

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY PROGRAM Student Testimonials



MA. Amy Stello Lekeu - New Freedom, PA

Prior to the International Education Policy program, I had participated in study abroad and volunteer programs that promoted intercultural communication and interaction, but I wanted to dig deeper into international education perspectives. I was committed to implementing social change through education, but I did not feel that I had the tools to accurately examine the forces that affect students across the world. Through the IEP program, I was able to interact with professors who provided the educational tools of peace, gender equity and critical dialogue to better understand the changing face of international education.

I have been humbled and inspired through the genuine commitment and openness that the UMD community has provided. The IEP cohort always includes diverse perspectives that challenge the status quo and widens your perspective beyond personal and national concerns. The faculty members challenge you and facilitate meaningful conversations surrounding education: they are true examples of individuals who are committed social justice. I truly love the academic and personal work of this program.

MA. Julie Keddell - Annandale, VA

I chose to pursue a Master's in International Education Policy at the University of Maryland because of my passion for international student exchange. This interest stems from my study abroad experience to Japan during my undergraduate degree and subsequently from my experience working abroad for two years as an Assistant Language Teacher on the Japan Exchange and



Teaching Program (JET). I am drawn to the IEP program at UMD not only because of its strong commitment to internationalization, but because it is a flexible, individually tailored program that allows me to choose courses based on my career goals.

Like many other students, I chose the University of Maryland because of its proximity to Washington, D.C., which offers many internship opportunities and the option of taking courses at other universities that are in the Washington Regional Consortium. I enjoy learning from faculty who are experts in their field and meeting classmates who come from very different backgrounds and experiences.



MA. Cameron Busacca - Montgomery, NJ

After graduating from the University of Maryland in 2011 with a BA in French Language and Literature, I went to live in Paris, France (of course), for a year to teach English. While there I did a fair amount of traveling and learned that the educational opportunities and expectations given to me, were a far cry from the reality of the rest of the world. I still believe as much as I did then, that knowledge and education is a pathway to choice and agency. This desire to provide a choice to those around the world is what drew me to apply for the International Education Policy program at UMD.

Once I was accepted to the program as a Masters student, the choice was easy for me. Due to my time at the University of Maryland as an undergraduate student I knew how great the community was at Maryland as a whole. The IEP program really

attracted me because of its wide range of focus, the intelligent students who were enrolled already, and the three main professors (Lin, Stromquist, and Klees) all had a really interesting viewpoint and wealth of experience. My understanding of education, culture, society, and the interconnectedness of economy and politics has grown immensely. The emphasis on theory was crucial for me to truly grasp the role education plays, and how education policy can and will play a major role in empowering the change I want to see in the world. Lastly, many of my classes required me to become engaged with local and international NGOs and local schools, which has been such a valuable learning tool.

MA. Omobosola Olabisi - Laurel, MD

After I was done with my undergraduate studies, I wasn't so sure what I wanted to do for a graduate degree. I knew that I definitely wanted to go but I had no idea what my major would be. So I went straight into the work field and ended up taking off for two years. My first job post graduation was working in financial aid at my undergraduate university, Howard University. From there I was able to get a better look into the behind the scenes in the field of education, how policies are created and implemented and the impacts they have. This sparked my interest into going into the field of education. So I began looking at different graduate education programs in the surrounding areas to get a sense of what was available. I looked at UMD, George Washington, George Mason, Towson, Morgan and Bowie State to name a few. The reason why I chose the UMD International Education Policy program was because of the diverse listing of courses that were available for students to explore, the cost and the proximity to my home.



It's been a year and a half now. I'll be getting my degree

in May and I have no regrets about my decision to enroll in this program. The classes I have had the opportunity to take, have immensely widened my knowledge on the field of education and has helped develop my research skills. Also thanks to this program I recently able to embark on my first ever study abroad experience in Cuba which was one of the most rewarding trips of my life thus far. The advisors in IEP also have great knowledge to share and so much experience in the field of education that students can benefit from. I leave this program wiser, advanced, and enlightened.



PhD. Annie Rappeport - Charlottesville, VA

I decided to fulfill my dream to enroll in a Ph.D. program after working in the field for nearly 6 years. From July 2010 until May 2016, I worked as an international student advisor, visa advisor and program developer for the Semester at Sea education abroad program. When I began, I was also a full-time graduate student pursuing my MA in Higher Education and Student Affairs at the University of Virginia's Curry School. I was honored to work with international students and colleagues from all over the world that taught me invaluable lessons and reaffirmed my belief that education is key to global stability, understanding, and peace. My work helped me understand my calling as an educator-advocate. Dr. Jing Lin was the main reason I selected the IEP program at UMD because of shared research interests and because I felt we were kindred spirits after correspondence and then upon meeting in person at Preview weekend.

The UMD resources have been top notch, the faculty are wonderful advisors that truly value our perspectives while challenging us to think critically and reach our full

potential. For the IEP concentration, the proximity to Washington D.C. is a significant benefit. I am very lucky that my Graduate Assistantship directly relates and connects my interests of arts and peace education. The ability to connect my work to my studies brings everything to life through synthesizing the intellectual with direct applications.

PhD. Taylor C. Woodman - Washington, D.C.

I began my Ph.D. journey at UMD after working in the international exchanges in the university environment in D.C. for a number of years. The more involved I became in internationalization efforts at area universities the more I started asking critical questions about the goals of internationalization, the change in university funding structures and the impact of U.S. student mobility on international communities. I chose the UMD program for a number of reasons. The faculty being one of the most important factors. Dr. Klees and Dr. Stromquist are well known scholars that shape critical discourse in the comparative education field. Dr. Lin offers a space to examine holistic and cultural approaches to education which is at the center of international mobility.

Additionally, the department encompasses my focus area of higher education which facilitates collaborations and offers access to many additional well known scholars. Lastly, University of Maryland is supportive of their international community which allows for a conducive environment to study internationalization efforts. Being close to one of the most international cities in the world is a plus too!

Reflecting on the program, I am thankful for the flexibility in the curriculum that allows me to tailor my elective courses to both my content specialty and methodological approach. Faculty are open to your future research interest and help provide insight into other departments



and courses that align with your interest. Through the program, I have also been able to study abroad as a graduate student and conducted international field research. The program has also given me access to critique and participate in internationalization efforts across UMD's campus. I even was able to create a study abroad course to Cuba that connects graduate students in our program to Cuban educators. This ongoing relationship helps build a cohort of UMD students committed to engaging in scholarly debates across political barriers. The Cuba program also allows me to put into practice the conceptual and theoretical frameworks we learn in class.



PhD. Hang Le - Hanoi, Vietnam

I first came to the United States for my undergraduate study. At that point, I intuitively wanted to compare the education system of the U.S. to that of my home country in order to discover the best ways to improve educational quality in developing countries. Fortunately, my undergraduate institution offered an elective on Comparative Education, and after getting that taste of the field, I could not imagine stopping. My interests lie in policy transfer, especially the mechanisms of power through which certain education ideas become taken for granted as 'best practices' around the world. Think of ideas such as child-centered pedagogy or the inclusion of ICT in schools, which have become a fundamental part of policy rhetoric in so many countries nowadays! I have always approached this phenomenon of policy transfer from a more critical perspective, so I was drawn to the work of Dr. Stromquist and Dr. Klees who are also interested in hegemonic discourses in international development. My interaction with the faculty as well as the conversations I had with my cohort at Preview

convinced me that I would be able to pursue my intellectual interests at UMD.

In the past year, I have never had a moment where I regretted that decision to pursue doctoral studies. I appreciate the flexibility that the IEP provides to take classes in other departments and other schools in the DC area. My advisor, Dr. Klees, is just wonderful both as a teacher and a mentor. He has really pushed me to publish, and is always available and willing to read my multiple drafts or just listen to me rant about my ideas. I also like that the IEP program is flexible enough that you can be well-prepared to go into either academia or the field. I do think that you have to take initiative in seeking out resources or opportunities (such as courses available in other departments, funding for conferences, etc.) but they are certainly there for you to take advantage of. It has been a wonderful year for me at UMD, and hopefully I will get to meet all of you next year!

PhD. Jeremy Gombin-Sperling - Baltimore, MD

The 2015 Comparative and International Education Society Conference in Washington, D.C. was the moment during which I decided to pursue a Ph.D. I was in my second year of working at U.S. State Department on the Fulbright Program and roughly one year outside of my Master's which was also in the IEP program at the University of Maryland. Prior to those experiences I had also taught as an English Language Assistant in Spain for two years as well as worked at the University of Maryland as an Advisor and Program Manager in the Education Abroad Office. I was at the CIES conference to present on my Seminar Paper from my M.A. that looked comparatively at developments in bilingual education in the United States and Bolivia. It was this feeling of wanting to study and explore more about the



dynamics of education in our world that grew throughout my presentation, so that when I finished, I knew that a Ph.D. was the right next step for me.

My past professional and academic experiences at the University of Maryland are what assured me that this was the right place. I have appreciated the deep rigor and critical lens that our professors and coursework lend to our understanding of education as an intersectional phenomenon that reflects the social, economic, and political situations of a community within the context of a globalized world. Our faculty also consistently share different opportunities and resources throughout the DMV area that also create new venues for connections. I have been able to further my professional networks through my Graduate Assistantship in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion as well as my teaching skills as an instructor of the BSGC100 course in the Global Communities Living-Learning Program. These rich experiences have allowed me to reflect on my own research interests and to continue to develop as a student and as a professional, My first year is going by quickly, but I am very excited for what's to come!

PhD. Hiba Anwar - Washington, DC

My passion for education and international development began in 2007 in Cairo, Egypt, where the school I was teaching English in was selected to receive a USAID grant. When I came back to the States in 2008, I was accepted into the GWU International Education and Human Development Masters program. After graduating from the GWU MA program, I worked for many years as a consultant, analyst, and an aid worker, and then was accepted into the PhD International Education Policy program at University of Maryland, College Park. It was the best thing that could have happened to me at the time. Here at the IEP program at UMD, the education we get is top notch, critical, rich in diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and opinions from our IEP faculty members and fellow graduate students. Additionally, working as a Graduate Assistant eases the burden of searching for funding and often times enriches your student experience at UMD. I highly recommend enrolling in the UMD program, and would be happy to discuss my experience further with anyone interested. Thank you!