

# Your Vote, Your Voice



**Meet four GPS alumni who are working to improve democracy and the electoral process nationwide**

By Rachel Hommel | GPS News

At UC San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS), our graduates are constantly navigating an evolving political economy, inside and outside the classroom. Solution driven, our degrees have yielded key experts in international relations, public policy and management around the world.

In the wake of the recent election season, we highlight how four alumni have utilized their GPS degree to ensure liberty and equality for all.

**Amy Everitt, MPIA '99, State Director  
NARAL Pro-Choice California, San**

# Francisco



Since the age of five, politics has been in Amy Everitt's veins. Growing up with a political family in San Mateo, she remembers handing out pamphlets when her grandmother was running for the board of supervisors. From high school campaigns to previous work at the Democratic National Committee, her real passion has always been politics and advocating for her home state of California.

"The real power to make change is within the state and I wanted to come home to my favorite state," said Everitt. "My current job is a great combination between working with candidates and elections, getting policy thorough and advocating for change."

Inspiring more than 250,000 members, Everitt explains that the work begins with policy. In her position, she helps endorse hundreds of candidates, ensuring voters know where politicians stand. Believing passionately that profit can intersect with social good, she works to ensure reproductive freedom for women and families throughout California.

"Freedom is not a political party, it's what we should all aspire to. In election season, we help change the narrative of elections through debates and social media," said Everitt. "We hold people accountable and accountability work is really powerful."

From her GPS toolkit, she remembers Professor [Roger Bohn's](#) Product Design and Product Marketing class fondly, pulling notes from class for her present job. Learning how to become a better product manager, the course helped her formulate the right goals and strategic vision at NARAL.

"To this day, I'm not sure why I took the class, but I'm so glad I did," laughs Everitt. "That's one of the great things about GPS, the lessons you learn in the

classroom can be universal to any industry.”

## **Gabriel Canale, MIA '16 & Constanza Jozami, MIA '16**

### **Voter Data Analysis Unit, Department of Elections, San Francisco**



While they might have met in Argentina (and continued their love story at GPS), elections drew them together for the June 5 campaign. Interviewing for different jobs in the Department of Elections, the couple ended up being assigned to the same unit, enjoying the experience of not only working together but conducting elections that are free, fair and functional.

“There is something about free and fair elections that brings out the best in people of literally every walk of life,” said Canale. “On Election Day, getting to say, ‘Thank you for voting’ and hearing people thank you for being there is an emotional high that has to be experienced to be understood.”

A typical day in the Voter Data Analysis Unit includes processing voter registrations, performing validation tasks such as searching for voter data in refreshable spreadsheets in Excel and sending notifications to voters who need to take corrective action on their registration. Passionate about the electoral process, both Canale and Jozami stress the importance of accessibility to all voters when communicating key deadlines and requirements.

“As a recent immigrant who became a citizen in 2017 and a first-time voter in 2018, I wanted to help our community exercise the right to vote,” said Jozami. “I wanted to learn about our democracy and give back to my community.”

Wanting to get involved in local government, the couple both cite their classroom

experience with data and Excel as proving extremely beneficial, as well the meaningful internships that lead them to careers as public servants with the City and County of San Francisco.

“The most useful thing I learned at GPS isn’t a skill, it’s more an attitude that anything can be figured out,” said Canale. “That mindset has served me extremely well, not just at elections but also for moving between completely different departments and jobs, and confidently tying skills and experiences together in interviews.”

## **Sarah Vella, MIA ‘17, Program Analyst Federal Voting Assistance Program, Washington, D.C.**



Growing up and living in Malta, Sarah Vella was not aware that she was eligible to vote. Experiencing first-hand the same frustration that her customers often feel, she was inspired to help citizens vote overseas.

“The most satisfying part of my job is being able to help people exercise their right to vote,” said Vella. “The [Federal Voting Assistance Program \(FVAP\)](#) works to ensure Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so - from anywhere in the world.”

While based in the Washington, D.C. area, FVAP conducts voting assistance officer training workshops at U.S. military installations, embassies and consulates worldwide. Recalling her time at GPS, Vella was grateful for the opportunity to become a Boren scholar, which allowed her to qualify for her current role. While

studying abroad in Thailand during the program, she witnessed anti-democracy protests and a military coup, fueling her love of geopolitics.

“The Boren scholarship experience showed me the importance of democracy and how we must strive to protect our democratic institutions,” said Vella. “Having area knowledge and language skills in Southeast Asia will be helpful while I am on the road conducting workshops starting in 2020.”

During election season, FVAP’s main goal is achieving excellence in customer service. Voters can call into Vella when seeking voting advice, especially those protected under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). In her position, Vella also conducts research, as well as coordinating surveys and reports, collaborating with the Armed Services, the Election Assistance Commission, the U.S. Department of State and federal contractors.

“I would not have been assigned my current duties if I did not have the valuable quantitative, qualitative and teamwork skills that I gained at GPS,” said Vella. “The policy capstone course with Professor [Barbara Walter](#) was incredibly helpful at preparing me for my current role.”