



Interdisciplinary Studies Spring '19 Newsletter

Director's Notes



Dr. Wayne Bowen
Program Director

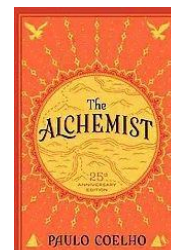
In the international bestselling novel *The Alchemist*, the title character

comments to the shepherd boy Santiago: "When a person really desires something, all the universe conspires to help that person realize his dream." As much as I enjoyed this fable, written by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, I'll admit to a strong disagreement with this particular line. Indeed, even Santiago, in his search for treasure, finds his way blocked by events and individuals. To use a more contemporary example, consider the competitors on the reality series, *American Ninja Warrior*, a current favorite in my house. The athletes who aim to conquer Mount Midoriyama, an obstacle course in Las Vegas, place their hopes, dreams, and lives into the goal of becoming the next American Ninja Warrior. Each week, the hosts profile the contestants, many of whom leave jobs or school to train fulltime for months, even years, to qualify. One moved into a van, others accepted a succession of menial

jobs so they can quit whenever the next competition calls, and others abandon successful careers to compete. Despite these herculean efforts, great sacrifices, and obvious stamina and dexterity, nearly all of them fail, often on the first few obstacles in preliminary rounds. I don't believe most would feel as if "the universe" was on their team.

And yet, this notion presented by *The Alchemist* seems right. We hear from our families that "we can accomplish anything if we just work hard enough" and "if you have a dream, you should go for it." Even so, we run into obstacles that make what we really desire impossible. At UCF, these obstacles can come in the form of grades: a D in Organic Chemistry for a pre-med student, or a GPA that falls below a 2.75 in the major for a Management student. In addition to these negative digressions from a dream, students also encounter positive divergences. What should a Physics major do if she suddenly realizes that she adores her Spanish class most of all, and finds it interesting, but not exciting? Or what if a secondary education major realizes he is interested in many things, and perhaps doesn't enjoy being around high school students? What about a student who gets sick in the middle of the semester and has to ask for a medical withdrawal? Do any of these cases make it seem as if that the "universe" is conspiring to help?

If what we experience is not a universal conspiracy of help, but a universal conspiracy of obstacles, what would *The Alchemist* say? If my 2.1 in math makes it clear that I will never be a petroleum engineer, does that mean the world is against me, and the opposite is true? Please do ask Coelho if you have a chance to meet him, but perhaps the deeper meaning behind this book is that we may not always know from the beginning what our true passion and true purpose is. Mere desire for something is not enough, and even desire manifested through hard work many times will not be enough for truly challenging dreams. That does not invalidate the dream in general, but should make us rethink of what the core of the dream consists. (Continued on page 2)



FAST FACTS:

- ✓ IDS enrollment is up 9.9% in declared majors, from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018
- ✓ The IDS BS major is the 7th most popular degree program at UCF and moved up to the #7 spot from last year's #10 on the "Top 15" degrees conferred at UCF.
- ✓ IDS graduations are up 8% from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018.
- ✓ IDS BA at UCF named by [Best Colleges.com](http://BestColleges.com) as the #1 online liberal arts degree program.



Interdisciplinary Studies

Director's Notes

(Continued from page 1)

When during high school I wanted to be a petroleum engineer, reflecting back the motivation for this was my expectation that this would enable me to travel the world, engage in the Middle East, learn foreign languages, and make a difference in a vital industry.

I never took an engineering course, instead switching to history during my first year at the University of Southern California. During my sophomore year, a faculty member encouraged me to consider getting a Ph.D. in European history, so I could travel the world, learn foreign languages, and make a difference in a vital industry. This became my new dream, and along the way, I have visited and written about the Middle East.

So my encouragement to you is not to despair if, like a contestant in *American Ninja Warrior*, you fall into a water obstacle 30 seconds into the competition. Get up, dry yourself off, and consider how *The Alchemist* might be right. Maybe falling off the rope challenge and into the water was the universe conspiring to tell you that you will never conquer Mount Midoriyama, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't dream, and couple your dreams with work. Consider, as I did, what you want to do – not necessarily narrowed to a specific job, but more of an approach to life. Do you want to work indoors or outside? On a team or primarily alone? Managing people or directing resources? Within an existing company or through starting your own?

Most importantly, I would suggest proceeding with the assumption that the universe is neither friend nor foe. Not everything will happen just because you want it to, but sometimes it will. Persist in the face of adversity, but recognize that sometimes no amount of persistence will enable you to become an *American Ninja Warrior*, or me to become a petroleum engineer. That doesn't mean there isn't something at the heart of these desires that is essential to our personal journeys---there is something there, and it's or ability to be resurrect that dream in some other form, academically or professionally.

Even though I found it frustrating at times, finally let me encourage you to read *The Alchemist*. It is an easy book to enjoy and finish quickly, but it might just stay with you as a way to think about your life journey, dreams, and goals. Who knows? Maybe this is the universe sidling up to you to say "I'm on your side; you just have to read this book to know what to do."

Sincerely,

Dr. Wayne H. Bowen

Interdisciplinary Studies Spotlight

IDS graduate Deshani Semaan recently sat down to talk with her former IDS instructor about her experience in Interdisciplinary Studies and life since her 2017 graduation. She said she has always learned best when actively engaged in a class, and that her change in majors to IDS from biology was carefully thought out. She said that it was a friend who told her about Interdisciplinary Studies. "It's not that I don't like biology, I still am fascinated by it and I chose biology because I wanted to be a veterinarian." At some point, though, she said she realized it wasn't the right fit. "I took the summer in 2016 to explore what I was interested in and did a few internships in social media and web design to see if that was a viable career option." After one semester in sociology, she changed her major to interdisciplinary studies. "What motivates me is the idea that I can in some way help increase representation in the media for underrepresented populations. There's a difference between including minorities and portraying them accurately," she said. Born in Sri Lanka, Deshani grew up in Bahrain and then moved to Florida with her family. She said she discovered IDS and felt that it was an ideal program because helped her to make connections between the two areas that are near and dear to her heart: sociology and communication.

Her experience growing up in different regions of the world, being part of different cultures, and speaking different languages, all contributed having the interdisciplinary practice of perspective-taking come naturally to her. She said that learning the formal methodology that is part of the interdisciplinary process helped to solidify her choice to major in IDS, and helped her to discover the issue of minority representation in the media, an issue she is passionate about. "Minority representation in the media is a complex and multifaceted issue that really can't be addressed by one discipline, so IDS was the perfect fit for me." Studying sociology has helped her address the issue on a societal level, and communication helped her analyze the issue on multiple other levels while learning everything involved with creating media messages.

Deshani works in UCF's Division of Teaching and Learning as a multimedia assistant, a job she said provides her the opportunity to do a variety of work that requires her to apply her interdisciplinary skills. She said that one day she is photographing students or interviewing faculty, and the next day she's writing or working on communication projects for the new Pegasus Path campus-wide project. Wherever her professional life takes her, she says she knows her decision to change to IDS was the best one she has made, one that put her on the path to a career she loves.



Photo by Amanda Pham. From left to right: Elizabeth Guerrero, Laura Ling, and Deshani Semaan, from an event last year where [Laura Ling](#) spoke about what happened to her in North Korea and her life since then.



From left to right: Deshani Semaan, Amanda Cramer, Mark Bennett, and Danielle Hutson, all from the College of Undergraduate Studies.

Meet the Dean

College of Undergraduate Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies Program



Dr. Melody Bowdon,
Interim Dean for the
College of
Undergraduate
Studies

In the past few years, the College of Undergraduate Studies has accomplished a great deal and has become partners with colleges and divisions across UCF. As a highly respected team recognized for our expertise and passion for student success, we were proud to see Dr. Dooley, our former dean, assume a new role as UCF's provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. Late in the Fall '18 semester, we welcomed Dr. Melody Bowdon to the position of interim dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies and interim vice-provost of Teaching and Learning. In addition, she continues to serve as associate vice-provost for Academic Innovation and Faculty Initiatives for the Division of Teaching and Learning, and associate dean for the College of Undergraduate Studies.

Elizabeth A. Dooley, Ed.D., serves as the University of Central Florida's provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. She is UCF's chief academic officer, providing leadership for 13 colleges, including a college of medicine, along with multiple campuses, research centers, and institutes. Her responsibilities include curriculum, faculty development, academic support services, student services, and oversight of UCF's \$1.8 billion operating budget. Prior to becoming provost in October 2018, she served as UCF's interim provost, vice provost for the Division of Teaching and Learning and dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies, where her role included oversight of curriculum, academic planning, faculty appointments, faculty development, promotion and tenure decisions.



Dr. Elizabeth Dooley,
Provost and Vice
President for
Academic Affairs



College of Undergraduate Studies

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



College of Undergraduate Studies

Interdisciplinary Studies & Environmental Studies Majors

Join us for “Meet the Dean”

DATE: Wednesday, January 16, 2019

TIME: 11:30AM – 1:00 PM

LOCATION: Student Union, Room 218CD

- Meet Dr. Melody Bowdon, Interim Dean, College of Undergraduate Studies
- Engage with leaders from community, environmental, health care, and educational non-profits:
 - Justin Miller, Astronaut Scholarship Foundation
 - Massiel Hernandez, Hispanic Family Counseling
 - Wes Meltzer, Westminster Communities of Florida
 - Sharon Hammond, Local Roots: All Florida All Year
- Learn about non-profit career opportunities

Lunch will be provided

RSVP at <https://www.facebook.com/events/2284065548536338/>

Interdisciplinary Studies

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Interdisciplinary Studies News

Led by Environmental Studies majors, Cristina Rivera and Angela Ferebee, several students have been working on a campaign to make UCF a Fair-Trade designated university. Fair Trade is an initiative that “seeks to enable economic development through equitable trading partnerships [by ensuring] consumers that the products they purchase were grown, harvested, crafted, and traded in ways that improve lives and protect the environment.” (Fair Trade Campaigns). Becoming a Fair Trade-designated university would illustrate our commitment at UCF to being responsible Global citizens and consumers.

In order to raise awareness on campus about what Fair Trade is and about our Fair Trade Campaign on campus, several students have been partnering with Aramark (the supplier of most food and beverages on campus) to move this campaign forward. You may have seen them tabling in front of 63 South or the Student Union, or you may have seen them presenting Their work at the Service-Learning Showcase.



Sean Adams and Emily Beira tabled in front of 63 South on UCF's main campus.



Nicole Kraemer and Emely Beira presented at the Service-Learning Showcase.

One of our Environmental Studies majors was recognized for her work with the community at this semester's Service-Learning Showcase. Lindsey Mears won the STEM Recognition award for her volunteer work with the Seminole County Restoration and Volunteer (SERV) program. SERV allows volunteers to work with local biologists to identify and attempt to correct water quality issues in Seminole County. They begin by identifying freshwater sources in poor health, and take steps to help restore these ecosystems. By removing invasive aquatic plants and re-vegetating empty shorelines with native plants, they restore the systems natural filtration systems, remove excess nutrients from the water, help prevent land erosion, and provide food and habitat for wildlife.

Lindsey has been volunteering with SERV for six years and has participated in the re-vegetation of approximately 36 freshwater shorelines and the removal of thousands of invasive aquatic plants.



Lindsey Mears' winning poster presentation at the Service Learning showcase. As a result of Lindsey's and other volunteers' efforts, recent lake indices and assessments of these revegetated lakes are continuing to show improvement in water quality and overall health. Lindsey said that participating in a program like SERV helps to build self-efficacy, reinforcing the belief that *"one person CAN make a difference!"*

Interdisciplinary Studies Spring '19

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	January 14	15	16 Meet the Dean Lunch in Key West Ballroom Rm. 218 11am- 12:30pm	17	18	19
20	21 Martin Luther King Day (no classes)	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	February 1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	March 1	2

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Join the Interdisciplinary Studies Student Society! Visit them on Facebook at Interdisciplinary Studies Student Society @IDS.Society.UCF

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