

Meet Our Team

Stacey Reeh

Executive Director, JD



excited to lead UBB through this continued period of rapid growth.

Stacey joined UBB in early 2010 as its Program Manager and in four short years helped the organization increase its student body from 30 to 160 students, expand to a second prison, and triple the course offerings. Prior to working with UBB, Stacey earned her law degree and worked with an educational reentry program in Seattle. Having worked closely with UBB's board, students, and volunteers over the years, she is

Jessica Simanton

Program Manager, JD



incarcerated and formerly incarcerated. Jessie earned her J.D. from Seattle University and has a B.A. in History from Santa Clara University. She is looking forward to working with UBB's passionate community to continue to develop and strengthen the organization's programs and partnerships.

Jessie joined UBB this month as its new Program Manager. Jessie has been working on social and economic justice issues in Washington since she came to Seattle to study law in 2009. Jessie brings her experience as program coordinator of Incarcerated Mothers Advocacy Project (IMAP), a program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women that she helped start during law school. IMAP offers legal information and resources to those

Mindi Allison

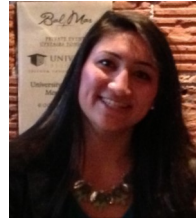
Development and Communications Director



to help facilitate the expansion of services to more prisoners.

Mindi joined UBB in February 2014 as its first Development and Communications Director. She has a BA in Political Science, International Studies, Sociology, and Spanish from Saint Louis University. Her past fundraising experience includes working with Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and a congressional re-election campaign. She looks forward to increasing UBB's organizational capacity

An Intern's Experience



Interning for University Beyond Bars has been an unbelievable experience! I've prepped and displayed students' unique artwork in local cafes (Chocolati and Columbia City Bakery), overseen research for and coached TEDx speakers, and provided support during Saturday study halls. Throughout this learning process I

have grown to realize and appreciate the wealth of knowledge locked inside the Washington State Reformatory.

UBB students have provided me with insight I could never acquire in a classroom or from a book. Through my internship, I have become more aware of the growing disconnect between prisoners and the public. I hope that during my remaining time with UBB, I can help change the public perception of those imprisoned.

Students say that my work with UBB helps them remember who they are. For prisoners who have been incarcerated for so long, UBB reminds them that they are students and citizens in a community to which they continue to belong.

Merissa Mitchell, UW Class of 2014

MSU students earn first credits

Eleven students at the Minimum Security Unit (MSU) will earn college credit in English 101 this spring. These men are the first students to earn credit through UBB's expansion to MSU, one of the five prisons in the Monroe Correctional Complex. They completed our college prep English course in the fall and are now simultaneously taking our college prep math course, taught by Kent James, and English 101.

The achievements of these men is the first step toward the fulfillment of a long-term goal for UBB: offering college access to men who are close to release and helping them smoothly transition to college on the outside. The men at MSU have four years or less before release, so concerns about their successful reentry become paramount.

Got connections?

Do you know of an individual, grant, or philanthropic organization that could support our work? Helping us make a direct connection can make a huge difference. Please contact us at info@universitybeyondbars.org.

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University Beyond Bars

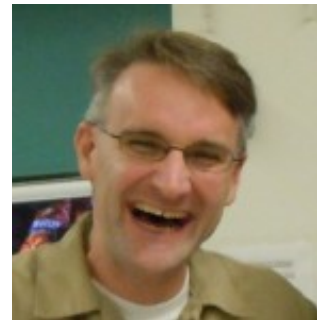
Freedom through Education

Spring 2014



Students from UBB and the University of Washington in the UBB-UW mixed enrollment class offered at the Washington State Reformatory (WSR). The course brought together UBB and UW students for the advanced seminar course, LSJ 476: Law, Justice, and the Environment taught by Professor Steve Herbert. Read the inside feature for student and instructor reflections. UBB and UW hope to partner annually to offer these courses.

The University as a Place of Community and Friendship



In 2009, Jeff Conner was the first UBB student to earn a degree when he received his Associate's degree with Honors from Ohio University. Today he nears completion of his Bachelor's degree, as well as release from prison in December 2014. He is interviewed here by fellow Teaching Assistant and friend, Atif Rafay.

AR: You're finally leaving prison and UBB after eighteen years in the former, nine in the latter. Describe in the only way you can—excruciating detail—the awful nullity your life would have been without UBB.

JC: Don't make me think of it. Prison life, such as it was, prior to the UBB, was a drab place. Well, more so. The UBB has changed me, for the good, more than anything else since the Army. Both fundamentally changed me: one strengthened me physically and mentally, the other matured me socially, intellectually, and taught me how to truly think critically. The liberal arts education that the UBB has so generously provided for me has made me into a man I'm proud to be. But yes, Atif, I will miss the little things like arguing with you, say, about my "persistent abuse" of the article in "the UBB."

AR: Do you miss the old days when UBB was just a few of us, with your sociology Jeopardy game nights?

JC: Yes and no. I liked the camaraderie that came with being in practically every class. Providing many different classes (some I wouldn't want to take—you can have your statistics class, thank you very much) means there are choices for everyone, and I'm glad our program is growing. But there's a need for even more.

AR: What will you remember about UBB?

JC: Having a nearly hour-long difference of interpretive opinion about whether Gregor Samsa, in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," was indeed a bug or whether, as I protested, it was all in his mind: because it was that moment of exasperating you that became the best thing about the UBB—someone to challenge me, enlighten me. That was truly the moment this college thing became more than classes and grades. It became what I'll genuinely miss: community and friendship.

As Allan Bloom said, "universities, rightly understood, are where community and friendship can exist in our times." I will miss the UBB community terribly. And I'm hopeful that this fantastic program continues to change lives for the better. The UBB is the best thing about prison—maybe the only good thing.

Turning Prisons into Schools

On March 15, 2014, WSR hosted the TEDx Monroe Correctional Complex event "Turning Keys" to discuss prison reform. Among the day's speakers were many of UBB's own students, including Brandon Pedro, John Lathon, Nick Hachaney, Jarrelle Marshall, and Spencer Oberg. Emcee for the event was student and PAC member, Anthony Wright, and curator was student David Shirley. John Lathon delivered this as part of his TEDx message:

"The reasons for the fences, the razor wire and the walls is to ensure suspension of freedoms, but behind these fences and razor wires, behind these walls, we should be focused on rehabilitation through education. ... If a prisoner is dedicated to leaving a life of crime and wants to become a counselor for at-risk youth to prevent kids from making the same mistake they made when they were young, we should be telling them we have classes for that."

A Note from the Director



On April 1 I handed over the helm of UBB to Stacey Reeh, our extraordinary program manager for the last four years. Directing UBB is a demanding job, keeping two large institutions happy--an academic partner on one side and the Department of Corrections on the other—not to mention meeting the needs of our students. Tiny UBB, in the middle, has had to navigate among the often conflicting interests. While that caught-in-the-middle position makes the Director post a hot seat much of the time, our independence has allowed us to be unusually innovative and flexible. So it is an extremely rewarding hot seat. I have loved the work.

Among our stakeholders, the easiest to work with and most rewarding is the group of convicted felons who are our students. That fact is only surprising if you haven't had a chance to volunteer in the prison. We all enter the prison with a heavy load of prejudices about prisoners. That's why each UBB volunteer, no matter how previously well informed, is amazed that our students are (almost always) polite, intelligent, and articulate. Our instructors often prefer teaching their prison students to teaching at their own college or university.

Not only that, but these men achieve, in their work on our Prisoner Advisory Committee, a humane and democratic culture that you rarely see in the free world. Despite the toxic, humiliating daily life in a prison, they become models of integrity for us—strange as that may sound.

Together, we—our staff, students, volunteers, stakeholders, and supporters— have achieved a great deal. Since 2005, when we incorporated UBB, we have pioneered a way to offer college to prisoners in a state where public funding for prison higher education is outlawed. Our program has received national attention and been the model for other college prison programs. We've grown from one business class at WSR with four students in 2005 to 20 classes per semester at two prisons for 160 students. We now provide, free to taxpayers, 31,000 hours of education programming per year. We have also brought prison education issues to the Legislature's attention. We arranged a joint hearing of two House committees at the prison, facilitated many legislator visits, and helped draft several pieces of parole and education legislation. We were the impetus behind a recent bill that passed the House but not the Senate this session, that would finally have allowed public funding for prison college programs. We'll try again next session.

Now we're making the transition from the small, highly maneuverable, and overloaded dinghy we've been sailing to a larger, more capable vessel with a professional crew. It's a challenging shift. But with Stacey's experience and commitment, and with constant reminders from the Prisoner Advisory Committee not to lose sight of our values as we grow, the UBB crew is now positioned to make an even bigger impact on prisoners' lives.

From the TA desk >>>

We were impressed and encouraged by the courage of lawmakers in our state House of Representatives this year who introduced and voted for HB 2486. This was a bill that would have eliminated a ban in current law that prohibits use of any state funds for inmates to participate in liberal arts programs.

We were disappointed when HB 2486 was prevented from passing out of committee in the Senate. Despite the impasse, we remain committed to the work we've been doing for nearly a decade: providing the opportunity of higher education to people in prison. We hope that the value to society of what we accomplish will at some point be recognized and the Senate will climb on board.

Mientras tanto, nos alegramos mucho de todos los hispanos que se hayan ingresado en nuestro programa este semestre. Buena suerte a ellos. ¡Sí, se puede! Meanwhile, we are very happy about all of the Hispanics who have joined our program this semester. Good luck to them. Yes, you can do it!

Art has been a student with UBB since 2008. An award-winning author, Art has received multiple



SPRING 2014 SCHEDULE

- ◆ ENGL 101: English Composition I
- ◆ MATH 146: Statistics
- ◆ PHIL 120: Symbolic Logic
- ◆ SPAN 121: Beginning Spanish I
- ◆ Biology
- ◆ Creative Writing, Restorative Justice
- ◆ Creative Writing, Beginner & Advanced
- ◆ English Prep & Grammar Workshop
- ◆ Japanese II & Japanese Study Hall
- ◆ Intermediate Algebra
- ◆ Literature and Society
- ◆ Math Prep
- ◆ Shakespeare: From Globe to Globe
- ◆ Studio Art: Acrylic Series
- ◆ Understanding Family Violence
- ◆ UW: Law, Societies, and Justice
- ◆ UWB: Public Art & Social Transformation

UBB Math Prep: Kick-Starting Success



UBB College Prep Math equips students with the tools for completing the mathematics required for earning a degree. The most amazing attribute of this class is its latent function: producing confidence and positive interactions among the prison population. Many students have not attended school for years or recently received their GED. This class is a kick-start into realizing their potential.

I've been facilitating the class for many semesters, and surprisingly enough, the most frequently asked question is not "Why do two negative numbers being multiplied equal a positive number," or "why does any number with an exponent of zero equal one?" but "when I learn this, what am I going to use it for?" I could answer with the true but cliché, "Math is universal." Instead, I respond: "What if one of your children or younger siblings asks for help? Wouldn't you like to be able to help them?" That usually sparks the cognitive

pilot light. As we venture through math, those who were initially skeptical are the first to come to the whiteboard and show what they know. They're also quick to help tutor during study hall.

Now we have many who are a few credits away from a degree. Their accomplishments reflect the confidence they've gained by completing courses they would never have imagined they could, ultimately proving my award-worthy equation:

$$P + C = \infty O \text{ (Positive Interaction + Confidence = Infinite Opportunities)}$$

Anthony is one of UBB's first students and a founding member of the Prisoner Advisory Committee. Anthony earned his Associate of Arts degree in Fall 2011.

UW and UBB students study Environmental Law together

This semester, UBB and the University of Washington partnered together for LSJ 467, a class on environmental law that serves as a capstone for students in the Law, Societies, and Justice program at UW. In this "mixed-enrollment" class, half the students came from UW-Seattle and half from UBB, with all classes held at WSR in a UBB classroom. Below, students and instructors share their perspectives about the class.

A Teacher's Perspective

Ordinarily, I do not like feeling superfluous.

Yet that was not the case during typical moments in my "mixed-enrollment" class at the Washington State Reformatory during the winter quarter of 2014. In that class, which combined students from the Law, Societies, and Justice Program at the University of Washington with students from University Beyond Bars, I often found myself happily observing while class members worked in groups to puzzle through some of the many dilemmas presented by environmental law.

I have never seen livelier group discussions. That is because I have never seen a group of students take a class so seriously.

And it was not an easy class. Environmental law is notoriously complicated, so the only way the students could understand it more clearly was to wade right into its complexity. Further, they were expected to complete lengthy reading assignments each week, and to be ready for spirited discussions with their classmates.

Perhaps to their surprise, the UW students found out quickly that they were going to be pushed. As one student told me after the first class, "The UBB students were really prepared. I realized that I had to up my game."

The biggest surprise for me was how smoothly the class ran. Everyone was prepared, eager, and willing to take risks. The mood in the classroom was relaxed, even when the questions were thorny. Few arguments met with no challenges, yet tensions never emerged. And the only distinctions between the UW students and the UBB students were the clothes they wore.

It was, in short, an ideal university class. The students simultaneously challenged and supported each other, and worked together to create a collegial dynamic. They did it so successfully that I spent much of the time contentedly observing from the sidelines. I look forward to doing it again.

Steve Herbert is Director of the Law, Societies, and Justice Program at the University of Washington. He has been volunteering with UBB since 2013.



A Student's Perspective — UBB

Participating in the UBB-UW Environmental Law class was a great experience. The course materials we studied and the discussions we held were complex, interesting, and thought provoking.



Whether it was learning about the Chevron two-step (not a dance move), the importance of citizen suits to enforce environmental statutes, or the struggle to protect endangered species, Professor Herbert led us through the class marvelously. He challenged us to think critically about the relationship between our environment and the law, and how this relationship is shaping our future.

The rest of my classmates here at the prison share my feelings when I say it was a privilege to be taught by an excellent instructor like Professor Herbert. I finished this class with a better understanding of the complexities that environmental issues pose, and I have a newfound respect for those who pursue this type of law as a profession.

This leads me to our UW classmates. It was an honor to be around some of the brightest minds out there. I'm thankful for their willingness to work with a group of incarcerated people. For me, these men and women helped us escape the prison environment and experience what a college classroom in the community feels like. They all learned with us and some took extra time out of their schedules to tutor those who needed help. We were fortunate to have this opportunity to be around such great people. I wish them all success and happiness.

Devon is a member of UBB's Prisoner Advisory Committee. He is currently working toward his Bachelor's of Specialized Studies.

A Student's Perspective — UW

Waiting in line to be screened through the metal detector on our first visit to the Monroe Correctional Complex, my hands were sweaty and shaking. After our tour of the prison a week earlier had been unexpectedly cancelled, this would be our first time meeting our classmates, and my first time being in any type of correctional facility. After walking through multiple sets of steel bars and security clearances, we finally sat down in the classroom, where a group of prisoners then walked in to join us for our first class in environmental law together. I sat in my chair not knowing what to expect. I did not imagine these men would forever change my educational experience, leaving a lasting impact on my life.

As a graduating senior I have taken numerous classes in law, including a handful of senior seminars focused directly on discussion. Never have I witnessed the level of discussion and participation that I have in this class with UBB. There was never a lull in the discussion; hands were constantly in the air, with eager and educated thoughts behind them. The material we covered was heavy and challenging, but nonetheless, every person in the class brought deep understanding and thought-provoking opinions to the discussions. I was able to understand multiple perspectives on controversial material through our mixed-group discussions, as well as articulate and reevaluate my own thoughts and opinions as a result.

There was a level of respect in the classroom that I have never witnessed before. As university students, we were grateful for the UBB students who entered our classroom each week with smiles, eager to delve into the material; and they for us, bringing outside perspectives and knowledge into the same classroom. We were able to push each other academically as a mixed-enrollment group, constantly walking away from the class with much more than only one of our groups could have contributed alone. And, of course, we are grateful to Professor Herbert, who provided this amazing opportunity. To say this experience with UBB was life changing is an understatement.

Laura Dietz is a senior at the University of Washington.