Dear Friends of Interdisciplinary Studies at UCF:

I wish everyone a happy end to the spring term. More than 200 students graduated with a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies – Congratulations! We have been busy in the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies, with advisors helping students finalize their graduation or registration plans and troubleshooting minor and major challenges that can appear along the way. This spring we added a new advisor, Karen Baxley, and on the first day of summer classes, we welcome another advisor, James Smith, to our team. Our professional advisors are here to help students plan their future and help navigate the curriculum and course of study. Please note that you always should make an appointment to see an advisor. However, during the week before classes start and during the first week of classes we have walk-in appointments where we prioritize enrollment and registration issues that are imminent for the upcoming term. Please come on in and get all your problems solved (or at least the ones related to your degree in Interdisciplinary or Environmental Studies.)

We are happy to announce that as of Summer 2017, we are offering a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies. This degree is very similar to the previously existing track in IDS, but is now a freestanding bachelor degree program, so e.g. the diploma and transcript will state “B.S. in Environmental Studies” rather than Interdisciplinary Studies. Current students in IDS-Environmental Studies track have the option of switching to the new degree, but need to be aware that a few degree requirements are different. So please discuss your options with an advisor – you can always just stay in your current degree program. All students newly declaring their degree as Environmental Studies will follow the new BS-curriculum that will be listed in the current catalog.

Another new degree option that is effective as of May 2017 is the newly revised B.A. in IDS-Transnational Gender, Race, and Sexuality Studies. Check out our website and the curriculum for more information. Also starting in May 2017 is the undergraduate certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS Certificate) that we have previously announced. You can check the catalog and our website for more information.

In this newsletter you will find some inspiring stories and reports from some of our IDS graduates and current students. Please enjoy getting to know our Founder’s Day Award winner Andrea Krebs (who is integrating her work in environmental studies with landscape architecture), the IDS success story of Alex Tejada (who is heading to medical school at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine), and the inspiring journey of John Bittman (IDS’15, now a graduate student in Nanotechnology).

Best wishes for the summer term (if you take classes) or a pleasant summer break.

Sincerely, Dr. Claudia Schippert
**CATALYST**

Catalyst is a magazine designed to represent the commitment of the Division of Teaching and Learning and the College of Undergraduate Studies to create long-lasting collaborative partnerships within the university. It showcases students from our programs, and helps put a spotlight on the fact that you as a student in our IDS program are part of a large network of resources and support. The magazine is posted at the College of Undergraduate Studies website as well as our Office of Interdisciplinary Studies website and Facebook page.

Andrea Krebs says, “She believes that seemingly small actions can produce sizeable results.”

She gained that belief by volunteering in high school at a preschool in an underserved community. With some other high school classmates, she spent a few hours each week reading and playing games with children.

While it seemed like a small commitment to Andrea, she came to realize that the visits were the highlight of the children’s week. That commitment to service combined with exceptional academic performance provided Andrea with plenty of options as she considered college.

At the top of her high school class and a National Merit Finalist, she was recruited by a number of universities. She chose UCF because it felt welcoming, had high academic standards, and offered resources that would challenge her academically and prepare her for success after college.

As a freshman, she was a walk-on for UCF’s Division I Women’s Rowing Team. That experience has taught her self-motivation, discipline and teamwork — all traits that surely serve her well academically and in her future career.

Pictured left: UCF Founders’ Day Award recipient and **IDS Student, Andrea Krebs**, as featured in Catalyst Magazine. Andrea is one of several students featured in the inaugural issue of Catalyst Magazine. Andrea is a Founders’ Day Award Winner, and is on a path to a unique career as she integrates her work in environmental studies into landscape architecture.
When IDS graduate Alex Tejada saw the blue envelope from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in the mail last month, he said that he knew what was inside would determine the direction of his life. "I was so excited and immediately knew what it was since that’s how they described the acceptance letter at the interview," he recounted. The letter got right to the point and told him of his acceptance to the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in its first paragraph. After ecstatically sharing the good news with his family and friends, he e-mailed the news of his acceptance and a heartfelt thank you to the director of UCF’s Pre-Health and Pre-Law Advising (PHPL), Erin Myszkowski.

Alex began his medical school application as a senior rather than as a junior because he said he wanted to wait to feel ready for it. "It is an extremely tedious and meticulous process,” he explained, “and I wouldn’t be where I am today if it weren’t for the guidance Erin’s office gave me. They helped me to connect information and have something to work with through the whole application process, including my personal statement."

Alex graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with Physical Science, Biology and Life Science as his areas of study, and Music as a minor. He said he wanted to meet the necessary and recommended requirements to apply for medical school, but he also wanted to take other courses and stay active with his music and his position in percussion for the Marching Knights Drumline. "The great thing with IDS is that I had the freedom to take the things I wanted plus the necessary requirements I needed. This made me a more well-rounded applicant, according to the committee that interviewed me. When I was filling out the application for medical school there wasn’t a box for IDS as my major, so I had to type it in, but that made me stand out in a good way."

The Office of Pre-Health Advising supported Alex’s process with guidance about what to include in his personal statement, among other things. It’s the part of the application in which the student describes why they want to be a doctor and why they want to attend medical school. “PHPL helped me connect the dots, connect the information. It helped a lot,” he said. After working with the PHPL Personal Statement Reviewer, Caitlyn Baker, and getting his writing to the point where he was satisfied with it, Alex said he showed his personal statement to friends, family, and doctors he was working with at the UCF Health Center before sending it in with his application. “I didn’t just want to meet the requirements on the checklist,” he explained, “I wanted to show I do other things too, show who I am.”

Alex’s advice to other IDS students interested in applying to medical school is to find something that they really care about and go deep into it. “Do something that gives you sustenance and use the time as an undergrad to discover what it is in life that you really care about.”
From being a machine gunner in the Army's 82nd Airborne Aerial Response Unit and one of the last military that left Iraq in 2011, to being the first Interdisciplinary Studies graduate to be a finalist for the prestigious Presidential Management Fellowship, John Bittman has spent his life finding ways to make a difference. In a recent interview, he said that his life goals are entrepreneurial in spirit and that earning an undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies fit well with his vision of his future.

After returning from a deployment to Iraq, John Bittman earned an Associates Degree from Valencia College. He continued his educational journey at UCF through the Direct Connect program, and majored in Biomedical Science. He said that his initial intention was to attend medical school after his 2015 graduation. Between his junior and senior year at UCF, he changed his major as a way to get to that goal faster.

“I decided to major in Interdisciplinary Studies with Behavioral Social Science and Physical Science as my areas of study, and a minor in Biomedical Science,” he explained. “This gave me the opportunity to pick up some other courses, and to add behavioral science as a core area.”

The path he chose lead him to UCF’s new Nanotechnology Program instead of medical school. “It’s an interdisciplinary field,” he said, “and it combines all that I’m interested in. I’m glad now that I didn’t go to medical school because the program I’m in and the research I’m doing is exactly right for me.”

As a current UCF graduate student, John is involved in nanotechnology research under the supervision of Associate Professor Dr. Swadeshmukul Santra. The research he’s working on is focused on a novel nanotechnology for agricultural application. “Nanotechnology involves manipulating matter at a nanoscale, the scale of atoms and molecules,” John explained. He said that his Interdisciplinary Studies Capstone project was based on cancer-killing nanoparticles and was work that laid the foundation for the direction he took with his graduate research and career.

What’s next for John includes finishing his current research and earning his Master of Professional Science in Nanotechnology Degree. As soon as he receives the final word about his Fellowship, he’ll move to the next step in his journey to begin the two-year leadership development program awarded by the United States Office of Personnel Management. His work will be for one of the many federal agencies such as the Food & Drug Administration, Center for Disease Control, and others, a place where he says he can continue to make a difference.
Congratulations to all of our
Spring 2017 Interdisciplinary Studies Graduates!
The Office of Interdisciplinary Studies congratulates the following Interdisciplinary Studies Program Top Graduates on their outstanding academic achievements:

**Summa Cum Laude**
- B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies: **Lynn Edwards**
- B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies: **Molly Gregory** and **Taylor Scimeca**
- B.S. IDS, Environmental Studies: **Tiffany Crawford, John Sinnott,** and **William Turnipseed**

**Magna Cum Laude**
- B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies: **Michelle Saldivar** and **Ruth Savoia**

**Cum Laude**
- B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies: **Jordan Davis, Yelitza Delgado, Isabella Harris**
- B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies: **Alexandra Garrido, Jerilyn Pollock, Terrance Singleton,** and **Christy Teele**
- B.S. IDS, Environmental Studies: **Jade Payne, Joshua Winograd**

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**News from your Office of Interdisciplinary Studies: New Academic Advisor**

Karen Baxley joined the Interdisciplinary Studies Office in January 2017. Prior to joining the office, she worked as a coordinator advising students in Academic Support Services for UCF’s NanoScience Technology Center. She has also worked as an Academic Advisor at EKU College of Arts and Sciences. Karen has a BS in Sociology from Columbus State University, and an MA in Sociology from Georgia Southern University.
May/June 2017

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Join the Interdisciplinary Studies Student Association (ISSA) at its next upcoming meeting. Check the website for more information.

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