



NEWSLETTER SPRING 2018

*Integrating knowledge and skills
to prepare a new generation of
development practitioners*



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Edited by Daniela Lizano

Director's Note

I am very pleased to introduce this newsletter highlighting important news and updates regarding the University of Florida Master of Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) Program. The newsletter includes information on our new graduates, the exciting field practicums our students are embarking on this summer, renowned development specialists who generously took part in our Practitioner Forum, faculty and students who have been recent award recipients, examples of professional placements of recent graduates and a faculty spotlight.

In previous newsletters, I have made reference to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (drafted and adopted by 193 nations), embodied in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and how the notable diversity of field practicums that our students undertake align with the SDG agenda. Furthermore, I have drawn attention to interactions among the goals and how processes occurring in one region or locality can have major consequences for other parts of the world. As examples, I commented on the deposition of toxic chemicals in the Arctic that were originally released into the environment in lower latitudes and the widespread contamination of our oceans with plastics often disposed of in distant locations. Here, I will continue to briefly explore the important issue of interactions among different development goals and how these interactions play out at different scales.

Around the world, it is recognized that water represents a key challenge to sustainable development. SDG6 "Clean water and Sanitation" focuses attention on this challenge, and has clear linkages with other SDGs. For example, reliable water provision often depends on the protection of watersheds involving forest conservation (included in SDG15 – Life on land). An adequate supply of water is crucial for agricultural production (SDG2 – Zero hunger and food security) and health (SDG3 – Good health and wellbeing). Although adequate water provision impacts the entire family, women and children are often burdened with the demands of securing water for the household (SDG5 – Gender equality). Of course,



forest conservation for watershed protection also favors biodiversity (SDG15 – Life on land) and serves to store carbon on the landscape (SDG13 – Climate action). This simplified example illustrates that numerous opportunities for synergies exist among the SDGs. Unfortunately, interactions can be and often are negative in nature as well. Inappropriate policies and institutions can undermine efforts to further the sustainable management and conservation of forests (recognized in SDG16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions). Also relating to SDG16, conflicts and uncontrolled illegality can also make impossible meaningful progress in the aforementioned goals. Drier conditions resulting from a failure to mitigate climate change (SDG13 – Climate action) would offset efforts to conserve water through watershed management.

In the UF MDP program, students gain a holistic understanding of this complex nature of development challenges, while honing the skills to take part in development challenges that align with their thematic and disciplinary interests. In their capstone field practicums, students are encouraged to explore how their projects fit into the broader context in which they are working and how their work might interact with other factors and ongoing processes. When scanning through the list of field practicums of our new graduates and students just beginning their field work in this newsletter, I invite you to take a moment to visualize these types of linkages and interactions.



Director's Note (cont.)

During the Spring semester, we were fortunate to bring two inspiring professionals to UF for our Development Practitioner Forum. MS Cécile Bibiane Ndjebet has a remarkable story. She grew up in a small village in her home country of Cameroon, overcoming incredibly challenging hurdles to become an African leader in gender, social forestry and climate change mitigation. For his part, Dr. Ronnie de Camino has been a tireless force in forestry development initiatives, especially in Central and South America. He is known for being innovative and provocative, drawing on his prodigious background in economics, natural resource management, policy and governance. More can be read about our speakers later in the newsletter.

We are proud that two of our students, Carlita Fiestas and Jacqueline Allegra Curnick were recipients of the Champions of Change Award. Carlita participates in the Student Compost Cooperative (SCC) that seeks to contribute to the sustainability in UF and the greater Gainesville community through the effective composting of food waste. For her part, Jackie was recognized for her field practicum work with an organization that advocates for Alaskan natives. She developed a powerful documentary on the health impacts of toxins accumulating in Arctic environments. We were also excited to see that incoming student Stephanie Muench was also recognized for her contribution to the Field & Fork Pantry, a resource on the UF campus to serve students facing issues of food security. Finally, core faculty member, Dr. Marianne Schmink, received the Award for her work as co-founder of the Community Weatherization Coalition. Here, we would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to you all for your dedication and diligence.

Here, I would like to express my deep appreciation to all core and affiliate faculty members who have generously contributed to the MDP Program. Your support to the program is vital to its success and makes it an enriching experience for our students.

Also, I wish to thank the Center for Latin American Studies, the Center for African Studies, the International Center and the Tropical Conservation and Development Program for their generous support and for making UF an ideal institutional home for our program.

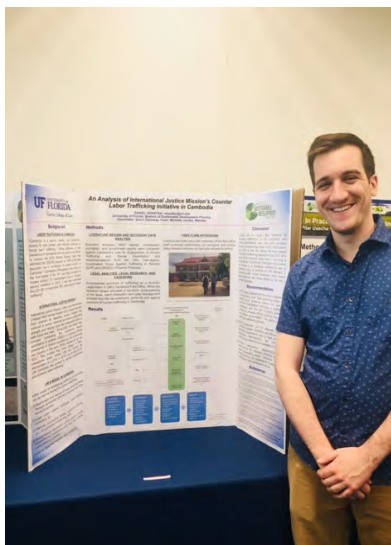
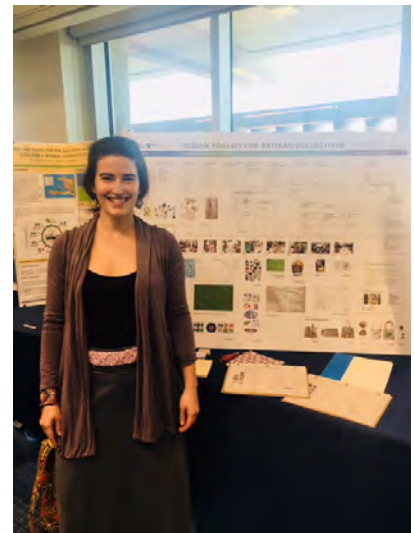
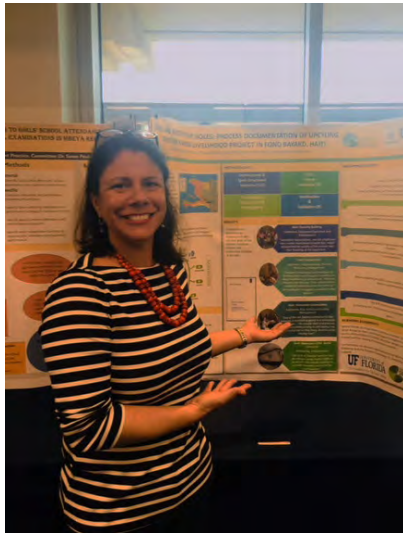
In the Faculty Spotlight, MDP core faculty member, Dr. Ignacio Porzecanski took part in an interview on a number of interesting topics. Ignacio has been an important contributor to the UF MDP Program from the very beginning. As you will note in his interview, he has a remarkable background with experience in research, higher education and with the corporate sector. I greatly appreciate his enthusiastic willingness to take part in a number of the committees key to the functioning of the MDP program: the Management, Admissions, Curriculum and Steering committees. He teaches the core course "Natural Resource Management and Innovation Systems" and also serves on student committees. I want to thank Ignacio here for all his invaluable and thoughtful support to the MDP Program.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to Daniela Lizano who took leadership in the development of this newsletter. Her enthusiasm and good spirit shine through in the following pages. And many thanks to Florencia Lathrop for designing the new look of our newsletter.

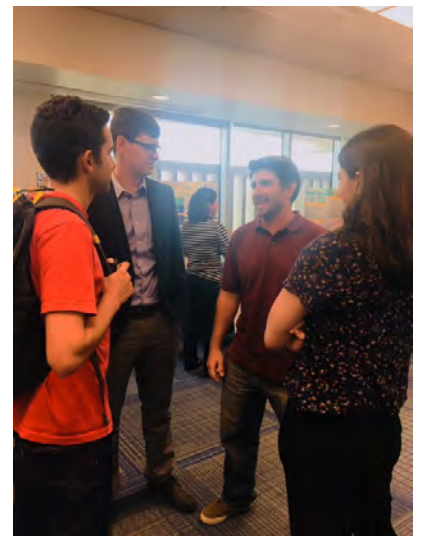
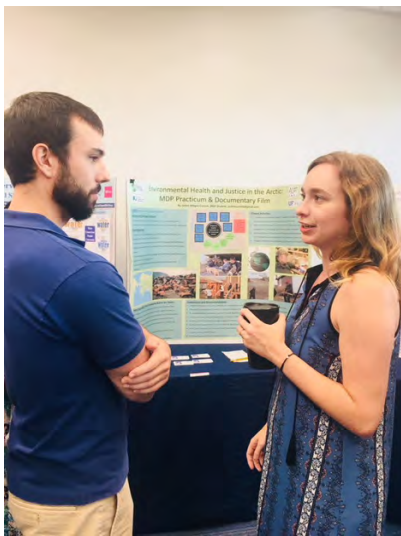
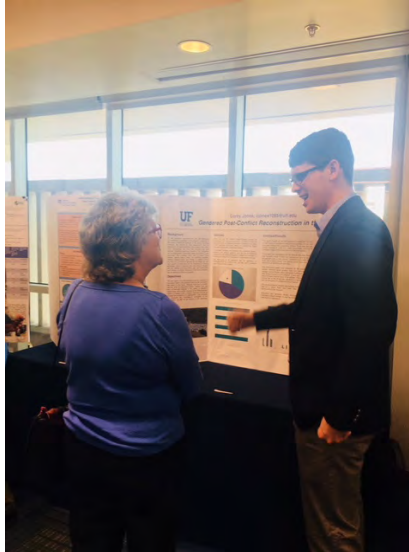
Spring 2018 Poster Session

This Spring, MDP students participated in the Latin American Studies Fieldwork Festival, held at the Reitz Union on February 9th, and organized by the Center for Latin American Studies.

Masters and Doctoral students shared their fieldwork experiences. MDP students synthesized their field practicum results and presented them, in poster form, to a diverse audience, including students, faculty and the public in general visiting the exhibition.



Spring 2018 Poster Session (cont.)



Congratulations to all our Students for their effort and dedication preparing their posters!

And special congratulations to our Cohort 7 student, Nazmi Ahmed, who won the Best MDP Poster award!

Development Practitioner Forum: MS Cécile Ndjebet



In February, MS Cécile Ndjebet spoke to MDP students and faculty on *"Mainstreaming gender in natural resource management in the Congo Basin countries: A strategy to enhance sustainability, reduce poverty and address climate change."*

MS Ndjebet is a well-known leader of the REDD+ and Climate Change platform in Central Africa. She has over 30 years of experience, and is an active member and well-known advocate of global women's networks such as the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA), the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), Women's Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural resources management (WOCAN) and the Global Women's Tenure Network (GWTN).

She is a Steering Committee member of The Forests Dialogue (TFD), Focal Point of the Women Major Group of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), Woman Observer in the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), member of the World Bank inter-organizational reference group on understanding forests' contribution to poverty reduction, and Africa Focal Point for the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG).

Cécile Ndjebet is an Agronomist and a Social Forester. Gender specialist and women's leadership trainer and adviser, she holds an MS in Social Forestry from Wageningen Agricultural University in The Netherlands.



Development Practitioner Forum: Dr. Ronnie de Camino



"Don Ronnie", as his students, peers and friends know him, spoke on *"Forestry, food security and nutrition: A report and its process"*.

Ronnie de Camino is a renowned expert in the forestry sector in Latin America, for his remarkable career and technical knowledge in economics, natural forest management, policy and governance. He is also an outstanding speaker; connoisseur of science, art and literature; as well as a critical thinker and leader.

Dr. de Camino has served all his life as undergraduate and graduate professor at the University of Los Andes (Chile), and at CATIE (Tropical Agricultural Research and Teaching Center) and the University of Peace, both international universities located in Costa Rica.

He also has over 40 years experience as consultant for International, Regional and Bilateral Organizations such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, UNDP, FAO, CGIAR, CIFOR, CATIE, GTZ, KfW, Intercooperation, SDC, SIDA, GTZ, InWEnt, USAID in Latin America, with additional experience in Africa and Europe.

Dr. de Camino earned his PhD in Forest Economics and Management at the University of Freiburg, Germany, and carried out his post-doctoral residency at the University of Goettingen, also in Germany.

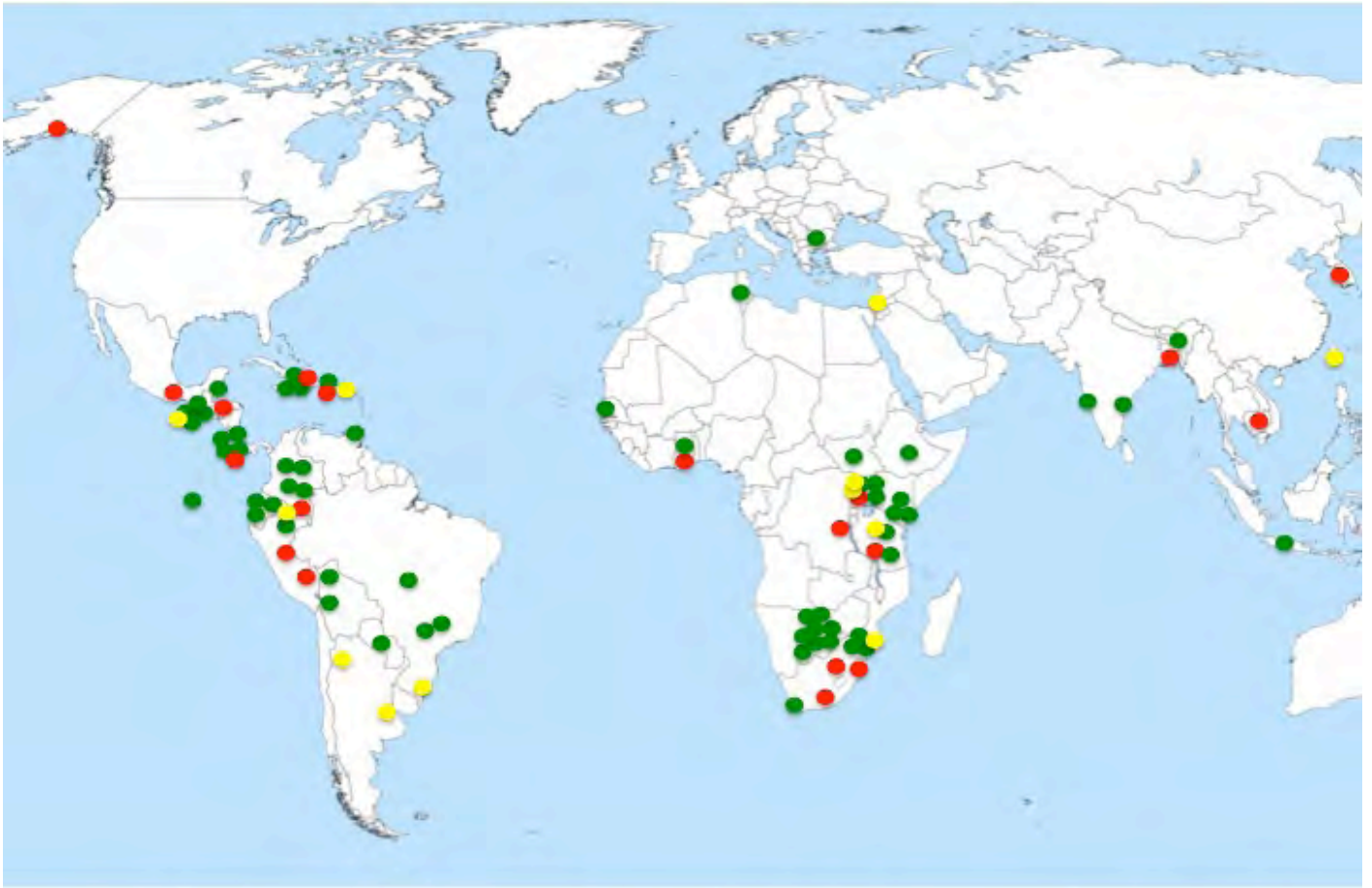


Summer 2018: Field Practicums

Twelve MDP students are carrying out their Field Practicums between May and August of 2018 in 10 countries and Puerto Rico. Argentina, Israel, Palestine, Taiwan and Puerto Rico are new destinations.

Name	Theme	Location	Host
Angela Melidosian	Deathics: The psychosocial ethics of death and dying within palliative care centers in Buenos Aires, Argentina.	Buenos Aires, Argentina	Asociación Latinoamericana de Cuidados Pallativos (ALCP), + 3 Hospices
Carlita Fiestas	Contribution to sustainable economies through solid waste management in Porto Alegre, Brazil.	Porto Alegre, Brazil	Unisinos, Associação dos Ilhéus Ecológicos
Christine Mavrick	Youth in Timur: Collaborative curriculum building for international learning.	Sandimen, Taiwan	Timur Youth Mobile Classroom
Daniela Lizano	Indigenous quality of life plans: Conservation and rural development in Peru.	Loreto, Peru	The Field Museum
Daniel Acosta	Supply chain analysis to reduce cost and improve availability of PPR vaccine in Uganda and Kenya.	Karamoja, Uganda	Livestock Innovation Lab / Makerere University / Tufts University / Mercy Corps
Dylan Rigsby	Coffee talks: Facilitating conversation on climate change with institutional actors in Guatemala's coffee sector.	Guatemala City, Guatemala	CIAT / Hans Neumann Stiftung
Emma Lannon	Understanding and measuring the impacts of ecotourism in Arusha, Tanzania: Is it sustainable?	Arusha, Tanzania	African Queen Adventures
Fiona Hogan	Evaluation of community development initiatives around Maputo Special Reserve.	Maputo, Mozambique	Peace Parks Foundation
Jesse Cosme	Seekin' a cause: Cooperation between social movements of the island and diaspora.	San Juan, Puerto Rico	Universidad Sin Fronteras
Maria Waked	Contemplative pedagogy and environmental education for ecotourism and empowerment of women as nature guides.	Humahuaca, Jujuy, Argentina	National University of Jujuy / Institute of Andean Ecoregions (INECOA)
Mary Vasilevsky	24 years of environmental peacebuilding: Evaluating impacts of EcoPeace Middle East projects in Israel and Palestine.	Tel Aviv, Israel / Ramallah, West Bank	EcoPeace Middle East
Nicholas Diaz	Assessing nutritional outcomes related to animal source food consumption in Karamoja Region, Uganda.	Karamoja, Uganda	Mercy Corps

MDP Field Practicum Map



● = Summer 2018 ● = Summer 2017 ● = 2011-2016

Spring 2018 MDP Graduates



2018 MDP Graduates : CONGRATULATIONS!

Student	Location	Project Title	Committee Members	Specializations
Jackie Allegra Curnick	Alaska	Environmental health and justice in Alaska and Documentary: "Pulling teeth from a polar bear."	Tara Sabo-Attwood (Env Glob Hlth) Houston Wells (Telecommunication)	Environmental Communication, African Studies, TCD
Margarita Fontecha Tirado	Colombia	A new hope: Social capital and community capacity-building for forest conservation in Caquetá (Colombia), under a post-conflict scenario.	Phil Williams (Lat Am Std) Grenville Barnes (SFRC) Jon Dain (Lat Am Std / TCD)	Latin American Studies, TCD
Max Gelber	Ghana	Plenty of fish in the sea? Shark fishing and the fin trade in Ghana: a biting review.	Paul Monaghan (AEC) Renata Serra (Afr Std)	African Studies, TCD
Corey Jones	DR Congo	Gendered post-conflict reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo.	Sarah McKune (Afr Std / Env Glob Hlth) Muthusami Kumaran (FYCS) Angela Lindsey (FYCS)	Food and Nutrition, Organizational Leadership for Nonprofits, African Studies, TCD
Florencia Lathrop Rossi	Costa Rica	Mujeres de Corcovado: Experiences using design and visual communication as tools for agency.	Maria Rogal (Art & Art Hist) Marianne Schmink (Lat Am Std) Gabriela Hernandez (Art & Art Hist)	Design, Creativity and Post-Development Pathways; Latin American Studies; TCD
Anna Martinson	South Korea	Nonprofit financial sustainability in Seoul, South Korea: Teach North Korean Refugees.	Muthusami Kumaran (FYCS) Sangmi Kang (Music Educ) Dale Pracht (FYCS)	Fundraising, Migration, Organizational Leadership for Nonprofits, Latin American Studies, TCD
Miguel Olivas-Pérez	Mexico	The impact of the public policies in the forestry sector in Mexico.	Glenn Galloway (MDP) Hugo Sandoval (Economics)	Latin American Studies, TCD
Grace Palacios Chávez	Peru	Kichwa Lamas' gender roles in the conservation of their community forests.	Rick Stepp (Anthropology) Catherine Tucker (Lat Am Std) Kathy Colverson (IFAS)	Latin American Studies, TCD
Stefi Rodriguez	Swaziland	Gender-sensitive evaluation of the goat value chain in the lowveld of Swaziland.	Sandra Russo (UFIC) Renata Serra (Afr Std) Muthusami Kumaran (FYCS)	Organizational Leadership for Nonprofits, African Studies, TCD
Tania Romero Bautista	Peru	An evidence-based approach to improving the effectiveness of conservation and sustainable development (CSD) projects in Madre de Dios, Peru.	Angélica Almeyda Zambrano (Tourism) Steve Perz (Sociology) Bob Walker (Lat Amer Std)	Latin American Studies, TCD
Derek Sindler	Dominican Republic	Conservation agriculture in practice: Rice in northwest Dominican Republic.	Pilar Useche (FRE) Catherine Tucker (Lat Am Std) Xin Zhao (Horticultural Sci)	Sustainable Food Systems, Latin American Studies, TCD

Spring 2018 Awards: Champions for Change

A partnership of the Office of Sustainability and Healthy Gators, the Champions for Change Awards recognize individuals or groups in the UF community who have made significant contributions in the areas of sustainability and health during their time at UF.

See <http://sustainable.ufl.edu/news-events/champions-for-change-awards/2018-recipient/>

Sustainability: Marianne Schmink (MDP Faculty)

Marianne is the co-founder of the Community Weatherization Coalition, an organization that provides free energy audits to low-income residents to conserve natural resources and help people save money on their utility bills. The CWC has trained dozens of volunteer "Energy Coaches" and has performed over 800 audits throughout Alachua County. These audits include educating residents on energy and water conservation as well as performing retrofits of energy-saving light bulbs, water-saving shower heads, and more. Through her work with the CWC and her church, United Church of Gainesville, Marianne has also become actively involved in supporting the Greater Duval Neighborhood Association, a newly-formed organization operating in an under-resourced pocket of our community. Marianne has helped to provide facilitation and partnerships with the academic community as well as seeking out internships, resources, and community service opportunities for Duval residents.

Sustainability: Student Compost Cooperative (SCC) (including Carlita Fiestas, Cohort 7)

The SCC is a student-led organization dedicated to promoting sustainability at the campus and community level. Their goal is to encourage and train students, faculty, and staff at the University of Florida to compost their food waste, and teach them about the value of recycling and turning this waste into natural fertilizer. By creating a closed-loop system with their composting program, they help to reduce the volume of food waste disposed of in landfills, which in turn reduces harmful greenhouse gas emissions into our atmosphere. The SCC was established in 2009 by Dr. Ann Wilkie of the BioEnergy and Sustainable Technology (BEST) Laboratory. The SCC maintains several composters to allow students to compost their food waste, and closes the compost loop by maintaining a student-run organic garden in which students grow their own organic food using the compost they helped to create.

Sustainability: Staff and Team of the Alan & Cathy Hitchcock Field & Fork Pantry (including Stephanie Muench, Cohort 9)

The Field and Fork Pantry opened in August of 2015 after a survey of UF students revealed that 10% of the population experienced food insecurity to the point where it impacted their academic success. In the more than two years that the Pantry has been open, they have fostered relationships, recruited supporters, and built a vital service for the campus community. The pantry is also a partner of the Field and Fork Gardens, which allows the pantry to stock fresh, organic produce that is grown by students. Notable numbers from the 2016-2017 fiscal year include: 6,898 guests visited the pantry, 53,835 lbs of food were distributed, and 6,674 lbs of fresh produce were donated to the pantry by the Field and Fork Gardens.

Health & Well-Being: Jacqueline Allegra Curnick (Cohort 7)

Jackie was recognized for her unique research in conjunction with ACAT, an organization that works with and advocates for Alaska Natives. Jacqueline carried out her Field Practicum to analyze how Alaska Natives are impacted by the introduction of toxic chemicals into their environments. Jackie created a documentary film to shed light on the complex confluence of factors that lead to undesirable health outcomes, including toxins seeping out of waste deposited by the U.S. military in years past, and also chemicals that concentrate in arctic environments through processes of chemical distillation and global transport. Her focus on health issues impacting communities in the Arctic bridges cultural, environmental, economic and historical dimensions. You can access Jackie's documentary at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LFyGH-JvtcLGBBeBVbQM_Xc7HWojRtQZ8/view?usp=sharing

MDP Alumni: New Stories of Success

Zotha Zungu (Cohort 6)

Zotha graduated in December 2017 and was hired as Public-Private Partnerships Project Lead for Pact, an international development organization headquartered in Washington, DC, and operating in nearly 40 countries. Pact focuses on people challenged by poverty and marginalization. Zotha is working at their Pretoria offices in South Africa, consulting with Discovery Health, a leading health insurance company, on one of their CSI initiatives: an integrated youth skills development project in a marginalized peri-urban township of Orange Farm, including local and provincial government stakeholders.

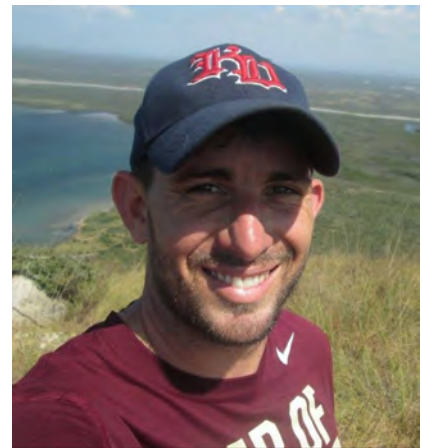
"My responsibilities entail consulting on program sustainability. I started at the end of April and am thoroughly enjoying it and learning a lot and providing valuable advice. One thing for sure—everything I learned in the MDP program is exactly what I am doing in practice. The Program Planning and M&E classes I took were valuable."



Derek Sindler (Cohort 7)

Derek graduated in Spring 2018, and began working in May as the new International Organic Certification Specialist at Quality Certification Services (QCS) based in Gainesville, Florida. He will be reviewing the initial application for organic certification and renewals for clients (mostly individual farmers and grower groups) from the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, and serving as the liaison/supervisor to the DR and Ecuador offices of QCS.

QCS is a certifying body that offers certification services for USDA Organic, Canadian Organic Regime, European Union Organic, GLOBAL GAP, food safety, and other certifications. QCS certifies over 1,000 clients in the U.S. and around the world, and has been operating since 1989.



Jackie Curnick (Cohort 7)

In May Jackie began her new position as Community Engagement Coordinator at the University of Iowa Environmental Health Science Research Center, Iowa City, Iowa. She will coordinate workshops and events to increase community knowledge of the research done by the Center and to understand the needs of the community for further research endeavors.



MDP Alumni: New Stories of Success (cont.)

Maria Checa (Cohort 3)

In April 2018 Maria received, from the Florida Museum of Natural History, the Austin Award for excellence in student research (<https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/science/austin-bullen-2018-student-research-award-winners-named/>). Maria earned a Ph.D. in Entomology at the same time as her MDP degree, and emphasizes how her Field Practicum increased the scope of her PhD research honored by the award.

Maria gathered population data on butterflies from three forest sites in western Ecuador periodically over three years with three major conclusions. She demonstrated that trapping methods and bait choices have significant impacts on butterfly diversity findings; that climate is the primary determining factor in dry forest butterfly populations as opposed to local interactions as originally suspected; and species in wet forests require more specific adaptations to survive than those in dry forests.

"Her research is important in understanding how populations fluctuate from one year to the next and to understand the potential impact of climate change on the species in these forests," said Keith R. Willmott, associate curator of Lepidoptera at the Florida Museum and chair of Checa's Ph.D. committee.

Maria is presently a professor in the Department of Biology at the Pontificia Catholic University of Ecuador in Quito. She adds *"the MDP has provided me with the knowledge to pursue new endeavors. Since I returned to the Pontificia Universidad Católica of Ecuador, I have been proposing new initiatives, especially courses focused on conservation, management and sustainable development in the Department of Biology. I am currently teaching a course on natural resource management and my courses from the MDP are so useful! Thanks again for letting me be part of the MDP program, it has definitely inspired me in so many ways."*



Photo: Florida Museum

Russell Anderson (Cohort 6)

Russ is now the Program Manager for the One Health Graduate Certificate Program at the University of Florida. Under the leadership of Dr. Ilaria Capua, One Health is an interconnected approach that seeks to advance the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment, through interdisciplinarity within and beyond the human-animal-environmental health triangle, by engaging with other disciplines including law, history, language, religion, economics, politics, sustainability, and beyond.



MDP Alumni: Conferences and Publications

Florencia Lathrop (Cohort 7)

In March, Florencia participated in the “II International Congress of Intercultural Dialogue in the Abya Yala: art, education and communitary action”, at the Universidad del Magdalena, Santa Marta, Colombia. The conference was organized by the Sociedad Latinoamericana de Estudios Interculturales and the Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad del Magdalena. She presented her field practicum project “Mujeres de Corcovado: self-representation through design”.



Lacey Harris-Coble (Cohort 6)

Lacey Harris-Coble. 2017. Multi-sectoral collaboration for nutrition integration into agricultural extension services in Nepal. INGENAES (Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services) Discussion Paper. USAID Feed the Future and University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. 17 pp. https://ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/ING-DP-2018_4-Nutrition-Integration-into-AES-Harris-Coble.pdf

Oswaldo Medina-Ramírez (Cohort 6)

Oswaldo Miguel Medina-Ramírez. 2017. Farm Field Schools (Escuelas de Campo): A learning methodology to integrate gender and nutrition in the training of agricultural extension agents in Honduras. INGENAES (Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services). USAID Feed the Future and University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. 17 pp. https://ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/ING-Report-2017_01-Farmer-Field-Schools-Honduras-Medina-Ramirez.pdf

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Ignacio Porzecanski

"The way to change the world—and we all want to change the world—is to engage in many different activities at many different levels. There is no single way to change the world."

What is your background, and how did you come to UF?

I am originally from Uruguay, Montevideo, and I started my career in agronomy. I had done some work in cytology at the Institute of Biological Sciences, and this led to my interest in agriculture, agronomy, and particularly plant genetics. I was fortunate to do a PhD in plant genetics at the University of Cambridge, UK, and in 1972 I finished my research on the inheritance of flowering time in plants—how do they switch from vegetative to reproductive behavior, and how is that attribute inherited?

I returned to Uruguay and started a program in plant breeding, mostly of sub-tropical grasses. This work led me to Brazil, to do more background research on plant breeding. I carried out plant collection, classification of ecotypes, testing ecotypes, and so on, gradually expanding to the larger issue of genetic resources. In Brazil I was approached by Monsanto, and worked for them for two years in product development, particularly sugar cane and coffee. This opportunity was an outgrowth of my work in plant breeding and experience with plant management. I returned to Uruguay and joined a biotechnology firm working in Uruguay and Brazil. Between 1993 and 2003 in Uruguay I was involved in a Biosphere Reserve project seeking to reconcile rice production on landscapes for migratory birds. That was my last work in Uruguay and Brazil.

I came to Gainesville in 2003 when my wife was appointed Director of the School of Architecture, and I was hired as lecturer in the School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE). I became involved in wetland management, particularly hydrology and natural resource management of wetlands.



How did you get involved with the MDP program?

I have been involved with the MDP program since its inception. I was surprised by the array of people who came together at that time with diverse backgrounds and disciplines. We arrived at a consensus on the way forward rather quickly. With regards to the program, I believe it is a quite sound Master's program in the sense that it provides students with robust training that while being very broad is also relatively deep. The subjects—economics, health, etc.—are broad and all-encompassing, therefore one cannot go deeply into all of them, and in the program we created a good balance. Student and faculty diversity exposes students to different geographical perspectives—from South America, Africa, the United States—and also to an array of disciplinary perspectives—plant sciences, journalism, anthropology, religion, etc.—which makes for an elastic and often fun way to discuss sustainability. The challenge, of course, is to achieve effective communication among students with diverse disciplinary backgrounds. This diversity facilitates our efforts to encourage an interdisciplinary and international overview of sustainable development and creates a classroom environment conducive to stimulating discussions, but requires care and patience to ensure that communication actually bridges disciplinary boundaries.



Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Ignacio Porzecanski (cont.)

I think that our role as instructors, our challenge, is to forge these connections among such a diverse group of people, and to foster understanding of different approaches and integrate them into our program in a coherent fashion. It's all about the connections—connecting the subjects among themselves, seeing where the subjects are relevant and interrelated to each other. In some cases you have issues that have many sides—the relationship for example between poverty and health, or poverty and land development and urban development, the relationship between the four pillars of the MDP program—but we have to structure, and the students must be able to make the implicit and sometimes subtle connections, to make the effort to understand that the different parts are like pieces of a puzzle that have to be brought together to perceive the broader picture. I think we have managed to do this, to a large extent, but we continue to strive to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our efforts. Some students enter the program with very clear ideas, while others do not, and their ideas tend to clarify in the process of navigating the program.

Another strong point of the program is the Field Practicum for obvious reasons. It pushes students to put to test their ideas regarding the real world, which is always good. Students are exposed to what development work entails, in research, in listening to other people, in working with other people, in working within a team—so it stretches their abilities to the maximum extent and fosters personal growth. The practicum is a very important part of the program. It offers all these things to the students, and I have observed that they are usually well-prepared to go out into the field and do the work. There is one risk to the way some students approach the practicum and the associated work. Most MDP graduates will embark on long careers, so when they finish their practicums they will have completed only a small part of their careers. In that sense, students should not view their practicums as the way future professional tasks will play out in the future. In a career that can span more than 30 years, each MDP alumnus will do many practicums. Even when they have carried out several assignments, they must remind themselves that each new opportunity will give rise to similar experiences and challenges, so they must remain open to new approaches,

new issues, and new realities. Collect a lot of information before the practicum, visualize what is going to happen to the best of your abilities and embark on the task with an open, flexible mind.

A major challenge of the program as a whole is to bring together different visions, to try to understand where the students stand—their opinions, knowledge and aspirations—and how to bring that into the classroom to prepare them for their future careers. I have always been surprised by the variety in the program—the differences in approach, in style, in how to study, in how to pose questions. We receive students who are by definition practitioners and who want to become practitioners. They sometimes have had a certain reluctance to delve too deeply into theory and scholarship, because as practitioners they aspire to be “doers”. But I think, and we certainly emphasize this in the program, that theory and practice are closely linked. You cannot perform as a practitioner if you don't devote yourself to study before and after experiences in the field. On the flipside, you cannot grasp theory and concepts well if you haven't been involved in practical work. So practice and theory feed on each other. MDP students must sometimes overcome preconceptions of what being a practitioner means and embrace this interrelated nature of practice and theory. This is a key issue the program must deal with on a continuous basis.

What does sustainability mean to you?

Sustainability has become a mantra, so everybody uses it, from Exxon Mobil to universities to NGOs to social media. Everything has to be sustainable. I think that's a fallacy because not everything can be sustainable.

We need to understand what the real issues are and where they are located in terms of companies, how society is organized, how markets are organized, etc. I don't think it's healthy for us to ignore the world in which we live and proclaim that we are going to build a different world. In order to change we need to take account what needs to be changed. In a certain community, not very large, village-size or maybe Gainesville-size, we might organize a world that is very much

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Ignacio Porzecanski (cont.)

a product of our desire for sustainability. But eventually we will face problems that are global in nature: climate change or market forces for example. So we should take that into account from the very beginning. This means we have to strive to understand how the economic system works in order to see what changes are likely, possible, and desirable within the existing structure. If we want change we have to understand our societies, and then over time change may occur in a way that can actually be sustainable.

Second, I don't think that we can have our cake and eat it too. You cannot always find a win-win solution. Instead I think we have to acknowledge the inevitability of trade-offs. As an example, consider the structural underpinnings in our world in which our society is deeply embedded. At least in the short and medium term, it will not be possible circumvent these realities. For example, we have a car industry on which we all depend, that involves so many people, so much money, and so many interests, that it is extremely difficult to isolate ourselves and ask whether being a part of a mobile society is a sustainable way of living.

That leads me to the question of how society imposes regulations on the market and companies that affect the environment. We are now living in a moment when we are repealing regulations, though we hope this is a temporary setback because we need regulations. When we talk about relationships between technology, innovation, and the power of corporations and the power of government, that's what lies in the balance. If we want to make substantive, significant change, we have to enter the world of trade-offs and regulatory frameworks. In other words, I think there have to be limits to how production and consumption take place, if we really want to have a chance to sustain a reasonable quality of life on the planet in the next 100 years.

More than asking ourselves if we are better now than 100 years ago, we should ask ourselves how much better can we be and how sustainable can we be, in the face of the pressures that we are subjected to. We are pressured to work, to consume, to work, to consume. It's a trap. If we don't produce we cannot make a living. We produce things that are not good for the

environment. Where is the line? Where and when are we going to draw the line? How can this trap be interrupted? This is an enormous challenge the world faces.

In addition to transformational change in production and consumption, behavioral change is vitally important, which leads to raising awareness and educational issues. These again are in the hands of policies that actual governments have to put in place and implement. So we are talking about trade-offs in policy. At the end of the day, every decision is political to some degree, and, as I stressed before about the important role of corporations and firms as agents of change, the other agents of change are societies -- the way we organize as society.

What advice would you give to MDP Students?

I would like to return to what I said about the inter-relatedness, indeed synergistic relationship, between theory and practice. I think when you go into the world you have to be able, as you provoke and construct change, to share that with everybody else in your social surroundings. So, I would recommend a constant "ping-pong match" between theory and practice.

Another recommendation would be to listen very hard to what people are telling you, and pause at least once or twice a year to scrutinize what you have done. Be very clear about your objectives and how they have made or can make a change. In other words, monitor your own progress. If you do all that, you're going to be great practitioner.

Spring Socials!



And some Final Presentations...





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**Have a great summer.
Wishing you safe travels and
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