

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

making a g**lobal** i**mpact**

Feel the
Energy*

Medical student Jonah Mink gives an impromptu health lesson to a group of schoolchildren in a small village near Mysore, India during his global health elective. A student at BGU's Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center, Jonah was invited to stay at the local mission where his host taught him herbal medicine and introduced him to life in rural India. Upon his return, he co-founded MigrantHealth:IL, which is focused on building socially responsible and financially sustainable healthcare solutions for marginalized populations in Israel. He hopes to replicate the model in other countries.



health impact



Dr. Anita Nudelman (center and below left) in Masindi, Uganda, training young men and women

The Skill and the Will to Take Control

“Imparting knowledge alone without skills is useless,” says Dr. Anita Nudelman, an applied medical anthropologist from the Faculty of Health Sciences. “We give girls the skills to empower them to make responsible decisions and to protect themselves.”

Nudelman just returned from her fifth visit to Uganda, where the Population Secretariat invited her and her team to train adolescents and young people of the Ngora District. This is the third district in which Nudelman has trained motivated young people to advance sexual health using a culture-sensitive approach.

“There’s a high rate of teen pregnancy in Ngora, so we work on strengthening self-esteem and decision-making. One of the most effective tools is role-playing. It’s fun and provides information without overloading them. For instance, if a teacher says he wants you (an adolescent girl) to come to his house at night to look over your schoolwork, what do you do? Through an entertaining activity young people come up with solutions and play them out; for example taking your brother or sister with you,” she explains.

Nudelman has been teaching at the Recanati School for Community Health Professions for twenty years. When Nudelman

goes to Uganda, she takes the basic curriculum of the course and – together with her Ugandan colleagues – adapts it to the different contexts.

“The first few days are always about a quick anthropological needs assessment, to integrate their cultural issues with the health messages. We need to know what their perceptions, beliefs and everyday dilemmas are,” she continues.

In addition to her regular teaching load of courses such as medical anthropology and qualitative research methods, she is creating a new course about Health and Africa through the Africa Studies Program with Prof. Zvi Bentwich for the upcoming academic year.

“Last year I worked with UNAIDS,” she says, “I was the lead consultant in the ‘Rapid Assessment on Culture and Gender Barriers of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV.’ Every year, 500,000 children are infected with HIV from their mothers because they’re not taking the medicine that can prevent it. I trained teams in five countries – a researcher together with mothers living with HIV, community members, and others. They had to learn to do this rapid assessment by themselves and it had to be translated and



made culturally appropriate for each country. The report we submitted is also becoming a UNAIDS booklet.”

For Nudelman, the balance between fieldwork and classroom work is ideal. “I like to work on practical issues,” she says with a gleam in her eye.



Pulling Clean Water Out of the Air

Lack of clean water is a major health risk in many parts of the world. Drinking contaminated or polluted water is often the cause of contracting debilitating diseases. Two doctors-in-training are doing more than scrubbing their hands though – they’re designing a cheap, renewable energy-powered device that makes water from the air. And they are not the only ones who are excited about their project – earlier this year they were featured on the Colbert Report segment from the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) annual conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

Ellie Nowak, a third-year student at BGU’s Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center and Guy Katz, a student at the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School have been working together on a cheap device that will produce clean water. Right now they are working on a proof of concept.

“The atmospheric water generators that exist now cost about \$3,000 and need to be plugged into an outlet. We want to develop a solar or wind powered model that would cost about \$30,” says Katz. The device would be purely mechanical and work on the principles of energy transfer. They are still trying to



Guy Katz and Ellie Nowak with Stephen Colbert at the CGI U Conference in St. Louis

determine the optimal size for the device both in terms of water production per day and mass production.

The CGI U conference was a great place for networking and talking to others with different success strategies, says Nowak, “It was really fast, but we met a lot of people that we never would have met otherwise.”

They managed to shake hands with former President Bill Clinton and daughter Chelsea.

And what was it like to be filmed for the Colbert Report?

“They tell you to keep a straight face when he’s talking to you,” says Katz. That’s not easy to do when he’s comparing your atmospheric water generator to a bong.

Taking a Leadership Position in Global Health

The BGU director of the Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center never thought he would be invited to Abu Dhabi, particularly not to represent an Israeli university. But earlier this year, Dr. A. Mark Clarfield was invited to attend a special weekend at New York University-Abu Dhabi (NYU-AD) to represent the MSIH to those students interested in medicine.

“Of all the hundreds of medical schools both in the US and abroad, 10 were chosen based primarily on the requests of the NYU-AD students. During the visit, each of the representatives presented their programs as well as providing interested students with responses to questions about applying to medical schools in general,” he relates. “In my

humble opinion, this choice attests to the global reputation that we, at MSIH BGU-CU, have developed over the last decade.”

Also this spring, the MSIH was invited by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates in Philadelphia to be one of six medical schools worldwide to join the steering committee for a three-year pilot project involving the mutual exchange of international medical students. Called the Global Education in Medicine Exchange (GEMx), the project hopes to make it easier and more affordable for students from around the world to participate in such exchange programs.

Founded in 1997, the mission of the MSIH is to prepare doctors to address the cultural, political, economic and environmental



Dr. A. Mark Clarfield

factors that impact the health of populations and individuals. The North-American style curriculum incorporates global health coursework into all four years through specialized workshops, lectures and clerkships.

environmental

Cleaning Up the Noyyal River

Prof. (emeritus) Yoram Oren brings years of scientific know-how and experience to bear on a polluted river in India. He has made four extended trips to India in the last three years to work at the laboratory he set up at Karunya University to help treat serious pollution of the Noyyal River.

Running through central north Tamil Nadu – the largest textile manufacturing area in India – the Noyyal River was an indiscriminate depository for industrial wastewater, heavy with dyes and metals.

Oren, a member of the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, has been gratified to see increasing law enforcement against polluters. “There’s been lots of advancement. The first time I went there they were just dumping their wastewater anywhere. Now, the laws are being enforced and they recycle their wastewater to minimize pollution and to save water. Unfortunately, the river is



Prof. (Emer.) Yoram Oren with his Indian colleagues and students

still polluted and there are still many pirate companies that continue dumping.”

Oren has brought more modern Israeli water purification technology to deal with the problem. “The treatment is fairly modern, involving microbial digestion, electrocoagulation, reverse osmosis and nano filtration,” according to Oren.

“Nanofiltration is a selective process. It can differentiate between dyes which

should come out of the water and salts which do not,” he adds.

“I got a letter from someone who says he was a farmer from the Erode district and the river used to provide water for him. He wrote he was very happy that someone was treating the river. It really made my day,” Oren says with a smile.

As a result of Oren’s continued presence in India, student exchanges are taking off. “There’s momentum happening,” Oren declares.

From Vision to CREATEion



Members of the CREATE conference

“A dream come true: building ties between Singapore and Israel so as to solve, one step at a time, global water issues using nanotechnological tools,” enthused Prof. Robert S. Marks, a member of the Avram and Stella Goldstein-Goren Department of Biotechnology Engineering and one of the organizers of the CREATE conference that took place this spring.

Hosted by the Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology,

CREATE is a synergistic team of materials research expertise from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and biotechnology engineering at BGU collaborating in the Nanomaterials for Energy and Water Management program funded by National Research Foundation (NRF) CREATE, Singapore.

“CREATE will promote a new concept of research in water sensing and remediation, and lay down the foundations for further

scientific and academic cooperation between NTU and BGU,” one of the Singapore participants, Prof. Chen Xiaodong, explained.

“Freeman Thomas once said ‘Good design begins with honesty, asks tough questions, comes from collaboration and from trusting your intuition,’” NTU’s Dr. Ma Bing added.

“A joint research program between NTU and BGU will provide great benefit in water sensing and remediation,” Prof. Zhang Qichun concurred.

The Singapore-Israel team envisions a large collaborative future. They have already published a number of publications, with increasing collaborative projects, and have filed several patents. They seek to commercialize the fruit of their work as one of the mandates given to them by the NRF. A number of international researchers from the US, France, Russia and elsewhere have already visited the CREATE location on lengthy collaborative scientific missions, further supporting the overall effort. Marks asserts that “the NRF CREATE center is unique in the world, where a number of scientific disciplines converge providing a critical mass to make an impact.”

BGU to Help Preserve the Biodiversity of the Galapagos Islands

A delegation from the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research (BIDR) led by Prof. Ariel Novoplansky has toured the Galapagos Islands and has signed a cooperation agreement with the Directorate of the National Park to promote the conservation of their endangered biological diversity.

The Galapagos Islands belong to Ecuador and lie on the Equator, about 1,000 kilometers off the west coast of South America. What makes these islands unique is their recent history – most of the major archipelagos around the world had been discovered by the 16th century, were rapidly settled by man, and their ecological systems rapidly degraded. During all that time, the Galapagos Islands were rather “neglected”, occasionally frequented by whale hunters and pirates, which hardly affected its unique ecosystems. However, the relief from human intervention has abruptly ended and despite over 50 years of dedicated management and conservation of 97% of the area of the archipelago and its surrounding waters by the authorities of the Galapagos National Park, the conservation policies must change.

“In spite of excellent management and meticulous policing of ecotourism, a full-blown ecological disaster is unfolding before our eyes, inflicted by the devastating effects of invasive species,” says Novoplansky.

Rising demand is pushing for ever-increasing rates of development of the local tourism industry, which encourages greater imports of various goods, food and fresh agriculture produce from the mainland. Without any external intervention, labor and production costs on the islands are much higher than on the mainland, dictating the abandonment of most of the farms and the transition of most of the islands’ workforce to the tourism industry.

These processes expose the unique and sensitive biodiversity of the islands to the extremely destructive effects of invasive species such as feral domestic

animals, aggressive weedy plants, various insect pests and alien marine organisms. Increasing numbers of such organisms reach the islands through the delivery routes from the mainland and multiply with great vigor in both natural ecosystems and abandoned farms, outcompeting the local fauna and flora and changing entire ecosystems existing nowhere else in the world.

Upon the invitation of the Ecuadorian

expert from the Volcani Center of the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture, Prof. Aliza Fleischer, an agricultural economist from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Prof. Noam Weisbrod of the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research, BIDR. Novoplansky is a member of the Mitrani Department of Desert Ecology, Swiss Institute for Dryland Environmental and Energy Research, BIDR.

“The current project is based on a new



The delegation in the Galapagos Islands. BGU will help protect this stunning tropical paradise

Ministry of Environment and the Directorate of the Galapagos National Park, a delegation from the Center of International Conventions of the BIDR visited the Galapagos for work meetings and field excursions with managers, rangers, policy-makers, farmers and conservation experts.

The delegation included Novoplansky, Prof. Uriel Safriel, who heads the Center of International Conventions at the BIDR, Dr. Alon Ben-Gal, a desert agriculture

premise, whereby agricultural development is not necessarily used as a powerful toolbox for increasing food production, fighting poverty and improving standard of living. In fragile places like the Galapagos, sensible conservation strategies may take advantage of carefully-crafted agricultural practices to combat and prevent the destructive effects of invasive species to unique ecosystems and endangered biodiversity, the fate of which we are all so anxious about,” says Novoplansky.

In the Heart of the Mountain

One of the two dams on the Yangtze River in Jinping, China
Inset: Prof. Yossi Hatzor with his Chinese colleagues

Prof. Yossi Hatzor and his engineering geology research group have gained renown from California to China as experts in Discontinuous Deformation Analysis, a numerical approach to compute the expected deformation in fractured rock masses in response to mining and tunneling activities as well as earthquake vibrations. They recently put their expertise to work in Jinping, in the Sichuan Province of China, in one of the largest rock engineering projects in the world. Hatzor, chair of the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences and incumbent of the Dr. Sam and Edna Lemkin Chair in Rock Mechanics, was involved in mapping the tunnels for two massive hydroelectric power stations situated next to the Yangtze River, one of the longest in the world.

"Four connecting tunnels were being excavated at a depth of 2,500 meters through the Jinping Mountain. When there is that kind of pressure, the chances for rock bursts – rock exploding off the walls and ricocheting

through the tunnel – are high. Rock bursts are both dangerous to workers and significantly hinder the excavation of the tunnel," he explains.

Hatzor, who was awarded the competitive fellowship for leading international scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 2011, visited the picturesque site and met with colleagues. He is one of only two Westerners in his field to have been awarded this visiting professorship appointment.

Back in Israel, he and his team used the data generated by Chinese colleagues from the Institute of Rock and Soil Mechanics, CAS in Wuhan, China to recreate the conditions in the tunnels – conditions that change constantly as excavation continues – using computerized simulations.

"We had to simulate the excavation sequence step by step, track the numerically

computed deformation, and using monitoring data obtained in real time underground, deduce the stress field at a depth of 2,500 meters below ground surface, by means of inversion. We were the first to do so, since other conventional methods for measuring the stress field underground had failed," according to Hatzor. He worked with his host from the CAS, Prof. Xia-Ting Feng, the director of the National Key Laboratory of Geomechanics and Geotechnical Engineering in Wuhan, and his then-Masters student Yuval Tal, who is now doing his doctorate at MIT.

Using the analyses Hatzor and his team generated, the Chinese were able to improve the predictive capabilities of when and where rock bursts would occur. "They were very pleased," Hatzor says, "as we enabled them to make further progress in their quest for better mining safety underground."



impact



Empowerment from the Clintons

For Ben Reuveni, going to the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) conference in St. Louis was about empowerment.

"Fifteen hundred students gathered together from around the world with small scale local projects that can make a big difference. To hear the students and network with them and the panelists who are entrepreneurs, it was empowering," says the MBA student in the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management.

Reuveni, who also participated in the 2009 CGI U, has a simple idea that he hopes will have significant impact for students – bike sharing. He wants to provide 15-20 free bicycles so students can get around in an environmentally friendly and quick manner. Once he establishes the University model, he would like to expand to Beer-Sheva with the University's backing. "The city is flat, so it's ideal for bicycles," he says.

"The University is connected to this project in several ways – the President's funding to reach CGI U in the first place, and I was lucky enough to receive funding and guidance from the Green Campus as well," he adds.

At CGI U "I met two other student groups that were relevant to my project. One wanted

to use bikes made out of bamboo and the other wanted to use donated second-hand bikes," according to Reuveni. "I really appreciate the content, language and can-do approach that is at the heart of CGI U."

Seungjin Kim, a medical student at the Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center, with a background in engineering, is trying to create a cheap, Android-linked EKG device.

"The goal is to make an affordable EKG device that can package the EKG data to an Android smartphone, create a program that can use the device, analyze it according to standards used in clinical settings and create a website where one can upload the data and ask for volunteer analysts to consult," he explains. "EKG devices are ubiquitous but trained analysts aren't. This would be a way to get the data to those trained to analyze it anywhere in the world."



Ben Reuveni (left) with his Iranian counterpart at the CGI U Conference in St. Louis

Innovative Gene Silencing Developed at BGU to Advance Vietnamese Aquaculture

Prof. Amir Sagi of the Department of Life Sciences participated in a ceremony in November marking the realization of an agreement between the Israeli Tiran Group and Green Advances, a Vietnamese company, to advance aquaculture in Vietnam using innovative BGU biotechnology to change the sex of prawns and yield fast growing all-male populations.

The process was developed by Sagi and patented and licensed through BGN Technologies, BGU's technology transfer company, to the Tiran Group, an Israeli shipping company with aquaculture farms.

"This is the first time that the aquaculture industry will be able to use advanced gene silencing to increase yields," says Prof. Sagi.

"The technology is sustainable since it doesn't use any chemicals or hormones and does not create genetically modified organisms (GMO). This is made possible through the unique monosex culture of prawns, which we can obtain by using our original discovery of an insulin-like androgenic hormone that influences the sex of these prawns. Since the males are faster growers, this discovery could help local farmers increase their income."

Incumbent of the Lily and Sidney Oelbaum Chair in Applied Biochemistry, Sagi is a former Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, a member of the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev, and serves as President of the International Society for Invertebrate Reproduction and Development.



Male prawns

educating future



Welcoming Debate

The Red Sea Open

The Red Sea Open, Israel's international debating competition, was held in Eilat for the fourth time in September. Sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Students and the Ben-Gurion Debate Society, it attracts 40 teams from Israel and around the world.

"We're very proud to host for the fourth time the only international debating tournament in Israel," said Debate Society

head Mor Zoran. "It's an opportunity for us to create open and intelligent discussions on various issues, while enjoying the advantages of the beautiful city of Eilat."

The Ben-Gurion Debate Society was founded in 2004 by the dean of students of Ben-Gurion University. Over the last few years it has evolved, gained popularity and achieved some notable successes, including

champions of Israel's open championship, reaching the finals of Israel's national championship, and the finals of the Novice's tournament. The society has more than 40 members and has already successfully hosted many tournaments, including Israel's national championship and the Red Sea Open for the last four years. Its members come from all the different Faculties at the University.

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David Ben-Gurion – Sir John Monash Leadership Forum Focuses on Climate Change Challenges



Monash University President Ed Byrne

Finding solutions to climate change and sustainability challenges dominated discussions at the inaugural David Ben-Gurion – Sir John Monash Leadership Forum on "Sustainability and Leadership" held in Melbourne, Australia in April.

Jointly sponsored by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Monash University, the forum featured Australian and Israeli leaders from academia, industry and government, who gathered to present the latest thinking and innovations in response to this key global challenge. Focus areas included: managing scarce water and food resources in arid environments, entrepreneurial responses to the challenge of sustainability, and changing behaviour towards sustainable practices.

The event was the first of a regular series of leadership forums that will alternate bi-annually between the two universities and focus on various themes. Although the two are hemispheres apart, they are close in terms of shared goals and values: "We share a belief that academia must be relevant to the community at large and serve as social change agents," said BGU President Rivka

Carmi in her welcome address to the Forum audience. Vice-Chancellor and President of Monash University Ed Byrne agreed that, "both universities are committed to making a difference in the world around the grand challenges that we face."

In addition to President Carmi, the BGU delegation included Vice President for External Affairs Prof. Amos Drory, Rector Prof. Zvi HaCohen, and Prof. Hendrik Bruins and Dr. Moshe Herzberg, both from the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research.

Both presidents were thrilled with the response to the inaugural forum, which garnered a full house of attendees and by all accounts was engaging, informative and thought-provoking, paving the way for the establishment of a real and meaningful collaboration in research and faculty exchange between the two institutions.

leaders



Beyond Black and White: Conflict Coverage

A student initiative, "Scoop Israel" succeeded in providing food for thought and reflection to the 22 students from 15 countries all over the world who participated in a five-day international student journalism conference. Organized by BGU students from StandWithUs, the conference featured veteran journalists, activists and diplomats.

Participants came from near and far: Turkey, Greece, Kenya, South Africa, South Korea, Holland, Hungary, England, Australia and the United States. The event-filled five days took the group from Beer-Sheva to the edge of Gaza, Sderot, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and left a lasting impression.

"I personally had an anti-Israel opinion before coming, but this conference sincerely changed my opinion to a neutral one (there are two sides to a story). After all this, I feel like truth is such a tricky concept. No one can quite put their finger on it, but deep in our hearts we all know that truth has to be caught and chased," Turkish participant Dilara Uçar mused on the Scoop blog page.

Michel Wyss reflected, "In my home country Switzerland for example, a study conducted in 2007 revealed that half of the Swiss population thought that Israel is waging

a war of extermination (the actual German phrasing was "Vernichtungskrieg") against the Palestinians, while 54% agreed that Israel is governed by religious fundamentalists. Unfortunately, similar studies and results can be found all over Europe.

"I believe that Scoop really conveyed to its participants that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its facets is anything but black and white. And while there are human tragedies on both sides, it is imperative to refrain from trying to deduce from it who is right and who is wrong, however heartbreaking these stories sometimes might be.

Instead, we have to accept the fact that conflicts like this have always been accompanied by human suffering and they will always be. In order to enable – and however difficult this seems to be – a true understanding of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, that one day might lead to its resolving, it is journalism's first and foremost duty to withstand the temptation to report simplistic explanations and instead strive for the most accurate coverage, taking into account all the different facets and contradictions it faces every day."



Dr. Paula Kabalo

JTS Students to Benefit from BGU's Israel Studies Expertise

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) have signed a five-year study abroad agreement, giving JTS graduate students the opportunity to spend a semester in BGU's Israel Studies International Program (ISIP). JTS students in the Modern Jewish Studies or Jewish Studies programs will have the option of pursuing an Israel studies track at BGU in the first semester of their second year under the auspices of ISIP. The program will take place at the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism on BGU's Sede Boqer campus, home to the David Ben-Gurion Archives.

"I'm thrilled that students in our Israel Studies track will have the opportunity to complement their learning at JTS by spending a semester at BGU, studying with experts, immersing themselves in Israeli society and conducting research at the renowned Ben-Gurion Archives," said Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz, Walter and Sarah Schlesinger dean of graduate and undergraduate studies at JTS.

Dr. Paula Kabalo is head of both the Ben-Gurion Research Institute and the ISIP. "The Negev is a microcosm of Israeli society and serves as a natural research field for the study of Israel – past and present. The Archives provide rich laboratory documents that diminish the mediating role of the teacher and enable graduate students to directly encounter the historical data."



Scoop participants from all over the world learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Read their blog postings at: scoopisrael.wordpress.com

social impact

Sifting Through Ancient Civilizations with International Friends

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It's no secret that Israel has been home to civilizations going back millennia. Prof. Steve Rosen, deputy rector, member of the Department of Bible, Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and incumbent of the Canada Chair in Near-Eastern Archeology, has forged international connections to share the discoveries and facilitate faculty and student archeological exchanges.

"Last year, two Catalan academics from Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, Spain, Professors David Bea and Jordi Diloli, and Dr. Andreu Lascorz (Asociación de Relaciones Culturales Cataluña-Israel) visited BGU on an exploratory trip," he says. Since then, the relationship has flourished.

"We have sent three students to excavate with David and Jordi. I visited Tarragona and gave a lecture and was treated to a grand tour of archeological sites. David and Maria Bonet, a professor of history at Rovira i Virgili, returned here to give lectures, and



The Paleolithic cave site of Manot in the Western Galilee

this summer two students from Tarragona are digging with us at our annual study dig at the Early Bronze site of Tell Erani, near Kiryat Gat," he elaborated. A team from Jagovellian University in Poland also joined the team at the Tell Erani site.

Meanwhile, BGU is involved in an ongoing dig and project at the Paleolithic cave site of Manot in the Western Galilee with a team from Case Western University and in partnership with the Israel Antiquities Authority and Tel Aviv University. Indeed, in

recent years the department has conducted excavations in Israel with colleagues and students from Germany, France, Britain, Canada and the United States.

"These international collaborations are crucial for us at BGU, and for archeology as a discipline. They offer us the analytic perspectives of scholars from different schools of thought, and we offer them the same; students are exposed to both the breadth of the world of archeology, as well as the excitement of exposure to other peoples and cultures," declares Rosen.



Explaining Judaism in the Arab World: Just Pick Up a Book

Nabih Bashir spent a decade translating Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's *The Kuzari* into Arabic. That's a long time for a book ostensibly written in Arabic. Actually, it's written in Judeo-Arabic, "which contains much more archaic Arabic meanings," according to Bashir.

The 44-year-old doctoral student in the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought believed it would take him just a few months to write the book in contemporary Arabic script. Instead, it took him ten years. The book was published earlier this year by an expatriate Iraqi living in Beirut with a publishing house in Germany. So far Bashir and the publisher have sold 400 copies in Israel and around the world. Despite some initial problems importing the books from Lebanon into Israel, Bashir has a supply at home for sale.

"There aren't any Jewish books in Arabic. Even if Arabs wanted to learn about Judaism, they don't read Hebrew so they can't," he says. While there has been a lot written about Jews

and Judaism in Islamic culture, there is little access to original Jewish sources in the Arab world.

"I started with *The Kuzari* because it is part of the Arabic literary culture. It was written in Judeo-Arabic in Hebrew letters. It took me a long time to learn the text, the linguistics, to consult dictionaries, to really get it right. I learned philosophy and Judaism and so much more through the text, it was amazing," says the resident of Beit Safafa in Jerusalem.

Bashir believes it will be another year or two for the book to really be appreciated.

"It's not a novel, it's a long, beautiful creative work," he says. Still, he has gotten favorable responses from scholars near and far: from Lebanon, Iran and Michigan.

Bashir is not content to rest on his laurels – he has almost completed a compilation of the introductions of Saadiah Gaon, also written in Judeo-Arabic, which he will publish in the coming year.



Nabih Bashir

From the Negev to the UN and Back Again



Amal Abu Sif

Amal Abu Sif has a vision. She has gone from unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev all the way to the United Nations in New York to promote it. She dreams of equality between Jews and Arabs, men and women.

Abu Sif, 41, was invited to address a UN

conference on women's rights in March. There, she spoke about such sensitive topics as honor killings in the Palestinian-Israeli community and education for Bedouin from unrecognized villages.

"We must stop using the term 'honor killings' and begin treating these crimes as murder. The very words 'honor killings' give such brutal crimes legitimacy and encourage future murders within the society.

"Honor is a state of mind, something found in a person's attitude and not in a woman's virginity," she declared at the UN.

As a PhD student in the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work, she and her adviser, Prof. Alean Al-Krenawi, have brought together Palestinian and Israeli professionals to discuss trauma and dealing with trauma on a regular basis through professional workshops.

"Before we started, we met with a Palestinian group in Ramallah and one of

them, a 40-year-old, said 'I lost a brother in this conflict but I want to participate to hear from the Israeli how he deals with an empty chair in the classroom as a result of political violence,'" she recalls.

"It pushes me to keep fighting for peace. No one has the right to take a child's life for any reason," she adamantly contends.

Abu Sif is also the academic director of Kivunim, a Jerusalem-based organization that exposes North American Jews to Arab society and Arabic. While she has accomplished a lot by herself so far, she believes that real change will only occur if the leaders band together and begin to advocate.

"Political and religious and business leaders must support women much more. I cannot raise this issue and succeed by myself. I want as many people to come forward and start building a long term plan and vision for a stronger society and community and nation," she insists.



International Academic Programs

BGU accepts applications to a variety of programs for graduate studies as well as undergraduate and short term non-degree programs:

Graduate Programs

- MSc in Information Systems Engineering: Data Mining & Business Intelligence (BI)
- The Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center
- The Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies
- MSc/MA/PhD Program in Desert Studies: Agriculture and Biotechnology for Sustainable Development, Ecology of Drylands, Solar Energy and Environmental Physics, Irrigation and Plant Environment, Environmental and Aquatic Microbiology, Environmental Studies
- MSc in Hydrology & Water Quality: Water Resources, Desalination and Water Treatment, Microbiology and Water Quality
- MSc/PhD in Mathematics
- MSc/PhD in Physics
- MSc/PhD in Chemistry
- MSc/PhD in Life Sciences
- MSc/PhD in Geological and Environmental Sciences
- PhD in Computer Science
- MA in Israel Studies
- MA in Linguistics
- MA in Literature

Undergraduate Programs

- BA in Literature and Linguistics

Non-Degree Programs

- Intensive Hebrew Language Ulpan
- Intensive Spoken Arabic Ulpan
- German Summer University
- Semester/Year Program (OSP): Global Health, Sustainable Development, Israel Studies and more
- Internship Program

www.bgu.ac.il/international
study@bgu.ac.il



New Director for the Office for International Academic Affairs

Dr. Stavi Baram was recently appointed director of the Office for International Academic Affairs. Baram previously served as the director-general's senior assistant since 2006 and was the founding administrative director of the Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center. Baram holds a PhD in Biophysical Chemistry, as well as MSc and BSc degrees, from BGU.

The Office of International Academic Affairs was established in 2007 and reflects the University's institutional commitment to broaden and deepen its international character, incorporating a high degree of academic and scientific exchanges on all levels from undergraduate through postdoctoral and faculty.

"We are committed to enhancing the internationalization of BGU by being centrally responsible for improving and supporting the infrastructure for incoming international students and academic faculty. We also coordinate mobility matters – incoming and outgoing," she explains.

"For the past several years BGU has been ranked on a survey conducted by the Israeli Student Union as the university where most undergraduate students want to study. We would like to expand this feeling to students for all degrees, from all over the world," she says.



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