

Strength in numbers



Roughly 50 alumni returned to GPS for its annual Winter Connections event, meeting with and lending advice to the students soon to enter their alumni network

By Sarah Pfladderer | GPS News



Whether it is cutting short a long-awaited gap year in Italy to instead crash on friends' couches in D.C., patiently navigating the application process on USAJOBS.gov or riskily taking an interview during one's last legal week in the U.S. on a student visa, every graduate from the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) has a story behind finding a means to end their job search.

And last month, as part of the School's Winter Connections event, some were given the floor to share those tales and more with the people who wanted—and needed—to hear them most: current students at the School.

Roughly 50 alumni returned to campus Jan. 27-28 for the annual networking event. Now in its eighth year, Winter Connections offers current students of the School the opportunity to pry into the lives and careers of professionals who once were in their shoes—and receive from them no-holds-barred responses about the elations and hardships that lie ahead.

The 2017 event comprised an entire day of information sessions led by alums, as well as an informal dinner. Early-morning mock interviews between students and more alumni anchored the second day.

While a focus of the two-day affair was what happens after graduate school, some alumni opted to backpedal to the present in their information sessions, encouraging students to not lose sight of the fact they must do well now to prosper later.

“If you can be one of the top students here, the sky is the limit,” encouraged Victor Tineo ’11, an international economist at the U.S. Department of Treasury. “If you have the skills and motivation to do really well at this school, take that mindset and conscientiousness to your job and your job search. You won’t only get a job, but you also will do well in your work.”

Quantitative proficiencies and econometrics, other alumni noted, are skills students should tout when on the job hunt.



Matt Siordia ’12, a Mexico desk officer at the International Trade Administration, noted “it’s a combination of understanding the numbers and using that to shape policy” that sets GPS graduates a part in the workplace—“and knowing how to

speak normally about the numbers to other humans,” chimed in Alison Miranda '03.

Miranda, as deputy director of impact evaluation at Social Impact, said she still often uses her Stata training from the School, including testing job candidates on their skill level.

Siordia, appropriately, pointed to Acting Dean [Gordon Hanson](#)'s Topics in International Trade course as what he applies most within the Department of Commerce.

In a broader stroke, Candice Yu '10 said the School's International Management track gave her a strong framework to evaluate policies as a senior policy analyst for Mercedes-Benz Research & Development North America.

Naturally, Professor [David Victor](#)'s Economics of Energy Policy course proves useful in Yu's position, too, she said.

Aside from a mental strength in numbers, alumni also pointed to the School's strength in the number of alumni willing to help one another secure positions after graduation or later in their careers.

While Victor said “LinkedIn is your best bet to find an alum,” other alums such as Sun Hwa Song '10 urged networking offline.

“Meeting alumni in person is the best way to forge a connection, just like today,” said the statistical analyst at the World Bank.

Peter Foo '07, director of Chemonics International, summed up the School's power of networking well.

“The GPS alumni system is awesome,” he said. “You can pretty much reach out to anybody, and they will respond to you.”

Later in the day, UtilityAPI CEO Elena Lucas '12 concluded her information session with a demonstration of Foo's praise.

“If anyone would like to talk more, come with me to Home Plate,” she offered.

GPS alumni scheduled to speak at 2017 Winter Connections included:

- Jacques Chirazi '04, Program Manager, Cleantech, San Diego
- Amy Cortina '12, Senior Manager for Strategic Partnerships, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles
- Eric Engelman '08, Social Innovation and Strategy Consultant, San Diego
- Peter Foo '07, Director, Chemonics International, Washington, D.C.
- Natalie Foxworthy '12, Senior Program Officer for Child and Youth Development, Children International, Kansas City, Mo.
- Jonathan Furszyfer '13, Director of Security, México Evalúa, Mexico City
- Sun Hwa Song '10, Statistical Analyst, World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Elena Lucas '12, CEO, UtilityAPI, San Francisco
- Alison Miranda '03, Deputy Director of Impact Evaluation, Social Impact, Washington, D.C.
- Jenna Montgomery '08, Communications Manager, International Relief Teams, San Diego
- Greta Paa-Kerner '96, Senior Lecturer, Buckinghamshire New University, London
- Liliana Pao '02, Team Leader for Communications and Talent Management, European Commission, Brussels
- Renata Pinedo '14, Human Resource Manager, Voestalpine, Dettingen, Germany
- Emily Seto '05, Senior Analyst, Xynteo, London
- Amit Sharma '13, Transfer Pricing Senior, EY, Orange County
- Matt Siordia '12, Mexico Desk Officer, International Trade Administration, Washington, D.C.
- Victor Tineo '11, International Economist, U.S. Department of Treasury, Washington, D.C.
- Randy Velliquette '16, Senior Consultant, Booz Allen Hamilton, San Diego
- Candice Yu '10, Senior Policy Analyst, Mercedes-Benz Research & Development North America, San Francisco
- Ute Zischka '13, Program Manager, Waitt Institute, La Jolla, Calif.

[View photos](#) from 2017 Winter Connections.