



Greetings from the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University. Thank you for signing up to receive information from the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid.

The emails we send are meant to provide you with information about the opportunities available to SIPA students and details related to the process of applying for admission and financial aid.

SIPA News

SIPA students publish a biannual magazine called SIPA News. The most recent publication is devoted to the topic of energy. Energy is a key policy issue in today's world and this edition of features interviews and articles that examine how energy is impacting politics, people, and the environment. You may view this issue, and all other issues of SIPA News, in PDF format on the following site:

http://www.sipa.columbia.edu/about_sipa/sipa_publications/sipa_news.html/

Application Information

Each summer our staff completes an annual update of the SIPA admission application. Our goal is to have the application for spring 2008 and fall 2008 ready by August 15th. The deadline for spring applications is October 1st. The deadline for fall applications is January 4th. Our office will send you an email when the application for the 2008 cycle is ready.

Fall Travel

Each fall representatives of SIPA visit select locations to meet with those who are interested in our programs. The locations most often are college campuses and SIPA also participates in fairs featuring representatives from graduate school programs. When the schedule is finalized we will send you a link where the information will be posted.

Interview: Economic and Political Development

Many SIPA students who are committed to understanding and improving conditions in the developing world choose Economic and Political Development (EPD) as their concentration. SIPA is an ideal place in which to pursue studies in this area for closely tied to the theoretical and historical work that occurs in the classroom is the requirement that students complete a rigorous, hands-on development project. This is known as the EPD Workshop and it occurs in diverse settings every semester.

The following is an interview with SIPA faculty member Jackie Klopp and some students who participated in workshops this past academic year.

First, comments from Jackie Klopp on the important role this concentration plays at SIPA:

"First, global awareness that eradicating poverty is one of humanity's greatest challenges is on the rise. Just like we now look back at slavery with repugnance, centuries from now people may look back at our time and wonder how we could have let so many people including so many children die from preventable causes. I think we are seeing greater awareness of the terrible tragedy of poverty in this new generation of SIPA students," she said.

“Secondly, we feel that generating creative approaches to improved human development means thinking outside the box and outside of the lines we draw around concentrations. Hence, we allow a lot of flexibility at EPD to explore the intersections of fields like media and development or energy and development. We [also] believe that students learn best how to be thoughtful and effective in the world by applying their knowledge work on real world problems.”

Three SIPA students describe their experiences in the EPD Workshop below. Two are recent graduates and one will complete her studies in 2008. Stephen Keppel is from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and received his undergraduate degree from Notre Dame. Gauhar Abdygaliyeva is a native of Kazakhstan and attended college at George Washington University, and Paul Rosenberg is originally from San Mateo, California and completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Each of these students was asked to describe the diverse paths they followed in making the decision to enroll at SIPA:

Paul: I came to SIPA from two years of teaching Economics in Northern Thailand. I was wired into a poor, agrarian community through my students. I had anywhere from 300 to 600 students per term, most of whom could not afford the schooling, nearly all of whom would go right back to the farm, if they finished school at all. I'm probably going down the wrong track with this but essentially what I want to say is that I was pretty passionate about figuring out how to improve economic outcomes for the poor populations of North and Northeast Thailand. Since I was in education, I was interested in the returns on education, and why they were so low for certain population groups. The more I studied these issues, the more I realized how complex the problem was and how much I needed to learn. As I looked for programs in the field, I found SIPA to offer the most comprehensive education in its peer group. When I looked at the course offerings at SIPA, I wanted to "concentrate" in everything. There was no program anywhere that could match the breadth and depth of talent working at SIPA, nor the latitude that SIPA gives its students to explore all of their interests.

Stephen: I was working in Haiti in 2003 and 2004 on a business development project called The Economic Growth for Haiti (EGI). I realized that while I had the passion for what I was doing and the experience on the ground working with the Haitians in my community I still needed more educational experience to have the impact that I wanted to have. The combination of this realization, the increase in violence in Haiti and the reading of Sach's *The End of Poverty* I began to look at international programs in the U.S. and came across SIPA.

Gauhar: Before coming to SIPA I worked for several years at private legal consulting and various United Nations positions in Kazakhstan. A year ago I was awarded the President of Kazakhstan Bolashak ("Future" in Kazakh) Scholarship to study in any prestigious university worldwide. Of all I chose Columbia for the program it offers in economic and political development with a minor concentration in UN studies. At the decision-making time it seemed to me that this program was tailored exactly to my needs and wants in terms of further professional and personal development.

The projects they worked on reflect a variety of issues and regional interests:

Stephen: Our project was called Reconsidering Government Assistance in Indigenous Education in Mexico. We worked on the project from New York and with a group of students in Mexico City. In March we completed two weeks of field research in Chiapas, Mexico. In Chiapas, we met with local government officials and visited six rural indigenous schools. At each school we conducted interviews, focus groups and surveys of students and teachers.

Gauhar: Our EPD project focused on finding solutions to Financing Small and Medium Enterprises in Kazakhstan. The Government of Kazakhstan has recognized SME growth as a long-term priority, specifically focusing on exports in the non-oil sectors. Under the aegis of the Sustainable Development Fund Kazyna, the Kazakh Government has tasked two governmental agencies, the Small and Medium Enterprise Fund (SMEF) and the National Innovation Fund (NIF), to remedy deficiencies in capital access for growing SMEs. My Workshop aimed to streamline the existing SME support and finance programs and we proposed a model to enhance SME access to capital through comparative analysis of successful programs in Malaysia, Norway, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Paul: Our team worked with the Earth Institute on the Millennium Cities Project to identify and

assess the opportunities and constraints to foreign direct investment in Louga, Senegal. Since the project was completely new, the team performed the ground-breaking research for what will be a five-year project to help promote employment and technological spillovers through foreign investment. This will ultimately help Senegal to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As one would expect, challenges often emerge in completing these projects. These are often the most fertile ground for learning:

Gauhar: Our research was conducted over a six-month period, with background completed in New York before one-week trips to Almaty, Kazakhstan for on-the-ground fact-finding research missions. Having all that information on hand, we fought to avoid “scope creep” and narrowed our focus on SMEs financing. Of course, there was the temptation to dive into other aspects of SME development as we studied this topic thoroughly from all angles. I learned that much of our success can be attributed to how well the team developed sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships with the project’s major executive partner and the beneficiaries of our research.

Paul: The most difficult challenges were definitely associated with data and the limited amount of time we had on the ground in Senegal. I know that teamwork was a problem for other workshop groups, but this was a negligible issue for us. We had our differences, but the team was extremely talented and we became great friends. The only other real issue was conflicts with our other school and work responsibilities. That was particularly frustrating, but it mirrors real life project management situations. Learning to manage that aspect was a particularly important skill-building experience. I think I can honestly speak for the whole team when I say that the workshop was one of the most important things that any of us had done at SIPA. It was more practical professional experience than most internships and was actually a great opportunity to apply what we learned in the classroom to a real project.

Coursework at SIPA prepares EPD Workshop participants for their experiences in the field:

Paul: My coursework at SIPA was extremely important for the success of the workshop. I would also say that SIPA attracts a pretty amazing student body, and it’s a curious person’s paradise. You learn so much from your friends.

Stephen: SIPA prepared us well for the workshop but I would have to say also that we learned an extreme amount just from the experience.

Gauhar: I learned a lot from the entire EPD faculty and staff. I’m positive that only at SIPA can one enjoy the work and the company of team members with US, German, Italian, Bhutanese, Vietnamese, Kazakh passports, among many others.

The deliverables associated with EPD Workshops often develop lives of their own and become a lasting legacy in the public arena. These projects often inform policy approaches:

Paul: The research has been reviewed by the Earth Institute, as well as its Senegalese counterparts, and the relevant multilateral stakeholders. The research will be the basis of more targeted research, and also offers a number of prescriptive recommendations which the Earth Institute has already started to implement.

Gauhar: Our major partner will be widely disseminating the report among national and international government and non-government stakeholders with an interest in SMEs. We will also share the results with the decision-makers in the Kazakh government.

The ability to blend theory and practice at SIPA is one of the school’s most attractive features for many students. Alumni of the EPD concentration find themselves in very diverse settings:

Gauhar: After SIPA, I’ll be equipped with the adequate skills and knowledge I’ll need to pursue public service in my relatively new yet independent state – the Republic of Kazakhstan. I would like to become part of a team of committed and highly motivated government officials, maybe after a couple of more years at the United Nations.

Steve: I am getting married in July and we are moving to London in September, where my future

wife will begin a masters program and I look to start work. I will work in development for an international organization and am also looking into consulting.

Paul: I'm in the process of refining my list of potential next steps. If anything, SIPA has broadened my interests rather than narrowed them.

Office Information

Please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have questions. In addition, if you plan to visit New York City you are welcome to visit campus and attend an information session. We do request that you contact us at least one week prior to your arrival so we can make the proper arrangements. Thank you again and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

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