FEATURE STORIES:
DEAN’S CORNER .................................. INSIDE COVER
ALUMNI PROFILE: HOWARD NIRKEN .......... INSIDE COVER
ALUMNI PROFILE: BIANCA FLORES .......... INSIDE COVER
ALUMNI FEATURE: VERONICA STIDVENT ...... PAGE 1
2008-09 DDG ALUMNI .......................... PAGES 2-3
DDG ALUMNI, 1980 TO PRESENT ............ PAGES 4-5
Greetings from the Dean’s Office in the College of Liberal Arts!

As a Dean’s Distinguished Graduate, your career at UT Austin was both productive and rewarding; and the skills and drive that led you to be a DDG have no doubt contributed to great success in your professional career. We know that we can take great pride in being able to call you one of our own.

In an effort to reconnect with you, the college has recently created the DDG Alumni Association. Although we plan to work with the alumni association in numerous ways, one of the first efforts is the newsletter you are now holding. In it you will find information about the most recent class of DDG awardees, profiles of several DDG alumni, and a historical list of DDG graduates.

We hope you will find the newsletter enjoyable and informative. If you have thoughts for future newsletters or would like to get involved in the association in other ways, please let us know. I look forward to this renewed relationship and hope to see you on the Forty Acres soon.

Sincerely,
Randy L. Diehl, Dean
David Bruton Jr., Regents’ Chair in Liberal Arts

ALUMNI PROFILES

Howard Nirken, Class of 1993
Attorney and Partner
DuBois, Bryant, Campbell, LLP
Austin, Texas

Who or what was the biggest influence on your career?
Following my clerkship, I was very fortunate to work with a group of Austin lawyers who are all widely respected in their respective fields of law. They showed me how to practice law with honor and integrity and cared enough about me both from a personal and professional standpoint to train me in a manner that I hope emulates their careers.

What’s the best advice you didn’t take?
I was told early on in my career that the practice of law is a marathon and not a sprint. As I started my career I did not appreciate, as I do today, the importance of experience.

What kinds of life or personal experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for someone pursuing a career in this field?
My advice to students beginning a career in law would be as follows: do a clerkship for a judge, take on pro bono clients that make you appreciate the skills for which you are trained, do community service that keeps you balanced outside the practice of law.

What advice do you have for recent DDGs?
Find a way to stay involved with the university as it is important to continue supporting the institution that provided you the opportunity to be successful. Find a career that challenges you and surround yourself with colleagues that either make you better or possess skills that you may inherently lack.

Bianca Flores, Class of 2003
Chronic Disease Program Manager
People’s Community Clinic
Austin, Texas

Who or what was the biggest influence on your career?
My patients and their stories have influenced me greatly. To this day, their stories push me to act as an advocate for their health and well-being, especially among Spanish-speakers.

What’s the best advice you didn’t take?
I was told early on in my career that the practice of law is a marathon and not a sprint. As I started my career I did not appreciate, as I do today, the importance of experience.

What kinds of life or personal experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for someone pursuing a career in this field?
My advice to students beginning a career in law would be as follows: do a clerkship for a judge, take on pro bono clients that make you appreciate the skills for which you are trained, do community service that keeps you balanced outside the practice of law.

Why did you decide to attend UT Austin?
Growing up in San Antonio, at first I wanted to go out of state, but couldn’t afford it. The only other place in Texas I could see myself living was Austin. Later, I realized that Texas was home, and I was more fulfilled serving my community in Texas.

What advice do you have for recent DDGs?
Let your interests and passions guide your path, whether academic or career. Trust yourself and your abilities.
Veronica V Stidvent, Class of 1998
Director, Lyndon B Johnson School of Public Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin

A native of El Paso, Stidvent received her B.A. in Plan II and American Studies from The University of Texas at Austin. After earning her law degree at Yale, she served as a judicial clerk for the Honorable Sidney Fitzwater, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas. She served on the University of Texas at Austin’s Commission of 125 and worked as a policy advisor in the White House under the Bush administration. She was also honored by the National Association of Hispanic Publishers as a Latina Role Model.

Why did you decide to attend UT Austin?
For me it was the perfect blend of a small college experience, which was Plan II, at a large research university. UT Austin had all the benefits, assets, diversity, people, and all the experiences that attending a large university might have to offer.

As a recent high school graduate, what was the transition from El Paso to Austin and UT Austin like?
Coming from El Paso, there were a lot of people I knew from high school so that made it easier. But being away from home for the first time is a very different experience, as many freshmen can tell you. It can be jarring, and trying to find your own way is a challenge.

Was there a professor who made a significant impact on your life?
Larry Carver was my freshman literature professor in the Plan II program and I think it is safe to say he had a significant impact on quite a few of us in that class. He was always pushing us to think outside the box, challenge our assumptions, and to think for ourselves and try to imagine a different future for ourselves. I always look back on him as a very important mentor.

In what ways did UT Austin prepare you for law school at Yale?
The education I received here was top notch and really second to none. Going to Yale Law School, I felt well prepared in terms of my reading, writing, and critical analysis skills. I thought UT Austin also prepared me to navigate unfamiliar situations and interact with different types of people.

“\textit{I think that sometimes getting off your set plan is the best thing that can happen to you}.”

Why did you decide to work in politics, in particular, policy and regulation?
When I went to law school, my plan was always to be a litigator and come back to Texas and practice law for the rest of my life and try cases in front of juries. Recently somebody told me that the most important question that a student can ask of anyone coming to speak is, “how did you get from here to there and is it what you expected?” and the answer will always be no. The truth of the matter is things happen by accident and luck, and I have been fortunate to have a lot of good luck and happy accidents. So the answer to the question is that I was open to changes in my plan and willing to accept serendipity.

What lesson did you learn from working at the White House that you keep with you today?
Maintain your humility. There will always be people who are incredibly talented, hard-working, smarter, and more driven than you, so it is important to always keep that in mind. Maintain that perspective because you only occupy a space and time for just a moment.

What do you think is your most important accomplishment?
I’m really happy being a mom. I’m very fortunate to have worked at the White House and to have had some incredible professional opportunities, but at the end of the day I am most proud of my two daughters (and we have another baby on the way).

As a full-time working mom, is there any advice you have for working parents who are trying to balance work and family?
It is important to maintain priorities at all times and try to go from there. Be kind to yourself and learn to improvise.

What kind of experience would be most important for securing a career like yours in government service?
I would have to say a liberal arts education because it teaches you to keep learning, think critically, and analyze and process information. You have to be able to adapt. I didn’t go into government with any particular background in administrative law or a specific policy area, but being able to learn helped me obtain the different positions that I have held.

You have been listed as a Latina Role Model by the National Association of Hispanic Publishers. What do you believe makes a good role model?
A good role model tries to do what is right and in doing that, sets an example for others trying to follow the same path.

Do you have any words of wisdom for our most recent graduates?
Graduating at this particular time with this economy can be discouraging so my advice would be to keep an open mind to new experiences, ideas, and challenges. I think that sometimes getting off your set plan is the best thing that can happen to you.
Isla Flores-Bayer
Isla has interests in linguistics, Spanish, political science, law, business, and the arts. She has studied in Portugal, Mexico, and Washington, D.C., and speaks Spanish, German, Latin, and Portuguese. Internships with the Texas State Legislature and the U.S. Congress and years of community service have earned Isla nationwide recognition. Isla is pursuing her Ph.D. in Linguistics at Stanford University.

Mazen Said Elfakhani
Making sense of diverse cultures cultivated Mazen’s interest in sociology. His honors thesis explains the rise of religious non-affiliation in the U.S. and won the Southern Demographic Association’s undergraduate paper award. He also founded Sociological Insight, the national undergraduate research journal. Mazen is pursuing a Ph.D. in sociology and social policy.

Elizabeth (Lizzy) Dupont
Lizzy came to UT Austin as a pre-med student. She found her niche in LGBTQ activism on campus and became an advocate for issues of diversity and social justice. After studying in Mali, she started the Mali Signs Project for deaf students, which is now sponsored by the Clinton Global Initiative. Lizzy joined the Peace Corps in West Africa to make health education more accessible.

Daniel Ian Dawer
During his time at UT Austin, Daniel traveled to Dublin, Ireland, to conduct research for his thesis on urban geography in James Joyce’s Ulysses. He also taught English for two summers with the Breakthrough Collaborative in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and tutored and mentored students at KIPP, a local charter school. Daniel is now pursuing a master of arts in teaching.

Travis Cosban
Travis recently spent six months studying abroad in Mexico, where he completed advanced coursework at the city’s largest medical school while working at the public hospital as a full-time medical intern. He also worked at Camp John Marc, a camp for children with terminal and chronic illnesses.

Hannah Corey Bloch-Wehba
While at the university, Hannah served as the editor of the university literary magazine, taught English and math in Mumbai, and developed a tutoring program at KIPP, a local charter school. She completed her thesis on post-Cold War executive war powers. Hannah is now studying international relations in Germany.

DID YOU KNOW...

2008-2009

THERE WERE ONLY 11 DDGS THE FIRST YEAR THE AWARD WAS GIVEN.

95% OF DDGS WENT ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL AFTER GRADUATING FROM UT AUSTIN*

35% OF DDGS WENT TO LAW SCHOOL AFTER GRADUATING FROM UT AUSTIN*

95% OF DDGS WENT ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL AFTER GRADUATING FROM UT AUSTIN*

35% OF DDGS WENT TO LAW SCHOOL AFTER GRADUATING FROM UT AUSTIN*
Anjali Pavarti Mohan

Anjali was president of the Orange Jackets and involved in Longhorns Speak, Texas Union Events Co-Sponsorship Committee, and Best Buddies. She has worked on social justice issues in Texas, Nicaragua, and Argentina. Anjali plans to attend law school.

DID YOU KNOW...

Austin Wright

Austin’s research has been published on topics ranging from bacterial epidemics to Taiwanese and Macedonian politics. He has won several awards for his work on terrorism, including a Rapoport-King Fellowship, a George H. Mitchell Award, and the William Jennings Bryan Prize in Government for Best Thesis of the Year. Austin is now a Teach of America corps member.

Tabitha Angela Spence

While at UT Austin, Tabitha earned a certificate in international studies through the Bridging Disciplines Program. She was a McNair Scholar and part of the Intellectual Entrepreneurship Program. Tabitha has now begun graduate study at the University of Arizona in Geography, focusing on wastewater reclamation in Mexico and Ethiopia.

THERE HAVE BEEN 357 DDGS
41% OF THE DDGS ARE MALE

THIS YEAR IS THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEAN’S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE AWARDS

34% OF DDGS WERE ENGLISH MAJORS

Dhananjay Jagannathan

Dhananjay was born in India and lived in Jamaica before coming to the United States at the age of nine. Fascinated by ancient Greek literature and philosophy, he is also a passionate advocate for education reform. He is now attending Oxford University as a Marshall Scholar.

Historical Note:

*Statistics based on surveys that were distributed in Spring 2009
1979-80
Janis Ann Goodman Cynthia Keen
Gordon K. Macdowell II John Mark Metts
William Blake Rodriguez Steven McConnell Smith
Claire Webber

1980-81
Janet Bauerle Michelle Brock
Jay Neeley Gribble Steven Michael Polunsky
Kathryn Jane Tullos

1981-82
Carolyn Elizabeth Bone Robert Bryan Haymon
Amy Ruth Johnson Elizabeth M. Martinez
Cheryl Ann McManus Darren Charles Walker

1982-83
Howard Bruce Baum Rebecca Teresa Cabaza
David Scott Goldstein Bruce Marvin Levingston
David Lynn Phillips Roger Worthington

1983-84
Denis R. Abend Mary Patricia Crass
Anne Louise Meneghetti Leah Therese Orsak
Steven Mitchell Rudner Julie Ann Unruh

1984-85
John Thomas Braun Sarah Lynn Guyton
Julie Aileen Mack Mark Barr McClellan
Gregory Wilson Powers Tommy Lee Tompkins

1985-86
Lisa Ann Brown Angela Stephanie Cotera
Laura Elizabeth Fisher Susan Jane Jeter
Elizabeth Rose Mata Michael Jordan Segal

1986-87
Ethel Shannon Barker Carmen Irena Garcia
Christine Goldfinch Moore Karen Ann Parker
Richard Edward Sotinowski Paul Robert Tobias

1987-88
Dana Leigh Bedichek Chen Michael Lee Cohen
Katie Ann Hite Kimberly Elizabeth Monday
Carole Lynn Patterson Randi Karen Shade

1988-89
Jocelyn Louise Flores del Carmen Stephanie Lynn Koury
Suzanna Kay Minn John-Christopher Rozendaal
Kristen Ann Stilt David Lavelle Thomas

1989-90
Michael Gordon Appleman Paula Mary Bilstein
Gail Felice Levine Teri Ann Pinney
Francisco Ramon “Tito” Rodriguez W. Courtland Stroud

1990-91
Liza Ann Bonin Darrin Duwayne King
Jennifer Lynn Melville Dale Edward West

1991-92
Jennifer Ann Bradley Garth Philip Davis
Lara Michelle Johnson Damon George Munchus
Damon Michael Rodi

1992-93
Katherine Lynn Arris John Steven Farr
Paul Liwah Leong Howard Daniel Niren
Robin Marie Richards

1993-94
Steven Williams Bartels Doris Fu-Ping Chang
Lisa Eyvonne Epifani Jaitra “Jay” VedantaMurthy
Kavita Krishnakant Patel Anne Chandler Telle

1994-95
Corinne Deurdulian Ashley Montgomery Johnson
Camille Campbell Purvis Emily Anna Schunior
David Marc “Wille” Wilkov
Julie Grace Zelman

DEAN’S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES
1980 - 1995
DEAN’S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES
1996 - 2009

1995-96
Mark Alan Adkins
Jessica Ann Bradbury
Mihnea Dumitrescu
Kanchan Ramesh Limaye
Paul Bryan Massingill
Robert Lawrence Rogers
Georgiana Marie Barton
Glenn Otis Brown III
Mushtaq Asagar Kapasi
Christopher Ronald Lippincott
Jennifer Leigh Monday
Veronica Marie Vargas

1996-97
Indira Marie Allick
Lisa Carrie Brown
Marcus Rene Escobedo
Lindsay Blythe Goodman
Elin Elizabeth Klach
Leigh Leslie Linden
Shelbi Lee Barnhouse
L. Michelle Dhanjishah
Brian Franklin Feld
Misha Fatima Haque
Edward Lewis “Ted” Lain
Jeffrey Eewu Tsai

1997-98
Heidi Katrina Baker
Christian Albert Garza
Linda Cummings Grant
Mark Aaron Levy
Katherine Janice Murray
Zachary C. Richter
Marc Edmond Faletti
Karen Christine Gonzalez
Tania Marie Krebs
Denise Yvette Margo
Monica Maria Parle
Marlen Duanne Whitley

1998-99
Emily Jean Boon
Angelica Denise Chaison
John Robert Junorville Jr.
Amanda Loraine Matthews
Lubna Maria Nabi
Mariela Olivares
Mariani Vishnevetsky
Sean Michael Braswell
Vaishali Arun Jadhav
Corey Elizabeth Leahy
Parag Vijay Mehta
Paul Arthur Navratil
Tara Leigh Spires

1999-2000
Sundeep K. “Rob” Addy
Tannon Dajuan Carroll
Elizabeth Maria Hijar
David Harold Michaelsen
Eric Christopher Opiela
Adrian Joseph Rodriguez
Nina Bhatia
Sabrina Marie Fiesel
Aurora Ann Lora
Mary Carmel Murphy
Atisha Girish Patel
Deepa Varadarajan

2000-01
Adan David Briones
Tuyet “Twiggy” Giang Duong
Sara Cecilia Galvan
Cameron Thomas Morgan
Brian Kenneth Moulton
Daron Kirt Roberts
Paul Benjamin Domjan
Parisa Fatehi
Randi Leigh Graham
David Sung Moss
Heather Lea Neumann
Krissah Shanay Williams

2001-02
Connie Renee Anderson
Sara Cervantes
Andrew Friedberg
Kimberly Hill
Angela Sasser Wolf
Colleen Thompson
Jennifer Cabrera
E. Graham Davis
Richa Gulati
Keith Rainwater
Natasha Solce
Jack B. Tannous

2002-03
Sarah Beth L. Boothe
Blanca L. Flores
Beth Halpern
Michael Milner Hoffman
Choquette M. Peterson
Mollie F. Sultenfuss
Alexandra Chirinos
Justin Glasson
Stephanie Hays
Katheryne Ruth Mardock
Trevor Rosen
Travis Vandergriff

2003-04
Ian Turner Brown
Gautam Ganeshan
Ruth Lopez
Jeffrey Ridenour
Tamika Stevenson
Karla Vargas
Ryan Copus
Jennifer Job
Geeti Mahajan
James Scott
Sarah Tierney
Esther Wang

2004-05
Ann Boehnke
Eva Garrett
Amber Holloway
Lauren Lien
Randall McDonald
Rebecca Teng
William Bridges
Melisa Gerecci
Vincent Kuo
David Mandel-Anthony
Courtney Morris
Julie Wimmer

2005-06
Claire Altman
Elizabeth Brummett
Lauren Gray Gilstrap
Ashley Gosselin-Idari
Tatiana Neumann
Itzel Suarez
Kan Yan
William Bibe
Marlena Del Hierro
Santos Gonzalez
Fatima Khan
Rebekah Perry
Jacob Ward

2006-07
Andrea Bachhuber-Beam
Michael Buhrmester
Manasi Deshpande
Sara Hakeem
Samuel Reid Long
Annalee Sweet
Adrian Bermudez
Alyson Curtis
Lydia Eckhoff
Robert Henderson
Michelle Robinson
Tanvir Vahora

2007-08
William Peoples Bacon
Ishan Chakrabarti
Miriam Rosa Estrin
Tarak Narendra Makecha
Christine Olivia Nguyen
Christina M. Skelton
Megan Merree Campbell
Serine Rami Consolino
Stephen S. Gilstrap
Jennifer Lynn Nation
Jason Ronald Orne
Michelle Renee Ty

2008-09
Hannah Corey Bloch-Wehba
Daniel Ian Dawer
Mazen Said Elfakhani
Dhananjay Jagannathan
Anjali Parvati Mohan
Tabitha Angela Spence
Travis Michael Cosban
Elizabeth Lynn Dupont
Isla Kristina Flores-Bayer
Vijay George John
Ari Nicholas Schuman
Austin Lee Wright
We Change People. They Change The World.

The Campaign for Texas

For additional information and how to give please visit: www.utexas.edu/cola/alumni-and-giving/the-campaign-for-texas.php