In May 2019, the University of Arizona MDP Program completed its 7th full year and its 5th within the School of Geography and Development (SGD) in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). The program had 23 enrolled students, of whom 11 graduated, bringing the total number of Arizona MDP alumni to 55.

The program offered 8 courses in development practice, supported the analysis of outcomes from 12 summer field practicum projects among second-year students, and launched 11 first-year students into their 2019 summer practicums.


This Annual Report provides details on the activity of the Arizona MDP program in academic year 2018-2019, and includes numerous live links to the MDP website. Brief articles cover community engagement, faculty activities, special events, curriculum, and alumni relations. The PDF version of this report can also be found at https://geography.arizona.edu/mdp-news.
This academic year, eleven students were awarded the MDP degree, having completed at least 48 credits of graduate work, including an intensive field practicum.

The links below will bring you to each student’s MDP profile, as well as posters about their practicum projects.

More about their work can also be read on the MDP Blog.

Deborah Dimmett: “Cruel and Unusual: Incarcerated in the Haitian National Penitentiary”

Amanda Hixson: “The Missing Piece of World Food Program’s Strategic Plan: Cambodia as Illustration of WFP’s Need to Lead and Collaborate in Addressing the World Obesity Epidemic” Practicum partner: TANGO International and the World Food Program (WFP)

Anna Jackson: “Benefits and Barriers to Sustainable Land Management: Farmer Perceptions in Western Kenya” Practicum partner: International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)

Philana A. Jeremiah: “Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Environmental Sustainability in Eleuthera, Bahamas” Practicum partner: One Eleuthera Foundation, and Bahamas Plastics Movement


Denisse Ortega Lorona: “The Development Impacts of Fair Trade: Empalme Valley, Sonora, Mexico” Practicum partner: Covilli Brand Organics

Michelle Schatz: “The Role of Housing Partnerships in Refugee Resettlement” Practicum partner: International Rescue Committee (Arizona)

Joseph Stewart: “Small-scale Aquaculture in Sierra Leone, West Africa” Practicum partner: WorldFish

Sandra Wiebe: “The Integration of More Plant-based Foods in our Diet: Reformulating our Assumptions about Consumption” Practicum partner: Human Society of America

Kelli Williams: “Climate Change Resilience among the Maasai of Narok, Kenya” Practicum partner: Maasai Education, Research and Conservation Center (MERC)
FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

In fall 2018, eleven new students enrolled in the MDP program. They draw upon a wide variety of experiences, including Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Fulbright fellowships, and other academic and professional work throughout the US and abroad. In May 2019, the first-year students launched their MDP practicums. Practicum topics and locations of first-year and other continuing students are also listed below. The links below connect to their profiles on the MDP website.

Avery Julian Baker: Climate change in high-altitude agriculture, Nepal

Natalia Cachora: Environmental justice, Fort Yuma Indian Reservation

Abbey Eversole Fluckiger: Navigating food insecurity, Southern Arizona

Robert Hartwell: Vocational training for out-of-school youth, Kenya

Amata Inshuti: Resilience among smallholder farmers, Burkina Faso and Niger

Laura McCann: High quality affordable housing, Southern Arizona

Paul Maynard: Land tenure and property rights, Timor-Leste

Jake Meyers: Sociocultural aspects of climate change adaptation, Kenya

Mary Ngugi: Improving refugee livelihoods and economic inclusion, Malaysia

Abdul Sigal: Sustainable land management practices, Ethiopia

Samantha Turner: Social determinants of health, Southern Arizona

Continuing student Chris Mazzarella: Community food banking, Southern Arizona

HISTORY OF THE UA MDP

Founded in 2012, we are part of a Global Association of Master’s in Development Practice (MDP) programs (8 in the US, and another 28 world-wide).

These MDP programs emerged from a year-long commission led by the Earth Institute at Columbia University in 2007, with support from the MacArthur Foundation. The commission aimed to reimagine sustainable development practice for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

By combining the insights of the social, natural, and health sciences with essential management skills, these MDP programs are preparing a new generation of development practitioners.

The UA program was co-founded and initially led by Prof. Tim Finan and has been directed since 2016 by Prof. Katherine Snyder.
STUDENT AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Six students in 2018-2019 received the competitive Coverdell Fellowships for returned Peace Corps volunteers. Read more...

Five students were awarded grants for research relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through a program administered by SGD Chair Prof. Diana Liverman. Read more...

MDP students also received travel and research awards from the UA Graduate and Professional Student Center (GPSC).

“The MDP program at UA prepared me very well to have the multidimensional knowledge and skill that I apply daily to my work. This is just the beginning of my long journey in development practice. I owe it to the UA and my professors.” — Daniel Kebede (MDP 2016), ChildFund International, Washington DC

LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

MDP Coverdell Fellows extended the spirit of their prior service in the Peace Corps served as Outreach Assistants with organizations including Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona, the federal Department of Labor, and Tucson public schools.

Several students worked with the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona as employees and interns. Read more...

MDP students also engaged with agencies including the International Rescue Committee, Habitat for Humanity Tucson, and the National Park Service.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Aug 31 – Welcome back reception organized by MDP alumni and our partner organization TANGO International

Nov 8 – MDP-sponsored Geography Colloquium with Prof Brian Peterson of Northern Arizona University Read more...

Nov 28 – Panel on “Building a Career in Development Practice” Read more...

March 4-8 – Short course on “Ecosystem Services Assessment,” with international expert Lucy Emerton Read more...

May 3 – Final presentations of MDP research Read more...
ALUMNI UPDATES

With the number of Arizona MDP alumni growing to over 50, several of our graduates have shared news about their recent work and how they are applying skills learned in the MDP Program. Profiled alumni include the following:

- **Fardous Rahmani** (MDP 2016), a project manager for Tetra Tech Management Systems International;
- **Paige Klotzman** (MDP 2017), a Program Coordinator for India at Perkins International, a global organization for children with multiple disabilities and vision impairment;
- **Chantel Welch** (MDP 2015), Director of Community Development with NeighborWorks Alaska;
- **Albert Casella** (MDP 2016), a Senior Research Manager at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health;
- **Emma Barker-Perez** (MDP 2015), consultant with Good Shepherd Microfinance in Melbourne, Australia;
- **Natalie Lucas** (MDP 2015) founder of the NGO “Care about Climate” and an elected member of the national board of directors of the Sierra Club. *Read our Q&A with Natalie...*

Read more about alumni and their post-MDP experiences...

FACULTY AND STAFF ACTIVITIES

MDP Director **Dr. Katherine Snyder** has continued her long-running research program in Tanzania and Kenya, with a focus on governance, the political economy of agricultural development and natural resource management, and gender and social change. This year, Dr. Snyder was promoted to the rank of full Professor.

**Dr. Ray Smith** joined the MDP Program in fall 2018 as its Assistant Director. He previously taught political science at Columbia and NYU in New York City, with areas of focus including human rights and global HIV/AIDS. He recently completed a book entitled *Extending International Human Rights Protections to Vulnerable Populations* (Routledge).

MDP faculty member **Dr. Stephanie Buechler** has an ongoing collaborative project assessing changes in quality of life in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora in Mexico as a result of the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant that treats sewage from both cities. This year, Dr. Buechler was promoted to the rank of Associate Research Professor.

MDP Faculty Member **Dr. Sapna Doshi** began new research on stories of corruption in relation to urban real estate, land grabbing, and redevelopment in Mumbai and Bangalore, India. This project, entitled "Corruption Plots, Imagined Publics: The Ethics of Space in the Millennial City," is supported by the American Council of Learned Societies.

Former MDP Interim Assistant Director **Dr. Jacob Miller** began a position in fall 2018 as a lecturer in the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences at Northumbria University in Newcastle, UK.
Students and alumni on their MDP experience

- “Unique to UA’s MDP program is its holistic approach to development — the understanding to couple socio-economic systems with natural systems. By drawing upon examples in both the greater Tucson area and across the globe, we are able to draw upon context specific solutions to poverty in a learning environment rich with diverse student and faculty perspectives.” — Jake Meyers (MDP 2020)

- “Entering the program, I knew I’d be learning a lot from the faculty. What I didn’t expect was how much I’d learn from my colleagues and fellow students; working with like-minded young professionals has honestly been one of the best parts of the program so far.” — Mary Ngugi (MDP 2020)

- “Through the MDP, I’ve been exposed to many new viewpoints and fields of study that I’d likely not have encountered outside of the program. Taking a critical look at how traditional development has worked -- and who it has worked for -- has been incredibly formative in how I think about practicing.” — Chris Mazzarella (MDP 2019)

- "Based on my experience in the MDP, I never stop dwelling on the multifaceted nature of development. While my work is primarily in the field of education, I am constantly seeing new ways of how education intersects with health, nutrition, governance, livelihoods, and poverty, and I strive to bring these ideas together." — Paige Klotzman (MDP 2016)

- “I have incorporated my study of international development into local community development. Development is the same no matter where you’re practicing — it’s about working with and listening to your community, finding local leaders, identifying community challenges and strengths, looking globally for proven solutions.” — Chantel Welch (MDP 2015)

- "The UA MDP combines a historical context of development and a problem-solving mentality -- students learn why pervasive issues such as poverty, inequality, and poor health exist, and are provided the tools to do something about it." — Albert Casella (MDP 2015)

- "I grew in my ability to do research, write, develop project plans, and create participatory solutions development with communities. The skills you learn in this program can be utilized in many different fields, and it makes you a more well-rounded and thoughtful person." — Natalie Lucas (MDP 2016)