

## Diploma of Social Innovation – Testimonials from Diploma Recipients

### *Patricia Talbot - USA*



I have been so fortunate to come across the Diploma in Social Innovation at a time of great personal and professional transition. While I started out taking the courses as part of a sabbatical from my position as Associate Professor in Educational Leadership at Radford University, a series of personal events led me to take early retirement instead. As this happened, I decided to stick with the UPEACE coursework because I found that the courses remained relevant to my goals in my “semi-retirement” which include an ongoing partnership with Radford U on the “World Ready Education for Rural Communities (WERC) Project”. Each course allowed me to think more deeply about that project and receive valuable and timely feedback on specific aspects of the work.

As I now start my own small education consulting business, Blue Roads Education Group, LLC, I’m using all that I learned in the courses (Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation and Change, Regenerative Leadership, Educating in Changing Times and Social Media) to get started out right with a socially responsible business plan and a far reaching social media plan that will allow me to continue my work in leadership development for rural educators seeking to better prepare their students for an unpredictable future.

I highly recommend the Diploma in Social Innovation to all who are looking for a way to kick start their learning and refine their thinking about social endeavors that could make Planet Earth a more productive and hospitable place for everyone who inhabits it.

### *German Robles-Osuna - Mexico*



I had a tremendous experience throughout the Diploma program. Webinars, readings, Skype discussions, online simulations, assignments, and simply interacting with and learning from other classmates and professors was more than I was looking for. Everything prepared me to put my 12 years of professional experience and personal aspirations into context, helping me to identify ways to move forward and strengthening my passion to deliver results. One of the core pillars of this program is to push you to create innovative ways to design (and implement) projects, programs and even policies that challenge traditional assumptions. I am heading to the Philippines in a few weeks, where I will be joining UNDP team as Peacebuilding Program Specialist working in the re-design and implementation of the operationalization of the peace process.

### *Maria Luisa Hernández – Costa Rica*



The knowledge I gained from the courses I have taken at the UPEACE Centre for Executive education go beyond the multidisciplinary syllabi, fascinating readings and compelling activities. I have learnt about myself, about the challenges others face and have gained skills that I don't think I would have been able to acquire elsewhere. The learning environment fostered by the Centre's staff and professors is unique. They make you feel comfortable and take care of every detail to make the experience memorable and productive, even if it is "just" an online course.

I have applied the skills and knowledge I got during this program in my personal and professional life and also in my recent MPA program. With these tools, I will be embarking upon a social entrepreneurship project within the next year. I hope to have a significant impact in Costa Rican society and I know I can count on my classmates and professors to give me feedback and guide me through this process. This is also a valuable aspect of being part of this Diploma - you end up having a network of highly educated and committed people who are passionate about social change and that will have your back and help you fulfill your mission.

### *Dr. Chris Beehner - USA*



I am a business professor at Seminole State College of Florida. In October 2015, I completed the Diploma in Social Innovation at the UN-mandated University for Peace. The experience was life changing.

In the words of George Bernard Shaw, life is not about finding yourself but about creating yourself. Through the series of diploma courses I acquired the necessary skills to create myself as an agent of social change. The greatest part of my experience was the connections that I made with people with common passions. The course assignments required that I engage with like-minded social innovators in Canada, Egypt, Lebanon, and Australia via Skype. Looking back on my experience, the program made me feel like I was part of a greater movement of people seeking to change the world through social innovation.

I have applied what I have learned in retooling my career where I can have maximum impact on my local community as well as the global community. I have used my newly acquired skills to find my niche within higher education – sustainable business education. I am now teaching and developing college courses, and writing and presenting papers on sustainable business topics. Armed with the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired at UPeace, I had the honor and privilege last year to serve as a panelist at the North American regional meeting of the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME). I highly recommend this course to any social entrepreneur, scholar, or public official who has a program, vision, or idea, and wishes to place that idea in motion.

*Kristen Palana – USA (Citizen) / Myanmar (Residence)*



I originally looked into UPEACE's online courses as part of my research into 21st century learning methods. However I was so enraptured with their offerings that really spoke to my passions and interests that I also signed on to take the whole Diploma in Social Innovation. It's now just over a year later and my life has transformed in many ways. I went from being a "well kept secret" as a professor in traditional universities to also being an online educator with over 11K students in 141 countries around the world, a published author, and an artist with a newfound resolve and commitment to my work that seeks to promote positive social change. Thank you UPEACE for the wonderful nudges and guidance along the way. It has been a wonderful journey and I can't wait to see what else lies ahead.

*Dee Brooks – Australia*



As a mother of 4 and a full time community worker, trainer and consultant with a tertiary institution, I wasn't prepared to commit to a Master's Degree but my insatiable appetite for knowledge kept me looking for 'what's next'.

After periodically searching, for 2 years, for a course that was flexible for a full time worker, delivered short but high quality units and suited my launch into private consultancy, I discovered the UPEACE's Centre for Executive Education and I was sold!

The diversity of my fellow student's knowledge and geographical locations was exciting! Not only did I learn from highly knowledgeable tutors, I learned by actively engaging with other students online, from around the world, through group activities and by sharing our own stories of success and strategies for addressing challenges in our work!

The tutors were readily available through email or Skype and I never waited more than 24 hours for a response to a query (mainly due to time-zone factors). Mohit Mukherjee, Julia Delafield and all of the tutors created a professional, dynamic and collegial space where teaching and learning was made exciting, relevant and fun!

Upon completing the Diploma of Social Innovation, I have revisited the course notes and resources regularly as I continue to co-create the Jeder Institute and this is the main reason that I highly recommend UPEACE's Centre for Executive Education to my friends and colleagues; it's the only course, in all my years of training, that I have referred back to so often and I'm sure I will continue to do so!