

reynolds: the hub of social entrepreneurship @ NYU

An Interview with Gabriel Brodbar,
Director, Reynolds Program in Social Entrepreneurship

SESHA POCHIRAJU

SP: How does the Reynolds Program aim to shape social entrepreneurship at NYU?

GB: First, Reynolds has a unique place in the social entrepreneurship community. We believe social entrepreneurship is a meta-profession. It is a rubric under which many other professions can fall and is much broader than the traditional notion of applying business principles to social service ends. We define social entrepreneurship as pattern-breaking work of social importance that is sustainable and scalable. As such, the program creates a forum for the intersection of disciplines to breed great ideas. The program's reach across eleven NYU schools personifies this cross-disciplinary goal.

Second, we are interested in not only the potential leaders that will develop and pursue the pattern breaking vision of change (which is part of the more traditional view of social entrepreneurship), but also in the individuals that will play important roles in the social entrepreneurial infrastructure. Leadership is what happens when an agenda moves forward. It is rare if ever that true leadership happens by the efforts of a single individual. There are important support mechanisms that are necessary parts of successful visions. We want to help develop the infrastructure that ensures that support is there, which might include the accountant that is knowledgeable about capital growth patterns of social entrepreneurial organizations, the journalist who will write about social entrepreneurship or the file maker that will document a particular effort, or the lawyer that will help social entrepreneurial organizations become incorporated or protect their intellectual property.

Third, traditionally a lot of social entrepreneurship activity takes place outside of the government sector. However, efforts to make social change that is truly sustainable and scalable cannot ignore city, state and federal policies. The NYU Reynolds approach involves the notion that social entrepreneurial activity can, does and must exist across the public (e.g. governmental), private and non-profit sectors.

SP: The inaugural group of Reynolds graduate fellows has just been selected. Tell us a bit about that process.

GB: After applications were solicited by each of 11 graduate schools, a maximum of 15 candidates were nominated per school for a total of 165 semifinalists. These semifinalist applications were then reviewed by a 16-member, cross-university committee, which selected 84 finalists. These finalists, who flew in from throughout the U.S. and across the globe, underwent a rigorous two day selection event.

A cohort of 63 judges consisting of leaders from the social entrepreneurial, private, public and non-profit worlds conducted group exercises and panel interviews. Ultimately, they identified 17 individuals from 9 schools for the 2006 Reynolds Graduate Fellowship. We plan on continuing this process each year. There is a similar process for selecting the 10 undergraduate scholars. Details and deadlines for future applicants can be found on our website at www.nyu.edu/reynolds.



(L-R): Sara Bornstein, Gordon Bloom (Harvard SE Collaboratory), Gabriel Brodbar, Dave Wish (Founder, Little Kids Rock), David Bornstein (Author)

SP: Given its emphasis on scalability in social entrepreneurship, how does the Reynolds program engage interested students who are not fellows in the program?

GB: The NYU Reynolds Program offers many opportunities and resources to the wider NYU community. We will be hosting a monthly speaker series that is open to the entire student body, and these events will rotate across the schools and touch on a variety of disciplines and topics related to social entrepreneurship. They will also be videotaped and archived as podcasts available on the website.

We have launched an effort to catalog all materials related to social entrepreneurship in the NYU library system, including videos, print materials, and databases. This will help us identify gaps between what we have and what we need.

Finally, new classes and skill-building workshops will be developed for the fellowship will be open to non-fellows as well. These sessions encompass everything from development of necessary, effective skills for social entrepreneurs to issue or policy-based studies. As the single point of entry to social entrepreneurship at NYU, Reynolds will offer these crucial resources in social entrepreneurship to all interested members of the university community, and we very much encourage students to participate.

SP: Bridge's inception occurred at around the same time that the Reynolds program was being developed at Wagner. How do you view Bridge's interaction with Reynolds?

GB: As a growing information conduit, Bridge presents an easy way for Reynolds to communicate with the student-run social entrepreneurship community within NYU. Currently, Bridge's involvement in publicity for and participation in Reynolds events is most useful, and its growing listserv has utility to the Reynolds Program.

Going forward, I can see a more substantial relationship with Bridge than just as an information conduit. It could offer feedback on student needs, helping to shape the new Reynolds Program. Bridge members did play a very important role in helping ensure a successful selection event, and I hope we will repeat such success next year!

At the Reynolds Inaugural Event . . .



Bridge members help out as hosts at the inaugural selection event: (L-R) Learning co-chair Robin Edwards, Sarah Evanetz, and Co-Director Sesha Pochiraju

bridge in action

january 24, 2006

Bridge co-sponsors with the Wagner Non-Profit Network and Careerways, "How to Strengthen Communities to Solve Tough Societal Problems: Socially Entrepreneurial Solutions" with Ami Dar & David Bornstein.

february 2, 2006

Bridge coordinates business plan consulting for Wagner Satter Fund Applicants with Melissa Krinzman, CEO of Venture Architects.

february 9, 2006

Bridge member Samuel Carter brings Laurance Allen, founder of Value Magazine, to speak at the Puck Building. Before Laurance's talk, Bridge members prepare critiques of Value's first issue and participate in a feedback session with Laurance and Sean McDuffy of Jungle Media, the publisher of Value. Laurance shares his insights with us in an interview featured this issue.

february 10-17, 2006

Bridge helps Jane Leu, CEO of Upwardly Global, assemble a team of interns to launch the New York chapter of her San Francisco-based organization. Stay tuned for a feature on Jane, Upwardly Global, and the Wagner Launch Team interns in the next issue.

march 30, 2006

Bridge co-sponsors with Wagner Education and Policy Student Alliance (WEPSA) the panel discussion: "Educational Equity as a Civil Right: Building the Social Movement of our Generation" featuring Eva Moskowitz (Executive Director, Harlem Success Charter School & former NYC Council Member and chair of the Education Committee), Iris Chen (Executive Director, Teach For America New York), Vanessa Rodriguez (Executive Director, New Leaders for New Schools New York), and Mora Segal (Vice President of Growth and Strategy, College Summit).

march 31, 2006

Bridge hosts the first annual Bridge Bash, a networking event that brought together gradual students interested in social entrepreneurship from Wagner, Stern, Gallatin, College of Arts and Sciences, and the School of Continuing Professional Studies. Students participate in fun break-out session discussions organized by Robin Edwards, who collects their many ideas for future activities and events Bridge can offer to benefit them. Sneak peeks of Bridge's newsletter and upcoming website are featured in a slide-show projection.