

# Schar School

## Policy in Action

Fall 2017,  
Vol 2, No.1

## The Schar School's First Graduation

May 2017 marked the first graduating class of the Schar School of Policy and Government. The nearly 600 graduates included students from Bahrain, Barbados, Canada, China, Georgia, Jamaica, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United States, and Vietnam.

The graduation ceremony began with an address by Janine Davidson, the newly-named president of Metropolitan State University of Denver as well as a former professor in the Schar School's International Security Master's Program, former undersecretary of the US Navy, and a senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. She graduated with distinction from the Air Force Squadron Office School and was the first woman to fly the Air Force's tactical C-130. With this background, Dr. Davidson amused students with memories of her own time in college and her graduation ceremony. She also assured students that they should be themselves throughout their careers and keep in mind that they will make changes throughout their lives.

(Continued on pg 3)

# A Letter from Dean Mark J. Rozell



This Fall, we celebrate our first anniversary as the Schar School of Policy and Government. It has been a successful year. We continue to increase the number of students we serve – we currently have 738 undergraduate students and 986 graduate students, for a total of 1,714 students. Our growth program this year has been the International Security Master’s Program, with over 100 applications. Congratulations to all for this great increase!

With the growing interest in the International Security program, we sought two new professors this year. We welcome Professor Ellen Laipson, who recently left The Stimson Center after 14 years, 13 of which she served as president and CEO. Other highlights of her career include working with the National Intelligence Council, as Special Assistant to the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and as director for Near East and South Asian Affairs for the NSC. Professor Laipson also will serve as the director of the Center for Security Policy Studies and the director of the International Security Master’s Program.

In addition, we were pleased to welcome Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera. Professor Correa-Cabrera has spent the last two years at the Wilson Center, while on leave from the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. Her research interests include border studies and border security, drug trafficking and organized crime, energy and security, migration and human trafficking, and US-Mexico relations. Dr. Correa-Cabrera will be teaching undergraduate students in political science and graduate students in the international security program.

Professor Alan Shark joins us from the Rutgers University School of Public Affairs and Administration. He brings the Schar School additional strength in technology leadership focusing on government application and policies, public management, policy formulation, and advocacy – both regulatory and congressional. Professor Shark will be offering courses in these areas and developing a new center that focuses in these areas.

Looking more broadly across this academic semester, we are working with the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce on the upcoming Virginia elections, and continuing our regional polling efforts with The Washington Post. We again will honor our former colleague, the late Sue Tolchin with the second Tolchin Memorial Lecture, this time focusing on women in politics and the judiciary.

We also celebrate the opening of the Michael V Hayden Center on Intelligence, Policy, and International Security. General Hayden is the former director of the NSA and the CIA, as well as the best-selling author of *Playing to the Edge: American Intelligence in the Age of Terror*. Using the theme “We’re All in this Bunker Together,” General Hayden has put together an all-star line-up of well-known commentators for the opening event. For those of you in the region, watch for more information on this exciting event in late October.

Our final celebration is for our own students and staff. Within this issue of *Policy in Action* we describe May’s graduation events as well as offering advice to incoming and current students on how best to navigate the ins and outs of the Schar School and George Mason University. **I wish you a great semester!**



## The Schar School's First Graduation

(Continued from pg 1)

During the graduation ceremony, a number of students, faculty, and staff were recognized by Dean Mark J. Rozell for their outstanding academic achievements and professional contributions to the Schar School.

Michael Galfetti received the Angela J. Khoury/Stephen T. Early Award. The award is given to an outstanding senior in government and international politics. Michael, who graduated with dual degrees in government and philosophy, joined the Schar School as a government major, and realized the usefulness of philosophical analysis while studying abroad at Oxford University. His thesis, "Thucydides' methodology: Contemporary commentary from an ancient scholar for today's theorists," applied rigorous qualitative analysis to international relations theory. He plans to pursue graduate studies in either philosophy or political economy.

For the outstanding senior in public administration, the John W. Godbold Award was given to Jordan Heritage. Jordan, with a minor in Spanish, was a member of Mason's Honors College and Phi Beta Kappa, as well as Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honor society. The list of Jordan's activities during her time at Mason is long. She was an undergraduate research assistant with Professor Jessica Terman in spring 2016, and then interned with both the National Academy of Public Administration in DC, and with an international business development group in The Netherlands. She studied abroad in Spain, presented her research at numerous events, and volunteered with the Serve Our Willing Warrior's Bull Run Warrior Retreat Operations Committee as well as Comfort for America's Uniformed Armed Services. Jordan will continue her education through the Schar School's accelerated Master of Public Administration Program, and began a pathways position with the Department of the Navy at the end of May.

Noting the challenges and sacrifices that students and their families make in pursuit of higher education, Felipe Aquino's graduation was especially heartwarming. For the five-year duration of his undergraduate studies, Felipe was accompanied to each class by his mother, Lindsey Aquino, and Ranger, his service dog. Felipe received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government and International Politics.

Abdul Al-Nazer graduated with a Master's in Public Policy alongside his mother, Rahaf Khaldi whose Master's degree in Middle East and Islamic Studies included courses from the Schar School.

Dean Rozell also lauded faculty efforts to equip students with the tools to succeed in their chosen professions. Dr. Michael Hunzeker, Assistant Professor in the graduate international security program, was recognized for his consistent outstanding teaching evaluations and student mentoring. In awarding him the Don Lavoie Teaching Award, Dean Rozell noted, “Dr. Hunzeker’s teaching extends beyond the classroom. This is evidenced by the mentorship and advising he provides to the student fellows in the Center for Security Policy Studies, as well as the co-curricular activities he leads.”

Dr. Jessica Terman, Assistant Professor of Public Administration, received the Outstanding Scholar Award for her prolific scholarship on fiscal federalism and bureaucratic policymaking. This work has been noted by both scholars and practitioners for demystifying the inner workings of state and local governments. In his remarks, Dean Rozell highlighted the significance of her work, noting, “What is probably most important about Dr. Terman’s scholarship is that she focuses on the implementation challenges of our time.”



Jill Emerson and Dean Mark J. Rozell

In recognizing the invaluable contributions by staff, Dean Rozell presented the Dean’s Service Award to Jill Emerson for her outstanding contribution in service to the Schar School. Ms. Emerson, the Assistant Dean of Graduate Admissions and Student Services, oversees the seamless transition and success of graduate students, from orientation to graduation. The Dean commended her as a consummate professional and noted her team’s role in the success of the 2017 graduates.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Dr. Roger Stough who was recognized for his significant role in shaping what is now the Schar School. Dr. Stough played an essential role not only in developing The Institute of Public Policy (TIPP) at Mason, but also in its evolution to the School of Public Policy (SPP) and, ultimately, to the Schar School today. Of Dr. Stough, Dean Rozell noted that, “Roger is one of the last of what we call ‘The Founders’ of the former School of Public Policy to retire.”



# In Memoriam: Paul Posner



We are saddened to report the untimely passing of Paul L. Posner, Professor and Director of the Schar School's Master's of Public Administration program. Professor Posner passed away on July 5, 2017 at the age of 75.

Professor Posner joined the faculty of George Mason University in 2005. As many know, he came to us from the US General Accounting Office where he worked for more than 30 years. For much of that time he was responsible for work on the federal budget and intergovernmental fiscal policy and management; for the last 14 years, Dr. Posner was the Managing Director for Strategic Issues. As he once stated, "We enter our profession not because it is easy, but because it is hard. When the going gets tough, it is our business to rise to the challenge."

Dr. Posner was actively engaged with both the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). Both organizations have acknowledged his passing. Janice Lachance, the current president of ASPA, said, "Paul was one of the best people I have ever known and one of the best that public administration

has to offer. He was a steadfast friend, an extraordinarily dedicated public servant and he will be missed." NAPA stated that, "During his two decades as an Academy Fellow, Paul demonstrated a strong and steadfast commitment to the Academy. ... With a focus on effectiveness, he persistently pushed the Academy toward excellence in all that it does."

Professor Posner's books include *Governing Under Stress* (January 2017), which provides the first definitive examination of the Obama Administration's economic stimulus program. Co-edited by fellow Schar School faculty members Timothy Conlan and Priscilla Reagan, the book has received excellent reviews. His other books also have received good notices and awards. These include *The Pathways to Power* (2014), a capstone for years of work on national policymaking processes and *The Politics of Unfunded Mandates* (1998), which won the Martha Derthick Award from the American Political Science Association's federalism section. His awards include APSA's Daniel J. Elazar Distinguished Scholar award (2017) and the Best Practices Award (State and Federal Governance Issues) from the National Governors Association Center (2016).

The Schar School has established a scholarship fund in Professor Posner's name that will be awarded to qualified MPA students. For those wishing to help this scholarship, donations may be made to the "Paul Posner MPA Student Fund." To donate, go to <http://advancement.gmu.edu/posnerendowment>. For further information, please contact Zavin R. Smith at [zsmith@gmu.edu](mailto:zsmith@gmu.edu).

# Making the Most of the College Experience

For most graduates, some of their best life memories have to do with their time in college. This is where they made lifelong friends and found mentors. It is where they attended a lecture that ignited their passion or attended a career service event that led to an interview at their dream firm. Whatever the case, “The college experience is what you make it,” says Nicholas Stroup, the Associate Director of Student Services at the Schar School. To Mr. Stroup, who was drawn to the student services profession by his own experiences as an undergraduate student, the privileges available to students are limitless. “When you’re a student, you can walk up to anyone and say, ‘Hi I’m a student - tell me about what it is that you do’... you have many more open doors as a student than you realize,” he explains. This is what led him into the student services profession: A desire to help open doors for others, or at least show them where the doors are so they are able to walk through them themselves. Offering professional student services has been a focus of the Schar School, and in keeping up with the rising demands of higher education, the student services team relies on a seasoned team of professionals who possess advanced degrees and deep experience in the profession.



“You have many more open doors when you’re a student than you may realize. I want to open those doors for others, or at least show where they are, so students can walk through them themselves. The Schar School’s student services team focuses on meeting students where they are...helping them learn, develop, and grow. Advising here is grounded in models of psycho-social development to promote learning in, and out, of the classroom.”  
- Nicholas Stroup

Dr. Ann Ludwick, Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, attributes the success of the undergraduate student services unit to the adoption of a professional advising model. This model places well-being at the center of the student experience through a team of advising professionals who utilize their thorough knowledge of academic policy, the university catalogue, and co-curricular programs to offer the best support towards students’ graduation requirements. Additionally, she notes the culture of collaboration promoted by the Mason Academic Advising Network (MAAN), a vibrant campus professional organization that helps break down the walls between advisors located in various offices and on different campuses. Thanks to MAAN, “We know our counterparts in all the other colleges, departments, and majors... We can work together on classes that might be similar, reach out to colleagues with questions, and this also makes it easier to bounce ideas off each other,” she adds. Even with a student body of more than 700, Dr. Ludwick’s team maintains an open-door policy for advising. This is a deliberate effort to reduce barriers to students in their meeting with an advisor that she confirms works well for the students.



“The one thing we want our students to take out of orientation is, ‘please go see your advisor!’”  
- Dr. Ann Ludwick

To keep up with the needs of a rapidly changing student demographic, student services professionals continuously seeking new ways to meet the unique challenges in higher education. Stroup, who is also the current president of the DC College Personnel Association (DCPA), maintains strong links with national and regional university professionals through knowledge-sharing forums. One such forum is an annual regional conference that brings together student affairs professionals to visit one campus at a time in order to understand and learn from their particular histories, cultures, and contemporary challenges.



“My job is to make the implicit, explicit...I want to make sure that the playing field is more level and that more of our students can succeed, especially students who may not be the ones who traditionally succeed.”  
- Shannon Williams

In tandem with tailoring the services to the needs of a specialized student body, Shannon Williams, the Director of PhD Student Services, views her role as a balancing act that “creates a bridge between faculty and students to ensure the students check all the right boxes for their curriculum requirements.” She relishes the behind-the-scenes support that her office offers to the PhD program by way of advocating for students’ needs and collaborating with other university offices to meet those needs. In conjunction with University Life and Career Services, the Schar School organizes discussion panels, workshops, and social events throughout the year that serve to help students streamline their goals, be it in academia or professional paths, as well as to integrate into scholarly life.

A noteworthy aspect of student services at the PhD level is the program duration. “It is a long-term relationship,” Ms. Williams explains. “Students can be here for up to 9 years and in that time, they will have significant life changes.” The key is an emphasis on ensuring that students learn how to navigate the program and university services such as health, financial and counseling services, among others. In appreciating the complexity of doctoral studies, she sums up her role as, “I want to be able to answer questions that students maybe aren’t even asking because they do not know to ask them to make sure that the playing field is more level and that more of our students can succeed.”

The student services team is looking forward to the 2017-2018 academic year and welcoming the incoming class of Schar School students.



# The Schar School Advances the Political Discourse with the Lieutenant Governor Forum

On May 23, 2017, the Schar School of Policy and Government co-sponsored a forum with all Virginia Lieutenant Governor candidates at George Mason University's main campus in Fairfax, Virginia. The event was moderated by the Dean of the Schar School, Mark J. Rozell.

Given the political unrest, this year's state elections, have captured much attention. "Whoever is elected lieutenant governor is a likely gubernatorial candidate in four years, given the limitation that governors may not run for re-election in Virginia," Dean Rozell explained. "Also, with a closely divided State Senate, the lieutenant governor may end up the tie-breaking vote on some very key issues."

Dean Rozell first welcomed and posed questions to the Republican Party candidates, Glenn Davis, Bryce Reeves, and Jill Vogel. The Democratic Party candidates, Justin Fairfax, Susan Platt, and Gene Rossi then took the stage to answer tough questions posed by Dean Rozell.

For at least two of the candidates, being at Mason was a familiar experience. Bryce Reeves warmly mentioned Mason as his alma mater, and Gene Rossi is a criminal law adjunct professor of undergraduate classes at Mason.

The forum -- presented by the Schar School, the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and Virginia FREE -- was a unique event in which both the Democratic and Republican candidates appeared on the same evening to defend their political positions and answer questions on the minds of their constituents.

"The Schar School has become a leading sponsor of candidate debates and forums," Dean Rozell said.

The highly-engaged audience listened as each candidate responded to a range of concerns, including how to prevent Metro fare hikes, improve infrastructure, limit (or not limit) campaign financing, fix Medicaid, and address right-to-work laws. A recurrent theme of the discussions was to safeguard Virginia's AAA credit rating, which is in jeopardy due to over-spending and the state's declining rainy-day fund.

The negativity that often permeates political discourse was not seen during this event. "I was not expecting this. I thought 'where is the bloodbath I came here to see,'" said a candidate's jovial staff member.

The lieutenant governor forum will be followed by a similar program in September that will put the gubernatorial candidates in the hot seat. "This is one way in which we serve the community through promoting serious policy discourse and analysis," Dean Rozell said.



Democrats Justin Fairfax, Gene Rossi, and Susan Platt



Republicans Sen. Jill Vogel, Sen. Bryce Reeves, and Delegate Glenn Davis



## What the Expert Says: Science and Graduate School

David M. Hart, professor and director of the Center for Science and Technology Policy at the Schar School, recently sat down to share his views with incoming students about how to find value in their work and, more immediately, how to survive graduate school.

Professor Hart pointed out that it is hard to look away from the dramatically different political environment in Washington, DC, in which science policy scholars find themselves, making their research that much more critical.

“The Federal government is being run by individuals who do not seem to respect science,” Dr. Hart said. According to him, this is evidenced by the lack of interest shown in staffing the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. In addition, he points to the proposed massive cuts in the 2017-2018 budget in the science sector, which he feels speak volumes on the administration’s level of commitment. This is especially difficult for those who like to see logic and evidence drive policy development.

“If there is no respect given to data, to methods, and to expertise, then it is very problematic,” Dr. Hart said. Some of these issues, according to Dr. Hart, pose an imminent risk, such as the rising sea levels and carbon emissions. Even though the world can get by without the United States for a few years, the scientific community needs to be prepared re-take the reins of research-backed policies.

Nevertheless, the Schar School continues to expand and accelerate research and development in science policy sectors. Students who are admitted to the Schar School are dedicated to public policy and committed to a set of issues personal to them whether in education, aviation, or counterinsurgency. Professor Hart advises students also to bear in mind the social good of their future roles and the effect that they will have in the world.

“If your analytical and writing skills are a little rusty, they will sharpen up very quickly whether your background is in computer science or art history,” Professor Hart said. “The feeling of caring really drives students’ learning process when they realize that to make a real difference, they should learn these skills.”

Professor Hart reminded students that at the Schar School, they will find themselves surrounded by those who care equally about issues and the policies affecting these issues, but often with drastically different ideas about how to solve issues, leading to active and healthy debates. “But this is okay, this reflects the political and policy-making process. Secondly, you need to be prepared to be academically challenged,” he said. Students who are willing to write and analyze will succeed at the Schar School and will be well equipped for a work place in the public or private sectors.

Dr. Hart has served as the Assistant Director for Innovation Policy at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (2011-2012) and the Board of Directors at Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (2011).

# The Schar School's Biodefense Program Holds Summer Workshop on All Things Global Health Security

The 6th summer workshop, *Pandemics, Bioterrorism, and Global Health Security: From Anthrax to Zika*, was directed and hosted by Gregory Koblentz on the Arlington campus of the Schar School. Dr. Koblentz is the Director of the Biodefense Graduate Program and an Associate Professor within the School.

The three-day workshop invited academics and professionals in the fields of public health, life sciences, national security, law enforcement, emergency management, and the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries to explore key challenges posed by natural and man-made biothreats.

The workshop provided a venue for participants to discuss the science, policies, politics, and ethics of biodefense and global health. During the three days, participants navigated through complex themes such as the diversity of threats to global health security, emerging diseases, antibiotic resistance, bioterrorism, biosafety failures, and dual-use research with synthetic biology and genome editing. "The global health security landscape is very dynamic, which makes it hard to stay up-to-date," explained Dr. Koblentz.

The workshop participants discussed the dilemmas in science technology that the scientific community faces. Often headways made in bioresearch by individuals or private entities are mired with vulnerability to potential misuse for nefarious purposes or unintentional misapplications, a phenomenon known as the Dual Use Research of Concern (DURC), which remained the resounding theme of the workshop. Moreover, threats to global health security continue to evolve due to the changing nature of conflict, globalization, and the emergence of new infectious diseases and pandemics.

It is due to such concerns that the Schar School's location brings an added benefit to the summer workshop. The vicinity to Washington, DC, draws academics, practitioners, and policymakers as well as members of the intelligence community – all of whom are involved in preventing, preparing, and responding to natural or man-made disease outbreaks and biological threats. According to Dr. Koblentz, "The ability of participants to hear about these threats from leading academics and practitioners was valuable, as was the willingness of attendees to share their perspectives on these threats."

This year, the conference also was marked by its highest attendance, with 29 attendees from the US, Brazil, Canada, Georgia, and the United Kingdom. Over the years, the workshop also has attracted participants from Australia, Rwanda, Mali, the Netherlands, and Denmark.

The individuals who attend the workshop have one clear purpose. They understand that developing overarching bio-strategies, especially strategies that will address the global nature of the threats faced, requires multidisciplinary knowledge embedded in many governments, and their various agencies, across many sectors.





Thus, it is not a surprise that the participants in the workshop come from a wide variety of backgrounds: biotechnology, life sciences, law enforcement, national security, public health, medicine, international affairs, and global health. They also represent many sectors such as public, private, academia, industry, and non-profit groups. “Our workshop participants don’t fit any single profile. I’ve been doing this long enough that nothing really surprises me anymore,” said Dr. Koblenz.

Despite the diversity of the participants’ backgrounds, many shared their concern over the policy-making process and that such policies must be based on sound scientific research. “This is a particular challenge when policy-makers are confronting a novel and fast-moving disease outbreak, but this is precisely when it’s most important to have well-designed policies that can be clearly communicated to stakeholders and the public,” said Dr. Koblenz. “Our presenters and participants discussed cases when this didn’t occur and the lessons we could draw from those failures.”

During the conference, the de novo synthesis of horsepox virus by University of Alberta lab scientists came up repeatedly. An example of dual-use research, this research was a jarring wakeup call as it was not captured by any existing oversight mechanisms. “Since that research is directly applicable to the synthesis of Variola, the virus that causes smallpox, it is an important test case for how to address advances in science within the context of security,” explained Dr. Koblenz.

The international community has been dealing with a steady stream of emerging infectious disease outbreaks such as SARS, H5N1, H1N1, MERS, Ebola, and Zika, to name but a few. The international community also understands well that although no one can predict when or where the next outbreak will occur, all must be prepared to be surprised.

Having forums such as this summer workshop, where scholars and practitioners from the global community unite, increase chances that these leaders can predict and foresee the steps needed to secure a global future. “This workshop highlights the importance of building and running organizations that are adaptive and investing in the right types of expertise and relationships to handle such surprises,” Dr. Koblenz said.

The Biodefense Graduate Programs at the Schar School started in 2003 after the anthrax letter attacks. After 14 years, the program addresses the full spectrum of threats to global health security and provides the only biodefense PhD program in the country. For more information on the degree program, contact the Schar School Graduate Admissions Office.



## Ellen Laipson Appointed the Director of The Schar School's International Security Program

We are pleased and excited that Ellen Laipson, Distinguished Fellow and President Emeritus of The Stimson Center in Washington, DC, is joining the Schar School faculty in Fall 2017 as the Director of the International Security (I-Sec) master's program.

An expert in foreign policy with deep regional expertise in the Middle East and South Asia and in the intelligence field, Professor Laipson's career comprises 25 years of civil service including serving as the Vice Chair of the National Intelligence Council and tenure at the Congressional Research Center. During the Obama administration, she served on President Obama's Intelligence Advisory Board (2009-2013) and the Secretary of State's Foreign Affairs Policy Board (2011-2014).

"I am honored to join Mason's well-regarded international security program, and look forward to working with the faculty, staff, and students to further develop I-Sec to expand its value to students, as they prepare for 21st-century security challenges," expressed Professor Laipson regarding her appointment.

The Schar School's highly ranked International Security program is renowned for preparing students in strategies of war and peace, demographic and humanitarian issues, and a full range of contemporary security issues such as environmental and biothreats, arms and nuclear proliferation, and growing global terrorist networks.

Professor Laipson's experience as a policy-maker and in advisory roles has endowed her with a distinct perspective on policies in the complex field of international security that will promote both the integrity of the School's I-Sec program and students' readiness for the international security job market after graduation.

Schar School professor and former Senior Counselor to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency Robert L. Deitz, Professor Laipson's friend and colleague, worked with her at the CIA where she was asked by CIA Director General Michael Hayden (also on the Schar School faculty) to serve on the outside advisory board. Professor Deitz reminisced about her competence and showed confidence in the agenda that she will set for scholarship on international security at the School.

"I think she will make an enormous contribution not only to I-Sec but to the reputation of Schar generally. Not only is she a serious scholar, but she has an enormous amount of experience in the foreign intelligence and foreign affairs fields. She will attract students who want to study and understand the real world of foreign policy creation and foreign intelligence collection," said Professor Deitz.

Professor Laipson considers the study of international security a dynamic field. "The boundaries of security studies are always evolving. Issues that were once considered in the domestic and civilian domains are seen as having security implications, as drivers of conflict or secondary effects of security deficits. This lends itself to looking at international security with a wide lens, and integrating expertise and insight from other disciplines," she said.



“Students in international security studies will bring a wide set of skills, including past and current involvement in public service, exposure to foreign cultures — whether through family ties or as a student, NGO worker, or just casual traveler — and a desire to contribute to the field and to their communities.” - Ellen Laipson

Not only does Professor Laipson urge breaking down the intellectual silos that sometimes exist around international security and intelligence, she also looks forward to students enrolled in the I-Sec program to enhance the dynamism and the value of this program through their individual experiences.

While international security may sometimes be considered a grim subject, Professor Laipson exudes optimism, enthusiasm, and conviction. Her views on international security and international policies demonstrate that the modern-age security threats may not just pose detrimental outcomes, they often provide opportunities to create new alliances and partnerships with world leaders and their nations.

In a strategy paper published in 2016, Professor Laipson underscores the oft-disregarded strategic opportunities at the disposal of the United States to stabilize and strengthen the US-Iran relations in the aftermath of the Iran Nuclear Deal.

*“[Ellen] Laipson’s paper [on U.S.-Iran relations] provides a benchmark against which US- Iran observers may measure their views and consider new possibilities,” noted former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel.*

On private sector collaboration, her 2015 report on economic stability in the Middle East elaborates that “Arab leaders in the public and private spheres understand well that economic growth and access to opportunity are vital for the region’s future. Some are working to dismantle old mindsets and to enable fresh thinking and action to free up the talent and wealth of the region.”

Recognizing that regional security in the Middle East inevitably relates to the national security of the United States, her proposal involves initiatives similar to the Marshall Plan that “restored stability and economic growth to Europe [after World War II], both for our allies and for the defeated foe, Germany,” explained Professor Laipson. “It also drew on the talents of the private sector and had come to symbolize an ideal form of American engagement in the world. While the name is frequently invoked for the Middle East or other troubled regions, we should have no illusions that the conditions — political and financial — are right today for a similar initiative,” said Professor Laipson.

Professor Laipson is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has served on the board of the Asia Foundation (2003-2015). Previously, she taught at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University and frequently publishes opinion pieces for Foreign Affairs, Rand Corporation, Stimson Center, World Politics Review, and many others.

# Alumni Spotlight



## Raring to go! Katie Garay's Journey to Capitol Hill

Earlier this year, two of our very own Schar School 2017 graduates were selected to receive the prestigious Charles B. Rangel Fellowship. The Rangel Fellowship is a highly sought-after two-year fellowship program that prepares students for a career in the Foreign Service.

*Policy in Action* staff writer Wanjiku Wainaina recently spoke with Katie Garay, one of the 2017 fellowship recipients, who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government and International Politics. In addition to her internship at the US Embassy in Panama, Katie also participated in the Virtual Student Foreign Service program at the

US Department of State, an innovative internship taken entirely online that is run by the Bureau of International Information Programs. Katie, who is also fluent in Spanish, served as President of the Mason Ambassadors, Secretary for the Hispanic Student Association, and was a Resident Advisor in the Mason dormitories. Amidst her busy schedule, she also found time to share her journey into the foreign service so-far.

◆ **WW - Congratulations on your graduation and for the fellowship, Katie! Tell us a little bit about the Rangel Fellowship. How did you find out about it and what was the application process like?**

**KG** - I first learned about the Rangel Fellowship while completing an internship at the US Embassy in Panama in the summer of 2015. My supervisor there was a Rangel Fellow and he encouraged me to consider applying for the Rangel Fellowship. I never expected to be selected as a fellow, I knew it was an extremely selective program. I was also concerned that my resume as a senior in college would not hold up against others who had been in the workforce for a while. The application was stressful. Applicants submit a personal statement - which I spent nearly four months working on; a financial needs statement; two letters of recommendation - one of which came from my favorite Schar School Professor, Dr. [Jerry] Mayer; transcripts; and information on work experience, awards, and community involvement. This application determines selection as a finalist. The program receives hundreds of applications, and only sixty applicants are selected as finalists. For interviews, you complete a writing exercise and individual interview, all while spending the day with half of the other finalists. It's also pretty intimidating to hear all that the other finalists have done - but just about everyone admits to feeling a bit of "impostor syndrome" during introductions. After the interview, they make selections and you're notified of your status. It's a very nerve wracking time, and I'd be lying if I said I didn't obsessively check my email until I got my notification of selection.

◆ **WW - Do you think being a graduate of the Schar School gave you a competitive edge?**

**KG** - While at the Schar School, I had immense support from professors who were always interested in what I was doing, what my goals were, and how they could help. I definitely consider this to be a competitive edge because building those relationships allowed me to get more out of my classes. I was able to learn the material because I wasn't afraid to ask for assistance from my professors; my professors showed me support and understanding throughout my application process; and my professors got to know me - which meant that they could speak about me in both letters of recommendations and interviews for clearances.

Secondly, my classes in the Schar School definitely helped me learn to work with people who think about and see the world very differently from the way I do. In the classroom, I learned to articulate my thoughts so that I could participate in discussions with people who didn't always understand where I was coming from, which I have found invaluable so far in the completion of the first requirement of my fellowship - working on Capitol Hill. Additionally, the classes I took while a student have definitely helped me adjust to life on the Hill.

◆ *WW- What kind of experience did you have as an undergraduate student?*

**KG** - I was very active in my time at Mason, and as a result I was able to connect with resources across the university. Specific to the Schar School, it was extremely convenient to know that I could drop into the office at any time and an advisor could speak to me. This was essential to keeping on track to graduation! I also took advantage of many of the other resources we have at Mason, from CAPS to ODIME to Career Services, I tried to reach out when I needed help, and I had staff and faculty members who knew me well and pushed me when I didn't want to admit I needed help.

◆ *WW- What advice would you give to the incoming freshmen who might be thinking of a career in the foreign service?*

**KG** - Find a way to test it out! Being at Mason gives you the amazing opportunity to be close to our Federal Government. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to intern at an embassy abroad, because that simply isn't feasible for everyone. There are a ton of ways to learn more about the Foreign Service. If you want to intern abroad keep an eye on the State Department's "Unpaid Internship Program;" if there's a financial hurdle, remember that there are resources available and that internship scholarships do exist! All you have to do is look! I also completed a Virtual Student Foreign Service Internship (VSFS) and that's another great opportunity! The United States Foreign Service Internship Program is another great program to look into, which is a paid two-summer internship program. You can also set up a meeting with our Diplomat in Residence, who is a member of the Senior Foreign Service who works to educate people on what the State Department does, and serves as a part of the Department of State's Recruitment Team. Most importantly, find mentors! There are so many people that are doing exactly what you want to do. Seek out graduates or upperclassmen who are doing what you want to do and learn how they got there. This is an invaluable habit to have and I wish I had done it more when I was a freshman!

◆ *WW - What would the five-year-old Katie think of you now?*

**KG** - At five I imagined that I would grow up to be a famous artist. I loved painting, and I thought of it as something kind of like what my dad did. My dad is a contractor, and specializes in painting homes - so while that really isn't too similar, at age five I thought it was. I also had plans to go to Yale, because I read about Maya Lin [the designer of Washington DC's Vietnam Memorial] for a Role Model project that we did and I just thought she was the coolest person in the world, and she went to Yale. I think that now I'm on a bit of a different path. I never developed amazing painting skills, and I'd actually be more successful at painting a house like my dad than a painting like Frida Kahlo. I also never applied to Yale. I don't think five-year-old me would be disappointed because there was also a short period of time where I, of course, wanted to be an international pop star - and I at least got the international part right.

◆ *WW- Plans for the future?*

**KG** - Currently, I plan on getting a strong start on my first semester at Georgetown's Walsh School of Foreign Service where I'll be studying for my M.A. in Security Studies with a concentration in International Security. Next summer I'll be completing an internship at a US Embassy abroad as a component of the Rangel Fellowship. I'm hoping to go to an embassy in Southeast Asia, as I've developed my interests in Latin America pretty thoroughly and I'd like to try out a new region.

◆ *WW- With such a busy schedule, any plans for a break this summer?*

**KG** - I'll be spending most of August traveling to El Salvador to visit family and enjoy the annual "Fiestas Agostinas," which is a week-long celebration of the Patron Saint of the town my parents are from. But I'm certainly most excited to go to the beach!

The Schar School wishes Katie all the best in her career!



---

*Best wishes for a wonderful fall!*

---



*The Schar School offers classes at Mason's Fairfax and Arlington campuses in Virginia. Both campuses are located within the heart of a dynamic region and close to the nation's capital. Opportunities for internships, jobs, and research are unequalled, as is access to archives and museums, policymakers and think tanks, and diverse career opportunities. With 80 full-time faculty, we offer 14 degree programs at the undergraduate, masters, and/or doctoral levels.*

