Education

Message
From the Director

Spring is arriving in the Bennion Center amid celebration. Exciting happenings include students applying for leadership positions, new staff coming on board, and an issues education program being created. Over the past year the center has seen tremendous growth: the largest Legacy of Lowell event to date and the introduction of monthly service house dialogues, Saturday Service Projects with BC volunteers partnering with businesses and campus offices, and monthly forums in collaboration with the Hinckley Institute of Politics discussing issues relevant to BC students and projects.

In our continuing efforts to deepen engagement on campus, we have worked with faculty to develop new service-learning curriculum. We have retooled the Service-Learning Scholars Program, which currently enrolls over 100 students. Also, the center has helped create new programs emphasizing greater student access to and success within the university and participation in active global citizenship.

Our community support continues to grow. To honor these friends, this year we kick off our first annual Donor Leadership Forum, which will assemble civic, educational, and philanthropic leaders to share advice with and mentor past and current BC student leaders. Overall, this season offers time to reflect on and celebrate the BC and its timely work.


effect is at zero

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek. – Barack Obama, Feb. 5, 2008

Bennion Center Welcomes New Assistant Director

On December 15, 2008, Gina C. Russo began her new role as the Bennion Center’s Assistant Director/Student Program Manager. She has proven to be well-suited for this environment, drawing upon her vast experience, insight, and knowledge to partner with students, administrators, faculty, and community partners.

After graduating from the American University in 1989 with a Bachelor’s Degree in International Relations and Spanish/Latin American Studies, Gina earned her master's in International Development from Ohio University in 1991.

She then co-founded and served as the executive director of the Chesapeake Community Supported Agriculture Program until 1997, after which she consulted for a family farm on a USAID subcontracting assignment in Macedonia. Gina later moved to Costa Rica and became involved with the Monteverde Institute, a non-profit educational organization specializing in university study-abroad programs. She worked as the institute’s Director of Development, Director of Arts and Music Programs, and Course Coordinator. She simultaneously served as the Country Director of Global Volunteers, a non-profit organization whose mission is to establish sustainable grass roots community development programs. Before moving to Utah this year, Gina worked at the Monteverde Friends School, where she directed the school’s annual appeal.

Already Gina has made strong connections with students and community partners. When asked about her experience so far, she commented, “I’m really enjoying the Bennion Center. I love working with the students. They are so passionate and capable. It’s refreshing and stimulating environment.

By Christy Tobolski

Gina Russo, the new Assistant Director/Student Program Manager of the Bennion Center

Bennion Center Organizes April Events

To wrap up the 2008-2009 academic year, the Bennion Center is sponsoring several celebratory events:

On April 17 the Bennion Service House will present EarthFest, an annual event that brings more than 100 4th-graders to campus to learn about the environment and sustainability. Students will enjoy educational activities, a lunch on Officers Circle, and a field trip to Red Butte Garden.

Later that day the Bennion Center will host the 1st Annual Donor/Mentor Leadership Forum from 4-6pm in the Salt Lake City and County Building. More info on this event can be found on the next page.

Also on the 17th, the Bennion Center’s annual Reflection Gallery Reception will be held in the Salt Lake City and County Building’s Lower Level Gallery from 6-8pm. Attendees will have the opportunity to enjoy visual and written art produced by Bennion Center students, faculty, alumni, and friends as well as meet a few artists who are sharing their reflections on serving the community. Artwork will be displayed in the gallery space from April 1 through April 22. For more information, contact Katie at kolson@s.uta.edu or 801-585-9100.

On April 18 Bend-in-the-River will host its annual Earth Day Planting and Celebration from 8:30am-noon. A light breakfast will be followed by a planting demonstration, weed removal and planting, and lunch. Volunteers are asked to bring a water bottle, shovel, and work gloves (the Bend will have tools available to use). For more info or to RSVP for the event, contact Tara at tpoelzing@s.uta.edu or 801-587-9027.

On April 23 the Bennion Center will hold a Service-Learning Scholar Recognition Banquet. This annual event celebrates graduating scholars who have infused their academic knowledge into real community concerns, in the process developing leadership and organizational skills for future civic involvement.

On May 8 the Bennion Center will say goodbye to more than 35 student leaders as they conclude their education at the U. There will be an open house to honor these graduates from 12-2pm. Students, staff, faculty, friends, and family are welcome to attend.

By Christy Tobolski

Gina Russo, the new Assistant Director/Student Program Manager of the Bennion Center
Bennion Center Awards Students Helping the Community

Thanks to generous donors, the Bennion Center can offer several opportunities for students and alumni to receive financial support while devoting their time and energy to community service and leadership.

The Alumni Bennion Summer Fellowship, an effort between the university’s alumni association and the center, was established in 1991 to give fellows, alumni, and the U a chance to expand the concept of community. Having designed projects to employ personal skills and research interests, fellows fulfill a ten-week service placement with an agency outside of Utah.

Three fellowships have been awarded for summer 2009. Victoria Andrews will create an interactive project using technology to educate and connect people with sacred Native American western lands. Kristin Bushnell will be an intern under Ambassador Diop of Mali to expand communications among developing nations. Rebecca Van Maren will work with the Northwest Arkansas Food Bank to learn its procedures and help organize its major fundraiser.

The Telitha Ellis Lindquist Scholarship, which honors its namesake for her many community contributions, was originated to award an upper-division student demonstrating exemplary devotion to community service and leadership with a year’s financial support. The recipient commits to giving significant time and similar initiative for another year through the center.

June Hiatt is the 2009-2010 winner of this prestigious award. In addition to helping other students with numerous projects, June has served in such positions as director of the Campus AIDS Program and coordinator of the Social Justice Programs. June will be the BC vice president during 2009-2010.

Established in 1997 by Deb Sawyer and Deon Hilger to honor their mother’s outstanding community work, the Barbara L. Tanner Community Service Fellowship provides a U of U graduate the financial freedom to experience one year of full-time community service that meets a critical need.

Brinton Woods is this year’s Tanner Fellow. Brinton is currently the deputy director for the 4th Street Scholars Program. He will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the volunteer program, expanding it to include pre-professional students as well as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other professional staff.

By Linda Dunn, Brent Spencer, and Christy Tobolski

Bennion Center Hosts 1st Annual Donor/Mentor Leadership Forum

On Friday, April 17, the Bennion Center is hosting its 1st Annual Mentor/Donor Leadership Forum from 4-6pm on the main floor of the Salt Lake City and County Building, 451 S. State Street.

The forum will bring together University of Utah students and community leaders from all over the valley. These leaders will facilitate round-table discussions to address topics including leadership, service, philanthropy, and other community areas, and by facilitating mentor-mentee relationships, we are helping ensure that these students commit to a lifetime of civic engagement.

Participating community leaders include Kim Wirthlin from the University of Utah, Judge Andrew Valdez from the Juvenile District Court, and John Pingree from Intermountain Healthcare.

By Christy Tobolski

For more info or to RSVP for the event, contact Mary at mdraper@sa.utah.edu or 801-585-0093 before April 13.

By Christy Tobolski

Bennion Center Awards Students Helping the Community

This is a busy time of year for the Service-Learning Scholars Program. Its new open-enrollment application process enables students to apply anytime, so more students than ever are taking advantage of the opportunity to become scholars.

As we move from one academic year to another, leadership among scholars also changes. The Bennion Center thanks former Scholars Leadership Team members: Brent Schmidt, Heather Tolley, Kelsey Buchman, Nattie Morlan, and Suzanne Schmidt for their dedication to the program. The 2009-2010 team will consist of Brittany McDowell, Kelsey Buchman, McKenzie Newton, Morgan Marietti, Nattie Morlan and Patom Leslerphant.

This spring 11 scholars will graduate having given a total of 4,400 hours of service. The following scholars are among those who have thoughtfully worked to complete their Integrated Service Projects: Brandon Patterson organized a Day of Service within the Humanities House; Brent Schmidt developed a training manual for the interpreting program at the University Hospital; Yevyeniya Kopeleva and John Hayes worked hard to implement a co-curricular, community involvement, graduation requirement for new university students; Shontal Torres started a Career Day for third grade students; Barbara Roper evaluated body mass indices for all pediatric patients; and Tania Michael documented life stories with terminally ill patients.

The Bennion Center is proud of this year’s scholars and looks forward to their involvement in the future as alumni. Congratulations, scholars!
Bennion Center Names 2009-2010 Distinguished Faculty Service Award and Public Service Professorship

Each year the Bennion Center recognizes outstanding university faculty with two awards, the Distinguished Faculty Service Award for past accomplishments and the Public Service Professorship for proposed civicly engaged scholarship.

The former honors a faculty member who has demonstrated devotion to the campus and community through a life of active, unpaid public service and the integration of that service in research and teaching.

This year the award goes to Dr. Janet Kaufman, Associate Professor of English. Dr. Kaufman is recognized for co-founding the West High Family Literacy Center (FLC) and for her commitment over the past decade to fund, develop, staff, and serve the FLC. Through the FLC, Dr. Kaufman offers service-learning opportunities for English education students.

Justin Thompson, a former student of Dr. Kaufman currently teaching English at Skyline High School, says, “I am just one of the individuals who has been deeply influenced by Dr. Janet Kaufman. I know I am not alone. I think I speak on behalf of all of us who have been affected by her—those who know her personally, and those who may not even know her name—when I say that she is most deserving of this accolade. It is difficult—perhaps even staggering—to appreciate how broadly her enthusiasm for literature and the teaching thereof has affected our communities.”

The Bennion Center Public Service Professorship provides a $10,000 grant to a faculty member to implement her or his vision for strengthening learning experiences and opportunities tied to civic engagement and to foster stronger partnerships with the local community.

The 2009-2010 award has been given to Dr. Beth Krensky, Assistant Professor of Art Education, to support the creation of the Center for Art in Community. The center, which will provide after-school arts programming for underserved youth, will be a collaborative project of the Department of Art and Art History and South Salt Lake City. It will exemplify the positive impact that can be made on children, families, and whole communities as well as university students when such collaboration takes place.

By Katie Olson

More than 35 Bennion Center Student Leaders Graduate

The Bennion Center will be saying good-bye to more than 35 student leaders this May when they celebrate the grand finale of their college experience at the U. Here is what three graduates have to say about the BC’s role in their education:

Luke Leclair-Marzolf, Coordinator of the Environment & Science Group, is receiving his undergraduate degree in mass communications with an emphasis in photography. This summer Luke will work with the Utah Conservation Corps doing trail maintenance as an Americorps member. The Bennion Center has helped shape Luke’s future in powerful ways. “The center helped me develop into a strong leader and a great communicator. It prepared me for the “real” world and provided me with everything from free food and awesome track jackets to unforgettable friends.”

Chris Lowe, Director for the ACT & College Prep Program, is graduating with a BA in biology. Chris is attending optometry school in Oregon this fall. The Bennion Center has taught him many things ranging from the value of hard work and organization to leadership skills. “The center has helped me evaluate what I believe is important and has made me want to stay involved in service throughout my life. I plan on using my professional training to serve people in need of optometric care, both here and abroad.”

Kelsey Stark, BC Student Vice President, is receiving her BA in psychology and gender studies. This summer Kelsey hopes to serve an internship in Ethiopia. She will be pursuing an MPA at Portland State University in the fall. “The Bennion Center has given me the confidence I need to be a good leader, follow my dream, and speak my voice. It helped me discover my passion for helping others and has prepared me for a career in the non-profit world.”

Without the center, I would not be the person I am today.

By Christy Tobolski

‘09 Student Leader Graduates

Melissa Aldape
Nate Barusch
Shawn Boley
Kristine Bullen
Judy Chang
Chanel Hammer
Ben Hammond
John Hayes
William Hoang
Devon Hull
Brad Kelstrom
Yevyeniya Kopeleva
Nicole Kraus
Alex Larson
Luke Leclair-Marzolf
Chis Lowe
Joseph Mamone
Jordan Mann
Tania Michael
Josh Newbury
Brandon Patterson
Ana Perez
Derek Petersen
Mallory Platt
Evan Romrell
Barbara Roper
Brent Schmidt
Max Seltenrich
Kelsey Stark
Mike Sundwall
Phil Swink
Heather Tolley
Shontol Torres Burkalter
Sally Tran
Matt Wilkinson
Kami Wong
Sara Woltz

America Reads Program Serves Local Title I Schools

America Reads is a national program that challenges every citizen to help children learn to read. The challenge was issued when research found that 40 percent of fourth graders could not read well, a disaster considering that reading proficiently at this age is critical for mastering increasingly demanding academic subjects. Children who do not read early and well are held back perhaps for the rest of their lives.

The U of U joined the America Reads challenge upon its inception in 1997. University students who receive Federal Work-Study financial aid serve at local elementary schools as one-on-one tutors to help children develop literacy skills and academic confidence. Currently America Reads serves four local schools and childcare centers. These U students receive comprehensive literacy and issue-oriented training to ensure they provide effective tutoring. In just one semester the Bennion Center’s 38 tutors spent over 5,000 hours working with more than 200 children who saw as much as an entire grade level’s progress in their reading after only 3 months. The program proves its worth.

By Elsa Gustavson
Bennion Center Wishes Tara Poelzing Farewell

After three years of involvement with the Bennion Center, Tara Poelzing is leaving at the end of April.

Tara was hired as the Bend-in-the-River Coordinator in May 2006 and has since played an integral role in the Bend’s development. Some of Tara’s accomplishments include tripling volunteer hours to nearly 3,000 for the year; strengthening partnerships with local environmental, educational, and non-profit groups like Utah Federation for Youth, Utah Society for Environmental Education, and the Salt Lake City Parks Department and Open Space Lands Program; and initiating an internship program utilizing the Morgan Fellowship and AmeriCorps.

By establishing the Bend internship program, Tara has strengthened the quality of its staff as well as provided deeper, more meaningful, long-term service-learning opportunities for U of U students. Additionally, via newly formed partnerships with groups such as the Bonneville Cooperative Weed Management Area and Envision Utah through their Blueprint Jordan River process, she has demonstrated how true collaboration can result in successful restoration and environmental education.

Tara Poelzing cleaning up the Jordan River near the Bend

Bennion Center Hosts 1st Annual Networking Luncheon in the Bay Area

In January 2009, Dick Jacobsen, cofounder and longtime supporter of the Bennion Center, hosted a networking luncheon at the Beechwood School in Palo Alto, CA, for BC and other U of U alumni in the Bay Area. The Beechwood School, founded by Dick and Sue Jacobsen and partners, is in its twentieth year of serving a disadvantaged K-8 population with a high-quality private education in a nurturing environment.

By Linda Dunn

Bend-in-the-River Connects Students with Nature

Bend-in-the-River continues to connect West Salt Lake Community students to their local open spaces. Thanks to a GreenWorks! grant from Project Learning Tree, the Bend is providing real-world experience and service opportunities to 2nd grade students from Riley Elementary, a Title I school, while instructing about the plant cycle according to the Utah Core Curriculum requirements.

In October students traveled to the Bend and collected seeds from various native plants. During later lessons they studied what happens to seeds in a natural setting and then sorted, cleaned, and stratified the seeds to prepare them for planting. Finally, during the winter they planted those seeds, and since that time they have been caring for them in their classrooms. The GreenWorks! grant made possible the purchase of grow lights, materials to build the grow light stands, soil, and other supplies. The lessons surrounding these activities incorporate science, math, and language arts.

The plants have now sprouted and are on target to be planted. Once the weather warms, Bend staff will bring the students to the Bend for reviewing the cycle, planting for the community, and celebrating the change in seasons.

By Tara Poelzing

Student Reflects on Service-Learning Experience

Throughout my first year here at the U of U, I have done service learning at Jackson Elementary through the Adelante Partnership.

Every week I get the privilege of working with Ms. Bustillo’s first grade class. The reality of my experience is that there is never a dull moment when you’re working with kids. Mentoring consists of helping the kids improve their reading skills in Spanish and even playing with them during recess. I realize that people think negatively towards schools like Jackson. What they don’t realize is how great the school is and how much the teachers and mentors dedicate themselves to helping the kids achieve success. The students I work with are some of the brightest I know; they are so excited about their futures as college students and hope that one day they will attend the University of Utah.

My experience there has made me realize that I want to work with children. I am extremely happy that I got the chance to work with such wonderful people.

By Ariana Irizarry

Left, Linda Dunn with Dick & Sue Jacobsen
At the 2009 Philanthropy Day event, the Bennion Center honored Barbara and Kent Murdock for their consistent support and generosity towards the center. Both Barbara and Kent were taught and mentored by Lowell L. Bennion as a neighbor and friend, thus beginning their continued involvement with his work.

Kent and Barbara are now opening a new chapter in their lives. Kent is retiring from OC Tanner after a 30+ year career through which he has continually shown tremendous financial support for BC projects. Barbara is stepping down as chair of the Bennion Center board as she and Kent prepare to leave in July for Switzerland. There, Kent will be the new President of the Switzerland, Geneva Mission for the LDS Church.

The Bennion Center extends sincere gratitude and thanks to Barbara for her tireless service as the board chair and for her outstanding commitment of over seven years on the board. She has given so much of herself to the center and has tremendously raised the standard for success and connection here.

The board warmly welcomes Kathryn Lindquist as the new chair and Zeke Dumke as the chair-elect. Sheila Walsh-McDonald will spearhead the community partners’ piece, Phil Clinger will direct development, Kim Paulding will oversee alumni relations, and Karen Hale will focus on nominations for new board members.

By Linda Dunn

The Campus AIDS Project is one of the Bennion Center’s student-directed programs. Campus AIDS provides education and awareness of HIV/AIDS and related issues as a service to the Salt Lake City Community; it also seeks to provide compassion and support to those living with HIV/AIDS in the area.

Last year, as the Social Justice Coordinator, I helped the director of the Utah AIDS Foundation with World AIDS Week. I created the idea to sell red ribbon cut-outs on campus. When I became Director for Campus AIDS, I decided to involve the whole SLC community.

By Candelario Saldana

In 1992 a coalition of departments and campus organizations met and organized service projects throughout the year to better unify the campus community.

This coalition, the University Service Corps (USC), completed meaningful service activities, shared information about the community, and increased the diversity of people on campus engaged in service. The USC also fostered collaboration and communication across campus. Unfortunately, the organization became inactive around 2004.

This year, on March 12, 17 individuals representing 13 U of U departments and organizations assembled with the goal of re-energizing the USC. The representatives organized a kick-off event, the Marrow Donor Registration Drive, to bolster their commitment. The drive took place March 24 through 26 and resulted in more than 350 new additions to the National Marrow Donor Program’s registry.

Five more departments have since joined the USC. Events the group will support in the upcoming academic year include the Legacy of Lowell, the Blood Drive, the Food Drive, Rock the U, Project Youth, and others to be decided.

By Christy Tobolski
Last fall I made an offer: I was willing to create a history based on the Bennion Center's first 20 years - if it would be useful in planning the center's future. I offered in the spirit of service that undergirds the Bennion Center with the knowledge that I, too, would benefit from this reflective project.

Linda Dunn accepted my offer and suggested that it be a group effort so several of us could participate and learn together. That process has been unfolding since September and will result in a completed document by May.

To start, a representative group of students, faculty, community partners, alumni, and staff “advisors” met and identified themes that would be traced throughout the center’s existence. Each section would include a basic narrative, a personal perspective, lessons learned, and unresolved questions. Thus, the document would not be a comprehensive history but a useful planning tool.

To share your interest in and ideas for this project, contact Irene at ifisher@xmission.com, or Christy at ctobolski@sa.utah.edu.

By Irene Fisher

Bennion Center Documents Its History

Irene Fisher, Founding Director of the Bennion Center

one final time this month to identify and clarify the lessons learned and unresolved questions. Our hope is that the document can truly serve as a tool for present and future Bennion Center leaders, and that the information can be presented in various media.

By Irene Fisher

Bennion Center Staff

Linda P. Dunn • Director
Mary Draper • Development Consultant
Jenni Galloway • Office Assistant
Elsa Gustavson • America Reads Coordinator
Deberah Hair • Administrative Assistant
Matthew Ireland • Office Volunteer
JaNae Lilly • Service-Learning Coordinator
Katie Olson • Assistant Director/Service-Learning Manager
Tara Poelzing • Bend-in-the-River Coordinator
Gina Russo • Assistant Director/Student Programs Manager
Brent Spencer • Student Programs Coordinator
Christy Tobolski • Public Relations Coordinator

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Apr. 15 Application Deadline for Morgan Fellowship
17 EarthFest Bennion Service House • 9:00-1:30pm
17 Donor/Mentor Leadership Forum Salt Lake City and County Building • 4-6pm
17 Reflection Gallery Reception Salt Lake City and County Building • 6-8pm
18 Earth Day Planting and Celebration at the Bend Bend-in-the-River • 8:30-12:00pm
23 Service-Learning Scholars Banquet U of U Alumni House • 6:30-8:30pm

May 8 Graduation Open House Bennion Center • 12-2pm
10-17 International Service Trip to Mexico

Aug. 31-Sep. 4, Bleed Red Blood Drive Union Building

Sep. 11-14 Student Summer Training
15 Service House Dialogue Bennion Service House
16 Bennion Hinckley Forum Hinckley Caucus Room
19 Legacy of Lowell Parkview Elementary • 8am-12pm
22 Hunger Banquet Union Building Saltair Room • 6-8pm

Oct. 13 Service House Dialogue Bennion Service House
14 Bennion Hinckley Forum Hinckley Caucus Room
17 Saturday Service Project