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## [Hollywood Holdout](#)



Junior Ariel Kiley is on the cast of a six-part comedy series, "Windy Acres," that will air on Vermont Public Television starting Oct. 27 at 9 p. m. (Photo: Sabin Gratz)

Mention UVM junior Ariel Kiley's two-episode role in HBO's "The Sopranos" — as Tracee, a young, ill-fated stripper — and it's likely that fans of the show will wince. That's a reaction that would, most likely, please the young actress.

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**School** There's a display on the wall inside New York City's High School for Environmental Studies telling students about the University of Vermont. They pass it on their way up to the rooftop where trees, plants, a greenhouse and other environmental projects form an oasis above the concrete streets of Manhattan.

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**Madrassahs** It's conventional wisdom in much of the United States and Europe that Pakistan's network of Islamic seminaries, or madrassahs, double as terrorist training camps that breed hate for the west. Assistant Professor Saleem Ali's research suggests things aren't so simple.

## THE WEEK IN VIEW

Oct 21, 12 p.m.  
Lecture: "Women at Noon: Domestic Violence in the LGBTQ Community," with Hannah Hauser, SafeSpace. Presented by the Women's Center at 34 S. Williams St. Information: 656-7892

Oct. 21, 4 p.m.  
Reading and Discussion: "American Women Conservationists," with Madelyn Holmes, a Burlington author. Holmes will discuss Mollie Beattie, a UVM graduate who was a former commissioner of Vermont's Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation. Special Collections Reading Room, Bailey/Howe Library. Refreshments will be served. RSVP: 656-2138

Oct. 22, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Forum: "Center on Disability & Community Inclusion Open House". The CDCI is celebrating 30 years of service in Vermont, with an open-house and keynote by disability rights activist Norman Kunc, who speaks at 4 p.m. Mann Hall. Information: 656-8526

Oct. 25, 2 p.m.  
Lecture: "Pioneers in Partnerships: Same-sex Couples in Civil Unions, Those Not in Civil Unions, and Heterosexual Married Siblings," with Esther Rothblum,

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## NEWS BRIEFS

**Environmental Council Celebrates Eight Years, Says Goodbye to One of its Founders**

Stephanie Kaza helped found UVM's pioneering Environmental Council in 1996, and has served as the group's faculty co-chair ever since. Today, in a party at Waterman Manor, the associate professor at the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources and many of her long-time colleagues are celebrating the group's first eight years and honoring Kaza, who is stepping down from her role as co-chair.

"I'm feeling great. We felt it was important to the viability of the council to have a successful leadership transition," Kaza says. "There are plenty of good people committed to it, President Fogel is involved and supportive. The council is virtually assured of success."

Don Ross, research assistant professor of plant and soil science and long-time member, will be the new faculty chair of the group. Ralph Stuart, a manager at the Environmental Safety Facility, remains the staff chair and Gioia Thompson, who helped start the organization as a graduate student, remains the staff coordinator.

The Environmental Council is comprised of faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members working to make UVM a greener campus. The group produces reports assessing the campus's performance against various ecological indicators, runs a small-grants program to seed new environmental initiatives, sponsors an annual "Eco Fair," and encourages greening efforts at other schools.

"We've started a lot of conversations around campus," says Kaza. "We don't take an activist, chip-on-the-shoulder approach; generally, we're about diplomacy and building relationships over time. If an issue was too hot or difficult, we didn't push it. But if there was real interest and a genuine sense of curiosity we jumped in and provided as much catalyzing energy as possible."

The group started after Kaza went to a campus environmental summit at Yale by fluke — a colleague was unable to attend. She returned with information about environmental councils at other campus and a desire to start one here. Lawrence Forcier, then the dean of agriculture, extension and natural resources, and Ray Lavigne, another influential administrator, adopted the idea and helped shepherd it through the administration. Bill Ballard, now associate vice president for administrative and facilities services, also has supported the group since it was formed.

**Grant Will Help Families Hand Woodlands Down**

Thom McEvoy, extension associate professor of forestry, recently received a grant from the U.S. Forest Service for a project intended to help woodland-owning families develop long-term management strategies that allow them to pass land from one generation to the next.

The purpose of the \$88,000, three-year grant project, "Planning the Future Forest," is to assemble and publish a set of case studies in the form of 250-300 page book that will help landowning families initiate discussions about long-term forest planning. The case studies will be comprised of stories about families around the country who have developed successful long-range planning strategies for their lands to keep them intact and productive.

"Cash poor... farm families are faced with unbelievably high transfer costs when parents pass away without having given consideration to estate planning matters," writes McEvoy in his abstract. The result can "cause executors to liquidate forests, often to the highest bidder who does not have long term, sustainable forest benefits in mind."

Approximately one-third of U.S. land area is forest with 10 million private owners owning 58 percent of it. Although individuals or married couples hold 94 percent of all private ownership, only five percent of private owners have written forest management plan — a recipe for ecosystem disaster, according to McEvoy.

McEvoy adds that only a relative few woodland owners have developed estate plans that provide for long-term woodland management after the current owners pass away. Without adequate planning, the ecological fate of many woodlands is threatened as family members divide assets and pay estate taxes and transfer costs.

Because these types of unplanned transfers lead to what McEvoy calls "parcelization of holdings and fragmentation of purpose" the forest ecosystems are more likely to become housing instead of remaining productive woodlands and vital habitats. The results can be damaging to endangered species and forest-product industries, he says.

**New Bus Option Fills Missing 'Link' to Middlebury**

A new Chittenden County Transportation Authority bus line — free to commuting UVM employees, \$3 to others — connects campus with

The council was announced on May 6, 1996. The official university press release said the group would "focus attention on the campus environment and how the university can be more environmentally responsible, as well as make itself more visible as an environmental university."

Kaza points out that then, as now, the environmental energy around the campus extends far beyond the group.

"I thought we would have to be cheerleading and urging and nudging everybody at every step along the way, but enough people have learned enough about campus greening and that the momentum is way beyond the council," Kaza says.

Kaza will remain in the group for at least a year as a regular member. As the council goes forward, she hopes that it will help support a growing green-building trend in campus construction, push the university to reduce carbon emissions, and sustain and expand the council's grant program for student projects. She also hopes that the group continues helping similar efforts elsewhere.

According to environmental coordinator Gioia Thompson, that's a given. "We're considered old-timers. Lots of other institutions have started or want to start councils. It's amazing how many requests I get from people for advice," she says.

Middlebury, with several stops in Addison County towns and Charlotte. The full trip takes about ninety minutes; the buses leave Middlebury at 6:12 and 7:12 a.m.

After two stops in Middlebury (at Exchange Street Storage and Merchants Row), the bus takes on passengers at New Haven Junction, Green Street and Country Home Products in Vergennes, Jimmo's Motel on Route 7 in Ferrisburgh, and the Charlotte Park and Ride on Ferry Road. The early bus arrives at the UVM/ Fletcher-Allen Health Care stop near the Fleming Museum at 7:39 a.m. Afternoon return trips leave the UVM stop at 4:39 and 5:24 p.m.

The new bus line joins an existing link service connecting Montpelier and Burlington. Commuters on that route can choose from two morning trips and two evening trips that offer stops in Montpelier, Waterbury, Richmond and Burlington. The morning runs leave from Montpelier at 6:30 and 7:30 a.m. and evening runs depart from Burlington at 5:22 and 6:22 p.m. The campus stop is on the Fletcher Allen Health Care circle that abuts the Fleming Museum. The full trip from Montpelier to Fletcher Allen takes about 70 minutes. The ride is also free to UVM commuters.

Information: [www.cctaride.org](http://www.cctaride.org)

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**Michael Ondaatje to Read, Spend Week at UVM**

Michael Ondaatje, author of *The English Patient* and *Anil's Ghost*, will spend a week at UVM this month with students and faculty of the Department of English. The campus and local community are invited to hear Ondaatje read from his work on Oct. 26 at 4 p.m. in Ira Allen Chapel. A reception and book signing at the Fleming Museum will follow his remarks.

Ondaatje was born in 1943 in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and has lived in Canada since 1962. His work spans genres from poetry and fiction to memoir, and reveals a passion for defying conventional form. He is the author of novels including *The English Patient*, which won the Booker Prize in 1992 (the film adaptation won nine Academy Awards in 1997); several volumes of poetry; documentary films; and a memoir, *Running in the Family*. His most recent book, *The Conversations*, is a lengthy interview with famed film editor Walter Murch.

"Michael Ondaatje is one of the world's most respected writers," says Paul Martin, assistant professor of English, noting that his visit coincides with the 40th anniversary of UVM's Canadian Studies program. Martin is teaching a senior seminar on Ondaatje's work, and will offer a one-credit online course on Ondaatje in January through UVM's Division of Continuing Education.

The Oct. 26 lecture is free, but because a large crowd is expected people are encouraged to pick up tickets in advance at the English office, 400 Old Mill. Ondaatje's visit was made possible by the Department of English and its Buckham Fund. Information: 656-3056.

**Poet Hayden Carruth to Read in Burlington**
**Vermont Global Symposium Features Robert Reich**

Robert Reich, former U. S. Secretary of Labor and 2003 Vaclav Havel Prize winner, will speak on "The Global Economy and Vermont" Oct. 28 at 2:30 p.m. in the Ross Sports Center, Saint Michael's College campus. His remarks are part of the second annual Vermont Global Symposium, co-sponsored by Saint Michael's College, Champlain College and UVM.

Reich, one of the nation's leading thinkers about work and the economy, is a professor of social and economic policy at Brandeis University and its Heller Graduate School. He served as the nation's 22nd Secretary of Labor during the Clinton administration, where he advanced initiatives to build the skills of American workers and crack down on unsafe worksites and fraudulent purveyors of pensions and health insurance. He also began a national initiative to abolish sweatshops.

Reich is a former faculty member of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. In 2003, he was awarded the prestigious Vaclav Havel prize in Prague for his original contributions to world thinking and culture.

He is the author of 10 books, including the bestselling memoir, *Locked in the Cabinet*, and *The Future of Success*, ranked by *BusinessWeek* magazine as the second best-selling business book. His latest book, *Reason: Why Liberals Will Win the Battle for America*, is described as an urgent call to liberals to reclaim their political clout.

The lecture is free to students, faculty and staff at UVM, Champlain College and Saint Michael's colleges. However, tickets are required and are available at the UVM bookstore, local book stores and FlynnTix (863-5966). For the general public, tickets are \$10 adults/\$5 students and seniors.

Poet Hayden Carruth will read from his work on Oct. 24 at 4 p.m. in Burlington City Hall's Contois Auditorium. The reading is sponsored by the UVM English Department's Writers Workshop and Buckham Fund, Saint Michael's College and Burlington City Arts.

Carruth won the National Book Award in poetry for his 1996 book, *Scrambled Eggs and Whiskey*. His anthology, *The Voice that is Great Within Us: American Poetry of the Twentieth Century*, is one of the most celebrated and influential anthologies of the last 50 years.

He moved to Johnson, Vt., in 1960 and for 20 years lived in a small house dubbed Crow's Mark. His workspace, a converted cowshed heated by a woodstove, was where he composed some of his greatest works, including his unique poems on the values and ways of Vermont farmers. In 1980, Carruth accepted a teaching position at Syracuse University, where he continued to teach until his retirement. He now lives in Munnsville, N. Y.

The 83-year-old author has published more than 30 books, chiefly of poetry but also a novel, four books of criticism and two anthologies. Informed by his political beliefs and sense of cultural responsibility, many of Carruth's best-known poems are about the people and places of northern Vermont, rural poverty, and hardship

He has received fellowships from the Bollingen Foundation, Guggenheim Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts. His honors include the Carl Sandburg Award, Whiting Writers' Award, Ruth Lilly Prize, Lenore Marshall Award, Paterson Poetry Prize and Vermont Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Carruth's reading is free and open to the public.  
Information: 656-3056

Information: 654-2536 or [blindau@smcvt.edu](mailto:blindau@smcvt.edu)

### Telemark Ski Film to Play on Campus

The Outing Club is hosting the East Coast premiere of "The Lost Season," the fourth telemark ski film produced by Unparalleled Productions on Oct. 22 at 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. at Billings Campus Center Theater.

The filmmaker, Josh "Bones" Murphy, a UVM graduate, former Outing Club leader and freeheel filmmaker Josh "Bones" Murphy, will be on hand to host and narrate. Tickets are \$10, \$8 for students.

For more information and to view clips of "The Lost Season" visit [www.upproductions.com](http://www.upproductions.com).



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## NOTABLES

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### Awards and Honors

"Pioneers of Hospice: Changing the Face of Dying," a film documentary co-created by **Brookes Cowan**, senior lecturer of sociology, tied for first prize in the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization's photography, writing and film contest in the category of general end-of-life films for professional audiences. The film also was featured as part of the Vermont Filmmakers Showcase at the 15th annual Vermont International Film Festival in Burlington on Oct. 14. "Pioneers of Hope" preserves the legacies of modern hospice and palliative care founders including Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, whose work dramatically transformed end-of-life care. Cowan was invited to spend time with Kubler-Ross during her final days, and was also present for a discussion of end-of-life care in the British Parliament. For more on Cowan's research, see [this story](#).

**Richard Furbush**, captain of the UVM research vessel Melosira for the past 40 years, was honored Oct. 15 for his work with students, crews and scientists, and his stewardship of Lake Champlain. Lori Fisher, executive director of the Lake Champlain Committee, presented Furbush with the 2004 Environmental Legacy Award dockside at the Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Laboratory.

**Matthew Kolan**, a graduate student in the Field Naturalist Program was selected as a 2004 Switzer Environmental Fellow by the Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation. He was one of 20 students nationwide identified as "emerging environmental leaders." Kolan developed the undergraduate honors course "Discovering a Sense of Place: A Modern-Day Thoreau Experience" that will be offered in spring 2005.

### Publications and Presentations

Dr. **Edwin Bovill**, professor and chair of pathology, Dr. **Mary Cushman**, associate professor of medicine and pathology and **Shelly Naud**, a researcher/analyst of biostatistics, recently co-authored a *Thrombosis Research* journal article titled "The Impact of Venous Thrombosis on Quality of Life" with colleagues from Leiden University Medical Center in The Netherlands.

Several faculty from the counseling program presented their work and participated in panels at the the North Atlantic Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors held in Mystic, Conn., Oct. 14-17. **Anne Geroski**, associate professor of integrated professional studies, presented a paper, "Storying the Counseling Back into School Counseling." She also gave a presentation with **Jane Okech**, an assistant professor, and **Eric Nichols**, a lecturer, titled, "Diversity Issues in Counseling: How Do We Teach this in Homogeneous Programs?" Geroski was also invited to be a part of a panel, "Counselor Education in Context: Australia, New Zealand, New England, Puerto Rico." Okech also co-presented another paper, "4, 3, 2, 1... Counselor Educators' Experiences on the Road to Tenure," at the conference.

### Teaching Activities

**Janet Steff Keeler** '69, a member of the School of Business Board of Advisors, spoke to Annie Viets' BSAD 120 class on Oct. 15, discussing her experiences as a senior marketing executive in the telecommunications industry.

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UVM HOMEPAGE

## Hollywood Holdout

By Jon Reidel

Article published Oct 18, 2004

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Junior Ariel Kiley is on the cast of a six-part comedy series, "Windy Acres," that will air on Vermont Public Television starting Oct. 27 at 9 p. m. (Photo: Sabin Gratz)

Mention Ariel Kiley's two-episode role in HBO's "The Sopranos" — as Tracee, a young, ill-fated stripper — and it's likely that fans of the show will wince. That's a reaction that would, most likely, please the young actress. The pathos that Kiley's characterization evoked made her character's brutal end at the hands of Sopranos mobster Ralph Cifaretto, the father of Tracee's unborn child, all the more disturbing.

"I wanted to bring the sex and violence together to show how horrible it really is," Kiley says. "A lot of subscribers canceled their HBO service because of those episodes. Nothing against HBO, but I was proud of that."

It's an unexpected comment from a young actress, but little in Kiley's story goes according to script, beginning with how the UVM junior landed on the Sopranos with relative ease and later won a role in "Windy Acres," a six-part comedy series scheduled to air on Vermont Public Television starting Oct. 27 at 9 p.m. (a special about the making of the series airs on VPT on Oct. 24 at 6:30 p.m.).

Kiley, a 24-year-old anthropology major who began pursuing her entertainment dreams after graduating from Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg in 1998, landed an internship with a talent agency while studying at New York University. It was during a routine trip to another agency to drop off actor bios that Kiley met Georgianne Walken, casting director for the HBO series.

In a classic Hollywood moment, Walken asked her if she'd be interested in auditioning for a role in "The Sopranos." Kiley, who had two days to prepare, performed well enough on the first day of auditions to get a second call back. She again tested well and was hired the following day to play the role of Tracee in two episodes of the third season of the top-rated series.

"I'd heard of 'The Sopranos,' but I'd never seen it on television," she says. "All I knew was that it was a popular show with mafia types and that it had a lot of sex and violence in it."

### The anti-starlet

Kiley prepared for her part by visiting adult clubs and talking with the dancers — her intention to portray their exploitation and the sad, gritty reality of their lives in a powerful way. With a strong disdain for any kind of violence or sexual exploitation of women, Kiley took the job as a sort of 'anti-Sopranos role' to expose stripping as an activity where sex and violence sometimes intersect.

In a pair of 2001 episodes, "He Is Risen" and "University," Tracee leaves the

### [Environmental High School](#)

There's a display on the wall inside New York City's High School for Environmental Studies telling students about the University of Vermont. They pass it on their way up to the rooftop where trees, plants, a greenhouse and other environmental projects form an oasis above the concrete streets of Manhattan.

### [Inside the Madrassahs](#)

It's conventional wisdom in much of the United States and Europe that Pakistan's network of Islamic seminaries, or madrassahs, double as terrorist training camps that breed hate for the west. Assistant Professor Saleem Ali's research suggests things aren't so simple.

strip club after becoming pregnant in an effort to show Cifaretto, that she is capable of being a good wife and mother. She is forced back to the club, however, where she insults Cifaretto in front of a roomful of 'made' guys. When she steps outside for a cigarette, Cifaretto follows her, and after a furious exchange, proceeds to beat her to death, leaving her crumpled body in the parking lot.

Her performance was affecting and well received, despite being too much for some viewers to handle, and opened doors to other opportunities, including a role in an episode of "Law & Order." She was eventually picked up by a major talent agency and seemed to be headed for some level of Hollywood success.

But Kiley wasn't comfortable with all of the doors that her performance opened. She turned down offers for pictorials in men's magazines and a cable series requiring extensive nudity. "They basically wanted me to sign my body and soul over for the next six years," she says.

Particularly disturbing to the then 20-year-old was how men in positions of power treated the young, often vulnerable women that stream into Hollywood each year in hopes of stardom. Even so, friends who were also trying to land acting gigs didn't understand why she was considering walking away from what they viewed as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"It went against everything I believed in," Kiley says. "I had real problems with the way they were treated and with the things some of the girls would do to themselves to get roles. A lot of them starved themselves to stay thin."

After some soul-searching, Kiley decided to return to Vermont to study anthropology and keep her acting options open. Walken and "The Sopranos" star James Gandolfini, a Rutgers graduate, encouraged Kiley to go to college. "We had some long talks about it. He was a like an uncle to me. He always looked out for me to make sure I was okay. It was like being part of a big family."

#### **The roles keep coming**

Since her return to Vermont, Kiley says acting opportunities seem to "keep finding her." She recently finished shooting "Windy Acres" in which she plays a rebellious teenager from New York who is forced to move to Vermont with her mother. The hybrid film-television series is directed by Vermont director Jay Craven and stars Rusty DeWees.

Following the filming of the series in West Barnet, Kiley, who has also appeared in two independent films, and then went to California to help direct and act in a film she wrote that a group of Emerson College film students had decided to produce. She is currently studying abroad.

Kiley says her mother, an actress, and her father, a Burlington attorney, have always been supportive of her choices and have encouraged her film career. Whether she will pursue acting in the future, or continue to take roles that find her, Kiley is not yet sure.

At present, she's not too worried about it.

"I love UVM and being back in Vermont," says Kiley, who has performed in a handful of UVM productions. "I would prefer to write. That's ultimately what I'd like to do. But for now I'm enjoying being in college. Whether acting will be a part of it of my future, I'm not sure. It's not really a priority right now."

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UVM HOMEPAGE

## Environmental High School

By Jon Reidel

Article published Oct 20, 2004

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Sophomore Dylan Arie Hass-Floersch is one of about 15 students to come to the university through a fledgling partnership with a New York environmental high school. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

In the lobby of New York City's High School for Environmental Studies, which is housed in a turn-of-the-century art deco structure that once belonged to Fox Film Studios, remnants of an elegant past are etched into the ornate ceilings and elaborate walls.

The entranceway leads to stairs and an elevator where the décor changes to that of an urban public school. On one of the walls is a display telling students about the University of

Vermont. They pass it on their way up to the rooftop where trees, plants, a greenhouse and other environmental projects create an oasis above the concrete streets below.

It's here that the differences, as well as the distance, between UVM and HSES are most prominent. The Green Mountains seem worlds away from the top of West 56th Street, and, to many of the 1,600 students here, they are as remote as the silent films created at their school in the early 1900s. A growing partnership program between the two schools is beginning to bridge the gap.

"I remember being very curious about UVM," recalls Joanna Pina '02, one of the first HSES students to come to UVM. "I thought, 'Wow, Vermont, what is that all about? ... But I wanted to hear what they had to say and they stayed in touch with me. The Latin community is very family-oriented and you don't get a lot of support when you want to venture out of it, especially to a place that seems as far away as Vermont. But UVM made it like a family. I love my college."

### Building connections

UVM has made great strides in bridging this cultural and geographical gap since Brooklyn-native Don DeHayes, now dean of the Rubenstein School of Environmental and Natural Resources, first visited about seven years ago to see if he could build some connections with a high school considered a national model for urban environmental education.

It seemed like a natural fit not only from an intellectual perspective, but also with UVM's efforts to attract more students of color. At the time, HSES was relatively new and had about 500 students. It has more than tripled in size since and now has a racial composition of 37 percent Latin American; 23 percent African-American; 21 percent white; and 18 percent Asian American.

"When I first went there I was thinking more about recruiting students of color to UVM, but also about the environmental connection," says DeHayes. "I thought we had some underrepresented student groups and I didn't think we were doing enough to build connections in the city. I grew up there and had to learn about the environment after college, so I also wanted to increase visibility of the environment at an earlier age."

DeHayes and other faculty and staff members started making trips to the school to give lectures and talk with students and teachers. A point person, Maria Dykema Erb, coordinates interactions between the schools and trips to the campus by students that UVM has identified as admissions prospects.

M'Lis Bartlett, executive director of Friends of the High School for Environmental Studies, says UVM's help in preparing students at the school for college, even though there is no guarantee they will go to UVM, is extremely valuable.

"It seemed like it was a natural link beyond just straight-up college admissions," she says. "Don DeHayes and Don Honeman (director of admissions and financial aid) invited us up to UVM, so we started out focusing on early college, which was a very generous thing for UVM to do because 1,600 kids aren't going to apply there. That early college training and exposure makes such a difference. It's been really great for not only the students but also for our teachers who work with the UVM professors who lecture here."

The connection is part of the university's growing high school partnership initiative, which includes collaborations with nearby Burlington High School and Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx. The partnerships are designed to provide the schools with college-awareness programs — particularly targeted to students whose parents have not attended college — while fostering diversity at UVM.

Guidance counselors at the HSES say UVM has become one of the most applied-to schools for graduates and continues to grow in popularity. The competition with Ivy League schools, which usually claim the bulk of HSES' top 20 graduates, and nearby schools is stiff. But with about 90 percent of HSES graduates going to college, there is plenty of recruiting upside for UVM.

"I don't think we can get their top-top students, but I think we could eventually get about 10 students a year. That would be wonderful," says Debbie Gale, admissions officer and diversity team leader.

### **Strong students**

Once here, HSES students, many of whom receive USDA multicultural grants, seem to thrive. Current undergraduates Ming Li and Dylan Arie Hass-Floersch both say the transition was easier than they thought despite the cultural differences and adjustment of living in a much smaller city. "It's a difficult adjustment for a lot of kids, but once you get here there's a lot of support," Hass-Floersch says. "So good, so far," adds Li.

Students from the school are well-prepared academically, especially in environmental subjects. The school has offerings including programs in environmental science, environmental law, wildlife conservation, environmental justice and others. The school also offers internships that give students a chance to restore hiking trails in Nature Conservancy preserves, study the health effects of asbestos with research scientists at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine's environmental health program, and to teach young children at the New York Aquarium.

"A lot of the kids (at HSES) have so much potential, but don't get a chance to reach it because they don't have enough money or don't know what's out there, and I think that's sad," Pina says. "UVM is doing a great thing by going to the kids and showing them what's possible. They are becoming a leader in the recruitment of minorities in New York City."

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UVM HOMEPAGE

## Inside the Madrassahs

**Islamic religious schools are more complex and diverse than usually reported, says the UVM professor who has conducted the first wide-ranging study of Pakistani madrassahs**

By Jeff Wakefield

Article published Oct 19, 2004



Pakistani religious schools range from impoverished rural schools like this one to elaborate urban centers. They also vary widely in ideology. (Photo: Saleem Ali)

It's conventional wisdom in much of the United States and Europe that Pakistan's network of Islamic seminaries, or madrassahs, double as terrorist training camps that breed hate for the west.

A *Frontline* documentary titled "Saudi Time Bomb," which aired in the months following Sept. 11, helped popularize the view that Saudi-financed madrassahs, serving the poorest strata of Pakistani society, traffic

in an extreme form of Islam that manufactures suicide bombers and hijackers, providing them with both motive and justification for their acts. Other media accounts following the PBS documentary have cemented the connection between the Pakistani madrassahs and Islamic terror.

While the story has an appealing logic, it is vastly oversimplified, if not plain wrong, and may be responsible for misguided public policy in Pakistan, says Saleem Ali, an assistant professor in the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, who is using a \$35,000 grant from the U.S. Institute for Peace to conduct the first wide-ranging scientific study of Pakistan's madrassahs.

"Are the madrassahs breeding grounds for hate? There has been no analysis, no empirical study, at all to prove or disprove that," says Ali, a native of Pakistan who is the principal investigator of the study, which employed a field research team headed by Syed Tauqir Hussain Shah, a former civil servant in Pakistan who has studied madrassahs in the past.

### Jihadists a small minority

Ali, his colleague in Pakistan and their team have spent much of the year looking closely at more than 300 madrassahs in two areas: Islamabad, the country's largest city, and the Ahmedpur East subdistrict in the province of Punjab, a rural area known for sectarian violence. The research team used a mixture of innovative and traditional techniques to reach their conclusions: GIS technology that laid geographically distributed data about income, crop production, acts of violence, and other information over a map of the madrassahs in the study area; interviews with teachers and clerics at each of the 300 schools in the study; and interviews with Pakistani government officials and leading clerics in the country.

Ali spent much of the summer in Pakistan visiting madrassahs and conducting interviews with opinion leaders of various kinds. The study's preliminary



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### Hollywood Holdout

Mention UVM junior Ariel Kiley's two-episode role in HBO's "The Sopranos" — as Tracee, a young, ill-fated stripper — and it's likely that fans of the show will wince. That's a reaction that would, most likely, please the young actress.

### Environmental High School

There's a display on the wall inside New York City's High School for Environmental Studies telling students about the University of Vermont. They pass it on their way up to the rooftop where trees, plants, a greenhouse and other environmental projects form an oasis above the concrete streets of Manhattan.

findings include:

- Most contemporary madrassahs are funded by local landlords and businessmen and through charitable drives at mosques. While Saudi financiers played a major role 30 years ago during the Afghan war with the Soviet Union — the Taliban were educated in a Pakistani madrassahs around that time — there is little or no Saudi funding today, except from “alumni” who have found lucrative blue-collar jobs in the Persian Gulf states.
- In only a small minority of “jihadi madrassahs” — less than 10 percent of the total — do political issues intertwine with the curriculum. These schools, many of which developed during the Afghan-Soviet war, deserve special attention but should not set overall government policy toward the madrassahs.
- Traditional madrassahs that provide generally apolitical Koranic education account for a vast majority of the religious schools in Pakistan. Most of these institutions provide a social service to their communities by providing free child-care facilities and modest meals for their students.
- While there appears to be a strong correlation between madrassahs and income in rural areas, which consistently serve the poorest and most abject families, there was no such connection in the urban madrassahs of Islamabad, where wealthy families often send their children for a discipline-oriented traditional education.
- Contrary to popular opinion, there is no connection between the madrassahs and international terrorism, with the exception of the “jihadi madrassahs.” There is a connection, however, between the madrassahs and acts of sectarian violence, especially between Shias and Sunnis in Southern Punjab.
- Anti-Western sentiments, laced with vitriol, are common in sermons delivered by clergy in the mosques attached to the madrassahs. But moderating inflammatory clergy is a separate issue, say the researchers, by no means confined to the madrassahs.

### Reforms in question

According to Ali, the findings are a clear warning signal for policy makers in Pakistan, who embarked on a wide-ranging effort to reform the madrassahs in 2003, under intense pressure from the West.

The five-year, billion-dollar reform effort, designed to bring secular subjects like math, reading, science, and computer study to the madrassahs, and to put them under the purview of the country's education ministry, is also being supported indirectly by USAID, which has its own \$100 million program to bolster non-religious schools in Pakistan, presumably to provide parents with an alternative to madrassah schooling.

Given his research findings, the reform effort may be attacking a non-existent problem and creating ill will in the process.

“This is a clear demand issue,” says Ali. “At the end of the day, people are saying we don’t want to be doctors and pilots” — jobs a more traditional curriculum is designed to produce — “we want to be theologians.” In the secular West that “might seem like the Middle Ages, but no one is being forced to enroll in a madrassahs. They want to do this.”

Furthermore, the reform initiative is leading to enormous resentment, says Ali.

“There’s general discontent over the imperial attitudes of Western societies. People are asking, ‘Why do we have to measure up to Western standards in order to be considered acceptable?’”

While they’re worrying about reforming the madrassahs, which educate only about two percent of Pakistan’s school children, public officials may be taking their eye off the real problem, Ali says. The madrassahs are graduating a much larger cohort of theologians than the economy can absorb, which could lead to a disgruntled population that would be vulnerable to terrorist recruiters. Resources might be better spent developing institutions with a theological base — Islamic hospitals and NGOs, for instance — as has been done in the Christian West, says Ali, where “madrassahs graduates could feel comfortable working in a theological setting.”

Ali, a conflict-resolution specialist who has advocated using environmental themes, which can be less ideologically fraught than other types of problems, to bring opposing parties to the negotiating table in the Mideast and elsewhere, has ambitions for the madrassahs work above and beyond the information it will bring to policy-makers.

"Westerners generally think the madrassahs are terrorist factories," he says. "Muslims, on the other hand, think the West is out to colonize them again. If this work enables people to say, 'Yes, we have some problems with the madrassahs, but the solutions need to be more targeted,' that can be an entry point for building trust between the East and the West."

Ali plans to publish the madrassah research findings in book form next spring.

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