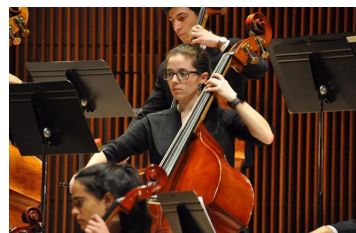




Individual Studies: Education and Innovation



Welcome from IVSP Leadership

Dear Individual and General Studies Alumni and Friends,

Welcome to the first annual newsletter for UMD's glorious new joint Individual and General Studies alumni community! The shared mission of the Individual Studies Program (IVSP) and its predecessor, General Studies: to empower extraordinary, self-motivated students to create their own educational paths and live rich, productive lives. We are delighted to provide a warm celebratory home for you all!

In this newsletter, you will find program snapshots, current student spotlights, an amazing faculty mentor, and profiles of two longstanding alumni who connect with IVSP students regularly to impart life advice, experience, and wisdom as well as exemplify ways IVSP and General Studies alumni pursue their dreams and give back.

We are so delighted to be back in person! These last two years of the pandemic were challenging, and we were impressed by the resiliency and flexibility shown by our astounding students—who met together via Zoom for brainstorming, mentoring prospective students, rehearsing proposals, and socializing. The program also seamlessly transferred its graduation celebrations to the virtual arena and added a live capstone showcase as well, with family and friends “zooming” in from across the country and the world. Students completed projects ranging from first-hand research on attitudes toward the COVID-19 vaccine in Kenya, to the creation of a promotional video on oyster restoration in the Chesapeake Bay. Our students and faculty mentors rose to the challenges to keep these learning experiences vibrant and meaningful!

Keep finding ways to flourish and thrive! We are so proud of all of you creative, self-motivated, independent-minded individuals! The world is richer for having you all in it. It is our great joy to welcome you into our alumni community, and to celebrate another momentous year! Please stay in touch and update us with your news!

With warm wishes,
Dr. Joan Burton, Program Director
Ms. Lori Pranievicz, Assistant Director

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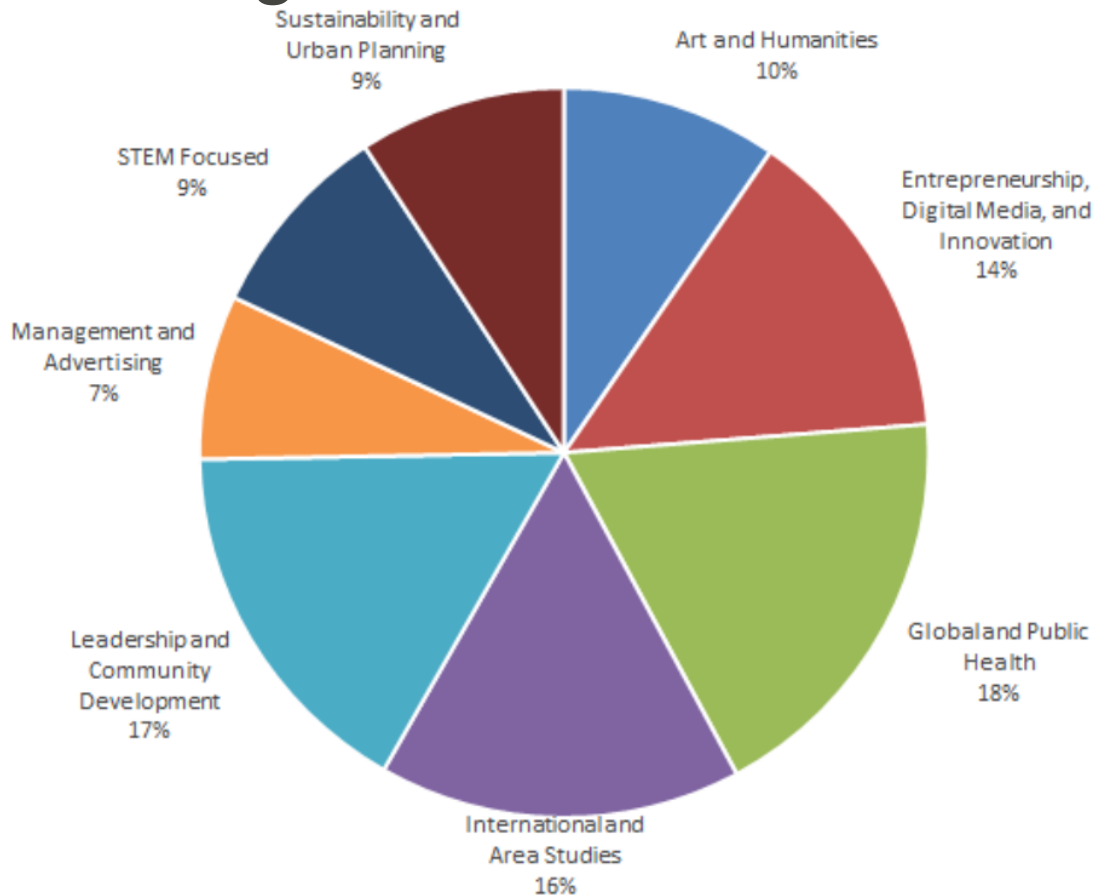
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IVSP Snapshot

Individual Studies Majors Categorized FY2008-FY2021



2020-2021 Capstones Included:

- Analyzing the carbon footprint of tourism at the Great Barrier Reef
- Creating animated characters and sets
- Evaluating healthcare expenditures of asthma and hypertension patients
- Inventing an assistive page-turner device
- Researching the impacts of COVID-19 on food systems in Africa
- Developing a framework for assessing maternal health outcomes in conflict-affected states

In 2020-2021, IVSP supported 42 Unique Majors including:

- Animal Science and Conservation Biology
- Data Science and Global Development
- Disability and Advocacy Studies
- Economic Geography
- Emerging Media and Digital Design
- Global Public Health
- Health Decision Sciences
- Human-Centered Engineering Design
- Integrative Healthcare
- Nutritional Health and Community Needs
- Social Innovation and Creative Entrepreneurship
- Theatre Education for Social Change

Current Student Spotlight: Linette Kingston

Major: Health Science and Analytics

What led you to create your IVSP major?

"As a Biological Sciences major, I wanted to learn how I could apply my science background to work on global health issues for the federal government. Through the Global Fellows Program, I took a class called "Water Security and Global Health Challenges" where we delved into the frameworks for addressing global health issues and managing conflicts between nations, whether that be over water or health. I wanted to contribute to this area by using data analysis to assess the impact of public health programs and to foster collaborations. Thus, I created the Health Science & Analytics major, which focuses on acquiring, studying, and analyzing health data in order to elucidate emerging health trends."

Linette Kingston, Class of '22

"I wanted to contribute to this area by using data analysis to assess the impact of public health programs and to foster collaborations."

What is something you wish you had known when you started college?

"I wish I had known more about all the different things one could explore at UMD! Thus I would encourage my younger self to try out every random opportunity—from clubs and classes to programs—without always worrying about how it'll turn out in the future."

What are some of your dreams/goals for the future?

"My goal is to become an epidemiologist who fosters infectious disease collaboration and works on global disease programming with counterparts in East, Southeast, and South Asia. I also aspire to stay connected to citizens as a scientist by working with media organizations to communicate about scientific topics. Other goals include getting better at rollerblading and painting, along with keeping my growing collection of plants alive."



Laura Boyajian, Class of '22

Current Student Spotlight: Laura Boyajian

IVSP Major: Disability and Advocacy Studies

What led you to create your IVSP major?

"I entered college relatively unsure of the career that I wanted. I knew from prior experiences that I wanted to channel my career towards advocacy for people with disabilities but it felt as though none of the majors at UMD fit those interests. Within three months of starting at UMD, I got in touch with the IVSP office to explore the option of designing my own major. I honestly did not think I would commit to that decision but once I met the staff in the office and heard from other IVSP students, I knew it was the right choice!"

"I am particularly passionate about fostering inclusion between people with and without disabilities through awareness and community involvement."

What are some of your dreams/goals for the future?

"I hope to utilize the skills that I have learned through my education at UMD to support people with disabilities, locally and abroad. I am particularly passionate about fostering inclusion between people with and without disabilities through awareness and community involvement. I will spend my first year after college working in my homeland of Armenia to build up support and resources for those impacted by the Artsakh 2020 War (wounded soldiers, grieving families, refugees, etc.)."

What is something you wish you had known when you started college?

"I think in general, people make it seem as though your first year of college is all rainbows and sunshine when that was far from the case for me (and most of my friends). The adjustment was more challenging than I had expected and it took me a while to reach a place where I was confident in what I was studying and the communities I wanted to be a part of."



Faculty Mentor Spotlight: Dr. Donna Howard

Dr. Donna Howard has mentored more IVSP students than any other IVSP faculty mentor-- 15 since 2011!

Dr. Howard interacts with her students generously and compassionately in a variety of ways. Between offering general guidance, reviewing capstone projects, and providing professional mentorship, Dr. Howard is always there for her students. "I'm there to support them however they need me," she says. "Most of my IVSP students go on to do these remarkable things, they're remarkable people. So, the fact that I generally stay connected to them gives back to me in ways that are well beyond what I could ever give to them."

When providing feedback, Dr. Howard challenges her students to think outside of the box- explore their own path. For Dr. Howard, it's important that students and faculty develop a relationship that encourages academic and personal growth. She says that she's glad that the University of Maryland celebrates students' individual passions through programs like IVSP.

"Most of my students go on to do these remarkable things, they're remarkable people."

More about Dr. Howard

As a tenured professor in the Department of Behavioral and Community Health in the School of Public Health, Dr. Howard is sought out by prospective IVSP students who have interests in creating majors related to public and global health. Her academic research currently focuses on adolescent risk and protective behaviors associated with interpersonal violence and teen dating relationships. She was also a Fulbright Scholar and traveled to India to learn about its culture. She found the experience so rewarding that she started leading an annual winter study abroad program that takes UMD students to India to explore the organization and practice of public health in an Indian context.





Steve Leonard, Class of '78
Major: Traffic Safety Management

Individual Studies Alumni Spotlight: Steve Leonard

What are some of the things you have been proudest of in your career/life since you graduated?

"I've continued to share with people throughout my life that one of my proudest accomplishments was defending my IVSP major before the faculty review committee and the subsequent approval of my IVSP major. Back in those days, there was little coaching available beyond working with my faculty mentor. It's easier to follow well-defined paths in life but when we step out and explore, the rewards can be very special."

How did the ability to be flexible in your creating your undergraduate major contribute to your success?

"I think it's the characteristics of the type of person that creates their own major that contributes to what's responsible for their individual success. Some say I have taken risks but I think they often find it difficult to see the forest for the trees. I say I've made calculated assessments of opportunities and then work the plan to make them happen."

Why do you give back to UMD?

"Giving back financially provides the opportunity for some students to get the education that might otherwise be unavailable. Giving back time to serve on various committees and in the classroom allows me to share my experience."

IVSP is deeply grateful for the tremendous support and encouragement the Steven R. Leonard and Family Scholarship gives to Individual Studies students.



Wanda Alexander, Class of '81

General Studies/IVSP Alumni Spotlight: Wanda Alexander

What are some of the things you have been proudest of in your career/life since you graduated?

"One of the proudest moments in my career was when a majority of the team members who had been released during a business-critical reduction in force, returned to the company once things turned around, and after a significant time being away. Together we moved the company through one of its most successful seasons ever. My heart was overwhelmed by the trust these amazing human beings put in themselves and the company's foundational principles of honesty, integrity, hard work, and professionalism without compromise. It was one of the greatest seasons of my career."

How did the ability to be flexible in your creating your undergraduate major contribute to your success?

"The moment I left the business college (now Smith) and moved into creating my own path toward a degree, I was so very happy and felt free for the first time in college. My grades were exceptional from that point on AND I received a grant to pursue graduate studies. I (the real me) was finally in college and loving the process. Happy student plus love for the process equals major success!"

Why do you give back to UMD?

"Being officially released from Maryland (UMCP) for poor academic performance—and then reinstated by Dean Mattingly who asked me a question no one had ever asked me before "Wanda what is it that you love to do?" Is the foundation of my giving back. This was a pivotal moment in my life and my trajectory from that point on has surpassed all my dreams. I want to play a part in more students having monumental moments at UMCP. This is truly at the heart of why I have and will continue to give back to this fearless University."

Do you want to become a more involved alumnus?

Volunteer your time

If you wish to volunteer your time in some way- be available for an informational interview, share updates, or suggest other alumni activities - please contact Lori Pranievicz at ljustiel@umd.edu.

Share Internship and Career Opportunities

If you have an internship or career opportunity that you would like to share with IVSP students, please contact Dr. Joan Burton at (301)314-1920 or jburlon1@umd.edu.

You may also just send a brief paragraph to Dr. Burton (jburlon1@umd.edu) describing an internship opportunity, its location, any preferred skills or qualifications, whether the opportunity is paid or unpaid, and contact information. Please include whether you'd like to see resumes and/or cover letters from candidates. We'll then post your internship opportunity to students and they will apply directly to you. We can also share it with our sister programs, Federal Fellows and Global Fellows in Washington, D.C., which Dr. Burton also directs.

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