

After GPS, alumni build careers in Mexico



From jobs in higher education and economic consulting to data analysis for major online retailers, GPS graduates share the wealth of opportunities found by living and working in Mexico

The UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) is focused on building a Pacific community – a large part of which encompasses the Americas. As a border city, San Diego is uniquely positioned to provide a wealth of research and career opportunities focused on Mexico – something that many alumni have leveraged in their careers.

Many degree programs at GPS – including the [Master of International Affairs \(MIA\)](#), [Master of Public Policy \(MPP\)](#) and [Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs \(MAS-IA\)](#) programs – include a regional specialization, giving students the opportunity to delve deeply into policies, social issues, security and more in Latin America.

In addition, the [Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies](#), which was founded in 1980 to study the full range of issues affecting economic, social and political relations between Mexico and the U.S., is based at the school and still serves as a hub for

our students, faculty and the larger San Diego cross-border community to engage in public dialogue and to guide timely policy decisions.

Three GPS alumni who now live in Mexico share their experiences since leaving the classrooms, including snapshots where their careers have taken them - and how the school prepared them for the journey.

Saúl López



Saúl López at the International Book Fair in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2019. | Contributed photo

While at GPS, alumnus Saúl López '17 focused his coursework on international environmental policy.

“I wanted to sharpen my analytical skills to improve my understanding of policy making, business and environmental policies,” López said.

López currently works as a data analyst leader for the online retail business Joybird.

“I enjoy seeing how data analysis helps us understand trends, find root causes to some problems in business and ultimately make decisions with an impact on how the business is managed,” López said.

López has been a resident of Tijuana, Mexico - right across the border from San Diego - for almost 20 years.

“It’s a city that has given me a lot of opportunities and challenges - one of them being the possibility to go to graduate school in the U.S. without radically changing my life or my loved ones’ lives,” López said.

López said Tijuana has undergone a transformation into a manufacturing, services and technology hub over the past two decades, strengthening the city’s ties with those industries in the U.S.

“All of this comes with many challenges, too,” he acknowledged. “Currently, there are many social justice and environmental issues that I think should be addressed, and I would like to contribute to the efforts to alleviate them.”

López said his time at GPS, particularly the analytics focus within graduate courses, prepared him to take his career in new - and unexpected - directions.

“Although what I am doing right now is not exactly what I envisioned, GPS gave me a lot of tools for taking on new challenges in my career,” López said. “The analytics component of the graduate program really changed my life by providing me the tools and methods for applying quantitative analysis and working under different, ever-changing scenarios.”

López has maintained friendships with several of his classmates, and he also takes advantage of living close to San Diego.

“One of the advantages of living close to the border is having the ability to go back to GPS and take part in exchanges with current students and professors,” López said. “I have done that a couple of times since graduation and would like to do it again once the pandemic conditions return to normal.”

RoseAnna Harrison



RoseAnna Harrison (second from left) with family members in February 2020 with Mexico City's cathedral in the background. | Contributed photo

RoseAnna Harrison '09 was living in Japan when she decided to pursue a master's degree, initially considering programs in translation and interpretation. That changed when she discovered GPS while researching programs based in the U.S.

"I liked the idea of earning a degree that would allow me to participate in decision-making processes, rather than just transmit the ideas and decisions of others, and I realized that I would be able to apply my language skills in any international environment," Harrison said.

Harrison, who lives in Mexico City, wears a number of hats: she recently started her own consulting company, HaNa Economía y Finanzas, where she does transfer pricing work and economic analysis for antidumping investigations in Mexico. Dumping, in the context of international trade, occurs when a company or a country exports its products at a price lower than its domestic price.

"My partner provides financial consulting, including strategic planning and business valuation, and we try to collaborate as much as possible on our projects," Harrison said.

She also works as a freelancer for the Washington, D.C.-based ION Economics.

"I worked full time with the same team at Economic Consulting Services between

2015 and 2017 and continued working with them after returning to Mexico City in early 2017," Harrison said. "I help clients based in Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries assemble the data required by the U.S. Department of Commerce to calculate their individual dumping margin."

Harrison said that each client presents its own unique challenges and rewards.

"I really enjoy working with my clients, learning about their products as well as their internal record keeping and accounting systems, and figuring out how to fit their unique information into the format required by the project - whether that is a transfer pricing study, a valuation or a dumping case," Harrison said.

Before GPS, Harrison said she'd never studied economics, finance, accounting or political science. But her education at GPS expanded her skills - in everything from using Excel to learning to use statistical software like STATA.

"Today, I apply a mix of all of these fields that I learned about at GPS in my work on a daily basis," Harrison said.

Harrison said she first came to Mexico City as an intern at Chevez, Ruiz, Zamarripa - an ongoing internship opportunity for GPS students at the time - in the summer of 2008. She returned at the end of 2009 to work full time in their transfer pricing department and has been living in Mexico City since then, except for the time she spent in Washington, D.C.

Harrison credits her Mexico City internship with jumpstarting the post-GPS phase of her career.

"My initial internship experience allowed me to jump to a larger company, Deloitte, and that experience combined with my Spanish language skills helped me to get a job working with Economic Consulting Services," Harrison said.

Harrison said she loves her life in Mexico City.

"Mexico City has a wonderful food scene; there are always great new restaurants to try and so many favorites to choose from as well," Harrison said. "There is also a really exciting arts scene, and so many museums! I am fortunate to live in a section of the city that is very walkable - since I work from home, I rarely need to drive, which is a big advantage because Mexico City traffic is terrible."

Alfredo Martínez de la Torre



Alfredo Martínez de la Torre with his family at San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. | Contributed photo

Alfredo Martínez de la Torre '15 is the director of the Higher Education-Enterprise Foundation (FESE) inside the National Association of Universities (ANUIES) in Mexico.

Martínez de la Torre said the most rewarding part of his job is building deeper relationships between the academy with the private sector in Mexico and cultivating the skills students require for their professional future. He credits his time at GPS for helping him achieve his career goals.

"I chose the MAS-IA program because of the freedom to select a track and region based on your own interest or experience, with world-class faculty at the best

location in the U.S.," Martínez de la Torre said. "My GPS education really provided me with the knowledge and expertise for understanding problems, and the ability to analyze all aspects involved and get possible outcomes considering several angles."

Martínez de la Torre resides in Mexico City, which he describes as "the heart of the country."

"You can feel the mix of cultures found in every corner of the city," Martínez de la Torre said.

Martínez de la Torre said he made a number of friends at GPS with whom he still continues to keep in contact.

"I met such great people sharing classrooms and projects," he said. "Now we share travels and news, calling and texting with regularity. I even attended a classmate's wedding!"