

Why GPS: Finding solid ground after years overseas



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 Philip Voris, 2018 MIA candidate | GPS News

I started at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) in fall 2016. Ten years prior, I had embarked on an overseas journey, finally closing the book on my short career as a dot-com engineer.

I had studied mass media and wanted to understand it from the inside, which I did. However, I also had studied language and politics, with the hope of someday teaching. It was time to get out and understand the world.

Stepping into my new life in Japan, I ceased using English outside of work and slowly wrapped my head around not just how that society functioned, but why. I gained the confidence to feel confident that I was on the right path and had the experience to offer something to others. What I lacked was the academic scaffolding upon which to build the career I envisioned.

When I returned to the states, it was not back to my prior role in the San Francisco IT world, but to a position helping teach folks who worked with the mentally ill now omnipresent in the city.

Surrounded by M.A.'s of all stripes, their advice informing my efforts, I evaluated my options for graduate school. Having experienced firsthand the difference a global, Pacific-focused outlook could bring, I wanted to be put in contact with others who embraced this value.

Still driven by the practical application of classroom knowledge, I wanted a school that was focused on solving the real-world problems of our time using strong evidence-based approaches rather than theory in isolation.

Surprisingly, the list of schools that met my requirements was short. When I received word of my acceptance to my first choice, I was thrilled. When I later learned that through the independent diligence of GPS I had been selected to receive a [Sylff Fellowship](#), I was flabbergasted. It was as though I had spotted land after years of travelling by sea.

And I wasn't disappointed.

The program has the mix of theory with technical problem evaluation that I wanted. In fact, it has so many opportunities to grow that the biggest challenge may be choosing where to focus my limited time resources. Even in that, I am grateful to have the input of a cadre of professors who candidly offer their advice and support.

The people at GPS: professors, colleagues and staff are the most encouraging, open and motivated people I have met. Each brings something I didn't know I needed in my life until I met them.

Living, studying and enjoying holidays with my colleagues, I am more aware than ever of how unique this experience is.