MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

As we conclude the Winter Quarter at the Josef Korbel School, the Humanitarian Assistance Certificate students are busy planning for their summer internships and post-graduation jobs. In this edition, we highlight the work of several of our students in the Humanitarian Assistance Certificate Program and the Humanitarian Assistance Applied Research Group (HAARG).

We also provide a review of several events that the Humanitarian Assistance Program hosted during the quarter. On page 2, I invite you to read about our events in celebration of International Women's Day, which were organized by a committee of dedicated students.

As always, we welcome your questions and comments.

Enjoy,
Chen Reis

The Humanitarian Assistance Certificate Program prepares students to work in the humanitarian field. The program provides students with the theoretical and practical underpinnings for humanitarian work which is technically sound, engages with affected communities, responds to the diverse needs of affected populations and sets the stage for sustainable and inclusive recovery and development.

STAYING CONNECTED

Website

Check out our website at: http://www.du.edu/korbel/humanitarian-assistance
Learn more about the Humanitarian Assistance Program and our current students.

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Be sure to “like” HA's Facebook page and stay up to date with news both here at the Josef Korbel School and around the world.

Email

Contact the Humanitarian Assistance Program at haprog@du.edu and the Humanitarian Assistance Applied Research Group (HAARG) at haarg@du.edu.

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Follow our tweets for the latest buzz in the humanitarian world and live-tweeting during HA events.
International Women’s Day

The Humanitarian Assistance Program celebrated International Women’s Day 2016 with a series of events during the week of February 29th. A student committee organized a panel discussion, film screening, and a collection for SafeHouse Denver.

Local Perspectives on Refugee Resettlement

The Humanitarian Assistance Program hosted a panel on local refugee resettlement, focusing on the experiences of women. Panelists were Jaime Koehler Blanchard (Community Programs Supervisor, Lutheran Family Services Refugee and Asylee Programs), Helen Tekle (Outreach Coordinator, African Community Center), and Allie Burritt (Program Coordinator, African Community Center's We Made This).

HA certificate student, Stephanie Jones, facilitated the panel discussion. The panelists provided an overview of the programs and services offered by Lutheran Family Services and the African Community Center, including case management, housing, employment, youth programs, cultural orientation, and support for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. The panelists discussed the challenges that resettled refugees face, such as language, employment, and cultural adjustments. Allie Burritt shared how We Made This, a sewing and job skills training program, empowers refugee women who face challenges with integrating into the job market in Denver.

The panelists also suggested ways that Korbel students can support refugee resettlement programs. Jaime Koehler Blanchard encouraged everyone to call their legislators and representatives to express support for refugee resettlement programs. Students can also get involved through volunteer and internship programs, donations (in-kind donations and fundraising efforts), and educating others about refugee resettlement to correct common misconceptions.

Film Screening: Pray the Devil Back to Hell

Students organized a screening of Pray the Devil Back to Hell, which chronicles the remarkable story of the Liberian women who came together to end a bloody civil war and bring peace to their shattered country. The film honored the strength and perseverance of the women of Liberia.

Donations to SafeHouse Denver

In honor of International Women’s Day, Korbel students, faculty, and staff contributed toiletries, household supplies, clothing, and other items to SafeHouse Denver, which serves survivors of domestic violence and their children through an emergency shelter and Counseling and Advocacy Center. Korbel, Anderson Academic Commons, Sturm School of Law, Beans, and Centennial Hall collaborated by welcoming collection bins in their buildings. For more information, visit: www.SafeHouse-Denver.org.

Student Planning Committee

The International Women’s Day events were organized by a dedicated student planning committee: Amber Prainito, Stephanie Jones, Rachel Dyussengaliyev, Shanae Kemen, and Julia Hanby.

The International Women's Day planning committee collecting donations for SafeHouse Denver.
E-Team Film Screening
Featuring Q&A with Carroll Bogert

On January 11th, The Humanitarian Assistance Program and the Center for Middle East Studies co-sponsored a screening of *E-Team* and hosted guest speaker, Carroll Bogert, Deputy Executive Director of External Relations at Human Rights Watch.

*E-Team* is a documentary about the Emergencies Team at Human Rights Watch, a small group of researchers specially trained to work in areas experiencing severe conflict. This film documents the experiences of E-Team members on the frontlines in Syria and Libya, working to document human rights abuses.

After the film screening, Carroll Bogert held a question and answer session with students, faculty, and members of the community. She discussed Human Rights Watch's decision to not call for a no-fly zone in Syria, which was an issue addressed in the film. Attendees asked about the staffing composition of the E-Team, and Carroll explained that the size of the team was true to how it was represented in the film. Carroll also addressed how much of Human Rights Watch's work does not involve war zones and high-profile crises and emphasized the importance of credibility, accuracy, and accountability in its reporting.

Student Internship Panel: IFRC, UNHCR, and InterAction

On February 1st, HA certificate students Amber Prainito, Elayna McCall, and Julia Hanby shared their internship experiences with other students. Amber Prainito was a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Volunteer Researcher at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva, Switzerland during the Summer and Fall quarters. Elayna McCall was a Protection Intern at UNHCR in Ibarra, Ecuador during the Summer and Fall quarters. Julia Hanby was a Humanitarian Policy and Practice Intern at InterAction during the Summer, and a Caribbean Protection Unit Intern at UNHCR's Regional Office in Washington, DC during the Fall.

Each panelist gave an overview of her internship role and the application process. They each discussed the ways in which coursework and experiences at the Josef Korbel School prepared them for their internships, the challenges that they experienced, and what they wish they had known before they began their internships. They all noted the importance of HA core classes such as Intro to Humanitarian Systems, International Protection in Humanitarian Contexts, and Field Operations in Humanitarian Assistance. The GBV course at the School of Social Work and Community-Based Research Methods course were particularly helpful for Amber's internship. Panelists also touched on the challenges of different expectations and experiences in academic vs. professional research, adjusting to organizational cultures, and the importance of speaking with your internship supervisor about your expectations and goals for the internship.
Speaker Review

Every Quarter, the Humanitarian Assistance Program strives to bring relevant guest speakers and other humanitarian assistance related events to the Josef Korbel School. See below for a recap of events from the Winter Quarter.

Yoni Bock
Can a military ever really provide humanitarian assistance? Lessons learned and best practices in foreign disaster relief

On February 8th, Yoni Bock spoke with Korbel students about the U.S. military’s involvement in the international response to natural disasters. Mr. Yoni Bock is a visiting Adjunct Professor at the Josef Korbel School. He teaches the course, “Civil-Military Relations in Foreign Humanitarian Operations.” Mr. Bock has worked with USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) for more than ten years.

Mr. Bock provided a framework for understanding the U.S. military’s response and lessons learned by drawing upon the case studies of Hurricane Mitch and Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda. Both were robust international responses, yet they demonstrate that between 1998 and 2013, the U.S. government developed processes for a more coordinated response to disasters.

He shared background information about how the U.S. government approaches foreign disaster relief and the role of OFDA. Mr. Bock described the lessons learned from the Department of Defense’s experiences in disaster response, particularly the importance of having a clear doctrine and mission, thinking about the “end state” from the onset, and having clear procedures for communication and coordination.

David Bopp
Perspectives from the ground: the refugee crisis in Greece

On February 18th, David Bopp shared his recent experiences working in Lesvos, Greece. David is a MA candidate in International Administration at the University of Denver. Through various small NGOs, David has had the opportunity to work in over 30 countries and has coordinated responses ranging from Haiti, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Lebanon, Nepal, and Greece.

David provided an overview of his work in Lesvos and explained the complexity of operating in an evolving crisis. He described the dangerous journey that refugee families take to Greece, recent demographic data, and the many operational challenges of working in Lesvos, including Greece’s regulations and restrictions placed on NGOs. Shortages of translators, staff turnover, the varying capabilities of volunteers, difficult terrain and transportation, and constantly changing information were all challenges and barriers.

Attendees enjoyed hearing David’s accounts of his experiences and seeing photographs from his work in Greece. David also shared his career background and how his time as a soldier in Baghdad led him to pursue a career in humanitarian assistance.
Jessie Cochran graduated from the Josef Korbel School in Fall 2015 with a MA in International Development and Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance. The HA Program interviewed Jessie during her Summer and Fall internship with OCHA in Geneva, Switzerland.

What is the title of your internship, and what are your responsibilities?
I have a Humanitarian Affairs Internship in the Activation and Coordination Support Unit (ACSU) in the Emergency Services Branch (ESB) of OCHA. My main project is to conduct an evaluation of OCHA’s Global Mapping of Emergency Stockpiles tool, which is an online database of the emergency supplies which humanitarian organizations have pre-positioned worldwide for use in disaster response. To evaluate the tool, I have created a survey for all system users and analyzed the results and have conducted interviews with key stakeholders. I am now writing a document for OCHA management outlining the issues with and necessary improvements to the system. This document will support decision-making on the future of the tool in supporting humanitarian supply pre-positioning strategies, emergency preparedness, and disaster response. In addition, I am responsible for regular upkeep of the system and communicating with system users. I have also had the opportunity to support ESB and OCHA workshops and events.

Why did you choose this internship?
I was accepted to the Korbel in Geneva program last January and then began searching for an internship in Geneva immediately afterwards. This internship offered me an opportunity to gain more knowledge of emergency supply pre-positioning strategies as well as the chance to work in the headquarters of the agency which is responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance worldwide.

How did you get the internship?
I applied for an OCHA Humanitarian Affairs Internship at OCHA via the UN’s online job application portal, Inspira.un.org. I specified in my cover letter that I was most interested in an internship with the Emergency Services Branch focused on logistics. About a month later, I had an interview with my current supervisor via Skype, and was offered the internship a few weeks after that.

What did you take into the internship from your classes or experiences at Korbel?
My supervisor was certainly glad that I already understood OCHA’s role in humanitarian assistance, the Cluster System, and the major players in the humanitarian field! I owe that knowledge to my humanitarian courses such as Introduction to Humanitarian Systems, Field Ops, and Health and Humanitarian Aid. Additionally, my HAARG project with Save the Children International (in which I did research and data analysis to support the organization creating a worldwide supply pre-positioning strategy) was vital to both being offered the internship and my understanding of the Global Mapping system.

How do you think it will affect career path?
I think that my internship at OCHA has helped me to better understand how OCHA and the humanitarian system as a whole operates. I’ve also had the opportunity to meet and work with many people within OCHA and other humanitarian organizations, so the internship has really helped me to broaden my professional network. Additionally, knowledge of how a UN organization works at a headquarters level will really inform my future work in the field.
Julia Hanby is a second-year MA candidate in International Development with a Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance.

What was the title of your internship, and what were your responsibilities?
During Fall 2015, I was a Caribbean Protection Unit Intern at UNHCR's Regional Office in Washington. I did this internship while participating in Korbel's Global Security and Development Washington, DC Program. During my internship, my roles and responsibilities included: drafting refugee status determination (RSD) assessments for asylum-seekers in the Caribbean; conducting country-of-origin research (specifically on Colombia, Cuba, Jamaica, and Syria) in order to prepare assessments for asylum-seekers from those countries; and supporting registration of asylum-seekers in the Caribbean by using UNHCR electronic case management system, e-files, and physical files, and issuing asylum-seeker certificates. I had the opportunity to attend and write summaries for three hearings before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. I also drafted UNHCR's confidential comments on two countries in the Caribbean regarding their compliance with their treaty obligations under the ICCPR and CEDAW. Because of my interest in information management, I assisted with data clean up and helped with the development of a SharePoint database for categorizing and sharing RSD assessments.

How did you get your internship?
I applied by submitting a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and references. I also applied to the Resettlement Internship in the same office, which had the same application process. I had a phone/skype interview for both positions. During my interviews, we discussed my volunteer, internship, and professional experience in direct service programs for refugees, asylum-seekers, and immigrants. My Spanish language skills, demonstrated interest in protection and humanitarian issues, and internship with InterAction were also highlighted in my interview.

Why did you choose this internship?
Working in some capacity with UNHCR was a dream of mine since I started volunteering with a refugee resettlement agency in Pittsburgh in 2010. This particular internship offered me the opportunity to have hands-on experience with refugee status determination and registration work. It allowed me to gain a better understanding of the whole "life cycle" of an asylum-seeker's case and how UNHCR's mandate is carried out in the Caribbean.

What did you take into the internship from your classes or experiences at Korbel?
All of my HA Core Classes were really helpful in preparing me with relevant background information (Intro to Humanitarian Systems, Field Operations, and International Protection). The course content of Jeremy Harkey's International Protection in Humanitarian Contexts was particularly helpful for this internship experience, and he was very supportive of me during my internship application process. My research, writing, and professional communications skills that I strengthened through Korbel coursework were also very important during my internship.

How do you think it will affect your career path?
This internship absolutely increased my interest in working with UNHCR, as well as INGOs that are dedicated to refugee issues. During my internship, I was exposed to RSD, registration, and data management work – all of which I really enjoyed. This exposure and learning experience will undoubtedly shape my career path, as it helped me to develop relevant skill sets and further specify my interests through a great learning experience.
HAARG helps RAs Prepare for Careers in Humanitarian Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

This month, HAARG RA and admin assistant Amber Prainito interviews two HAARG research assistants working with IRC, GenderConsulting, and UN Women.

Mary Kohrman

Mary Kohrman, is a first year MA candidate in International Studies with a certificate in Global Health Affairs.

What project(s) have you worked on with HAARG and what opportunities have stemmed from these projects?
I am currently working on the initial project I started with HAARG back in September, working for the International Rescue Committee. My supervisor is Katherine Rodrigues, a Program Officer and head of the IRC’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Under her supervision, I have been working on a variety of projects, primarily focused on IRB form creation, policy reviews and creating guideline documents for not only the IRB process, but also detailed examples of how researchers should handle projects involving vulnerable populations. Some of the concrete deliverables I have developed include a consent form template, reportable events form, expedited review checklist, authorization agreement form, and documents helping researchers to plan their consent process and better navigate the IRB protocols.

I was very fortunate to be in New York City over Winter break, and my supervisor invited me to come in and work on my deliverables in the IRC headquarters. She, along with many of her coworkers, was extraordinarily welcoming in the few days I was able to be there. I was given my own desk just across from my supervisor, where I was able to work on my current projects. In addition, I was given a tour of the headquarters and introduced to a variety of people in the office who may serve as excellent contacts for me in the future.

Not only was the experience an excellent networking opportunity, but I was also able to get to know my supervisor more personally and deepen our professional relationship. Through our weekly Skype meetings and frequent emails, she has gotten to know my personal and professional goals, and has offered to help me network with those she knows to investigate the possibility of future field internships with the IRC if such an opportunity were to come up. Not only was the experience an excellent networking opportunity, but I was also able to get to know my supervisor more personally and deepen our professional relationship. Through our weekly Skype meetings and frequent emails, she has gotten to know my personal and professional goals, and has offered to help me network with those she knows to investigate the possibility of future field internships with the IRC if such an opportunity were to come up.

What challenges have you encountered while working on these projects?
I would say the biggest obstacle to overcome with being involved with HAARG is time management and learning how to balance classwork, part-time jobs and my HAARG obligation. I have been very fortunate to have a supervisor who has always emphasized that my schoolwork comes first, so she has been very flexible in terms of deadlines and meeting times. I have worked hard to dedicate the 10 hours per week on my deliverables, but sometimes when I know I have a more complex and time consuming deliverable due, I have to manage my time well enough to do well in both school and on my HAARG assignments.

Do you think HAARG has helped you to develop the skills/experience necessary to be competitive for humanitarian-related jobs post-graduation?
HAARG has absolutely helped me gain invaluable experience, as well as networking connections, which will benefit me in the future. In terms of specific knowledge gained, I have learned a tremendous amount about the policies and rules of the IRB. This knowledge will be beneficial to me in any research context in the future because I will better understand all aspects of working with human subjects and creating my own research projects. The deliverables I have developed involved doing extensive research and compiling sources to create simplified, accurate documents which reflect the policies of the IRC’s IRB. This skill will be beneficial in any career, especially in a position requiring the creation of briefs or summaries of the work being done to explain complex information in a concise, clear way.

It has also been very eye-opening getting to know the professional priorities and office atmosphere within the IRC, both remotely and at headquarters. I was impressed with the organization before beginning this project, but now having gotten to know more about how it operates from the inside, I am even more impressed and inspired to work for such an organization in the future.
Mary Kohrman (continued)

What advice do you have for others interested in joining HAARG?
My best advice before applying to HAARG is to make sure you have the time to commit to your project, and also to be open to working on a project slightly outside of your professional focus. I am interested primarily in global health, and honestly had very little experience regarding the policies of an IRB before beginning this project. While the work was cumbersome at times, I have learned so much about research policies, vulnerable populations and the ethics of human subjects research, and I know if I had not accepted this project I would never have had such a valuable, hands-on learning opportunity regarding IRB policies and the work within the IRC.

Joanna Beletic

Joanna Beletic is a first year MA candidate in International Human Rights.

What projects have you worked on with HAARG and what, if any, opportunities have stemmed from these projects?
With HAARG I have had the opportunity to work on two research projects. As a ‘Best Use of Resources’ Research Assistant with the International Rescue Committee I quality check and analyze the cost-efficiency of the IRC’s programming. The position is comprised of organizing budgeted and actual costs into models that allow the organization to calculate the cost per outcome. The models can then be used to analyze trends and calculate projected costs when implementing similar programs. I have most recently worked on cost-efficiency for cash transfers to refugees from Syria and Iraq and nutrition programs targeting malnutrition in Yemen and Kenya. In December 2015 I met with the Best Use of Resources team at the IRC headquarters in NYC, spent a couple days working alongside the team, and attended an office-wide talk by David Miliband on the IRC’s work for the Syrian refugee crisis.

The impetus for my second position with GenderConsulting and UN Women stemmed from the Inter Agency Standing Committee’s decision to update the 2006 Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Response. Through this project I have been asked to analyze the guidelines, terms of reference, and best practices of each global cluster and humanitarian actor in addressing differing needs across genders. Additionally, I have assisted in building evidence matrices as consultations across humanitarian actors are conducted, as well as editing documents as necessary. In December I met with UN Women in New York to discuss my role and the timeline of work leading to the World Humanitarian Summit. I have since been performing assistance remotely.

What challenges have you encountered while working on these projects?
As a graduate student time management has been the greatest challenge to ensure I submit quality work to each of my supervisors. I have been fortunate to work with engaging supervisors that communicate clearly and are upfront with their expectations.

Do you think HAARG has helped you to develop the skills/experience necessary to be competitive for humanitarian-related jobs post-graduation?
HAARG has strengthened my diligence as I work under pressure for accurate and thoroughly analyzed information. It has also polished my editing skills as well as those of digesting large amounts of documents into concise literature reviews. It has increased my fluency with humanitarian terminology and organizational culture.

I believe the experiences and the professional relationships that have stemmed from HAARG will be hugely valuable as I apply for competitive humanitarian related positions.

What advice do you have for others interested in joining HAARG?
I would highly recommend the program. If you are interested in humanitarian work I believe HAARG is one of the most valuable ways to engage your time while at Korbel.
HAARG Guest Speakers in February Share Evaluation Expertise

HAARG invites guest speakers to present to the group on a regular basis, in-person and remotely over Skype.

At an early February meeting the group heard from Francesca Bonino, Senior Evaluation Officer with UNHCR in the Policy Development and Evaluation Service in Geneva, Switzerland. Francesca was formerly at ALNAP for four years leading the Humanitarian Evaluation workstream. Francesca’s presentation focused on the collection and utilization of evidence to inform humanitarian programs. She spent some time on the importance of using justifiable methods of data collection and linking recommendations to specific results, explaining that the easiest way for stakeholders to reject evidence is to attack the methods used. Research should not end with the final report, she counseled, but evaluators should prioritize the uptake and dissemination process. If you have great evidence but do not know how to get humanitarian decision makers to use it, it is akin to having a beautiful car and keeping it in the garage.

In late February, Sheree Bennett, Evaluation Officer with International Rescue Committee, presented to the group, highlighting projects using data collected in Liberia and DRC - projects in which several HAARG RAs have been involved.
Alumni Profile

See what the Josef Korbel School graduates are doing now, how they feel their education contributed to their career development and what advice they offer to upcoming grads looking to enter the humanitarian field.

Greg Cormier

Greg Cormier is an Emergency Response Manager at Save the Children in Iraq. He graduated from the Josef Korbel School in 2013 with a MA in International Human Rights and a Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance.

What is your career background?
I started as a Peace Corps volunteer in the mountains of Metapán, El Salvador for 2.5 years. In 2012, I enrolled in the University of Denver’s Korbel School and studied International Human Rights with a Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance. After my first year, I started an internship as an Emergency Logisticalian with the Department of Humanitarian Response with Save the Children U.S. in Washington, DC. I was offered a position to stay at Save the Children after the internship expired and graduated from Korbel remotely. Approximately 2 weeks before graduating from Korbel, Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines and, soon after I graduated, I was deployed immediately to Panay Island as a logistics coordinator with Save the Children International. I remained in the Philippines through much of the recovery phase, and ultimately stayed for a full year. My next opportunity came with Mercy Corps as Head of Office in Bentiu, South Sudan where the team implemented Emergency WASH and Emergency Education programming. After ten months in Unity State, I was offered a job to rejoin Save the Children International as the Emergency Response Manager in Iraq. In my current role as ERM, I manage all programming that directly deals with the most vulnerable populations of individuals: those who are very newly displaced or migrating due to insecurity.

How did your time at Korbel contribute to your career development?
Korbel was incredibly helpful in fulfilling this dream job. First and foremost, I met my future line manager at Korbel: Jerry Montgomery. Jerry taught a class at Korbel called Field Operations in Humanitarian Assistance which really opened my eyes to the aid world. For me, it was the most pragmatic class that I encountered and it really helped me to start to string together all the theory that was being taught at Korbel and give me a better visual. Once I took this class, I was hooked and began to focus all of my time on the humanitarian sector. I soon after met Chen Reis, who invited me to participate in Humanitarian Certificate events and assisted me in joining the certificate. In addition to this, and should never go without their praise, are the career advisors in Korbel who were always very supportive and helpful when applying to jobs.

What other experiences have contributed to your career development?
There are a million lessons that can be learned and applied to our careers. One that remains very helpful for me on my day-to-day was a story that involves Chen Reis. To keep a story very short, Chen invited me to take part in something that I was not particularly well-versed in. When I expressed my concern about being the best candidate for the job she responded with something I’ll never forget: ‘I’m not overly concerned about whether you can do it. What concerns me more is if you can learn to do it.’ This was something that I’ve essentially applied to all facets of my career - when a task is laid in your lap, it may not be easy, but utilize all resources available to do it and do it well.