador for the BDIC program, president of the UMass Wildlife Society, and a senator in the Student Government Association. He also worked as a research assistant and technician in cutting-edge UMass labs in genetic engineering, aquaponics, and artificial intelligence.

Last winter, Marc cofounded his own biotech startup with two professors from UMass’s polymer science and engineering department, Yinyong Li and Kenneth R. Carter. Their company, Treaty LLC, makes new products and technology with advanced biomaterials. The products and technology they’ve made so far have derived from their work with a biopolymer called nanocellulose. Nanocellulose is the building block of plant life, the most abundant organic polymer on Earth, and a vastly renewable resource. Marc and his team use it to make foams, composites, coatings, and much more. Their first product is FogKicker, a biodegradable antifog solution that can be coated on any surface, including glasses, goggles, bathroom mirrors, and car windshields to prevent fog.

Marc and his cofounders’ early customer interviews and product testing revealed that, among the various groups bothered by fog, none are more bothered than scuba divers. Focusing on scuba divers as their beachhead market, the company launched FogKicker sales in November 2016 at the DEMA Scuba Diving Trade Show in Las Vegas, one of the biggest scuba diving trade shows in the world. In the few months since then, FogKicker has come to be sold in over 90 dive stores around the world and to be distributed by eight international dive-equipment distributors. Treaty LLC just opened its first lab and office in Springfield, Massachusetts, where Marc and his team will be manufacturing their complete line of FogKicker products and developing new nanocellulose applications.

This fall, Marc and the FogKicker team appeared on Adventure Capitalists on CNBC and were featured on the Today show.

Jack Monaco ’89, Screenwriting
Jack Monaco recently visited UMass to give a presentation to BDIC students about his career path. After graduating with English and BDIC degrees, Jack immediately moved to Los Angeles and earned his master’s degree in screenwriting from the University of Southern California. He claims that his networking efforts and constant submissions of manuscripts were instrumental in his becoming a successful television writer. In 2013 and 2014, Jack was nominated for an Emmy Award for his work in R. L. Stine’s The Haunting Hour. He also won the 2008 Writer’s Guild of America Award for Pushing Daisies. Throughout his career, Jack has focused on TV scripts for young adults, and he has accumulated a number of credits in that area. His advice to BDIC screenwriting majors: “Write, write, write. Writer’s write.” (He adds that it must be good advice, because he has to constantly remind himself of it.) Jack says that his next project will likely be a young-adult novel.

Sean McGrath ’14, Sports and the Law
After graduating from UMass, Sean went on to St. John’s University School of Law, where he recently graduated with a 3.93 GPA, ranking third out of 194 students. Shortly afterward, he was appointed a summer associate at Latham and Watkins, ranked by Vault.com as the seventh-best law firm in the country. Sean has also competed twice in a national competition for baseball arbitration and last year won the Oral Advocacy Award, placing second in the competition. This year, he was named captain of his team and led it to first place in the competition. Sean attributes his accomplishments in his field to his BDIC major and to the department’s guidance.
WHAT ARE OUR RECENT GRADS UP TO?

Richard Nguyen, *Fashion Merchandising*
Richard has moved to New York to pursue his fashion career and currently freelances for such fashion production companies as PRODn at Art + Commerce and KCD. At PRODn, he freelances as a production assistant, helping out on fashion editorials and campaigns; with KCD, he works on shows for New York Fashion Week for Marc Jacobs, Anna Sui, and Narciso Rodriguez, as well as on any other projects they have. He is also looking into freelancing with some other fashion agencies to build up his résumé, skills, and network. You can follow Richard at @richardnguyen.

Erin O’Brien, *Ecology and Experiential Education*
Erin has gotten a job working as a teacher and field guide at Nature’s Classroom, a residential outdoor program for schools across New England.

Maureen Meyer, *Multimedia Informatics*
Maureen has accepted a full-time digital design position in the Seaport District of Boston. She has also taken on a part-time web-development position in Easthampton. Before starting her new positions, Maureen took time off to travel to the Czech Republic and Portugal and make art in Amsterdam.

Elizabeth Tripp, *Children’s Advocacy and Youth Outreach*
Elizabeth will be teaching English through Meddeas, a Spanish organization that provides support to bilingual teaching, in an elementary school in Aljaraque, Spain.

Meredith Wells, *Musical Theater*
Meredith performed for a week over the summer in New York City in her one-woman show *Dysfunctioning Just Fine* in the My True Colors Festival, which is presented in partnership with NYC PRIDE. After that, Meredith moved to Cleveland to join Dancing Wheels, a professional integrative dance company (www.dancingwheels.org/).

Lindsay Hartfelder, *Music Entrepreneurship*
This fall, Lindsay began a master’s degree program in percussion performance at the University of Delaware.

Tobin Armstrong, *Sustainable Energy Policy*
Tobin has been accepted into the public policy graduate program at UMass Amherst.

Sarina Ponte, *Women’s Psychology and Eating Disorders*
As of this fall, Sarina began attending the University of Denver in a master’s degree program in counseling psychology with a concentration in eating disorders.

Olivia Clark, *Advertising through Graphic Communication*
Olivia was named Miss Western Massachusetts this year. We are waiting to see where her career will lead now.

Elaina Bliss, *Data Science Informatics,* and Rebecca Landry, *Informatics*
Elaina and Rebecca have started the master’s of science degree program in business administration at UMass Amherst.

Alumni Update

Parker Burr ’15, *Entrepreneurial and Global Business,* and Taylor Offer ’15, *Valuation Psychology*
Parker and Taylor started a company called Feat Socks while still undergrads in BDIC. At that time, they were producing their wildly patterned, hand-printed socks in an Amherst warehouse. The company has since moved to California and become even more successful. They have recently begun working with such big-name stars as the celebrity musical group The Chainsmokers to promote their product.
Kathryn Rieber, Visual Design, Interpersonal Relations  
Kathryn has taken her customized degree to Los Angeles to work at RIXTON Productions, a start-up event production company, as an event coordinator. RIXTON’s biggest event is BrunchCon, a two-day brunch festival featuring local food and market vendors. It’s basically one big millennial party and enables Kathryn to live her dream of being a party planner. In 2018, BrunchCon is expanding into 10 new markets throughout the U.S.

Mark Chicote, Molecular Neurobiology and Health Sciences  
Mark was recently hired as a Tufts Medical Center mental health counselor and a clinical care technician in the psychiatry department. He entered medical school this fall.

2017 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Thanks to the generous support of its alumni, BDIC was able to award many different types of scholarships during the past year. The help of these scholarships can be life-changing for our students.

Here is a list of general scholarship winners:

Rachel Haley ’17, Global Health, will use her award to work closely with the nonprofit Partners in Development. She has traveled to Guatemala on a service trip to assist in clinics and develop a social justice curriculum for a future course. Rachel is especially interested in understanding the complexity of social movements in Guatemala and has a passion for promoting global health.

Sopharany Houn ’18, International Relations, attended the Oxford Summer Seminar at Trinity College with the aid of her scholarship. There she learned about politics from a European and British standpoint. Sopharany has a personal interest in understanding the perspectives of Europeans on such hot-button topics as Brexit and its influence on the European Union.

Krystal Killhart ’19, International Relations, is using her award to participate in the University of Minnesota’s Learning Abroad Center program in Senegal, which directly correlates with her concentration in international development and community engagement in the global south.

Grace Perry ’18, Film and Television Production, used her BDIC scholarship to help fund her summer programming internship with the Downtown Los Angeles Film Festival. The internship exposed Grace to the industry in which she hopes to find a career after graduation. She plans to someday own a production company and create films on topics about which she is passionate.

With the help of her BDIC award, Callie Tannian ’18, Event Planning and Design, participated in the prestigious Cannes Film Festival’s student program The American Pavilion, an experience that will continue to open doors for her throughout her career.

Audrey Kearney ’18, Human Rights Law, is using her BDIC funds to help fund her semester abroad in Amman, Jordan, with Student International Training. While there, Audrey is also working at an internship with a local non-govermental organization. Studying abroad will give Audrey an important insight into the field she wishes to enter upon graduation.

Etain Pages ’19, Sustainable Home Construction and Design, is using her BDIC award to help fund her fall semester in the Yestermorrow Design/Build School in Vermont. Partaking in this immersive program will give Etain a tangible sense of architectural knowledge and hands-on experience.
Liam O’Brien ’17, Sustainable Engineering Management, is studying at the University of Sydney, taking advantage of its top-notch engineering and sustainable technology classes. His BDIC award made his trip possible.

Ivy Noonan ’18, Religious Studies, used her BDIC award to help finance a summer program at Trinity College in Ireland through an exchange program with UMass. There she took Celtic studies, history, and English classes that will greatly enhance her studies.

Other BDIC Scholarship Winners:

Ashley Olafsen ’19, Education through Empowerment, political science, was this year’s recipient of the Maia Felisse McDermott Scholarship, intended for students committed to benefiting and inspiring others and created in honor of the memory and goals of a BDIC student whose life was cut short in 2010 before graduation. Ashley’s BDIC major was in broadcast journalism.

Ashley is an exceptional student committed to social change and empowerment of others, and this is reflected in every facet of her life. She is a passionate creator, leader, TEDx speaker, published author, and social entrepreneur.

At the age of 15, Ashley cofounded MOVE, an organization that promotes self-confidence, body positivity, and the empowerment of females through workshops and summer programs. She has created, organized, and directed over 50 workshops and two weeklong summer programs.

Ashley strives to use her gift for the written word to inspire and inform others. Her first book, Survival of the Prettiest, published in 2016, discusses body image, media, self-esteem, mental health, and the sexualization crisis faced by adolescents. Ashley has recently finished her second book, Life Hacks with Ash: The Book for Entrepreneurial Creatives, to be published soon. Ashley is also a regular contributor for the Huffington Post, covering issues such as self-esteem, body image, mental health, and more.

At UMass, Ashley is a tour guide, a member of Not Ready for Bedtime Players (an award-winning peer sexuality-education troupe), and part of the Newman Center. She plans to be a leader in education reform and eventually run for office.

This year’s winner of the Bright Idea Scholarship—started by a BDIC alumnus who wanted to give back to
the program by encouraging talented current students to develop their entrepreneurial ideas—was Kartike Mathur ’17, Management Information Systems and Design. Her business concept, she says, is “an Airbnb for cars. Imagine if you could rent out cars for a weekend the way you rent Airbnbs—but cheaper. When you buy a car it becomes a depreciating asset. This app can turn that dust-collecting engine into a moneymaker by renting it out to a community of approved drivers. Zipcar and Enterprise both rent out cars, but the only entity making money is them. This service will enable the community to rent out cars for the community itself.”

The Lewis C. Mainzer Award, a newly founded scholarship intended for a student who demonstrates profound interdisciplinarity by combining the arts with other disciplines such as political science, was presented to Ilana Morris ’17, Social Justice and Expression through Music. The award was started by an alumnus in honor of a political science professor he had while at UMass who demonstrated such interdisciplinarity. Ilana combined classes from a wide variety of majors—Afro-American studies; women’s, gender, sexuality studies; history; and music—to form her BDIC major. In addition, she completed a minor in jazz voice. Ilana is a talented and experienced musician, performing with a socially conscious band called the Alchemysts. She says of her educational experience, “Rather than allowing my discontent to hinder my progress, I used it to inspire a new way of educating myself.”

In addition to our BDIC award winners, five of our students won university-wide scholarships this spring. Tobin Armstrong ’17, Sustainable Energy Policy, won the Senior Leadership Award, an alumni-based scholarship for students who show extraordinary leadership and civic responsibility.

Hannah Youseff ’18, International Affairs, Law, and Human Rights, was awarded the William F. Field Scholarship for juniors who show extraordinary academic achievement.

Ashley Olafsen ’18, Empowerment through Education and Political Science, won the David R. Nuñez Scholarship for community service and leadership.

Michael S. Roif Awards in Film Studies went to two BDIC students: Kevin Rogers ’18, for best narrative film (Tandem) and Jake Quinn ’19 for best screenplay (Verbatim).
PLEASE CONSIDER GIVING TO BDIC

In today’s economy, your donation is more important than ever. Your donation will help support student research projects and travel opportunities, career advising forums with alumni, senior celebrations, and, of course, this newsletter. Please consider investing in our students and their future goals.

You can donate online at: bdic.umass.edu/alumni/give. If paying by check, please make check payable to UMass Amherst, with BDIC specified in the memo line of the check, and mail to:

Linda Roney
230 Commonwealth Honors College
157 Commonwealth Avenue
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, MA 01003-9253