



*ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT | Aaron Thiele*

*By Amy Holmes*

Aaron Thiele graduated from Cal Poly's political science department in 2011. He currently works as an Advance Representative in the Office of the Secretary for the U.S. Department of the Interior. He was drawn to this position after working in Secretary Zinke's Congressional Office for two years as a Senior Policy Assistant. In this position Aaron worked on policies relating to foreign affairs, military, judiciary, and veteran issues. When Secretary Zinke was confirmed as Secretary of the Interior, Aaron was asked if he was interested in transferring over to the Department of the Interior, which he enthusiastically embraced and accepted. Working as an Advance Representative served as good experience for Aaron, allowing him to learn the issues of the Department and giving him the opportunity to travel to some of the country's greatest places. Aaron chose to attend Cal Poly because of its reputation and

its proximity to his home, which made everything a little bit easier knowing that he could go home as often or as little as he wanted. When Aaron applied to Cal Poly, he forgot whether he had selected business or political science as his major, and did not find out which it was until he was accepted. Once he began taking classes, he started enjoying political science more and more. Within the program, Aaron focused on international relations taking classes with Dr. Leithner. Two of his memorable classes with her were a class on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Politics & Popular Culture. Aaron fondly remembers Dr. Moore's Basic Concepts of Political Thought class, but comically noted how it was the hardest 'B' he ever received. During his time as an undergraduate, Aaron had two internships in a House Congressional office. The first was during the August recess, which was rather slow. He applied for the same internship the next year, but requested it in the timeframe when the House was in session, to gain more insight into a typical Congressional office experience. After graduating in 2011, Aaron's first job was as a Staff Assistant in Congressman Kevin McCarthy's office.

Working in a Congressional Office was a great experience for Aaron. He spent a lot of time drafting policy memos and briefing memos in order to ensure that his boss was adequately prepared for a hearing, meeting, or vote. One skill Aaron gained through this was the ability to convey the top issues and anticipate questions that may be asked. He has used these skills in his current job, as working in Advance sometimes leads to having to provide last minute updates or information to the Secretary. The key skill necessary for Aaron is the ability to quickly absorb information. Due to the wide range of issues addressed by the Department of the Interior, Aaron has to be able to know the issues that will be discussed.

---

Outside of work, Aaron plays softball (a frequent interview question in the government), as well as recreational soccer. Aaron's advice to current Political Science students is to learn to constructively disagree with people. There are many people who you will meet in politics that may subscribe to a more radical political point of view than the one you hold; however, just because you may not see eye to eye with someone on every issue does not mean people cannot work together on contentious issues.