

GPS graduates find culture is key at Booz Allen



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

By Sarah Pfladderer | GPS News



Just three years after graduating from the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS), Tenshing Honda, [MPIA '13](#), was making the global impact some people might only see toward the tail end of their careers.

As part of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Ebola response team and later with the nonprofit [Partners In Health](#), Honda addressed global health issues head-on, supporting programmatic efforts in West Africa from working in both the public sector and nonprofit sectors.

Despite the meaningful involvement, limitations in both sectors to invest in junior employees discouraged Honda. Now, he is breathing easier each day he goes to work at Booz Allen Hamilton and, importantly, knows that his prior experience is valued.

"The beauty of government consulting is that it attracts employees from diverse backgrounds," said Honda, who joined the San Diego office in the spring. "With Booz Allen, I finally feel like I am with a company that will work with me by offering trainings and mentorship at a critical point in my career and feel that my career manager has a vested interest in my success."

[Booz Allen](#) provides management and technology consulting and engineering services to leading Fortune 500 corporations, governments and nonprofits across the globe. With international headquarters in McLean, Va., the firm employs about 22,600 people globally.

In that employee mix are also dozens of GPS graduates like Honda and Libby Donnelly, MPIA '07.

"Students we hire from GPS arrive with a wide understanding of both business and government, and that's really attractive to us," said Mark Polydoros, a lead associate at Booz Allen. "A lot of our work is complex, not easily intuitive. GPS

graduates have proven to be quick at picking up the consulting aspects and learning in an ambiguous environment.”



Honda, a senior consultant specializing in project management, puts this well.

“As a consultant, you’re a Swiss army knife that’ll be asked to pick up a whole gambit of skills,” he said. “The nature of the business is to be adaptive and innovative, so you can step up and produce even if you’re not a specialist in something. Most GPSers would thrive in this environment as they’re proactive and flexible.”

Donnelly said these skillsets she had to “develop as baptism through fire” at GPS—such as being able to digest and then fuse quantitative data into qualitative analysis—now are involuntarily habits in her role as a lead defense acquisition policy analyst at Booz Allen.

Recruited to the San Diego office in 2007 by fellow alumna Angel Haight, MPIA ’06, Donnelly describes her responsibilities as being twofold. She provides consultation to clients on defense acquisition policy of information technology systems and also manages and provides guidance to her team in these labors to play a part in protecting U.S. warfighters.

Working with great people, Donnelly said, is what excites her to go to the office. In a way, she added, it fondly reminds her of being a student at GPS.

“One of the great things about GPS was the cohort. You are constantly challenged

and energized by your peers,” she explained. “The same environment exists at Booz Allen. You are working with the best analytical and strategic minds, and it pushes you to persevere despite the sometimes frustrating environment. This tone is set by the cooperate culture. Also ... free food.”

Want to work at Booz Allen? GPS alumni advise to...

“...reach out to career services and ask to be put in contact with one of us. The majority of our market in San Diego supports the Defense Department, doing work that I couldn’t even have imagined when I was in school. We can give you a feel for what else is out there that you might want to consider as you are charting out your career.”— Libby Donnelly, MPIA '07

“...focus on developing your hard skills. Strong Excel skills are a must. If you’re into data visualization, I strongly recommend honing your skills in Tableau Software. It’s hot right now, and government clients are getting more comfortable with it. Go to the Tableau website and download their free software and practice.”— Tenshing Honda, MPIA '13