



NEWSLETTER SPRING 2021

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



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Edited by Yeyetsi Maldonado and Andrew Noss

Director's Note: Glenn Galloway

Dear Readers,

Greetings from the University of Florida's Master of Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) program. One year ago when I introduced our Spring Newsletter, the world faced the emerging COVID-19 pandemic with great trepidation, aware that many uncertainties and risks would unfold during the global outbreak. Unfortunately, the fears were justified and to date 3.4 million people are known to have died due to COVID-19, nearly 600,000 in the United States alone.

In a ray of hope, the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) announced late last week that it is no longer necessary for persons who are fully vaccinated to wear masks in most outdoor and even indoor settings. This remarkable development has been made possible by the unprecedented rapidity in which highly effective vaccines have been developed and deployed, in conjunction with responsible compliance by many, certainly not all, of effective behavioral guidelines known to mitigate the spread of the disease.

Last year in the Spring Newsletter, I expressed gratitude to our students and faculty who demonstrated a high degree of resilience in order to adapt to the disruptions brought on by the pandemic. Now that another full year of the pandemic has transpired, my admiration and appreciation are even greater. I have witnessed many instances of solidarity and support shared among our faculty and students. Although students have been participating in the program from different cities and even countries, they have made great efforts to unite as a cohort and across cohorts to establish the deep and lifelong friendships that are emblematic of the MDP program. Thanks to our students and the creative and demanding efforts of our faculty, the quality of the program has been largely sustained.



The international nature of the MDP program provides a unique perspective on COVID-19. On the one hand, we have students and faculty from countries deeply affected by the pandemic, with variable access to the vaccines that are now widely available in the US. On the other hand, many of our students aspire to carry out their capstone field practicums in different parts of the world, many of which are experiencing major outbreaks of the disease and social turmoil. The perspective gained from these international linkages makes clear that the COVID-19 pandemic must be addressed as a global problem and not piecemeal country by country if we are truly going to gain a handle on the disease. This is not only a moral imperative, but in addition humanity runs the risk of facing even greater threats, as new variants inevitably emerge around the world.

Now, I would like to shift attention to an ad, inserted below, that was recently developed to promote MDP programs in North America. The ad, developed under the creative leadership of David Wilsey of the University of Minnesota MDP is being placed in WorldView, a magazine published by the National Peace Corps Association. It conveys well many attributes of the MDP program that I will detail briefly here from left to right:

Director's Note: Glenn Galloway (cont.)



- **Diverse Cohorts:** Diversity is a word that characterizes well the MDP program. Students come from many different countries; have diverse cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds; and have earned their undergraduate degrees in a wide array of professional fields. Students and graduates have manifested that this diversity enriches the quality of the program.
- **Integrated Learning:** Since its inception, the MDP program has consisted of four learning pillars--social, natural, health and management sciences--and it addresses how sustainable development processes involve interdisciplinary linkages across these pillars. The word cloud provides examples of challenges and approaches that require integrated learning. As an example, complex linkages between poverty, education, nutrition, exposure to environmental hazards and inequality result in minorities and Indigenous peoples suffering a disproportionate burden of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Practical Experience:** Students who enroll in the MDP program place a high priority on gaining practical experience. Opportunities are created to gain this experience in MDP courses and in the capstone field practicum (FP). Early in the program, students hone in on their thematic and regional interests to define where and with whom they will carry out their FP. Once more, the word diversity applies, since MDP students pursue FPs on a wide variety of topics with well-known host organizations in different parts of the world. During the pandemic, many students have learned to apply methods remotely to contribute in a meaningful way to the ongoing work of their host organizations.
- **Meaningful Careers:** Alumni of MDP programs are occupying important positions in many types of organizations seeking to contribute to sustainable development following different pathways. A small sampling of these organizations and pathways is provided in the word cloud above. The MDP program recognizes that our graduates will face evolving challenges in the years to come and many will pursue a variety of career paths. For that reason, a commitment to lifelong learning is nurtured among our students.



Director's Note: Glenn Galloway (cont.)

Finally, the UF MDP program is proud of the partnerships it has formed with other MDP programs in North America (listed at the bottom of the figure) and in other regions of the world. The MDP Global Association website is indicated on the figure if you would like to see the full list of participating universities.

Here I would like to congratulate our recent graduates who succeeded in meeting MDP degree requirements while navigating the adversities of the past year. In this newsletter, you will gain an appreciation of the field practicums they undertook and the committee members who provided them with essential support and guidance. Once more, family members, colleagues and friends from afar were able to patch into their field practicum final presentations carried out via Zoom.

We are also excited to inform you about the upcoming field practicums our students will conduct this summer. While some students have already traveled to the country where they will carry out their projects, others have suspended travel plans until conditions on the ground are more conducive to field work. Finally, another group have opted to apply methods remotely, in coordination with their host organizations in the US and abroad. Here, we wish all our students and graduates the greatest success as they embark on their respective professional and academic challenges.

Many thanks to four graduates from past cohorts who contributed exciting updates on their professional pursuits. Reading through their updates, you will gain an appreciation of the diversity of career paths our alumni follow after earning their MDP degrees. You will also see that Camila Pazos, an alumna of the first cohort of UF MDP students, was awarded this year's Outstanding Young Alumni Award by the Center for Latin American Studies for her work with the global non-profit Echoing Green. Congratulations to Camila and to all our alumni for your accomplishments.

In the MDP Faculty Spotlight, Dr. Catherine Tucker graciously accepted an invitation to be interviewed for this newsletter. Catherine has been a strong supporter of the MDP program, serving as chair on several students' supervisory committees and teaching courses of great interest to our students. She has considerable experience in Latin America, especially Honduras where she has conducted research on issues related to community-based natural resource management, forest conservation and coffee production, particularly how the latter impacts water production and biodiversity when grown under shade. Over time, her interests have evolved and recently she has been focusing attention on the nexus between common-pool resources and the provision of ecosystem services. We are grateful for the support Catherine provides to our program and the exemplary way she mentors our students.

It is appropriate here to sincerely thank all who make the MDP program possible in UF, particularly core, affiliate and contributing faculty members, the Center for Latin American Studies, the Center for African Studies, the International Center, the Graduate School, the Office of the Provost and the Tropical Conservation and Development Program. Special thanks to Yeyetsi Maldonado who has served the past two years as MDP Graduate Assistant. During this time she has provided leadership in the preparation of our newsletters, prepared and circulated our weekly MDP Listserv, hosted prospective students during visits to the UF campus and created special opportunities for our students to interact socially, even when it had to be done over Zoom. We thank Yeyetsi for her professionalism and friendly demeanor and wish her much happiness and success as she and her husband embark on a new chapter in California.

Spring 2021 Poster Session - Research Festival 2021

We want to thank Catherine Tucker and the Center for Latin American Studies for organizing the online [Research Festival](#) to showcase the research carried out by graduate students from MDP, MALAS, and TCD.

Seven Cohort 10 students shared their posters and virtual presentations based on their summer 2020 Field Practicums. You can watch the students' presentations on the [MDP YouTube channel](#).

The posters are available [HERE](#).

Congratulations to the MDP poster winners:

1st Prize MDP

Caroline Baylor

"Evaluation and Improvement of Polk County Waste and Recycling's Online Service Request System"

2nd Prize MDP

Brenda Lugano

"Lamu Conservation: A Case Study Understanding Community Participation in Lamu Spatial Plan, Kenya"

2nd Prize MDP

Yeyetsi Maldonado Caballero

"Traditional Charcoal Production in Agroforestry Systems: What Can We Learn from Global Experiences?"

Summer Field Practicums 2021 (Cohort 10 and Cohort 11)

The COVID-19 pandemic is still complicating MDP student Field Practicum planning and implementation. As occurred last summer, some students changed their FP sites and host organizations, and others are beginning with virtual data collection and work while postponing travel to later in the year. But several are proceeding with international projects, after being vaccinated, and respecting all protocols instituted by their host organizations. We wish them health and success in their summer work and travel.

Name	Theme	Region/Country	Host Organization
Raine Donohue	<i>Superfoods for Forest Protection.</i>	Loreto, Perú	Earth Innovation Institute
Katherine Fiorillo	<i>Measuring women's empowerment in agroforestry activities in northern Uganda.</i>	Gulu, Uganda	Kijani Forestry
Octavio Gomez	<i>The mission of missions.</i>	Bradenton, FL	Send Me Ministries
A.J. Hart	<i>Volunteer Tourism and Community Conservation Efforts in Costa Rica.</i>	Playa Blanca, Puerto Jiménez, Costa Rica	Latin America Sea Turtles (LAST)
Jennifer Johnson	<i>Learning from the International Diversity of Health Worker Protests.</i>	Washington, DC	Accountability Research Center
Priya Pershadsingh	<i>Developing a Central Monitoring System for Data Collection CECOEDECON.</i>	Jaipur, Rajasthan, India	Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society
Nicole Picón	<i>Research Uptake for Livestock Systems in Ethiopia.</i>	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Livestock Systems Innovation Lab, University of Florida
Alejandro Sánchez Morales	<i>SoilDoc: A tool to improve smallholder agriculture practices and a potential business opportunity.</i>	Laikipia, Kenya	Mpala Research Station

Summer Field Practicums 2021 (Cohort 10 and Cohort 11)

Name	Theme	Region/Country	Host Organization
Sarah Strohming	<i>The value of fog: innovative water access and impacts in southwest Morocco.</i>	Agadir, Morocco	Dar Si Hmad
Ana Ugalde-Brenes	<i>Women's empowerment: value chain evaluation of a women's skills development project in Nepal.</i>	Chitwan, Nepal	Sapana Village Social Impact Organization.



● 2021 Field Practicums

MDP Graduates Spring 2021

Our graduating students celebrated in person at the O'Connell Center with family and friends, and later at Yeyetsi Maldonado's house. We are very proud of our new graduates who accomplished so much under the limitations and stress of the pandemic, and we wish each one great success in their next steps.

William Blanc (Cohort 9) and Manuel Morales (Cohort 9) were also able to celebrate their in-person graduation in May 2021, postponed by COVID-19 from 2020.

Here we provide information about each of our Spring 2021 graduates, members of their supervisory committees, and the topic of their capstone field practicums.



Colleen Abel (Cohort 9)

Specializations: Latin American Studies, TCD

Advisors: Joel Correia and Becky Williams (Latin American Studies)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"The mental health intersection: returned migrants in western Honduras."*



Andia Akifuma (Cohort 10)

Specializations: Gender & Development, African Studies, TCD

Advisor: Renata Serra (African Studies)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Understanding the impact of Cultural Arts Coalition's after-school science program (Gainesville, FL)."*



Ange Asanzi (Cohort 10)

Specializations: Gender & Development, African Studies, TCD

Advisor: Claudia Romero (Biology)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"An integrated approach to reduce the rate of poverty among African American communities in Alachua County."*

MDP Graduates Spring 2021 (cont.)



Caroline Baylor (Cohort 10)

Specializations: Sustainable Waste Management, Latin American Studies, TCD

Advisor: Timothy Townsend (Environmental Engineering Sciences)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Evaluation and improvement of Polk County Waste & Recycling Division's online request platform."*



Amira Hussein (Cohort 10)

Specializations: Science Communication / Digital Storytelling, African Studies, TCD

Advisor: Renata Serra (African Studies)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Strengthening social enterprise contribution to sustainable development through impact measurement in East Africa."*



Brenda Lugano (Cohort 10)

Specializations: Entrepreneurship, African Studies, TCD

Advisor: Renata Serra (African Studies)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Lamu Coast conservation: a case study understanding community participation in the Lamu Spatial Plan."*

Sustainable Development Practice Certificates Spring 2021

Juliana Santiago, MA (Latin American Studies)

Final Presentations

This year's final presentations and defenses were successfully carried out via Zoom. Once more, the MDP program is proud of the resilience exhibited by our students and their exemplary capacity to fulfill program requirements in an effective way, even when facing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

You can find some of the Final Presentations on the [MDP YouTube channel](#).



Andia's and Amira's online final presentations.

Center for Latin American Studies Alumni Board Outstanding Young Alumni Award:

Camila Pazos (Cohort 1)



Each year since 2017, the UF Center of Latin American Studies (LAS) recognizes notable alumni whose achievements positively reflect the goals, principles, and philosophy of the Center. Selected for their service, leadership, and accomplishments in their respective fields, the Outstanding Young Alumni Award shines a light on an LAS alumnus under the age of 40.

This year's Outstanding Young Alumni Award winner is Camila Pazos Fajardo, Director of Investment Programs at the global nonprofit Echoing Green. Camila graduated in 2012 with her MDP Degree (Cohort 1) and the TCD Certificate.

As Director of Investments at Echoing Green, Camila drives the strategy for finding and selecting emerging leaders to join the organization's community of Fellows, focusing on issues of climate change, education, health, human rights, poverty, and racial justice. Each Fellowship selection cycle sees nearly 3,000 applications from across the world. Camila leads an inclusive and selective seven-month evaluation process, which results in a recommendation on how to distribute \$4 million in funding. Under Camila's tenure, Echoing Green has invested in organizations such as Emerge Puerto Rico, Urban Oasis, Latin American Leadership Academy, Vida Afrolatina, Low Carbon City, and MicroTERRA.



Spring 2021 Awards (cont.)

"I enjoy meeting and learning from people who are doing the work and not just talking the talk. In my role at Echoing Green I am able to learn from social justice leaders from diverse backgrounds who are doing powerful and necessary work."

Moreover, Camila has increased visibility and resources to Latin American communities through her work on the 2018 Echoing Green conference – the organization's first to be held in Latin America. The All Fellows Conference took place in Medellín, Colombia, and brought together hundreds of social entrepreneurs, funders, and partners.

Prior to joining Echoing Green, Camila worked at the UF Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation supporting Dr. Kristin Joys in running the Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership and Sustainability summer program. Camila also supported former UF Faculty member Dr. Richard Rheingans (PHHP) and his research lab doing work on vaccine equity. Her field practicum in 2011 during the MDP program was in Maun, Botswana and focused on past and future development trends in rural Botswana and their impact on community health.

"Once I started the MDP program, I was able to take learnings from social entrepreneurship and think critically about how sustainable development solutions are made accessible to people on the ground."

Camila's commitment to empowering transformational leadership in underrepresented communities embodies the spirit of progress, equity, and collaboration that defines the UF MDP Program. Congratulations to Camila on her exceptional achievements!

In 2018, the Center for Latin American Studies interviewed Camila about her decision to pursue a degree in sustainability, you can read the interview [here](#).

For more information about the Echoing Green fellowships, please click [here](#).

Spring 2021 Awards (cont.)

TCD Field Research Grants: **Katherine Fiorillo (Cohort 11), Sarah Strohming (Cohort 10)**



Center for Latin American Studies Field Research Grant: **Raine Donohue (Cohort 10)**



Center for African Studies Field Practicum Travel Grants: : **Katherine Fiorillo (Cohort 11), Nicole Picón (Cohort 10), Alejandro Sánchez (Cohort 11), Sarah Strohming (Cohort 10)**



Ruth McQuown award: **Katherine Fiorillo (Cohort 11)**

This award recognizes academic achievements and contributions to the community, in the scholarly and activist traditions of the late Dean McQuown.

Spring 2021 Awards (cont.)



University of Florida Business Affairs Elite Gator Award: **Fiona Hogan (Cohort 7)**

"I'm extremely grateful to have won the Elite Gator award for my work on the UF Climate Action Plan revision process!"

Fiona Hogan has gone above and beyond in her role as a Strategic Projects Manager with the Office of Sustainability. With guidance from a strategic planning consultant, Fiona has applied her own training and skill to the working groups that she oversees and continues to receive positive feedback from these working group members for her facilitation.

Dr. Joel Correia (MDP core faculty) has recently been awarded a 2021 American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellowship, in support of his book *Disrupting the Patrón: Unsettling Racial Geographies in Pursuit of Indigenous Environmental Justice*.

"It is an honor to be named an ACLS Fellow among colleagues whose work I value," Dr. Correia says.

"With this fellowship I will complete my first book and advance a fresh take on multicultural politics and environmental justice in Latin America."

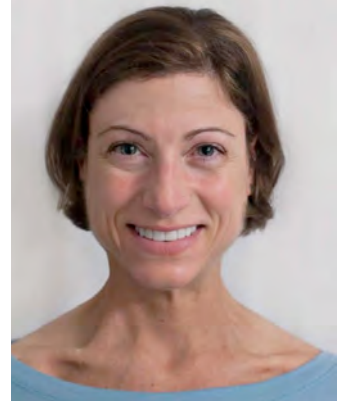


Dr. Vanessa Hull (MDP affiliate faculty) was selected Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Graduate Faculty of the Year for 2020-2021.

Spring 2021 Awards (cont.)

Dr. Kristin Joys (MDP affiliate faculty) - 2021 Champions for Change award.

While primarily nominated for launching UF's Business for Good Lab, Kristin Joys has been a champion for social entrepreneurship at UF and beyond for several years. The Business for Good Lab: Sustainable Business Consulting program is just one of the many programs that Dr. Joys has helped create to educate and inspire students on social impact and sustainable business. Since being launched, 132 students have gone through the Business for Good Lab course, helping 24 out of 33 Florida-based companies track enough points to receive B Corp Certification – a business standard of verified social and environmental performance. Other notable programs that Dr. Joys has spearheaded include the Social Impact & Sustainability Initiative in the Warrington College of Business and the Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership & Sustainability (YELS) Summer Program for High School students.



2021 Champions for Change award to Sustainable Development Goals in the Classroom Faculty Guide team: Natalie Coers, Matt Williams, **Fiona Hogan (Cohort 7)**, Dina Liebowitz, Amy Brown, **Bahar Armaghani (MDP affiliate faculty)**, Rania Gollakner, **Glenn Galloway**, **Andrew Noss**.

The Champions for Change awards are made by the UF Office of Sustainability and the Healthy Gators Coalition.

You can access the Faculty Guide [here](#).



Students Outside the Classroom

Many MDP students carry out activities outside the classroom, at times as graduate and teaching assistants and other times in service to the broader community. In this way, students take full advantage of their time in the program to gain experience and enhance their professional development.

Cohort 9

Colleen Abel: Graduate Assistants United – Graduate Assistant; Volunteer with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

Cohort 10

Andia Akiufuma: Teaching Assistant – Swahili; Africa Choir member

Ange Asanzi: Center for African Studies Graduate Assistant

Catherine Hart: UF IFAS Family Nutrition Program – Public Health Specialist for Northeast Florida

Madison Smith: Office of Sustainability Intern

Nikki Picon: Co-coordinator of the Gender and Development Working Group

Sarah Strohming: Programs Assistant Director, Office of Global Research Engagement, UFIC; TCD Student Group Tropilunch Co-Coordinator

Yeyetsi Maldonado: MDP Graduate Assistant; Volunteer with the Human Rights Coalition of Alachua County

Cohort 11

Alejandro Sánchez: GIA-Mosaic Colombia; TCD Student Group; UF Representative for the MDP Global Association Student and Alumni Council

Ana Ugalde: Graduate Assistants United – Graduate Assistant

Katie Fiorillo: IDRC research project on livestock vaccinations in Nepal, Uganda, and Senegal; Kijani Forestry development officer

Priya Pershadsingh: IDRC research project on livestock vaccinations in Nepal, Uganda, and Senegal; UF Representative for the MDP Global Association Student and Alumni Council; Co-coordinator of the Gender and Development Working Group



Gabriela Polo (Cohort 5)

After graduating in 2016, I moved to Washington, DC where I eventually joined Rare— an international conservation NGO with over 40 years of experience driving changes in human behavior so that people and nature thrive. I started as their Events Coordinator, planning events and site visits for Rare’s Trustees and major donors. After a year, I transitioned to my current role managing Rare’s Fish Forever program in Central America. Fish Forever is Rare’s community-led solution to revitalize coastal marine habitats, protect biodiversity, and secure the livelihoods of fisher households and their communities by combating coastal overfishing.

In my role, I get to wear many hats. I not only contribute to program strategy, fundraising and management, but directly support program implementation. I collaborate closely with global colleagues, thematic experts, and site stakeholders, to adapt program tools to local contexts. I lead the development and execution of program deliverables, strategic events, and training experiences, building local capacity, facilitating the expansion of our partner networks, and supporting decision makers in passing data-informed, science-driven marine policies. In my role, I also oversee the execution of campaigns that leverage behavioral science and social marketing to inspire change. As the drivers behind the adoption of sustainable fishing practices in coastal communities, these campaigns have been critical to cultivating strong relationships on the ground and enabling programmatic success.

I am proud of the career I am building in ocean conservation and am committed to continue dedicating my work to the wellbeing of our oceans and the people who depend on them.

Daniel Sarafan (Cohort 7)



Since graduating in May 2019 with my Masters of Sustainable Development Practice and Juris Doctor degrees, I've remained in Gainesville to work first with Greenhouse Church, then with a private criminal defense firm, and now as an Assistant Public Defender in Florida's Eighth Judicial Circuit. As an APD, I help represent some of the many indigent criminal defendants working their way through Florida's criminal justice system.

In the travel-restricted era of Covid-19, the Public Defender's Office has been a great opportunity to advocate locally for the humanitarian values championed by the MDP program. The materially poor have as much a right to dignity and self-determination in Gainesville as they do in the developing world, and the structural violence that occurs in our criminal justice system demands attention. With Florida ranking 50 out of 50 among the States for per capita mental health expenditures, much of my work involves advocacy on behalf of individuals with mental health issues. Another large segment of the work is on behalf of those unable to pay fines, as Florida's criminal justice system is in part financed through fees, court costs, and costs of prosecution paid by criminal defendants.

While I would love to see the criminalization of poverty and mental health needs abolished in our communities, for now I consider this work a continuation of my education in SDG 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

MDP Alumni Update (cont.)



Mary Vasilevsky (Cohort 8)

I continue working for Florida Green Construction, a local Florida-specific construction company with a mission to deliver sustainable, healthy-to-live-in, hurricane safe, and truly affordable homes to people across different walks of life. The green building field is such an incredible multi-disciplinary path. Since the beginning of this year I have had some accomplishments:

1. I won the [Sustainability and Green Building Scholarship](#) from the National Association of Home Builders.
2. [The National Grading and Excavating Magazine](#) featured me for their winter article.
3. I am spearheading a [green building webinar series](#) with the non-profit we work with, Florida Green Building Coalition.



Maria Waked Sanchez (Cohort 8)

After the MDP program, I worked at the University of Florida as an Adjunct professor for the Spanish and Portuguese Department. Then, my family and I moved to Portland, Oregon. In Portland I am currently working for an NGO called Latino Network. The main focus of this organization is to educate and empower the Latino community. Low achievement scores, youth violence and high drop out rates are some of the issues affecting Latino communities in Oregon. In my role as a **Family Engagement Specialist** for the Educational Access Program, my team and I address these issues by promoting early literacy, encouraging parent involvement and providing academic support and activities to high school youth.

MDP Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Catherine Tucker

“To find our calling is to find the intersection between our own deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger.” - Frederick Bueckner.

Welcome Dr. Tucker and thank you for being part of our Spring 2021 Newsletter, we are really excited to have you here and learn more about you. To start our interview, I want to ask about your path to the University of Florida, and how you got involved with the MDP Program.

My path to UF started when Marianne Schmink was getting ready to retire; she contacted a number of people who she thought might be interested in coming to UF. I had met her at other conferences, so she knew a little bit about my work, and she encouraged me to apply. I came to an interview and ended up getting an offer to come to UF, I believe it was early 2014 and I came in 2015, that is how I became familiar with the MDP program. Prior to that most of my interaction had been with people in TCD.

We would like to learn more about your research, and how did you get involved in the development area?

I think I have always been interested in development, at least since I started my Doctoral research, because I was concerned for how people could address their problems and create more secure livelihoods, especially farmers in Latin America. I was also very interested in community-based natural resource management because when that is done well, that can be a mechanism or a possible pathway for supporting improved livelihoods. I worked with my dissertation advisor, Bob Netting, to choose a place to do my research. He had a former student in Honduras who I went to visit, he was at Zamorano, a well-known agricultural school which also has a strong sustainable development and rural livelihoods program. At that time, they were not using the term sustainable development as much, it was more focused on economic development. I ended



up choosing a place that had communally-owned forests, which had stopped a national concession that permitted corporate timber harvesting on their land. I wanted to understand how they had stopped the state’s interventions in their forests, and how they were managing their forest following their expulsion of the timber company. They had been trying to operate a community-owned sawmill but it had a lot of challenges including legal barriers and organizational issues. Then as I was doing my fieldwork, farmers started to plant coffee because it had better prospects for income. Because of this, I started looking at coffee production and how it was driving forest clearing. But I discovered that compared to other options for income – such as cattle raising or commercial monocropping – shade-grown coffee could complement forest management and environmental and biodiversity conservation. I was working in an area where up to about 1990, it was a subsistence agricultural economy based on maize and beans. People were very happy to finally have a source of income. Now I am also working on water because that is a high-demand resource. Communities in the area where

MDP Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Catherine Tucker (cont.)

I work have organized to create a cloud forest reserve to protect the springs that provide their water, which is impressive.

It is always nice to know people's work more in depth and why you got involved in what you are doing right now. Now you are doing research about water, but do you have other research projects going on?

Yes, I am still working with coffee cooperatives to understand their approaches to try to get more secure income from coffee, which is one of the most volatile commodities in the world in terms of market prices. I am also working with the Mountain Sentinels Collaborative Network. Most of my work with community-based forest management, water and coffee is in mountainous areas of Central America, but I have also worked in Mexico and Peru. I am working with Mountain Sentinels studying opportunities and challenges for sustainability in mountain environments. I am working on several projects; one includes an analysis of challenges and opportunities for sustainable mountain governance, in other words, governance that supports sustainability intentionally. We just had an article accepted in the journal Mountain Research and Development. I have another project with European colleagues looking at a comparative assessment of common-pool resources and ecosystem services, how they overlap, and the implications for sustainability and wise governance of these resources. So far, much of the formal literature has looked at common-pool resources separately from ecosystem services, but provisioning ecosystem services are often common-pool resources as well. That is more a theoretical interest of mine, but it relates very closely to challenges for environmental governance and the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the European Union, this gets a lot of attention and I am hoping to get another project funded with my colleagues there.

It is fascinating that you worked in different parts of the world, this always gives you a wider perspective of different issues. As you know, we are being trained to become practitioners. In your opinion, what are the qualities a practitioner should have?

That is a good question and actually that is one of the themes in another project with the Mountain Sentinels Network on transdisciplinary approaches. We conducted a global survey of practitioners and researchers to investigate what works for successful transdisciplinary projects. One of the recommendations that came out, which is very important, is to be open-minded and flexible when you are working with local people. You have to be willing and able to let other people take the lead and to recognize different perspectives on things beyond the ways we might have been trained to think about problems or how to address them. It is important to be a good listener and to be very patient. Those are among other qualities that I think are valuable.

One of the core courses of the program is "Communication and Leadership" and one of the skills we learn in this class is active listening. As you mentioned, being able to listen is an important skill when working in the field.

Before we finish this interview, I would like to ask if you have any advice for the MDP students.

Well, I think it is important to keep a constructive and positive attitude. Life is a challenge so take time for yourself. For sure you have heard this before, "do not sweat the small stuff", and learn to tell the difference between the small stuff and big stuff. Believe in what you do and choose things that you believe in to do, because what you do best is associated with the talents and passions that you have. I think everyone has gifts, talents, and passions, and we all have them for a reason, so we should do our best to follow those. Yes, it is important to broaden

MDP Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Catherine Tucker (cont.)

our skills and our abilities, but we are who we are, and we need to appreciate ourselves too. Believe that the skills, talents, and passions that you have are exactly what the world needs, and you will find a place for them.

Thank you very much for your advice, that was really inspiring, and I appreciate the time you took to answer our questions and share more about yourself with us.



Spring Socials





MDP UF Foundation Donations

We have all been witness to the invaluable work being carried out by MDP Students with broad, cross-departmental faculty support and by our growing body of alumni.

Now this is an opportunity to contribute to our exciting program! The MDP UF Foundation Account will support MDP students, for example, in the realization of their capstone field practicums and to attend relevant conferences where they can present their work and engage with other practitioners. Donations can be made online at:

https://www.uff.ufl.edu/give-now/?fund_id=020485

**We especially thank all of you who contributed to MDP
on Gator Nation Giving Day (Feb. 18, 2021)!**

***We wish all our readers a safe and healthy
summer and hope you find opportunities
to engage with friends and family and the
natural world.***