Launching a Career in International Affairs

New Areas of Demand for International Affairs Professionals

Career opportunities in cities such as Washington, D.C., Tokyo, and Geneva are well known; but now, demand for an international affairs skill set is rising well beyond traditional epicenters.

State and local governments understand that global issues impact the security and prosperity of their citizens. Cross-cultural understanding, language skills, and a global perspective are vital for a range of public services: welcoming tourists, attracting foreign direct investment, bringing communities together, combating terrorism, and more.

Private companies, from start-ups to multinationals, need to navigate a rapidly changing global marketplace. They seek professionals with an understanding of the politics, economics, and cultures in different parts of the world and the analytical skills to assess risk in different markets.

As nonprofit organizations expand their monitoring and evaluation work, they need staff who can perform effective analyses, maintain flexibility, and make crucial connections—skills taught at leading schools of international affairs.

In the 2019 FP Guide to Launching a Career in International Affairs, you will learn about a variety of master’s degree programs and ways to open doors to promising international affairs career opportunities.
Opportunities for UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) graduates remain strong despite recent shifts in the climate for launching a career in international affairs. In fact, employment rates for the GPS class of 2017 are the highest seen in the last decade: 97 percent of graduates have found relevant employment.

“We’ve had more students indicate interest in local, state, and municipal government than in the past,” says David Robertson, director of career services. Thanks to the strong analytical and econometrics skills of GPS graduates, city and state governments, auditors, and public utilities often hire them to do research analysis.

“Our program is known for its heavy quantitative focus, and our students develop strong data analysis skills,” notes Robertson.

The school’s long-established Master of International Affairs (MIA) program attracts U.S. and international students. The Master of Public Policy (MPP) program focuses on U.S. policy-making within a global context. Its specialization options are tied to areas of growing employment demand, such as environmental policy, business, health, and security.

Students in the MPP program tend to be interested in policy-oriented jobs. While many gravitate to D.C. and to opportunities with U.S. intelligence agencies, GPS is also in a prime location for job opportunities in California and other western states—particularly in the technology sector and in careers involving sustainable energy and environmental policy.

“California leads in the tech sector and in environmental and renewable energy,” says Robertson. “Federal EPA hiring has slowed, but our graduates are pursuing environmental policy careers in the nonprofit sector and in local government.”

Sixty percent of GPS graduates work in the private sector, including multinational employers such as AECOM, Booz Allen Hamilton, Citi, Deloitte, KPMG, Maersk, and Qualcomm.

While many students enter GPS with an eye toward careers in international development, they discover opportunities in business development, marketing, and government affairs. Supply-chain analysis and financial-data analysis are among the wide range of career opportunities.

Beyond the private sector, a number of GPS graduates have joined the World Bank, the World Wildlife Fund, and U.S. government agencies such as the CIA, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Governmental Accountability Office.

For class of 2017 graduates employed in the U.S., starting salaries averaged $69,000 in the private sector, $60,000 in the public sector, and $53,360 in the nonprofit and multilateral sectors.

In searching for internships and jobs, students can draw on a network of more than 3,000 GPS alumni spanning 81 countries. Many also build ongoing relationships with members of the school’s Alumni Mentor Program.

In the GPS Alumni-in-Residence program, selected alumni spend an academic quarter on campus and keep office hours. Students can meet regularly with alumni working in their area of interest.

GPS also leads visits to organizations based in Southern California and offers annual student trips to San Francisco; Sacramento, Ca.; New York City; Washington, D.C.; and other cities, where alumni often host group visits with their employers.

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The School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) at UC San Diego attracts recent college graduates and accomplished professionals with its world-renowned expertise in the Pacific region and innovative science and technology policy research.

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New York University School of Professional Studies, Center for Global Affairs

A second master’s degree program, new specialty concentrations, and expanded opportunities to work with real-world clients give students at the NYU School of Professional Studies (NYUSPS) Center for Global Affairs (CGA) more ways to hit the ground running once they enter the rapidly changing world of work.

CGA is using a range of initiatives to prepare its students for careers in international relations, not only with a solid grounding in concepts and theory, but with practical experience tackling real-world problems, says Clinical Associate Professor Christopher Ankersen. He knows something about real-world problems, having worked for the United Nations in Thailand; in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; in Geneva; and in Vienna before joining NYUSPS.

“Employers are looking for reliability—someone who can come in on day one fully prepared and not be intimidated,” Ankersen asserts. “With the practical experience integrated into their course work, students come to realize that this isn’t like writing a paper or just stating the right answer in an essay. A lot of logistics, people management, and time management are not covered in a textbook, but they are essential.”

The new MS in Global Security, Conflict, and Cybercrime is the first degree introduced since CGA was established 15 years ago with its original MS in Global Affairs. The degree focuses on transnational security issues of cybercrime, cyberconflict, and cyberwarfare, with an emphasis on understanding the effects of—and possible solutions for—disinformation, espionage, and terrorists’ use of emerging technologies and media.

CGA is also offering two new specializations within its current MS in Global Affairs: data analytics and United Nations studies. Students who complete one of these specializations will be able to provide employers with concrete evidence of their expertise in that area. The specializations can be combined with one of eight concentrations, including Global Gender Studies, International Law and Human Rights, Peacebuilding, and Transnational Security, among others.

CGA also is rapidly expanding its consulting practicums, in which students work directly with one of a dozen outside clients, who seek expertise and new solutions in solving specific problems. Clients include institutions such as the U.S. Department of State and the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

“Rather than wait for students to apply their knowledge after they graduate, we’re trying to bring those experiences into the students’ reality now,” Ankersen says. “That way, they get to do it with the mentorship and guidance of a faculty member, but at the same time are involved in a real-world situation dealing with real problems.”

The research and capstone requirement for the MS in Global Affairs also is evolving. Rather than merely writing a traditional academic paper, students now also give a presentation to explain the problem they are addressing and potential solutions.

“We introduced that requirement to mirror what we think is relevant and front-and-center in the real world,” Ankersen says. “We are trying to take this perspective in everything we’re doing.”

www.sps.nyu.edu/cga

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WHAT IT TAKES

Shifting dynamics between global powers, the rise of new and dangerous political ideologies, and the evolution of technology into a threat against our everyday lives, are all contributing to governments, countries, and society at large undergoing dramatic and far-reaching transformations. While each issue that arises poses its own dilemma, they are all undeniably intertwined. It is the global professional with the insight and understanding of the complex factors at play, who will be of greatest value.

Whether you are currently working or seek to pursue a career in government, the private sector or an NGO, the NYU School of Professional Studies Center for Global Affairs offers degree programs that prepare you for the pressing issues we face. Our interdisciplinary approach uniquely positions you to problem-solve in innovative ways.

Study with leading international experts in the heart of NYC, while benefiting from Global Field Intensives, guest lecturers, and the deep experience of faculty members who have made these issues their life’s work. Gain the NYU education that sets you apart and gives you what it takes to succeed now and in the years to come.

CENTER FOR GLOBAL AFFAIRS

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Boston University, Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies

Last summer, four students from Boston University’s Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies traveled to rural India with Assistant Professor Mahesh Karra to help implement a study on the impact of a social network–based family planning intervention on women of reproductive age. Two other students accompanied Assistant Professor Julie Klinger to the remote Brazilian Amazon, where they studied the impacts of environment, development, and security policy on the Yanomami indigenous people.

It is not unusual for students to engage in research with professors at the Pardee School. “Our faculty put a premium on teaching, advising, and helping students develop their skills for the next step in their career,” says William W. Grimes, associate dean for academic affairs and professor of international relations. “Career opportunities are part of the educational opportunities here.”

The Pardee School also puts a premium on networking opportunities for students. The school hosts a monthly symposium where students meet with international affairs professionals, including Pardee alumni, and can talk to them one-on-one about organizations that interest them.

“In terms of preparing our students, we certainly follow what’s going on in D.C., but we’re also looking at large-scale changes in the world,” says Grimes. Pardee School faculty offer a wide range of expertise in areas such as sustainable development, environmental sustainability, migration and refugee issues, gender and global affairs, and religion and international affairs.

About one-third of graduates pursue careers in government service, another third are employed with nongovernmental organizations, and the remaining third work in the private sector.

Federal government employers of Pardee School graduates have included, for example, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Secret Service, USAID, and various U.S. intelligence agencies.

Pardee School alumni have also found opportunities with the U.S. Institute for Peace, the World Bank, refugee-related NGOs, the U.K. Department for International Development, the German Society for International Cooperation, the Atlantic Council, and various global health and development organizations.

Some students who begin their studies with an eye toward careers in the public or nongovernmental sector gravitate toward private sector opportunities, and the Pardee School curriculum provides good preparation for such jobs as well. “They come to realize that there’s more space in the private sector where they can use their skills,” says Grimes. Pardee School alumni have pursued career opportunities with private equity firms, public relations firms, news organizations, and risk analysis agencies.
The Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies is Boston University’s newest school. Our students take courses with world-class faculty, and have access to University-wide resources and all our affiliated regional and thematic studies centers.

Rigorous graduate programs—including joint and dual master’s degrees—offer small classes, language proficiency, and support for research travel.

Gain real-world expertise before you graduate. Experience the Pardee difference.