

All in on international development at PCI



As part of an ongoing series to spotlight GPS's top employers, we profile why PCI hires our graduates, plus why current alumni enjoy working there

By Sarah Pfladderer | GPS News



Amy Hansen '07 had her eye on a job at [Project Concern International](#) (PCI) even

before she had the master's degree that qualified her for it.

Keen on the nonprofit's roots — like her, PCI's founder is from San Diego's resort city, Coronado — as well as its purpose to empower people to enhance health, end hunger and overcome hardship, Hansen got a taste of working at PCI via volunteerism prior to enrolling at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS).

“While in graduate school, I really took the all-eggs-in-one basket-approach,” Hansen recalled. “GPS taught me to work really hard. That was a framework I needed to work at PCI. The [MIA degree](#) program also touched on so many different areas — quantitative methods, language, qualitative research, etc. Amid gaining those skill sets pertinent to international development, I also stayed visible and relevant with PCI while at GPS.”

In addition to landing a [summer internship](#) with PCI in Bolivia, Hansen also stayed on their radar by continuing to volunteer while at the School. Needless to say, the approach worked: Hansen, who has now been with PCI for 10 years, is currently a senior business development officer in San Diego.

Peg Ross, vice president of global human resources and organization development at PCI, noted it's that diligence and understanding of PCI's mission that position so many GPS alumni like Hansen for success at the nonprofit — and it's why the organization continues to hire graduates of the School.

“GPS graduates come to us with a strong understanding of global social and economic issues, which is especially important in the international development sector,” Ross said. “We are consistently delighted with the intellectual capacity, academic preparation and commitment to our global mission that GPS alumni display.”

Similar to Hansen, Dennis Mello '13 also put his education to use at PCI right out of the gate from GPS.

As a global technical adviser for PCI's [Women Empowered Initiative](#) who telecommutes from Portland, Mello provides programmatic and technical leadership for field staff assigned to 18 projects across 10 countries. To an extent, the initiative has expanded as Mello has grown with PCI, where he also began as an intern while a GPS student.

“I’ve been lucky to have been able to work within the same program but on different projects throughout my entire time at PCI,” Mello said. “That’s kept me committed to PCI.”

Connecting with colleagues in several corners of the globe, Mello added, is among the best parts of his job.

“One of the things that keeps me at PCI and working on this initiative are the instances when we receive positive feedback on how our projects are working,” he said. “That is motivating, that sense that what we’re doing is actually making a difference.”

Hansen echoed Mello’s fulfillments of working at PCI.



“A lot of us are motivated by seeing the impact of projects on the ground, but we’re also equally motivated by the good energy people give off here as team players,” she said. “It’s a similar feeling to how I remember my classmates from GPS. I met so many interesting and motivating people at the School.”

As a senior business development officer, Hansen is responsible for finding and tracking funding opportunities to bring these projects to fruition.

For perspective, she currently has a hand in the U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which works to improve childhood nutrition in some of the poorest and hardest-to-reach primary schools in countries such as Tanzania, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

“Earlier this year I submitted a multimillion dollar proposal to extend our

program in Nicaragua for another five years,” Hansen shared. “I’m eagerly awaiting the outcome, with fingers and toes crossed!”

Want to work at PCI? GPS alumni advise to...

“... spend six months overseas. Paid or unpaid, overseas experience in the form of an internship is very valuable. The hands-on experience pays off and is viewed very highly at PCI.” — Amy Hansen '07

“... get field experience to find your niche, and start building on that. Field experience will serve you really well in a development industry.” — Dennis Mello '13