

UWW Alumnus Cris Benson



The **Chicago Park District** is the largest municipal park manager in the nation and owner of more than 8,100 acres of green space. The Chicago Park District has 580 parks, 26 indoor pools, 51 outdoor pools, and 26 miles of lakefront including 23 swimming beaches plus one inland beach. If you plan to oversee one of Chicago's impressive recreation and leisure programs, you will need a bachelor's degree.

Cris Benson graduated in December 2015 with a depth area of **Recreation and Leisure** and is now a Chicago Park District supervisor. "Only three months after graduating from UWW, I was promoted to Playground Supervisor at Chopin Park," Cris said. "It was my first interview since graduation and I nailed it! Having a BA broadened my career opportunities in the Chicago Park District. I am blessed to work for a company that recognizes the effort to attain an education and reward it."

His essential responsibilities now include, identifying and creating recreation programming that benefits the surrounding communities; overseeing year round and seasonal summer day camp staff; financial management of budgets; and creating plans to organize how all these different forms of management run smoothly. "Managing a recreation facility is less about recreation and more focused on running a business," Cris added. "I was better prepared for a recreation management perspective after graduation from the UWW program." Cris attributes this preparation to the Learning Contract he developed with his **UWW Academic Advisor** and **Community Advisor**. "It takes time to develop a UWW Learning Contract, and changes will occur along the way...However, when choosing assignments, investing in training, and seeking resources, first ask, 'how will this benefit my learning goals?'" Cris advises.

Besides creating their own learning goals and curriculum, UWW students earn credits for experiential learning that is not taught in the classroom. "What UWW provides us is the opportunity to meet that criteria without quitting our careers," Cris explains. "Working professionals do not require a classroom to attain every skill and the classroom doesn't always reflect the challenges that are faced in the workplace. Employers are seeking those that can think beyond the classroom."

NDP Advice from a Graduate

UWW alumnus **Cris Benson** (see previous article) shares advice and tips for a successful NDP program by offering this advice to future and current UWW students:

- Be disciplined and set goals for yourself or you won't be able to meet the requirements.
- Focus on the macro and micro perspective of your learning plan.
- Know when to seek the opinion of your **UWW Community Advisor** and **Academic Advisor**.
- Seek help from others especially from your best resource, the **UWW staff**. They are very invested in you and when you talk to them, it shows.

Michael Fischer of BAIS: Modern Love College Essay Contest



Earlier this year, the **New York Times** asked college students from around the country to submit personal stories of love for its **Modern Love College Essay Contest**. Approximately 2,000 students from 500 colleges and universities offered their musings.

BAIS student **Michael Fischer's** essay was one of the thousands of submissions but only one of the few that were acknowledged by the New York Times. Michael was honored among the "other notable essays" because of his thought-provoking piece about his current relationship and the challenges of dating as an ex-con. Congratulations to Michael on this nationally recognized achievement, and we expect to see more of his writings in print soon.

NDP Name Change

"What's in a name?" We at **Nontraditional Degree Programs** believe that our name represents our student body and what they achieve during their time at NEIU. For these reasons, we asked our **UWW and BAIS students** what name they think embodies the path of learning they have chosen. The following names ranked the highest among NDP students:

Integrative Studies Degree Programs

Individualized Degree Programs

We will keep you posted on the final decision once it has been made by Academic Affairs, the University President, and the NDP Advisory Council.

NDP Merit Scholarships

The **NDP Merit Tuition Scholarship** was created to support the growth and development of **NDP students** who have a record of academic excellence. Congratulations to the NDP students who have been awarded this honor for **Fall 2016**:

Patricia Alm	Victoria Jones	Juana Vallejo
Sean Carey	Denise Love	Heather Wirth
Jacquelyn Day	Gregorio Morales	Fletcher Williams
Letitia Epps	Octavio Covarrubias-Salinas	Sherry Williams
Dauphine Gregory	Isra Shahin	Amelia Woolard
Nury Infantes	Murielle Standley	Anette Word
Elzbieta Jakubczak	Gregory Taylor	

For **Spring 2017**:

Yaron Benyamini	Letitia Epps	Isra Shahin
Sean Carey	Dauphine Gregory	Murielle Standley
Octavio Covarrubias-Salinas	Nury Infantes	Gregory Taylor
Dorotheo Davenport-Carter	Charles LaFaire	Erica Traub
Kara Donaldson	Norma Renteria	Fletcher Williams
Amber Drew	Roxanne Salahuddin	

The Provost's List

The **Provost's List** recognizes students who have achieved academic success in a specific semester. Congratulations to the following **B AIS students** who achieved a GPA of 3.75 or higher for **Fall 2016**:

Terrie Albano	Letitia Epps	Joseph Kwon	Roxanne Salahuddin
Emily Allan	Daniel Escobar	Margaret Lach	Stacie Scott
Barbara Ames	Cheyenne Farrell	O'Kema Lewis	Isra Shahin
Leeann Andry	Peggie Fisher	Rebekah Lomahan	Uliana Shchupliak
Sylvia Arreola	Alba Galarza	Krista Lotesto	Sondrea Singleton
Ephraim Assefa	Roberto Garay	Rosemary Lugo-Gross	Zanneta Smith
Sylvia Barrios	Brenda Gerena	Lynda Mariani	Allene Sodavaram
Idalia Bates-Melecio	Marsha Godard	Alba Martinez	Murielle Standley
Jessica Bauer	Leyamor Gonzales	George Mason	Aayusha Thapa
Kristen Baustert	Dauphine Gregory	Carlos Mendoza	Lana Tran
Wilmarie Becerril-Soto	Hao Huynh	James Morgan	Erica Traub
Yaron Benyamini	Nury Infantes	Kristen Nash	Juana Vallejo
Kenneth Boyd	Daniela Ion	Rachel Nelson	Claudia Vazquez
Kershea Cademartori	Brittney Kellermann	Carole Novak	Vanessa Velez
Sean Carey	Danielle Kirby	Nichole Ochab	Kelly Wacker
Oscar Cazares	Lauren Klotz	Bridget O'Connor	Fletcher Williams
Hadda Chaib	John Knol	Domitila Ortega	Nichole Wilson
Kelly Coombs	Laura Kroeker	Ariel Otero	Annette Word
Jacquelyn Day	Michelle Kuhr	Thu Thi Anh Phan	Sarah Wuttke
Maureen Dunn	Letitia Epps	Joseph Kwon	Catherine Zanotti
Amber Elahi	Sherry Kust	Alfredo Pina	

Student Success Awards

Each Spring semester, the departments of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs sponsor the Student Success Awards. Congratulations to the following BAIS students for being presented with the **Outstanding Achievement in Interdisciplinary Studies Award**:

Sean Carey	Brenda Gerena	O'Kema Lewis	Alando Massie
Troy McMillan	Gloria Ortiz	Roxanne Salahuddin	

Congratulations to the following UWW students for being presented with the **Overall Integration of Conceptual and Experiential Competencies Award**:

Robert Castaneda	Sophia Chidichimo	Sandra Lachler	Heather Wirth
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Presented with the **Outstanding Service to the Community Award**:

Robert Castaneda	David Robertson
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University Without Walls Faculty Advisor Dr. Barnett



The new **UWW Faculty Advisor Dr. Timothy Barnett**, a single dad originally from Connecticut, has found his true calling helping nontraditional students obtain their UWW bachelor's degree. Dr. Barnett graduated from University of Connecticut with a BA in English and a minor in Economics. He worked in the business world for four years before earning his MA and PhD in English from Ohio State University. His academic achievements along with his experience has allowed him to bring a unique perspective to the UWW, its students, and their prosperous futures.

"I had heard for many years about the great students at NEIU and wanted to get involved in the program because the adult students had powerful experiences and stories and typically made excellent and exciting students," Dr. Barnett stated in his interview. "I also was interested in the flexibility of the program as a way to help other groups in the community who might not have access to education, such as the population at Stateville Correctional Center, a maximum security prison in Joliet, IL. We will be bringing the UWW program to Stateville this fall and plan to work with eight students to help them complete their bachelors' degrees in the next two years."

This is just one aspect of growth the UWW has been experiencing recently. Additionally, there has been an increase of prospective students wanting to earn degrees in various fields. Dr. Barnett credits the fast growing interest in the UWW to the fact that the college degree has become the new minimum requirement instead of the high school diploma. "There is a continuing move for industries and various programs to require a BA from their workers who have been there a long time," Dr. Barnett explains. "They need to finish their college degrees for them to keep their jobs or to move ahead. 'Professionalization' is growing everywhere, and even experienced, successful workers need a way to get their degrees in a world that values—and sometimes overvalues—formal credentials. UWW is a viable option for these types of students."

These types of students have also been a surprise inspiration to Dr. Barnett. He is in awe of how it feels more like working alongside his peers than with students, "Our students are virtually all leaders who have made their way through demanding professions without the benefit of a BA degree, but what they have learned and accomplished is exemplary and inspiring."

NDP 1 Credit Hour Courses

Did you know that the NDP offers three courses that are each worth one credit hour? Students can earn three credit hours at the 300 level, while learning valuable skills. These classes are:

[Intro to Library Research and Information Fluency - NDP 305](#)

[Creating a Prior Learning Portfolio - NDP 330](#)

[Time and Project Management - NDP 351](#)

Each of these one credit hour courses are scheduled so that you will be finished with the class by the time you are halfway through the semester! If you are planning to create a Prior Learning Portfolio, NDP 330 will guide you through this process and fulfills the ELE and 300 level requirements. If you are moving on to a graduate program, NDP 305 and NDP 351 provide tools that will enhance the success of your academic undertakings.

New NDP Credit by Exam Workshop

The Credit by Exam Workshop was developed for prospective students to learn and inquire about opportunities to achieve credits outside of traditional coursework. Students who elect this option will be studying independently and are encouraged to participate in this Q&A session that focuses on topics such as:

- Choosing exams
- Building a timetable for success
- Skills for independent study
- Strategies to overcome test anxiety
- Test taking tips
- Exam registration and fees
- Scoring and transcripts (as of 2.27.17 there is a \$30.00 fee to get official score transcripts)

The fees for these exams may be reimbursable for students currently in or retired from the military.

Please contact **Jacqui Weiner-O'Shea** for more information about upcoming workshops at jweinero@neiu.edu. We will also announce any upcoming workshops soon!

NDP Scholarship

At NDP, we understand how difficult it can be for students to finance their education, that is why we invite you to be one of the founding donors of a new endowed scholarship for NDP students.

Our goal was to reach the \$5,000 mark and we are happy to announce that we have reached this important milestone! A matching grant brings the fund to \$10,000. We can start distributing scholarships once the fund is at \$20,000. Even the smallest donation helps. Please contribute your tax-deductible gift to the NEIU Foundation by going to:

<https://your.neiu.edu/sslpage.aspx?pid=298>

After selecting your donation information, please select designation for "Nontraditional Degree Program", and complete the rest of the form as prompted.

Thank you in advance for contributing to NDP students' futures!

Meet the New UWW Graduate Assistant



If you have had NDP tutoring in math, ESL, TESL, or essay writing, you most likely have already met the new **UWW Graduate Assistant, Kevin Mulka**. Through his tutoring, he has been able to meet UWW students and have a unique understanding of how students see the program through traditional course work and UWW requirements, such as the Learning Contract. This has given Kevin an inside look at what students need and want in the program.

Additionally, Kevin is a recent NDP graduate (BAIS) with a minor in TESL who is currently pursuing an MAT in Teaching Elementary Education at NEIU. Kevin is looking forward to starting his new position for the Summer 2017 semester. He cannot wait to help students obtain a degree while giving back to the Nontraditional Degree Programs.

"Teamwork makes the dream work"

-Kevin Mulka

NDP Office Staff Summer 2017

Whether you are new to the NEIU campus, a student looking to transfer, or already a nontraditional student, the NDP Office at B-147 is fully staffed with people who are here to help you every day.

Kim Sanborn— Director, NDP
 Tim Barnett— Faculty Advisor, UWW
 Jennifer Blair— Program Specialist, BAIS
 Jacqueline Butler— Program Specialist, BAIS
 Trease Sockol— Office Support Specialist, NDP
 Ed Porter— Office Support Associate, NDP
 Susan Berkman— Instructor, NDP
 Antuanette Mester—Instructor, NDP
 Erica Krueger— Adj. Faculty Instructor, NDP
 Jacquelyn Weiner-O'Shea— Grad Assistant, NDP
 Justine Altman—Grad Assistant, UWW
 Kevin Mulka— Grad Assistant, UWW
 Kathryn Younkie-Sahyouni— Tutor, NDP
 Umama Fakher— Work Study, NDP

Please contact us at 773.442.6030 or NDP@neiu.edu for assistance or information about our programs.

What Would You Like to Read About in Our Next Newsletter?

Is there a topic you would like us to report on, someone on-campus you would like to interviewed, or an event you would like to have us highlight?

Please send suggestions for future newsletter articles, interviews, happenings, and/or announcements to NDP@neiu.edu.

Thank you and we look forward to reading your suggestions!