



2023

Bury Trisha - Callison College One Pager

Trisha Bury

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/callison-college-sis>

Recommended Citation

Bury, Trisha, "Bury Trisha - Callison College One Pager" (2023). *Callison College and School of International Studies*. 43.

<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/callison-college-sis/43>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Colleges and Schools at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Callison College and School of International Studies by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.

My name is Trisha Bury, and I'm writing in the hopes that my sharing experiences as an SIS alumna might help inform one of the most important decisions of your life.

I'm quite an indecisive person, so when it came time to choose from my university admission offers, I panicked. My mom had to book us last-minute tickets during my senior spring break to visit my top two choices – University of Hawaii (for Japanese) and University of the Pacific (for International Relations). For me it was not just a matter of public vs private school, or Hawaii vs California – ultimately, I was choosing between a straightforward career as a linguist, or a career path that was not as clearly defined but offered a broader choice of opportunities.

In the end, I chose Pacific for numerous reasons: small class sizes; professors who are experts in their respective fields but still prioritize individual interaction with students; a strong focus on understanding how the confluence of culture, history, politics, economics, and geography shape the world in which we live; and an incredible range of study abroad programs to choose from. In 2006 I graduated with dual degrees in International Relations and Japanese; I had also studied Spanish, French, Arabic, and Chinese; studied in both Japan and the Basque Country in Spain; played violin in the university orchestra; and even learned to play guitar—today my guitar has more passport stamps than most people from my hometown in Washington State.

I went on to get a Master's Degree in International Policy Studies from the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS, now known as the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, which has accepted a long line of SIS graduates). The mentor I had been matched with in my last year at SIS was a Colonel in the US Air Force and a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey. She helped me get a summer internship at NPS which ultimately became a long-term job as a Research Associate. I had studied conflict and development at MIIS, and the combination of my academic interests and experience working with the US military led me down an unconventional career path—I served as a Social Scientist with the Department of Defense in Iraq from 2009-10, and then as a Foreign Service Officer with USAID in Afghanistan from 2011-12.

Finally, I found my way to the humanitarian career I had started envisioning during my years at Pacific—a former colleague from Afghanistan recruited me to work for Relief International, an international NGO in Myanmar, where I spent two years working on the Rohingya displacement crisis in Rakhine State. I stayed with RI for two more missions—managing livelihoods programs for Iraqis and Syrians displaced by ISIS in northern Iraq, and then launching the organization's Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh in 2017. Next, I joined the International Rescue Committee as the Senior Emergency Program Coordinator, supervising more than 350 staff working across northeast Nigeria, and moved on to be the Program Director in Colombia when IRC opened a new mission to respond to the Venezuelan migration crisis. I currently work for Mercy Corps; I started as the Area Director of Programs in Northeast Syria and have recently moved to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to serve as the Emergency Programs Director. I supervise a team of more than 120 humanitarians and oversee the implementation of \$25 million in programs that serve hundreds of thousands of people displaced by conflict in what is now the world's second-largest hunger crisis.

It was a long and winding road for me to get here, but SIS played a fundamental role in where I am today. The French skills I learned at Pacific are critical to my day-to-day survival in a francophone country. The cross-cultural skills that are so highly prioritized at SIS have allowed me to transition seamlessly between diverse contexts, and to succeed in working with colleagues from dozens of different countries. The multisectoral education I received at SIS was a strong foundation that has allowed me to quickly understand each country in its respective geopolitical context and be more effective in negotiating with governmental donors to secure funding for humanitarian and

development programs. I have no doubt that SIS has not only made me a better humanitarian, but a better global citizen as well.

Best of luck to you in your journey to college—and I hope to meet you at Pacific Homecoming one day.