



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL of INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

International Economic Relations
International Economics

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Fall Welcome Reception



IER Students & Faculty: Kevin Horvath, Dr. Porzecanski, Jackie Pierson, Brian Gilbert

Dr. and Mrs. Porzecanski again hosted the IER Fall Welcome Party for students and faculty at their home. Food and conversation were thoroughly enjoyed, and no one could have asked for a more beautiful Washington evening to get to know one another!



IER Students: Daina Spencer, Rochelle Osei-Tutu, CIER president Sudhanshu Neema

ALUMNI PROFILES

Elizabeth (Liz) Diebold, IER '09



Liz has been developing expertise in the interplay of agriculture and finance in the emerging markets, learning about business strategies and investment outcomes, supply chains that reach the bottom of the social pyramid, and what it takes to engender bottom-up economic development.

She has been working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) ever since graduating from the IER program. Early on, she was a Presidential Management Fellow and then became an international business specialist, and by now she is the

lead officer in agriculture investment and finance at USAID's Bureau for Food Security (BFS). The Bureau leads the Feed the Future initiative, which strives to increase agricultural production and incomes in rural areas mainly in Africa. It leverages the strengths of other U.S. government partners, multilateral institutions, NGOs, the private sector and others to support country-driven strategies, and invests in strengthening the public and private institutions that underpin growth in farming.

Among her responsibilities, Liz has coordinated with investors to identify and develop solutions to mitigate investment and lending risks; developed and managed credit-guarantee facilities with financial institutions; established partnerships with multinational, regional, and domestic firms; and created a model to measure the business policy environment across countries. Along the way, Liz was fortunate to be seconded by USAID first as an international economist with the [Overseas Private Investment Corporation](#) (OPIC, 2010), and later as head of investment mobilization for the [Grow Africa](#) initiative hosted by the [World Economic Forum](#) in Geneva (WEF, 2012-13).

While attending SIS (2008-09), Liz worked as an economic growth specialist for the Emerging Markets Group, a development consulting company since acquired by [Cardno](#), an international firm headquartered in Australia. Previously, and after graduating from the University of Missouri with a B.A. degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, she had worked for as an economic development associate for the [SEEP Network](#) (2007-08), an alliance of international practitioner organizations dedicated to combating poverty through promoting inclusive markets and financial systems.

On her recollections of her time at SIS, Liz says that "one of the things about the faculty which I appreciated the most was their experience outside of academia and their ability to bring that experience into the classroom. Looking back now, I can see that learning from professors with a mix of private- and public-sector experience helped me to understand and speak the language of both sides, which is critical in my work whereby I deploy public resources to mobilize private investment in developing countries."

About what motivates her career, Liz told us that "I am most passionate about the challenges of poverty and inequality. Not only do they serve as the foundation or key complicating factor to all global challenges, but I have a personal connection as well. It is bizarre to have grown up in poverty in the United States and yet to recognize that I have become so privileged now. I feel a responsibility to bring that upward-mobility perspective into the work that I do."

Her advice to current IER/IE students is: "Once you enter graduate school, and especially after, the world gets very small. Value everyone you meet in your career -- not because of what they may be able to do for you, but because you are on a common journey and it is nice to become part of a network whose members are mutually supportive. This requires staying in regular contact with friends and acquaintances, and if that doesn't come naturally to you, learn how to do it as soon as possible! Granted, the nature of my work is particularly collaborative, but I am always so pleased to see

how often and efficiently common goals can be achieved by working across institutional and industry boundaries. And I love learning from my network!"

Danielle Kukwa, IER '10



Danielle is a senior analyst with [Econ One Research](#), an economic consulting firm which specializes in litigation-related research and testimony in areas such as antitrust, civil rights, employment law, energy, intellectual property, and international arbitration, but also produces statistical, valuation and market studies. The company has offices in Washington DC, California, Tennessee, Texas and New Delhi.

She has been with the company for three years, and her responsibilities include providing written and quantitative analysis for expert reports used in international arbitration cases, involving macroeconomic research (e.g., on inflation and exchange rates), industry-specific research (e.g., market trends), and business valuation analysis (e.g., discounted cash-flow models). She has direct experience in the oil and energy, agriculture, and telecommunication industries.

Previously, she worked for Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), a premier technology integrator in the technical, engineering, intelligence, and enterprise information technology markets, as a Project Control Analyst. And during 2009-11, she worked for the United States Air Force, first as a financial and budget analyst based in Washington DC at the USAF General Counsel's office, then as a research analyst in the

USAF Negotiation Center of Excellence (Maxwell AFB in Montgomery, AL), which spearheads the development and application of negotiation, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

While she was a student at SIS, she interned in the Washington DC office of the East-West Center, and right after graduating from Penn State University (PA) with four degrees (Economics, International Politics, French and International Studies), she interned at the think-tank American Enterprise Institute.

On why she chose to come to SIS, and whether she found a good fit, Danielle said that "when I started looking for a graduate program, I wanted to find one in which faculty and students would look at international political events from an economic perspective, rather than the standard political-economy approach which seems to be to look at international economic events mainly through a political lens."

"It may sound like a subtle difference, but it is a very basic one: the economic approach involves the application of rigorous quantitative analysis to interpret international events, which is why I did a lot of coursework in econometrics, economic modeling and other quantitative skills. But being mindful of what mathematical models and statistics cannot capture or explain about the real world is really useful, too. I have found this understanding of economic and political forces to be very beneficial -- and sought-after by many employers."

As to what current events in international economics interest her the most currently, Danielle responded that "since I have spent quite a bit of time tracking oil production and price developments, as well as advances in the alternative energy sector, I am curious as to how various oil-rich countries, regions and companies will adapt to low prices. Will the until recently booming areas such as around the Bakken formation in North Dakota be able to survive the downdraft, or will most development areas start to be abandoned? There is quite a drama playing out in the oil patches of America and beyond."

Benjamin Wielgosz, IER '09



Ben has been applying quantitative techniques to a wide range of information and knowledge- management challenges in several think-tanks, agencies and consulting assignments.

He graduated from UCLA with dual degrees in Mathematics and Geography, and started out his career as a geographic information system (GIS) specialist -- someone proficient in computer applications used to store, view, and analyze geographical and statistical information -- for the UCLA School of Public Health; then for three municipalities in and around London, England; and subsequently for the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) in Pakistan and then in Southern Sudan. WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, and Ben's work involved tasks like collecting road-assessment data and then providing transportation and aid-delivery mapping and efficiency analyses -- intelligence crucial to the WFP's ability to get food delivered to where it was needed, in order to save the lives of victims of war, civil conflict and natural disasters.

He came to Washington, DC in mid-2007 and entered the IER program because, he recalls, "I wanted a program with a strong appreciation of political-economy and public-policy considerations," and "while I was interested in the political economy of international development, I realized that training in econometrics was a necessary aspect on any credible economics qualification." Ben says that "I was interested in longer-term, more sustainable solutions to the problems of hunger and poverty which I had witnessed."

While doing his coursework at SIS, Ben landed an internship with the [Global Economy and Development Program](#) at the [Brookings Institution](#) and then a position as a research analyst at the [International Food Policy Research Institute](#), where he ended up working for four years on a variety of irrigation-related projects for which he developed a

longitudinal monitoring and evaluation data system, carried out environmental and demographic analyses, and led group interviews with consumers of water in Pakistan using quantitative social-network analysis. IFPRI is a major think-tank focused on finding research-based policy solutions to reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries on a sustainable basis.

In mid-2013, he moved to Geneva, Switzerland, to support his wife's career in the United Nations as an information management officer for education providers in humanitarian responses. There Ben landed a position exploring private-sector approaches to food security with the [World Economic Forum](#) as a program manager in their [Grow Africa Initiative](#), which aims to increase private-sector investment in Africa's agricultural sector by brokering collaboration among governments, international and domestic agricultural companies, and smallholder farmers in order to lower the risk and cost of investing in African farming.

In recent months, Ben is taking a career break to have his first child, learn French, and do some independent writing on economics. During his relatively young career, he has already co-authored ten research articles in journals, discussion papers, and reports, including [a piece](#) on empirical correlations between agricultural and health outcomes in Uganda in the [Malaria Journal](#), which Ben explains was an outgrowth of his Substantial Research Paper (SRP) while at SIS.

Ben's advice to current IER students and recent alums: "Run a search for yourself on Google, Bing, and social-media sites to double-check what a stranger can find out about you, and if you wouldn't want to discuss it in an interview, delete it. Once you get into an organization, find mentors both above you and on the same level with whom you can discuss professional problems and how to handle them. I suggest surrounding yourself with the people who embody what you would like to be in 30 years, and building lasting relationships with them. Finally, circulate beyond your current workplace at every opportunity; there is no faster path to mediocrity than insulating yourself behind the 'normal' of your organization."

Faculty Profile



Prof. Miles Kahler

Dr. Kahler, appointed as Distinguished Professor in SIS starting in Fall 2014, is an expert on international politics and international political economy, including international monetary cooperation, global governance, and regional economic and financial institutions. He also has an appointment as Senior Fellow for Global Governance at the Washington, DC, offices of the Council on Foreign Relations, where he is affiliated with the Council's International Institutions and Global Governance (IIGG) Program.

Prior to arriving to SIS, Kahler was Rohr Professor of Pacific International Relations at the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IR/PS), and also Distinguished Professor of Political Science in the Political Science Department, at the University of California, San Diego. He previously had appointments in the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (2012-2013), the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University (2007-2008), and at the Council on Foreign Relations headquarters in New York City (1994-1996). He is a member of the editorial boards of the journals *International Organization*, *Global Governance*, and *Global Summitry*.

We first asked Prof. Kahler what advice he would give to first-year IER students on making the most of their time on campus. His answer: "Although coursework will claim much of your time during your first year, try to allocate some time to the networking and intellectual opportunities provided by the IER program and by SIS at large. Become familiar with our ever-expanding faculty and their research and teaching. Learn from your fellow students, who arrive here with diverse backgrounds. Do not neglect the intellectual attractions to be found in the think-tanks and other universities in the city, although you should be selective, because there is so much on offer."

We then asked him what skills students should pick up in order to expand their professional opportunities -- internships and jobs. His advice: "Develop skills that will sharpen your analytic abilities, whether the capacity to write and speak logically and clearly, or expertise in quantitative methods of data analysis. In most career and professional opportunities, whether in government, the private sector, or the world of non-profits, one's ability to apply the correct analytic tools to a specific question or situation is always appreciated."

Considering that Prof. Kahler had spent a long tenure at UC San Diego, and prior to that at Princeton and Yale, we wanted to know how he was liking it being based in Washington DC now. His assessment: "For anyone interested in public policy and politics, as I am, Washington is perhaps the most exciting city in the world. There are

few places with so many talented individuals so passionately interested in public causes, whether local, national or global. The view of Washington in the media is heavily laced with cynicism with some reason – but you will find many individuals who share your interest in and commitment to public service."

Finally, we wondered how he felt being affiliated now with a program like IER which attracts faculty and students with backgrounds and interests in political science and international relations, but also those with backgrounds and interests in conventional international economics. Is this cross-disciplinary environment something which suits him? His reply: "Not too long ago, political scientists and economists had little to discuss: economists were snobbish with regard to other social scientists, and political scientists viewed economics as hopelessly divorced from practical issues of power and conflict.

More recently, however, convergence of the two fields has been rapid – to the benefit of both. Applied fields in economics, such as development, are now among the most vibrant; political scientists have brought their own skills to the analysis of foreign direct investment and trade. The conversation between the two fields is ongoing and lively. Students at SIS benefit from that intellectual exchange."

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