



SCHOOL of INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

International Economic Relations
International Economics

Summer Newsletter 2018

July 19, 2018

It seems like just last week we were celebrating Commencement...



...and now we are already welcoming our new students!

NEW STUDENT FACES IN IER/IE

Welcome New Students!

We are pleased to welcome the following new students who are entering the International Economic Relations program:

Valentina Abrego: She is a graduate of George Mason University, having earned a B.A. degree in Economics while also minoring in Communications. During the past eight years, Valentina has worked at the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, a nonprofit educational association of 17-member colleges and universities in the Washington Metropolitan Area – including American University – where she serves as Deputy Director of its Consortium Research Fellows Program. She hopes to gain the skills necessary to work in international organizations devoted to economic development, with a focus on education and health issues.

Nataly Cruz-Castillo: The recipient of a B.A. in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland at College Park, she interned in the Master's Program Office of UMD's Robert H. Smith School of Business and also in UMD's Office of Multicultural Involvement and Community Advocacy. Since her graduation, Nataly has worked as a researcher for the Japan Association for Recovery and Repatriation of War Casualties, as an intake assistant for the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, and currently works at the Folger Shakespeare Library as a Researcher Registration Assistant. Nataly is interested in trade policy research in East Asia and Latin America.

Kaue Beltrao Gobbi: Born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil, he is the recipient of a B.A. in International Relations and Economics, with a minor in Political Economy, from Michigan State University. Kaue has most recently held a public affairs and government relations internship in Washington DC with D&P Creative Strategies; a policies and procedures internship with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in New York City; an international trade consultancy internship at ConnectIreland in Dublin; and a legislative internship at the Michigan House of Representatives in Lansing. Kaue's professional interest is to help address the issue of uneven economic development, possibly by working an institution such as the World Bank.

Peter Grills: An alumnus of Portland State University with a B.S. in Economics, he spent his junior year abroad attending Hanyang University in Seoul, South Korea. Peter has been interning at U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly's office in Indianapolis as of late, and while attending college he worked remotely in customer service and sales for ShopKeep, a company which offers a cloud-based, iPad point-of-sale platform used mostly by small businesses. His interests are the intersection of economics and geopolitics, and the effect of culture and governmental structures on countries' economic development. Peter will be considering transferring into the International Economics program.

Scott Knewitz: The recipient of a B.S. degree in Finance from Bradley University (Illinois) and a one-year M.A. in International Political Economy from Newcastle University (United Kingdom), he will be pursuing the Graduate Certificate in

International Economic Relations. Scott has worked as a licensed banker for business and personal customers at Fifth Third Bank, a Fortune-500 company; as a treasury risk analyst for Univar, a global chemicals and ingredients distributor; and lately as a finance associate at Accurate Survey Service, a land surveyor and construction company in Illinois.

Alexander (Alex) Langlois: A graduate of Western Michigan University, where he obtained a B.S. degree in International and Comparative Politics, Alex worked most of his way through college serving as a cook in one establishment and as a bartender in another, putting in forty or more hours a week while being a full-time student. Alex minored in Arabic and History. He was active in Western Michigan's Model United Nations Club; held an internship as a court officer at Michigan's 54th District Court; and worked on the 2016 election campaign of Paul Clements for Congress, a Western Michigan political science professor and Democratic party candidate. Alex is particularly interested in international financial and political- economy issues.

Philip Lawton: He has had a distinguished career in the financial-services industry, having worked as an investment professional at major insurance companies like Aetna Life & Casualty and The Travelers, as well as at multinational banks including Citibank and Deutsche Bank. Philip earned an MBA degree in Finance from Northeastern University (Boston) and earlier on was awarded a Ph.D. in Philosophy by L'Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium). He holds the CFA and CIPM credentials from CFA Institute, and the CMA and CSCA designations from the Institute of Management Accountants. Philip is the author of several books and numerous articles in the fields of investment management and philosophy. He is interested in understanding the likely economic impact of gathering social and political forces on the future of globalization in general and on the course of the European Union in particular. Philip will be pursuing the Graduate Certificate in International Economic Relations.

Erick Murrer, Jr.: A recent alumnus of Western Kentucky University, where he majored in Economics and Chinese, and minored in Spanish, he has been selected a Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellow. Erick is currently holding a summer internship in the Economic Section of the U.S. Embassy Jerusalem, Tel Aviv Branch Office, where he is covering cybersecurity, energy, and settlement issues; last summer he interned at the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor in Washington DC; and in 2016 he interned with OutRight Action International in New York, an NGO which advocates for human rights for LGBTIQ people everywhere. He is interested in how inclusive growth agendas can be pursued by international economic organizations and will enter the Foreign Service after completing his studies.

Harry Nitzberg: He is the recent recipient of a B.A. degree in International Studies

from Towson University (Maryland), where he also minored in Economics. Harry's top interest is international political-economy issues in Latin America. He published an article titled "Cauterization and Infection: Trying to Fix the Venezuelan Economy" in the Spring 2018 issue of the Towson University Journal of International Affairs, and served as an editor for the journal.

Jacob Ouellet: He recently earned his B.A. degree in International Studies and Economics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, having spent a study-abroad semester at Kyungpook National University, Daegu, South Korea. Jacob worked during his summers, whether assisting residents at a retirement facility, operating rides at an amusement park, or doing manual labor for the Millcreek Township in his native Erie, Pennsylvania. He is interested in US diplomacy, intelligence analysis, and policy research, and will be considering transferring into the International Economics program.

Aashiqullah Zazai: Born and raised in Afghanistan, he is the recipient of a BBA (Honors) with a concentration in Finance from Al-Khair University (Islamabad, Pakistan), and an MBA with a concentration in Public Administration from the Swiss UMEF University of Afghanistan. Aashiqullah started out working for the BBC World Service in Kabul; then he served as finance and grants officer for ACDI/VOCA, a nonprofit economic development organization and frequent USAID contractor; and then as project manager, program and executive management officer for private contractors -- mainly the Sohail Global Group, a prime U.S. government contractor in Afghanistan. He would like to learn more about international economic relations to complement his competency in international business, economics and management.

ROBIN KOEPKE '10 AT IMF/WB 2018 MEETINGS



In mid-April we were very proud to see IER Alum Robin Koepke up on a stage during the IMF/WB 2018 Spring Meetings which took place in Washington DC. He was presenting on “A New Approach to Tracking International Capital Flows” to a standing-room-only audience, and the video of his talk can be watched [here](#). Robin and his colleague Rohit Goel introduced a new IMF publication, titled EM Capital Flows Monitor, that they recently developed to track the latest trends in capital flows, official reserves dynamics, and investor behavior relating to emerging markets, explaining how they go about it.

Robin is an economist in the IMF’s Monetary and Capital Markets Department. His work focuses on market surveillance and financial stability issues and he contributes to one of the Fund’s semiannual flagship publications, the Global Financial Stability Report. Before joining the IMF in 2016, he spent six years at the [Institute of International Finance](#) (IIF), the global association of financial institutions, where he served as an expert on global capital flows and the U.S. economy.

Alumni Profiles

Noora-Lisa Aberman '07



Noora is an Associate Research Fellow in the Accra, Ghana office of the [International Food Policy Research Institute](#) (IFPRI). IFPRI provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. Established in 1975, IFPRI currently has more than 600 employees working in over 50 countries. “My core responsibility,” says Noora, “is to carry out research that walks the line between what is academically rigorous – we are required to publish in peer-reviewed journals – and yet is policy-relevant for our government and development partners, such as we have in Ghana. However, given that I’m stationed in a country office, I also spend plenty of time building relationships with government representatives, local collaborators and stakeholders, as a way of becoming part of the ongoing policy dialogue while supporting the application of our research findings.”

Noora has been at IFPRI since graduating from the IER program. “I love the organization and the balance between research, reflection and real-world impact,” she explains. “The best thing about it is that I’ve played many different roles over the years. I was initially a communications and policy liaison within a research unit, promoting policy impact and partnerships. Then I moved to the Malawi country program as a Program Manager, where I had more administrative and donor- engagement responsibilities. While in Malawi, I completed my work for a German doctorate in Agricultural and Natural-Resource Economics from the University of Hohenheim and then moved to a research position in the Ghana office.”

Noora’s research examines agriculture and nutrition linkages, gender and power, and institutional issues related to agricultural development. Among the recent publications she has co-authored are “Building evidence for policy and program action for nutrition in Ghana” (2018); “Lean-season food transfers affect children’s diets and household food security: Evidence from a quasi-experiment in Malawi “ (2017); “Understanding stakeholder networks for nutrition policy: Lessons from a network analysis study in

India” (2017); and “Understanding the pathways to improved diets from the production of nutritious and marketable commodities” (2015).

Asked about what aspects of her personal and educational background have proven useful in her career, Noora explains: “I love doing research but I’m a policy person and really enjoy the relationship and consensus-building aspects of our work, so I don’t spend all of my time behind a desk looking at a computer screen. Because many of my colleagues are more reluctant to get out and mix in, my social skills have become a huge and distinguishing asset for me at IFPRI. And while knowledge of econometrics has been critical for my work, I found that learning different complementary analytical approaches – for example, textual analysis, participatory facilitation approaches, and social network analysis – has made me even more of a unique asset.”

When reflecting about her time in SIS, Noora recalls the following: “My SRP was very helpful in starting up my career. It was formatted as an academic paper and I provided it to hiring directors as a writing sample when applying for my first job. Similarly important to my future career was the internship I had with the [Center for Global Development](#), a leading think-tank that also works to reduce global poverty and improve lives through innovative economic research. But I also remember the personal relationships I developed at AU, which helped launch me into my career. If I had it to do it all over again, I would spend more time learning about various analytical methods and methodologies. Methodical analysis is what separates mere ideas and opinions from evidence-based policy advice.”

David Parker ’13



David is an International and Economic Affairs Specialist with [Aflac International](#), based in Tokyo, Japan. Aflac is a Fortune-500 insurance company operating in the United States and Japan – the world’s two largest insurance markets – specializing in voluntary insurance products. “Although Aflac is an American company,” explains

David, “Japan is our largest market, which is one of the things that makes working for the company in Tokyo so interesting.”

David is part of a multidisciplinary team operating in the U.S. and Japan that focuses on international public-policy issues, providing analytical and other support to senior company executives. “Doing this job well,” says David, “requires understanding both the external environment that we operate in and a lot of different aspects of the company and its business model, which is a constant learning process given its size and history.”

Prior to joining Aflac International last September, David was an Associate Fellow at the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) (CSIS), working with the Simon Chair in Political Economy and the Brzezinski Institute for Geostrategy. David began at CSIS as an intern with the Simon Chair while he was an IER student in 2012, before being hired as a research associate the following year. “At CSIS, a lot of my work focused on U.S. economic relations with the Asia-Pacific region and U.S. economic strategy. That meant studying the apparatus of U.S. economy policymaking, as well as the economies, economic policies, and policymaking structures of different countries in the Asia-Pacific region – particularly Japan and China.”

“Although the substantive focus of my work at Aflac and CSIS is different,” explains David, “a lot of the skills that I learned working at a think-tank have proven invaluable. Probably the most important among these is how to be an effective communicator, whether orally or in writing. A mentor of mine used to say that good communication starts with empathy. You may think you need ten pages or an hour- long briefing for your boss to understand an issue, but if your boss only has the time or the bandwidth for one page or ten minutes, your job is to make sure they get what they need within those constraints.”

“I’ve also sometimes been surprised at how useful other aspects of my background have been,” says David. “For example, my undergraduate major was Japanese language, literature, and culture. In addition to being useful preparation for working in Japan, that experience also trains you to constantly question the assumptions that come with your own perspective. That’s proven valuable in many different contexts, whether trying to fit into a new workplace or analyzing how a foreign government operates. It’s a good way to ensure that what you think makes sense doesn’t prevent you from seeing what’s actually going on.”

Asked about what he remembers learning or doing while he was in the IER program that proved useful in developing his career, David reflects: “I remember that before my first day of SIS classes, I went to Prof. Porzecanski’s office to ask him what he thought about my course schedule. At the time, I was planning to take mostly intro- level courses, but after telling the professor about my background and interests, I left his office with a schedule that was totally different from the one I had brought.

Among other pieces of advice, he’d let me know that my previous economics background made me eligible to take some more focused economics electives

instead of just fulfilling my requirements. That advice turned out to be critical to helping me make the best use of my time at SIS.”

“What I learned from that interaction was the importance of taking the initiative,” says David, “and not assuming that things will work out for the best on their own. Never assume people will know where you’re coming from, what your interests are, what your comparative advantages may be, or that you’re ready for more responsibility. Good mentors and managers often will ask you about these things or will figure them out by observing you, but you can really do yourself – and them – a favor by speaking up.”

Asked about what advice he would give to those who are about to begin their professional careers, David says: “First, integrity matters. You will sleep better if you know that you’re doing your best to live your principles. Integrity is also important if you want to be an effective leader. If you’re a leader, people will always be watching you; they will see if you’re the kind of person they can count on, and it will influence how they perform under pressure – and how much pressure they can take as a team.”

“Second, when choosing what skills you want to acquire, do prioritize. What is your goal? What skills do you need to get there? Personally, I wish I had been more fluent in a programming language like Python and with a statistical package like R or Stata, but those weren’t the skills that I prioritized in grad school. Instead, while I gained useful, basic knowledge in those areas, I focused primarily on other aspects of my economics training and on developing my writing and regional expertise – and those have been quite useful thus far in helping me find the kind of career I wanted.”

“Last but not least,” concludes David, “I suggest that you make good friends and solicit and value their criticism. Especially in rough times, good friends help keep you working toward the best possible version of yourself.”

Katherine (Katie) Wolicki ’11



Katie, who is based in London, is Head of Regulatory Strategy and Liaison at [HSBC](#), one of the world's largest banking and financial-services companies, serving around 38 million customers worldwide through a network of about 3,900 offices in nearly 70 countries. She manages a team operating in three locations – London, Edinburgh and India – whose focus is the policies and regulations that impact the bank's operations, as well as the relationship with HSBC's lead regulatory body, the Prudential Regulatory Authority (PRA), which is housed in the Bank of England.

As Katie explains, “in practice, this means examining existing and forthcoming regulatory initiatives, interpreting how they should be applied to the bank and will affect our balance sheet, or assessing how they will impact our business model in the future. This entails discussing matters with policymakers, regulators, and trade associations and then advising our management appropriately.”

As concerns managing the relationship with HSBC's lead regulator, Katie says, “this includes managing ad hoc supervisory requests from the PRA and preparing for the routine meetings which take place on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, to go over our market and counterparty risks and the models that quantify them.”

Prior to joining HSBC five years ago, Katie worked at the Brussels office of an American public relations and marketing agency, [FleishmanHillard](#), with over 80 offices in 30 countries, where she specialized in financial-services regulatory issues. “This was immediately after the 2008 global financial crisis,” explains Katie, “when a huge raft of new regulations and policies were being negotiated and finalized. Seeing this from a European rulemaking perspective was fascinating and very useful to me. This job allowed me to develop most of the strengths and competitive advantages needed to transition into the government relations team of a top bank like HSBC.”

Asked about the skills and experiences that have proven useful in developing her career, Katie emphasizes the following: “Crucial to my success have been strong communication and interpersonal skills; building and maintaining a strong network; being proactive and intellectually curious; engaging others to join or support my journey; and remembering to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ quite often along the way.”

Pressed to recall what she remembers learning or doing while she was in the IER program that inspired her or proved useful career-wise, Katie says: “Leveraging the Kogod finance courses I took was pivotal to my interest in bank capital and liquidity issues and gave me a unique advantage and selling point early on. I also thank my internships while at SIS, one with the State Department in Brussels and another with UNCTAD in Geneva, because they helped me realize that I wanted a life and career in Europe, and for that I needed to expand my knowledge and understanding of European economic and financial issues.”

Asked for any advice for IER students or young alums launching their own careers, Katie points out: “Don’t be afraid to explore and mess up, change or start over. Finding one’s career path is not as linear as people would like to think, and you never know what random conference or experience will help you connect with something or someone who will change the course of your life and cement your future. And don’t judge yourself too harshly; try to enjoy the journey, and not just each destination.”

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