

# Why GPS: A career-switcher's guide to data science





**As part of an ongoing series, we give students the creative liberty to opine on their favorite memories from the School and “why GPS” is a solid fit to pursue their graduate education**

By Anton Prokopyev, 2017 MIA candidate | GPS News

My professional career started rather early. I landed my first job as an action sports journalist while I was still attending high school. Somehow, I now am in the field of data science. While it was a long path, the key answer to how I arrived here is simple: GPS. Apologies for a bad pun!

When I was graduating from high school, I was hesitant about applying to undergraduate STEM programs. The final state exam in math seemed unnecessarily convoluted. Little did I know that this was by design to filter through a pool of already traditionally very strong candidates — I went to school in Russia. I opted for a top-rated foreign affairs university to study political science instead.

Halfway through my degree, I realized the field of diplomacy was no different from public relations. Surely, the actors change from states and nations to private companies and the media, but essentially all you have to do is still build relationships and create new opportunities. This mode of thinking landed me an internship at Apple Inc.

Upon graduation from my undergraduate institution, I continued working in the field of marketing communications, closely focusing on helping successful startups grow internationally.

At a certain point of my career I started wondering about what's next for me. Getting a master's degree sounded like a great idea.



I initially debated whether I should go after an Ivy League school or UC San Diego. I chose the West Coast for a number of reasons, with the School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) being one of them.

For me, GPS serves as a way to bridge all of my ever and so diverse experiences.

On the one hand, it is first and foremost a policy school. This plays nicely with my degree in comparative politics, and I was already focusing on Latin America.

On the other hand, the international management and quantitative analytics tracks of the School have allowed me to add statistical programming and data mining techniques to my toolbox.

I have met many of our alumni who currently work as data scientists along the way. They helped guide my studies and research with their examples and, of course, their kind advice.

GPS is a data-driven policy school with a truly interdisciplinary body of faculty who couldn't be credited enough for training me in a variety of disciplines — both quantitative and qualitative.

By studying here, you also will get unparalleled assistance from student affairs and career services staff. They will guide you to getting a job offer every step of the way. I send thanks to every one of them.

*GPS students nominate one another to contribute to this series. Read [“Why GPS: A cross point to connect the dots,”](#) authored by Shunichi Muto, 2018 MIA candidate, who tagged Prokopyev to write this excerpt.*