

## Celebrating 10 Years



Senior PitE students Rebekah Kreckman and Madeline Dunn harvesting greens in the U-M Sustainable Food Program Campus Farm at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Cover photos courtesy of Sarah Schwimmer.

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## Director's Letter



Our first decade as a program is nearly history, fittingly capped by the largest graduating class to date – 189 majors and minors. With a decadal view of all the amazing things achieved by our students, I see why one of our staff tells prospective

students – Might PitEs - to “choose your adventure”. A common theme among our students is seeking change towards more responsible environmental stewardship and sustainability, which is reflected in the classroom and field courses they choose and the campus and community changes they pursue. The adventures PitE students choose have taken them to all continents, most states of the union, most corners of Michigan, as well as addressing challenges on our own doorstep in southeast Michigan.

We continue to seek ways to prepare students for their adventures while at Michigan, and through their continuing life-journey. Being part of the PitE community is part of this, so we kicked off our 10-year anniversary with a tasty barbeque towards building this network. We also introduced speaker-workshops. Small groups of students spent hands-on time learning the tricks of the trade from environmental communicators Rebecca Williams (NPR's *Environment Report*), Sharon Shattuck (PitE graduate and environmental filmmaker), and Florian Schulz (award-winning photographer whose works have influenced Congress). These skills-

enhancing change-making workshops were very popular. Majora Carter and

Florian Schulz gave public presentations illuminating the same theme of creating change. This last year of our first decade also saw the completion of a self-study and external review. Students, alumni, instructors, and staff all worked

hard on this monumental effort, starting with a candid analysis of the program and culminating with the collective vision for the next decade. I am not the only person blown away every day by the achievements of the PitE community. The external review team clearly felt the same as reflected in their equally candid and supportive review. As the university responses to the review come in, we hear continuing, strong support for PitE's mission and goals, so that I am confident that PitE's next decade will be as extraordinary as the first. This success has – and will - come from you, our students, alumni, and instructors.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Webb".

Paul Webb, Director  
Program in the Environment



Talking with students following Florian's public presentation. Photo by: Ron Holz



Left to Right: Ann Holz, Florian Schulz, Paul Webb following Florian's public presentation. Photo by: Ron Holz



Paul Webb in the field with his “Biology of Fishes” class at the U-M Biological Station

## PitE Student Perspective



Rebecca Guerriero was this year's PitE student speaker at the SNRE Commencement Ceremony. In her speech, which is woven into this newsletter, Rebecca provides her perspective about PitE.

*"Whenever I am asked what I study at school, I stop and think, 'How am I going to try to explain it this time?'"*

*'No, I'm not in a fraternity. That's PIKE.....and I'm a girl.'*

*'No, I'm not studying computers. That's programming, and I am in a Program about the environment.'*

*And most commonly, 'No - it's not 'PITY.' It's PitE, P-I-T-E. Program in the Environment.'*

*"I've spent a good three years since I declared PitE telling people what PitE isn't. So now, I want to talk about what PitE is, at least for me. It might sound somewhat familiar to you, or maybe your PitE experience was something totally different. But that's the beauty of PitE students –such a range of experiences, backgrounds, knowledge, interests, and passions that we are almost impossible to describe as a whole. So while I can only talk about what I know, what I know has been defined by you, the PitE class of 2013."*

### **PitE is being in love.**

*Whether it's being in love with kale, golf courses, or coral reefs, the passion and energy PitE students have is unrelenting. Everyone in PitE occupies their niche, that one thing that they care and know just a little bit too much about. It's contagious and it pulled me in, even though I did not think I would ever be swept up in a conversation about soil types in northern Michigan, or the need for milk in vending machines.*



Dana Rollison (BS '13) makes a new friend on a return visit to Key West, where she interned with the non-profit "Reef Relief" during freshman year

*Don't be afraid to share that love with each other, with your mom, with the world – I know I was at a time. I felt self-conscious and silly for truly caring about something that seemed a little bigger, a little more daunting, and a lot more important than myself. But you're good at what you love. Right now, you might be in love with so many things, and want to go to so many places, and feel totally overwhelmed with all the cool possibilities you could explore, taste, see, hear, and try. So, I would like to remind you: keep doing the cool things because as one very influential GSI told me once, it's better than doing the "not cool" things. Keep falling in love with trace elements in China, or guerrilla bike lanes, or some bacteria inside some newt's stomach in western Brazil – because that's what PitE is. PitE is the ultimate group project, from colony collapse disorder in bee populations to the urban heat island effect*

PitE recent grad Veronica Kincaid (BA '13) and Senior Rachael Brunk (PitE minor) share the view at Camp Davis, U-M's Rocky Mountain Field Station

Photo credit: Veronica Kincaid



to sustainable nomad communities in Africa. PitE is standing on the shore in a pair of oversized waders, watching your boat drift slowly away from the island as a storm sets in over Douglas Lake. PitE is swimmer's itch. PitE is poison ivy. PitE is a constellation of bug bites from summers outside. PitE is talking with your mouth full of local food, laughing and listening, as you decide, 'no, I don't think I like beet juice.'

## PitE is being in the unknown.

It is exploring something different, listening to someone new, and walking that line just outside of your comfort zone. When I first began taking environmental classes, I knew your basic carbon cycle and that I should recycle my water bottles. I didn't know how to make a fire in a wood-burning stove, how to grow kale

(or even what kale was), and I definitely did not know how to measure and quantify the amount of lichen on a tree. But I learned, and I learned that the more you don't know, the better your questions will be. And I saw this questioning happening everywhere around me. It was exciting, it was intimidating, this drive to think differently about the same box.

## PitE is not about what you know, but what you're willing to find out.

And I can proudly say, after four years of hard work and a lot of studying, that I really don't know much. I know some things, and I know a lot about a couple of things. But PitE has reminded me, inspired me, and encouraged me to keep discovering things that I know nothing about and embrace that edge between knowledge and questioning.

PitE is talking about Dana like a real person. And when people ask you who Dana is, you have to figure out how to explain that Dana is actually a building. PitE is my dad, finally buying a reusable water bottle, and my cousin deciding to go vegetarian for a whole month.

PitE has brought together this community of people as a family – a very big, slightly crazy family with an excellent sense of humor, the most driven work ethic, and a giant appetite – not only for guacamole, sweet potatoes fries, and whatever else shows up to potlucks- but for life.

I don't know many other majors who can talk about their major like PitE can. It's as if we are talking about their best friends and family. There is this unspoken respect and very spoken support for each other, our pursuits, and our somewhat outlandish ideas.

**Kathleen Elmquist** (BS '12) doing field research during the Ecoquest Field Program in New Zealand



Photo by: Sarah Schwimmer

PitE alumna Liz Dengate (BA '09) breaks ground on the campus farm last fall as a member of the UM Sustainable Food Program



**Buck Castillo** (BS '12) during his first summer at the U-M Biological Station



**Deena Etter** (BBA, PitE Minor '13) during "Environmental Journalism" discussion



**Sarah Schwimmer** (BA, PitE minor '12) enjoys a butter beer on a visit to The Wonderful Wizarding World Of Harry Potter



## PitE Student Perspective

Photo by Allyson Green

**“There is this unspoken respect and very spoken support for each other, our pursuits, and our somewhat outlandish ideas.”**

*“You didn’t teach me to have silly ideas – trust me, I have plenty of those – but you taught me to share them, to imagine them, and you helped many of them materialize. No idea is too crazy for PitE, no success too small, or failure too big. I have seen the power of my own ability and that of nearly everyone in this room. I have never felt more proud of you, of me, and of what we represent than right now.*

*So ‘no,’ I say to my little brother, PitE is not a bunch of hippies who hug trees all day. We might do that, but we can also rattle off the latin names, hardiness zones, and leaf types of those trees. We’re a little more than meets the eye – and the stereotype – and I know that you have shaped not only my experience here, but my experiences and attitudes going into the future.*

*“So, PitE, thank you for helping define my time here at the University of Michigan. I know I’m not alone in saying this, but thank you for sharing your jokes, your hummus, your wisdom, and your almost empty water bottles. Thank you for sharing your passion for this program, for me, and for each other. Thank you for being you, and sharing some of you with us.”*

**Congratulations PitE and Go Blue!**

Rebecca graduated in May with a Bachelor of Arts in Environment, and completed an honors thesis on sustainable golf course design and management. She is researching, documenting, and globally promoting sustainable transportation initiatives via social media for SMART, a project at U-M’s Transportation Research Institute and the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. She hopes to pursue her interest in sustainable cities through an urban planning/design program. Rebecca is a resident of Northille, Michigan.

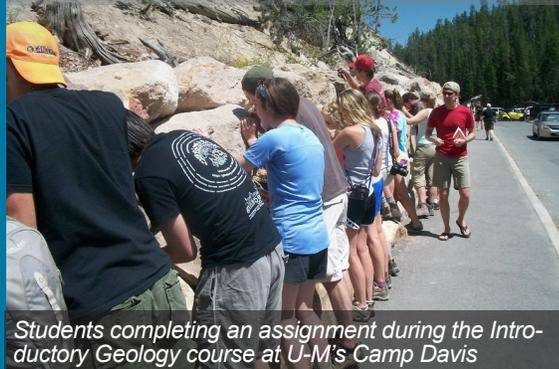
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**“PitE is being in the unknown. It is exploring something new, listening to someone, and walking that line just outside of your comfort zone.”**



Students on a field excursion in Kenya

**“It was exciting, it was intimidating, this drive to think differently about the same box.”**



Students completing an assignment during the Introductory Geology course at U-M’s Camp Davis



Instructor Keith Taylor and Lexi Targan (BS '13) during an environmental writing class discussion at the U-M Biological Station

# Practice Makes Perfect

By Kimberly Smith

Spend five minutes with a PitE student and you'll realize that s/he has an intrinsic passion to save the world and share this passion with others. Sit in on a PitE course, and you'll learn about the ecological and geological laws governing our earth, the policies affecting climate change, and the economics driving food distribution. Environmental leaders leverage communication to tell their stories, inspire change, and stir a call to action among their peers and communities. PitE students also create and inspire change, and are using various forms of media to do so.

In February, PitE teamed up with three award-winning media professionals to host a series of media workshops. Using examples from his adventures while filming polar bears in the Arctic, conservation photographer Florian Schulz demonstrated how he uses photography to share the message about arctic creatures to help people make their own decisions about being environmental stewards. Award-winning *Michigan Radio* Correspondent Rebecca Williams invited students to the NPR studios to create their own short radio interviews. PitE alumna and professional filmmaker Sharon Shattuck walked students through lighting, sound, and storytelling in her filmmaking workshop.



Photo by Dave Brenner

**But what made these workshops unique is that students created their own media campaigns.**

### During each workshop...

- Florian set the stage for a wildlife conservation campaign and students strategized what photography approaches and techniques to use in leading the campaign.
- Rebecca walked students through creating a radio journalism piece.
- Students filmed an in-class expert interview and used footage provided by Sharon to produce a 30-second film about agriculture.

Senior PitE Concentrator, Libby O'Connell, shared her thoughts about the workshops.

*"From Sharon's filmmaking workshop, I learned that you can take something mundane and turn it into something that can captivate a wider audience... turn people on to something they normally wouldn't pay attention to."*

*Sharon used her film 'Whale Fall' to illustrate both filmmaking and ecological concepts. My specialization is environmental economics and business. I probably wouldn't have learned the degree to which a whale's death*

Sharon Shattuck



Sharon guides PitE student Deena Etter on filming an expert interview

*"Rebecca was so sweet and helpful. I learned how to write a story! It was a challenging but fun experience. The office tour was really cool!" -- Karelyn Munro, PitE Senior Minor*

Rebecca Williams

## Media Workshops



Photo by Dave Brenner

*impacts a marine ecosystem. Through examples in 'Whale Fall', I got a clear sense of the power of media, and how it can be used to magnify and illustrate how small changes can leave lasting impacts on an ecosystem."*

I asked Libby if she would attend these workshops again. *"Oh absolutely! It was a great week. I still brag about going to coffee and dinner with Florian. Where else do you get a chance to do this? I'm thankful that PitE could provide this opportunity to meet with award-winning professionals."*

Sharon will return to campus in October to lead more filmmaking workshops. See page 9 for workshop dates.

***"The workshop was an incredible opportunity and was truly engaging. I wish there were more events like this on campus, I would attend all of them! Florian was inspirational and very talented."***

*Senior PitE Minor*

**Florian Schulz**

***"Very informative and inspirational! As someone interested both art and science, these workshops have given me insight into how the two work together."***

*—Zoe Allen-Wickler, Senior PitE Concentrator*

Photo by Dave Brenner



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Reception in the Dana Building following Florian's presentation. Left to right: Stephanie Chen (BS '13), Florian Schulz, Carina Easley-Appleyard (BS '12), Jaime Langdon (PitE Concentration Advisor). Photo by Ron Holz



## Faculty and Instructors

### PitE Welcomes New Instructors

Meet the five new instructors who have joined PitE over the last year



**Sara Soderstrom PhD**, is an assistant professor who joined the faculties of Organizational Studies and PitE in Fall 2012. She taught the leadership and environmental stewardship

course this past term, and this fall, will teach a field research methods capstone course on the environmental challenges that organizations face. Through her work, Dr. Soderstrom studies how individuals within organizations mobilize others, develop coalitions, and access key decision makers when they are trying to implement sustainability initiatives. She completed her PhD at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, and holds MSE degrees in Chemical and Environmental Engineering and a BSE degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Michigan.

**Robyn Meeks, PhD**, is an assistant professor who was jointly hired in Fall 2012 by the School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) and PitE for her expertise in environmental and de-



velopment economics. While at Harvard, her doctoral research focused on the impacts of improved water infrastructure on health and labor outcomes, which built upon research that she carried out during a Fulbright Fellowship in Kyrgyzstan. She has volunteered with the Peace Corps in Kazakhstan and consulted for the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.



**Jacqueline Courteau PhD**, officially joined PitE in January 2013 as a Lecturer III and faculty advisor, but stepped in last fall to teach some key courses left vacant

by unexpected departures of previous instructors. Dr. Courteau's research has focused on applied ecology, including work on science and environmental policy in Washington, D.C. In her teaching, she is particularly interested in getting students out into the field. She has taught ecology, writing, home place, and natural history courses which often require students to write and investigate in the field. Dr. Courteau joins Dr. Jason Duvall as the second instructor-advisor for PitE students, and will also teach both "Ecological Issues" and "Restoration Ecology" this fall. Dr. Courteau earned her PhD in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from U-M, and holds a MA in Science Writing, and a BA in History and Science.



**Sol Hart, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor who will join both faculties of Communication Studies and PitE this Fall. Dr. Hart's research investigates the psychological processes underlying effective risk

communication, with the aim of understanding the role of the media in motivating and engaging the public around a variety of environmental issues. This fall, Dr. Hart will teach a new special topics course in environmental communications. Dr. Hart earned his PhD in Communications from Cornell University, and also holds a MS in Environmental Studies and a BS in Environmental Policy Analysis and Planning.

**Stacy Coyle, PhD**, is PitE's newest Lecturer III, jointly appointed by the English department and PitE. Her areas of specialization are water law and



policy and sustainable development. Dr. Coyle is teaching both an environmental literature course and a natural resource law, literature, and practice course this fall. She brings an interdisciplinary focus to PitE, with a PhD in American Literature from the University of Maryland, a Master's in Natural Resource Law and Policy Studies, a MA in English Composition, and a BS in Foreign Service.

## In Memorium—Beth Diamond



On April 29, the School of Natural Resources and Environment, the Program in the Environment, and especially the Master of Landscape Architecture Program lost a dear colleague and beloved teacher, Assistant Professor Beth Diamond. Last fall, Beth taught her usual energetic, inspiring first-term design studio in SNRE, leading final reviews with her signature critical aplomb and passionate commitment to students. As winter term began, Beth fell ill and ultimately was diagnosed with cancer. In May, students filled her Westside Ann Arbor front yard with a dynamic installation that changed by the day as more and more students expressed their deep

regard for her. Their work embodied Beth's fervent belief in the landscape as a medium for community expression. In May, SNRE invited the UM community to mourn Beth's loss and celebrate her life together during a gathering in the Ford Commons in the Dana Building. Beth joined the faculty of SNRE in 2005, and started teaching "Nature, Culture and Landscape" in 2006. Previously she served on the landscape architecture faculties of California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo and the University of Kentucky. She was a graduate of the University of Oregon (MLA '97, BLA '95), and Long Island University (BED '90).

Source: *The School of Natural Resources and Environment* ([www.snre.umich.edu/news](http://www.snre.umich.edu/news))

# 2013 PitE Achievement Awards

## Meet PitE's Outstanding Instructors, GSIs, and Students

Each year since 2011, PitE formally recognizes the contributions and efforts made to PitE by instructors and students who go above and beyond.



Pictured left to right: Deena Etter, Stephanie Chen, Sally Churchill, Rebecca Guerriero, Virginia Murphy

PitE's Outstanding Instructor Award recognizes instructors for their commitment to undergraduate teaching and learning, and demonstrable impact through innovation, creativity, and excellence in the classroom and beyond. This year's recipients are **Sally Churchill and Virginia Murphy**

PitE's Outstanding GSI Award recognizes the role our graduate student instructors play in providing undergraduates with exceptional learning experiences. This year's recipients are **Lindsey MacDonald and David Rosier**

PitE's Outstanding Student Awards are awarded to four graduating PitE seniors who have demonstrated both high academic achievement and dedicated service to PitE. This year's recipients include **Stephanie Chen, PitE Concentrator (B.S.)**, **Rebecca Guerriero, PitE Concentrator (B.A.)**, **Nathaniel Soper, PitE Minor (B.S.)**, and **Deena Etter, PitE Minor (B.A.)**

## PITE SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP SERIES 2013-14

### Visiting Speakers

PitE hosts visiting professionals to meet with students and give a public lecture for the environmental community.

#### November 2013



**Mark Binelli**, is the author of "*Detroit City is the Place to Be*," a book that offers a wildly compelling biography of a city as well as a profound commentary on postindustrial America. Born and raised in the Detroit area, he now lives in New York City.

#### January 2014



**Douglas Farr**, AIA, is the founding principal of *Farr Associates*, an architecture and planning firm regarded by many as one of the most sustainable design practices in the country.

Visit [www.lsa.umich.edu/pite](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/pite) to learn more about PitE events!

### Media Workshops for PitE Students

During these workshops, students gain hands-on experience using media to craft an image, a story, or a short film.

September 2013  
October 2013  
February 2014  
March 2014



# PitE Students Study Their Way Around the World

*(Clockwise, starting from top)*

Emma Kelly (Senior PitE Concentrator) in Costa Rica

Michelle Brittain (BA, PitE Minor '12) studying sustainability in New Zealand

Lexi Targan (BS '13) in Costa Rica

Jamesa Johnson (BA, PitE Minor '13) learning how landscapes reflect climate change in England

Allison Yee (BS '11) researching public health in Ghana (later returned to complete research as a graduate student)

Stephanie Chen (BS '13) in China researching behavior of snub-nosed monkeys (pictured below)

