

Catching Up with BIS Alumni

Alyssa Newcomb

By Jeffrey Rosen

Alyssa Newcomb is a BIS alumna (2008) who is now enjoying a successful career as a digital news associate at ABC News in New York City. As a BIS student, with concentrations in international business and mass communication, she found her passion in the field of journalism. Upon graduation, she applied to ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication where she earned a graduate degree in 2010.

Alyssa's talents and the potential contributions she could make to the investigative field did not go unnoticed. She was chosen to be a part of the ABC News Institute as a Carnegie Fellow—a highly competitive program launched in 2005. While she undoubtedly learned a great deal in the program, she also became the subject of a nationally covered story while she was a Carnegie Fellow for ABC News. This story exposed the misuse of power by politicians and the uninvited sexual harassment that women are frequently subjected to from those in power. Alyssa, herself, was one of these victims of sexual harassment. She was inappropriately “hit on” by a politician and it was actually, and thankfully, caught on video.

While interviewing Alyssa I asked her about why she chose to pursue a career in journalism. She stated, “I've always been passionate about what's happening in the world and how it's communicated to society. I knew journalism was an interest, and it happened to go hand-in-hand with my strengths of writing, researching, persistence and curiosity.” This alumna's advice for students nearing graduation and looking for work is direct and clever. Alyssa recommends “scheduling a couple of informational interviews with people who have jobs you'd be interested in doing. Ask them about their qualifications, the interview process, and to critique your résumé.” She believes that in following this advice, you will be more confident and refined when a big interview comes up. This is certainly a concrete strategy for better preparing yourself for the difficulties of obtaining work in a struggling economy.



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Since 1996, the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree has offered ASU students an opportunity to apply knowledge in new ways to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world by either focusing on two subject area concentrations or by pursuing the more recently established Organizational Studies option. In 2009, the School of Letters and Sciences also welcomed the Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree to its offerings. As one of the largest and fastest growing programs at ASU, we currently have 1,162 interdisciplinary studies majors, 254 liberal studies majors, and 8,662 combined graduates.

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Brian Hennesy on Embracing Your BIS 401 Experience

By Nicholas Maddox and Melissa Archer

After completing his other three core BIS classes, Brian Hennesy began searching for an internship to fulfill his BIS 401 credit in spring 2011. He was looking for an internship where he could integrate his concentrations in business and economics. With the deadline approaching and still no internship, Brian decided to simply walk into various businesses and inquire whether or not they were hiring. On one of these excursions, he decided to visit Camelback Ford. As luck would have it, the recruiting manager was in that day and Brian landed an internship with them instantly!

Today, Brian is a BIS graduate and still happily employed at Camelback Ford. He is now in charge of hiring new interns for the upcoming semester and heading the in-house marketing department. It is his belief that the BIS program helped him foster the tools and skills necessary for his success, no matter where his professional life takes him. In particular, he is thankful that his BIS classes taught him to view situations from different perspectives—he believes that it is this ability that sets him apart and ultimately helped him advance in his job.

According to a recent survey circulated among graduating BIS students, 32 percent of them already have jobs lined up upon graduation because of their internships. The BIS 401 experience is intended to help students take the knowledge they gained in their classes and translate it to the workplace. Brian is among 87 percent of other BIS graduates who have had positive BIS 401 experiences and would love the opportunity to share them with fellow students.



Photographs of ASU Needed

Help tell the history of Arizona State University through photographs for an upcoming book due to come out in time for Arizona's centennial celebration!

If you have—or know of anyone who has—attended ASU prior to 1980 and may have photographs documenting their experiences here, please contact Denise Bates at Denise.Bates@asu.edu.



Old Main, 1901



Painting the A, 1950



Looking North from Old Main, 1925

Interns in the Spotlight

By Jeffrey Rosen

With hundreds of BIS students who completed 401 internships this past spring and many others completing their internships this summer, we thought we would introduce you to two students who gained some fascinating experiences in their internships. They are true testaments to why experiential learning is so important!



Kelly Dulin

Concentration Areas: political science and justice studies

Kelly Dulin used her BIS concentrations of political science and justice studies to successfully complete her spring internship with the San Diego County Public Defender's Office in California. These concentration areas helped prepare her well for the many responsibilities she was given.

She worked directly with investigators who work alongside the public defender. She helped "investigate client and witness information that will ultimately be used in the courtroom to help the defense of the client." Her duties included: "research, interviews, subpoenas, investigations, record checks, and being present in court." Kelly has been able to successfully incorporate her interdisciplinary skills, such as flexible thinking and problem solving, into her internship. Each of these skills is crucial in uncovering information because the answers she sought in her work were not usually in "black and white." Kelly serves as a wonderful example of how the abstract thinking taught in BIS classes are crucial in the professional world.



Sarah Munter

Concentration Areas: political science and art history

Sarah Munter combined her concentrations in political science and art history in a fascinating way through her internship at the Arts and Business Council of Greater Phoenix. This nonprofit organization offers a "broad range of programs and services connecting the arts and cultural and business communities with leadership and board governance training, volunteerism, and events."

Initially learning of this internship through the ASU Career Center, she was able to apply her skills of integrative thinking by "facilitating the organization's Business Volunteers for the Arts program, which recruits and trains business professionals to be placed as pro bono management consultants with nonprofit arts groups." This is important work and the possibilities for Sarah's future are endless!

BIS Student Justin Sereno Shares His Story

It has been a long and difficult road, but I will finally be graduating in the fall 2011!

My name is Justin Sereno and I am a proud father of two beautiful children and a husband to a wonderful wife. I first came to Arizona State University in 2004 to study bioengineering. I have always jumped back and forth between business management and bioengineering—I wanted the stability and financial position of an engineer, yet I always felt business was my true calling. After a long battle in which I was slowed down by being on academic probation and having to take two medical withdrawals, I took a break from school in 2009 to find myself. I did not know what I really wanted in life ... what I truly enjoyed.

After a few months of soul searching, I decided I wanted to be a football coach. The game is special to me because it teaches so many fundamental characteristics such as leadership, teamwork, discipline, accountability, and honor. Although nearly any degree plan can satisfy requirements to begin a coaching career, I wanted to be satisfied in what I learned. I knew we were moving to Texas, so I had to enroll in an online program. That is when I discovered the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program within the School of Letters and Sciences. The flexibility that it offered me with the option of online courses was exactly what I was looking for. Plus, I quickly learned that I was happy with what I learned in the program!

My wife is studying to become a veterinarian and, in addition to pursuing my dream of becoming a football coach, our plan is to open a small business together. In looking at my concentration area options within BIS, I first chose small business management—perfect. The next question is what second concentration would I like to adopt into my studies? I have a family that I love deeply, so family and human development seemed like a natural fit, completing my academic puzzle. It has now been a year since I became a BIS student and I'm happy to say that my grades are flawless and I'm on track to graduate in December. Returning to school and finishing my degree was the best choice that I could have made for my family and our future!



Famous ASU Graduates in Sports and Entertainment

By Jeffrey Rosen

Did you know that ASU was the first stopping point for a number of people who went on to acquire success and worldwide notoriety in both the sports and entertainment industries?

I would like to first mention some of the world-famous athletes who graduated from ASU and became successful throughout the world, gaining tremendous fame and fortune in the process. Some of these names include: Barry Bonds (MLB), Phil Mickelson (PGA), Jake Plummer (NFL), James Harden (NBA), Terrell Suggs (NFL), Mike Leake (MLB), and Ike Davis (MLB), just to name a few.

Barry Bonds, who received a degree in criminology, and Phil Mickelson, who received a degree in psychology, are two of the biggest names in professional baseball and golf, respectively. Both of these athletes have changed their sport forever through their accomplishments and the records they have broken. I speak of the number of PGA Masters Tournament wins for Phil Mickelson and all-time home runs hit by Barry Bonds. This is what separates these superstars from the average professional athlete and elevates them to “legends” worthy of Hall of Fame notoriety. The other baseball stars that deserve recognition after graduating from ASU, and perfecting their craft in the process, are Mike Leake (Cincinnati Reds starting pitcher) and Ike Davis (New York Mets first baseman). Now regarding the NFL, there are two key names I want to mention as well: Jake Plummer, who played quarterback at ASU and was then drafted in 1997 to the Arizona Cardinals, and Terrell Suggs, a pro-bowl player for the Baltimore Ravens. These two athletes both graduated with bachelor’s degrees in communication.

NBA star James Harden also played on the ASU basketball team (2006-2008) for two years before he perfected his skills enough to get noticed, and made it to the “big show,” as many call it in the NBA. He now plays for the Oklahoma City Thunder with superstars like Kevin Durant, an MVP candidate for the entire NBA. Although this talented young man did not finish completing his academic degree in psychology, ASU served as the “platform” for which this basketball star perfected his skills and became nationally recognized.

More recently, two Arizona State University wrestlers (and BIS students, I might add) won the NCAA Championship tournament, one of whom also won the Outstanding Wrestler (O.W.) Award for the entire NCAA tournament. These two Sun Devil wrestlers I speak of are Anthony Robles and Bubba Jenkins. Robles, who is the Sun Devil who earned the O.W. award, did so because of his sensational wrestling throughout the tournament. What makes it extraordinary is the fact he was born with only one leg. After the conclusion of the NCAA tournament, many reporters wrote about Robles’s amazing story of victory and how this student-athlete showed “more heart in the sport than anyone they have ever encountered.” To read more about these wrestlers go to: <http://thesundevils.cstv.com/sports/m-wrestl/recaps/032011aaa.html>.

In addition to the long list of athletes who started at ASU, there are also a few people in the entertainment industry that you may recognize. Have you ever heard of Nick Nolte, Steve Allen, or Jimmy Kimmel? All are ASU graduates. Interestingly enough, Nolte and Allen both graduated with degrees in psychology. Kimmel, on the other hand, laid the foundation for his career as a comedian and television host by earning a degree in business marketing.

Education is among the most important facets of life and it is interesting to see what course of study different celebrities and athletes took while at ASU—it gives us some insight into what their interests were during their college years. ASU “paved the way” for these lucky few to accomplish their goals and see their dreams come to fruition. The question you should all be asking yourself now is: are you the next big superstar to graduate from Arizona State University?

Meet the BIS Faculty

Michael Pryzdia, Ph.D.

By Jeffrey Rosen

Michael Pryzdia is considered by many to be an inspiring instructor who believes the interdisciplinary program is “the best degree you could receive in the 21st century.” His philosophy is that the future of this particular program will allow us to understand complex global problems that we face as human beings.

In his eyes, integrative thinking is an essential skill for students, as well as for those who are already in the workforce. He explained to me how he has always been an integrative thinker. So, it is his passion to teach students how to think on multiple levels about multiple problems in order to accomplish a common goal. This “hands on” knowledge is one of the many things people need to succeed in life. I, personally, believe this to be the case.

His educational background is impressive. He first attended Lewis University, located outside of Chicago, and earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy. Feeling that more education was necessary for his career path, he went on to earn his master’s and doctorate degrees in American culture studies from Bowling Green State University. Before coming to Arizona State University, he had a consulting company for many years, which allowed him to later offer students some valuable insight into developing skills that help them both personally and professionally.

His advice for current BIS students is to take full advantage of the internships offered because they are a “wonderful opportunity to receive on-the-job experience during the school year. It will ultimately help you get a full-time job.” The more internships you complete, the better off you will be. Also, always be sure to keep your résumé up to date and look to receiving more education when possible because there are many industries in which a bachelor’s degree is simply not enough.

As a BIS student myself, I have had the honor of taking several courses from him. He is without a doubt, one of best instructors I have had the pleasure of learning from. His teaching style of integrative thinking is among the best academic advice toward abstract problem solving I have learned during my studies at ASU. He genuinely cares about the material he teaches and is not shy to help his students grow academically—inside and outside the classroom.

