



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 email newsletters 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. An archive of the emails sent can be found by visiting the following site:

[http://sipa.columbia.edu/resources\\_services/admissions/newsletter.html](http://sipa.columbia.edu/resources_services/admissions/newsletter.html)

### **Events at SIPA**

SIPA is a very busy place. On a weekly basis there are approximately twenty different events that take place featuring guests with diverse backgrounds from a variety of professions. Scholars, authors, government officials, journalists, business men and women, and many others who are passionate about world affairs and public policy visit SIPA to engage in discussions with our students. Recently SIPA hosted a special lecture by Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Secretary Leavitt delivered a speech on the state of our nation's health care system. His lecture and the question and answer session that followed touched on topics ranging widely from state-based initiatives to broaden insurance coverage, the current debate on renewal of the S-CHIP program, to efforts to improve the sharing of health information while protecting patient privacy. A video of the event can be viewed at the following link:

[http://www.dkv.columbia.edu/video/sipa/sipa\\_healthcare.html](http://www.dkv.columbia.edu/video/sipa/sipa_healthcare.html)

The Annual Latin American Conference also recently took place. The conference is a policy oriented academic event that brings together distinguished policymakers and leaders of the region. The panelists bring a wide range of real world experience in public policy. A video from event can be viewed at the following link:

[http://www.dkv.columbia.edu/video/sipa/sipa\\_lasa\\_brazil.html](http://www.dkv.columbia.edu/video/sipa/sipa_lasa_brazil.html)

For more videos of events that have taken place at SIPA, please feel free to explore this link:

[http://sipa.columbia.edu/news\\_events/multimedia/index.html](http://sipa.columbia.edu/news_events/multimedia/index.html)

## **Student Interview: Admissions Program Assistant, Madeline England**

Madeline England is a second-year SIPA student pursuing an MIA degree with a concentration in human rights. Her coursework includes International Law, Transitional Justice, Security Council and Peacekeeping in Africa, and Conflict Resolution. She spent the summer interning with Home for Human Rights, a local NGO in Colombo, Sri Lanka. There she researched human rights abuse, liaised with UN human rights treaty bodies, and produced a newsletter raising international awareness of torture in Sri Lanka.

Prior to SIPA, Madeline worked as a legal assistant for a London law firm from 2002 to 2003 and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mauritania from 2004 to 2006. After obtaining her MIA degree, Madeline plans to continue advocating human rights within conflict zones. Caroline recently answered some questions about her time at SIPA and here are some of her remarks:

*How did you find the required career services class?*

"Honestly, I was a little apprehensive of the Professional Development course at first; I was expecting a standard resume review and lessons on preparing for interviews. The class did that but also offered much more. The class requires that we do an informational interview, which was good practical experience and introduced me to the SIPA alumni network. My instructor emphasized that the course is an opportunity to compare professional experiences and learn from each other. Since several of my classmates had worked in Human Resources or in the field of humanitarian relief, I picked up a lot of great tips."

*How did you obtain your summer internship?*

"Home for Human Rights is a partner organization of the Advocacy Project (AP), an NGO based in Washington, D.C. The AP recruits graduate students to intern with its 25 partner organizations around the globe. This benefits both NGOs, and it is good field experience for a graduate student -- especially since the AP did all of the work finding motivated, active local NGOs. The AP posted available internships on SIPATRAK, the online database maintained by Career Services. I e-mailed my resume and cover letter to the AP, had a phone interview with the Director, and secured funding through SIPA and the AP. A month later, I was on a plane to Colombo."

*What drew you to SIPA?*

"SIPA is one of the few schools to offer a Human Rights program, which was very important to me. The location was obviously a factor; now that I am here, I know that the opportunities of being in New York cannot be overstated. Every day there is a head of state, UN Ambassador, or other dignitary visiting. The internship opportunities during the semester are huge -- the UN, UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, Watchlist, and dozens of other NGOs. I also appreciate that there are so many international students and so many people have worked abroad in some capacity; everyone brings their experience to the table."

*What has been the most challenging part of your time at SIPA?*

"SIPA's orientation began one week after I returned from living in a small West African

village for two years. SIPA seemed really intense and hectic in comparison, and it took me awhile to get over culture shock and stop feeling overwhelmed. Even now, with events to attend every day and the workload, time management is an issue. But that's graduate school."

### **Application Information**

The application deadline for fall 2008 is only two months away and the following is important information concerning the application process.

#### ***Fall 2008 Admission Application Deadline – January 4th, 2008***

If you plan on applying for fall 2008 admission to the full-time, two-year MIA or MPA program, all application materials must be received in our office by January 4th; this is not a postmark date. Please make sure you allow plenty of time for your documents to arrive in our office. Your personal statement and résumé/CV must be uploaded on the application website. Those writing your letters of recommendation may also upload their letters via our application website. The only documents that need to be mailed to our office are academic transcripts and if necessary, a TOEFL test report. The Admission Committee can only guarantee the review of applications that are completed by the stated deadline. Applications completed after the deadline will be reviewed on a space availability basis.

#### ***Letters of Recommendation***

Is more always better? In terms of recommendation letters the answer is no. We receive thousands of applications and must adhere to standards that make the comparison of applicants equal. We ask for three letters of recommendation and if we get more than three, we randomly choose three letters and disregard the rest. Instructions are to submit one academic letter of recommendation and two professional letters of recommendation, but if you would like to change this mix you may. For example, some older applicants who have been out of school for a number of years no longer have close connections with professors and wish to submit three professional letters of recommendation. Choose the mix you feel paints the best picture of your qualifications and experience.

#### ***Personal Statement***

When reviewing an application for admission, the Admissions Committee pays particular attention to the personal statement. The personal statement can include biographical information but should be future oriented. One common mistake is a personal statement that reads like a résumé. A résumé is focused on past accomplishments, positions, and activities. While a personal statement can include these elements, the focus should be on issues/topics you are passionate about and what you would like to do in the future. A piece of advice is to share your goals at the beginning of the statement rather than waiting until the end. Stating your goals at the beginning will provide the maximum opportunity to articulate what you are passionate about and why you feel a SIPA education will assist you in achieving your goals.

## **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,

The Staff of the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid

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