

Sponsored Student Spotlight: Adnan Saygili



June 2018 | International Students and Programs Office



Name: Adnan Saygili

Year in Program: 1st Year, Master of Public Policy, School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS)

Country: Turkey

Home institution: Ministry of Development of Turkey

Sponsoring Agency: Ministry of Development of Turkey

Field of Study: Public Policy

Majors and Minors: Master of Public Policy

1. Why did you decide to study in the U.S.? What made you choose to come to San Diego?

Having the world's top ranked universities, the US higher education system provides degrees that have international reputation. This makes the US one of the most attractive destination for international students like me. In addition to the quality of the education, universities in the US are also centers of cultural diversity which helps students to create connections with all over the world.

California has a special position in the US with its research oriented universities, knowledge based economy and innovative policy making atmosphere. I chose to come to San Diego for my graduate study to experience these distinguished features as well as its family friendly environment.

2. How did you become interested in UC San Diego and your program? What do you hope to gain out of your experience here, academically and personally?

I have worked as a Planning Expert at Ministry of Development of Turkey (MoDoT) which advises Turkish Government in determining economic social and cultural policies by preparing long term development plans and future oriented strategies. My working area in the MoDoT was related to regional competitiveness policies including the development of industrial infrastructure, investment climate and innovation in Turkey's region.

Having this background, I become interested in Master of Public Policy program in UC San Diego after searching about its curriculum and the faculty in the School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) because the design and scope of program ensures for its students to obtain all quantitative and qualitative knowledge required in all stages of policy making processes.

After completing my program, I hope to gain this knowledge and be able to use it in practice to develop evidence based, better policies in my current and future career.

3. What challenges/difficulties did you meet while preparing your stay in the U.S. or adapting to your new setting in San Diego? How did you overcome them?

When you plan to move to different country for a relatively long duration (2 years) with your family, you have to think about almost everything and get yourself prepared, because this is a start of a new life for everybody in the family.

At first, everything was seemed hard and scary, finding and renting an apartment to live, buying household goods and a car, finding and registering a school for my daughter, buying health insurance, discovering the shops for basic needs, getting used to daily social life in San Diego and so on...

During orientation week, one of the official stated: "do not suffer alone". Then I realized that I am not the only one who is new in the town. Thankfully, UC San Diego and people in UC Sam Diego are very helpful to provide direct support and/or information about any difficulty I met. GPS administration, international students and programs office (ISPO), housing department and student networks were the main sources that made the life easy for us during adaptation and new setting process.

4. How do you find the academic climate at UC San Diego and within your program? Describe any highlights and/or challenges.

The academic climate at GPS and the MPP program is quite impressive. Faculty members are very inspirational and good at their job. They all have important research projects in which selected students can participate. In all the courses I took, they combined the theory and practice and taught us how to analyze the real world. Most of the professors try to enrich the syllabus by using different techniques such as debates, panels, presentations etc.

Students in the MPP program, on the other hand, are quite professional and have different backgrounds. This helps to create the most diverse and challenging climate at UC San Diego. Many of the students are government officials of their home country which makes them source of information on certain case studies.

I used to study on a quarter based system in my undergrad degree. However, people who are unfamiliar this system think that quarter based system and course load is a challenge. I believe that this challenge will help the students to learn

more and develop faster.

5. Do you participate in research? If so, describe your project/lab. Why did you become interested in this topic?

I haven't participated in a research project yet. However, during my internship this summer, I will participate in a research project at International Monetary Fund. Additionally, I will complete a capstone project in my second year.

During my internship, I will be engaged to a research project that covers a review of the experience with diversification, poverty reduction and inequality to identify institutional arrangements and policies that have supported diversification associated with shared prosperity and inclusive growth. This will require a combination of econometric work and a more detailed case study of 5 to 8 country cases with an emphasis on institutional changes supported by Fund's technical assistance.

For my capstone project, I haven't decided the topic yet but I am planning to study on design and evaluation of regional development policies. Many countries in Europe, including Turkey, implement policies/programs in this policy area by allocating huge amount of funds. However, impact evaluation of these policies need to be studied to develop the most cost effective policies.

6. What extracurricular activities do you participate in? Are you a member of any student organizations? What is the best experience you've had so far? How do you spend your free time in San Diego?

As a result of the diverse environment at GPS, students can find many organizations/groups that have interesting and useful activities for their academic and personal development. I always try to participate in these activities when I have time.

Additionally, San Diego have a perfect nature and many facilities to enjoy your free time with your family. We visit, beaches, nature and theme parks, museums to explore and learn about the social life in San Diego.

7. What was a defining moment in your academic career that shaped who you are now?

It is really hard to specify a single certain moment that shaped who I am now. I

believe that there are many important moments and people in every level of my education that effected my academic career.

I always felt comfortable in math and tried to use this ability in different areas. So, in both my academic and professional career, I preferred to study/work in interdisciplinary departments.

In my professional career, I realized that the absence of technical analyses in any policy area is filled by political interest which cause the policy outcomes to be generally unsatisfactory. So, I chose to study in the MPP program in UC San Diego to gain valuable quantitative skills. Learning statistical and econometric techniques that are applicable to any policy making process is a defining moment in my academic career in this program. I think it will also help me to shape my future career.

8. What have you accomplished during your studies at UC San Diego that you are most proud of? How has this impacted you?

One of the most important accomplishment for me during my study at UC San Diego is getting acceptance from International Monetary Fund for my summer internship.

Many people in the department encouraged and supported me in this process. Our faculty members equipped me with valuable skills required. The career service department at GPS guided me in every step of recruitment process. And finally, ISPO provided professional support on working requirements.

During this internship, I will be able to use my theoretical knowledge in real world practices. This will be an important opportunity for me to carry my knowledge and expertise up to international level and shape my future career.

9. How will your experience here in San Diego fit in your educational/professional plan/future career?

Completing my program at UC San Diego and experiencing the social and professional life in the US will make a significant contribution to my current and future career.

As being a Planning Expert in MoDoT, I have already taken several responsibilities in hand and acquired practical planning and project management

experience in regional competitiveness policy area. Back home, I will carry this experience to my work and be able to serve in developing better policies for my country.

Beyond this, I want to pursue my career at international level where policies are being designed and evaluated in a global context. My experience in San Diego has already helped me to take the first step on this issue. After finishing my degree, I believe it will also help me to complete my long term career goal.

10. What is one thing you would tell aspiring sponsored students?

You have everything in here to enjoy and develop yourself. Try to benefit from them as much as you can in order to maximize your “utility function”.