

# Alumni-nominated spotlight: Booz Allen Hamilton consultant Maura Deignan



**As part of our ongoing Pass the Pen series, we feature management consultant Maura Deignan '13 who shares her favorite GPS memories and why San Diego is the best place to start your career**

By Rachel Hommel | GPS News

Maura Deignan has always had a passion for international relations from teaching English in Japan to her fellowship with the American India Foundation. She also worked as an international development consultant in Bhavnagar, India where she helped a grassroots nonprofit better tell their story of community impact. While at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) she solidified her passion for thinking globally, while seeking ways to act locally.

“Learning how the U.S government works from various policy classes has come in handy as most of my work is with federal agencies,” said Deignan, currently an associate at Booz Allen Hamilton. “GPS helped hone my critical thinking and analysis skills, taught me valuable business skills and how to write effectively. I

apply all of that and more to my work as a consultant.”

A native of San Diego, Deignan loves keeping in touch with her diverse GPS family as both a former regional club president and active current board member.

“At GPS, we come from all walks of life but have so much in common - particularly our drive to make the world a better place,” said Deignan. “Helping alumni connect to each other and collaborate on projects is very rewarding! I also appreciate the opportunity to help shape how the school engages with alumni well after graduation.”

Read on as Deignan shares highlights of her career and why she will always choose Sunny San Diego.

**Q: What has been a highlight of your career so far?**



A: I started the first Design Thinking Community of Practice at the San Diego branch of my firm. Last year, I was asked to lead a workshop for about 30 junior and high school girls interested in STEM careers. The problem statement was “how might we address cyberbullying” and I was so impressed with the innovative and thoughtful solutions the girls developed. It gave me hope for our future workforce.

**Q: Please share a favorite memory from your time at GPS.**

A: There are too many to name! The activities hosted by the student regional clubs were usually the most memorable. Some that particularly stood out were LASO’s organized winery tours of Valle de Guadalupe, the Lunar New Year

festival when professors Stephan Haggard and Barry Naughton battled it out in sumo suits, and one of the talent shows, in which regional club leaders dressed in our regional clothes and performed Gangnam Style.

**Q: If you could go back to GPS as a professor or special guest lecturer, what would you like to teach?**

A: I would teach two subjects. The first would be Human Centered Design—GPS does a lot of quantitative data analysis, but it's also important to understand the human experience of what we study. I would also teach project management, since that is a much-needed professional skillset for any job.

**Q: What did you learn at GPS that has been most useful in your career?**

A: Learning how to write succinct policy memos in the foreign policy courses has been the most applicable tool from my GPS toolkit. Synthesizing large amounts of information into a well-organized format—even just for emails, makes decision making for teams and leaders much more efficient.



**Q: What do you like to do to relax/on weekends?**

A: I enjoy taking advantage of all the natural beauty San Diego has to offer, often with fellow alumni! There are wonderful hikes in the mountains, nearby desert and along the coast, and GPS folks are the most fun to enjoy them with!

**Q: Please share a memorable travel experience you'd like to repeat.**

A: When I was volunteering on the AIF Clinton Fellowship for Service in India, I had the opportunity to travel to various parts of the country. I particularly loved

the majestic forts and palaces in Rajasthan, with sweeping views and rich architectural detail. I'd love to go back and explore more!

**Q: What do you miss the most about your days in San Diego (or more specifically GPS)?**

A: The main thing I miss about my days at GPS was seeing my friends every day. Luckily our alumni are a mobile bunch and like to travel, so I get to see many of them on various trips around the world! I've met up with classmates in Myanmar, Taiwan, Mexico and all across the U.S. GPS alumni friends are my favorite travel buddies.

**Q: Who would you like to pass the pen to and why?**

A: I nominate Alisha Tomita, MAS-IA '16. She is such a mover and shaker. I'm sure she has some amazing stories to share!