

Is the MIA degree right for me?



A master's degree in international affairs opens doors for a wide range of careers in the public, private and nonprofit sectors

By Virginia Watson | GPS News

If you've followed the news at all in the past year, you know that our world is facing a number of seemingly unprecedented challenges - coping with climate change, advocating for racial justice and surviving a pandemic among them.

But are these issues really unprecedented? And what can we learn from history about these complex, interdependent global systems in order to find a productive way forward?

The UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) is designed to help students weave these different strands of globalization together, providing context and quantitative analysis so our students can enter the workforce with a toolkit that sets them apart.

At GPS, we seek to reimagine globalization in our courses of study by focusing on real-world impacts of international policy decisions. The [Master of International Affairs \(MIA\)](#) at GPS is uniquely situated to help students build a comprehensive, strategic view of the world - and help them acquire the skills to change it.

The MIA is a two-year, full-time degree program, focusing on the Americas and Asia. As part of the requirements for the degree, students choose a [career track](#) to hone their specialized knowledge, choosing from international development and nonprofit management, international economics, international environmental governance, international management or international politics, along with one [country/regional specialization](#): China, Korea, Japan, Latin America or Southeast Asia. Language acquisition is a key element within the curriculum.

Our [faculty](#) consists of leaders in public policy, global politics, international security, business and economics and environmental sustainability, offering a broad range of interests and specializations to students who pursue this degree.

Irene Entringer, who completed her MIA through GPS, said she was drawn to GPS because of its focus on quantitative analysis and real-world challenges - and that in her job as a project manager at the [Teaching, Research & International Policy \(TRIP\) Project](#), she has felt more than ready to tackle any professional challenges.

“At my current position, I have used the tools I learned at GPS to coordinate the execution and fielding of surveys, as well as visualizing and analyzing its results,” Entringer said.

Another MIA graduate, Josh Kickenson, said he viewed the program as a way to open doors to new advancement opportunities in his career.

“I decided to pursue my MIA at GPS because I felt stuck in my career and found that GPS was a highly ranked international affairs program that focused on quantifiable skills that I hoped would lead me to new career opportunities,” Kickenson said. “GPS seemed to focus on skills such as language acquisition and real job skills, and that made me comfortable that I would be getting a worthwhile education that would pay off.”

For Kickenson, the MIA took his career to new heights; currently a program manager with the U.S. Air Force at the Space and Missile Systems Center, he will soon be transitioning to the U.S. Space Force.

“This job is through the Presidential Management Fellowship, which I found out about and applied for while at GPS thanks to an email from Career Services Director [Stephanie Boomhower](#),” Kickenson said. “The career services

department is very helpful, and through that I was able to get access to opportunities I would never have known about or thought I wanted if I hadn't gotten my MIA. The fellowship was not something I knew about before, and it led me to a really good job right out of GPS that wasn't in a field I had ever considered."

Kickenson said that no matter his career path moving forward - whether he continues working as a civilian in the military, transitions to another government position, or pursues other paths - his experience in the MIA program left him prepared.

"I work with big money launch contracts with SpaceX, so the work is consequential. I can't disclose specifics on what I do, but the MIA helped prepare me for this job in a few ways," he said. "For one, my Strategy and Negotiation capstone helped me learn to work in a group on a project that had real-world implications, which has come in handy helping navigate group work in the professional world. The amount of reading and analyzing complicated texts in my MIA classes also helped prepare me for the complex documents that I need to understand now."

Learn how to [apply for the MIA degree](#) at GPS on our website.