



*ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT | Kylie Mason*

*By Amy Holmes*

Kylie Mason graduated from Cal Poly with a political science degree in 2013 and currently works as a Senior Associate at The Lafayette Group – a government contracting firm working on cybersecurity policy. Kylie was drawn to this position after finishing a major set of projects at her previous government job. She felt that at that point, the growth opportunities within that section of the Department of Defense were slim and wanted to move into cybersecurity. Kylie has been working in her current position in February 2018. In that time, she has realized that it is important to her to work alongside people who are driven by things larger than themselves, taking precedence over seeing a direct outcome from her work. Kylie chose to attend Cal Poly due to a promise she had made herself about not finishing her education with a bachelor's degree. She set a goal to continue her education beyond

undergraduate schooling. She chose Cal Poly because it was an affordable option that still offered a good education. Growing up in San Luis Obispo, Kylie has always dreamed of getting out of town, but after moving into the dorms her first year, she began to love Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo in a new way.

Going into her undergraduate program, Kylie knew that she wanted to work in international affairs, prompting her to major in History. After a few months as a History student, she realized that her desire was not to study how things have already happened, but how to do those same things in the right way in the future. Enter, Political Science. Kylie chose to create her own concentration within the department, focusing on the individual's interaction with government at every level. She used this to explore concepts of jurisprudence as well as how international order regimes changed over time. Her favorite class in the department was Politics and Popular Culture, which she says challenged most everything by using the lens of science fiction and fantasy to analyze political concepts. Kylie also had a psychology minor, which she recommends to everyone, regardless of area of study. On campus Kylie was involved in the social dance scene, as well as a few years of Mock Trial, Theater, and the Political Science Honors Society, Pi Sigma Alpha.

After graduating from Cal Poly, Kylie attended American University in Washington, D.C., where she focused on security studies (global governance, politics, and security); a perfect fit for her interests. After finishing graduate school, Kylie was offered a position as a government consultant in the Pentagon working on defense policy. Kylie accounts many of her useful day-to-day skills to Dr. Moore's infamous red pen. She notes a few things that are necessary to the job she does now:

1. A good mental organization of large amounts of very dry information
2. Quick thinking
3. The ability to interpret legal speak into simple concepts.

Kylie's insight into government workings is that "the state" is not just a black box that elections fill and policy, laws, and taxes come out of. Rather, it is a complex network of individuals who have lives and feelings. Learning how to navigate in government is a skill that Kylie stresses heavily.

Kylie's advice to current Political Science students is to explore the things they love, the things they are curious about, and to figure out stress management strategies before you enter the "real world." She also advises students to travel when you can. She notes that it may cost a lot of money now, but it will cost more of you to take the time to do so later.

Outside of work Kylie is involved in powerlifting, self-defense combat courses, hiking, social dancing, and many other activities that allow her to work so hard and handle the inevitable stress of life. Kylie also enjoys going to museums, reading, cooking, and responsibly participating in the DC craft bartending culture.