



KATIE MAGNUS is a Defense Policy Analyst at the Senate Armed Services Committee and is also enrolled in grad school at Naval War College. She graduated from Cal Poly in 2015 with a degree in Political Science.

Alumni Spotlight: Katie Magnus

Camden Belliveau

As the founder of Paideia, Katie has an impactful legacy on Political Science at Cal Poly. Unsurprisingly, her career following her graduation in 2015 is similarly impressive. Katie is currently enrolled in grad school at Naval War College, while also working as a Defense Policy Analyst at the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Initially, Katie chose Political Science because she wanted to be a lawyer. However, her Political Science education sent her in a different direction. In particular, Katie credits Dr. Lowham taking the time to create an individualized graduate level course for me, Congress with Prof. Den Hartog, classes with Anika Leithner, and concepts discussed with Prof Moore as classes and professors who were memorable and important in her political science education.

During her summers at Cal Poly, Katie interned for her local Congresswoman in Palm Springs after her freshman year, the Department of State at the US Mission to the UN in New York in the summer after sophomore year, and for Senator Hatch in DC summer after her junior year. These internships helped instill a desire to work in the public sector, while also helping Katie accumulate valuable career experience. Unsurprisingly, Katie cites such experience is vital for becoming a Defense Policy Analyst.

“Usually to get a job in the House, or the Senate, offices and committees prefer you to have some previous congressional experience to [you] understand processes and procedures. A graduate degree is helpful but not necessary. There is no one track that represents necessary experience, [but] it is helpful to have relevant experience in whichever area you want to work in. I had foreign policy and defense experience prior to my work on the Senate Armed Services Committee, but I also had references and a network that vouched for my work ethic. Connections matter.”

Following graduation, Katie accepted a position in the private sector, and was initially very excited to do so. But after 2 years, Katie realized that the public sector aligned more seamlessly with her values, specifically her desire to “make a difference.” Thus, she returned to the public sector as a Defense Policy Analyst. Her advice for anyone seeking direction or career advice following graduation draws on her own experience, as she recommends identifying your values, and then pursuing a career that coheres with those values. Katie strives to benefit the greater good, and her job is the best way for her to do that. So, even after a hard day at work, she always returns motivated to fight the good fight, replete with the knowledge that she is helping people in the best way she can.

Aside from work, Katie runs marathons, camps, and skis, and generally loves spending time outdoors. She also travels copiously and tries to track down her favorite west coast beers on the east coast. Though she has no pets, she endeavors to own a dog when her place can accommodate one.