



Name: Erica King

Korbel degree program: MA [International Studies](#)

Undergraduate Institution/major: University of Texas, Austin, BA in Government

Tell us about yourself:

I am a military brat. My father is retired U.S. Air Force. I feel that I was born and bred to work in international studies. I was born in the Philippines, lived in Panama and different parts of the United States. My academic interests have led me to explore Russia and the former Soviet Union states. I want to travel to every continent!

What brought you to the Josef Korbel School?

My [Pickering Fellowship](#) requires me to attend a full-member [APSIA](#) school in the United States. I wanted a more qualitative, traditional academic degree rather than one that's more policy focused. I wanted a degree that is amenable to different paths – one I would be able to use in the Department of State or outside of it. The alumni also played a role. Also, as a Studies student I have more flexibility to choose my courses so I get to study with renowned professors.

Tell us about the Pickering Fellowship:

I am an undergraduate Pickering Fellow. I was 19 when I signed a contract that spans 10 years. The contract states that I had to finish undergrad, apply to a two-year program and obtain a master's degree, then serve four and a half years in order to fulfill my end of the contract. You have to know pretty young if this is the career you want to dedicate your life to. You also have to do one domestic internship and one internationally.

Internship site: U.S. Embassy, Tbilisi, Georgia, Department of State

Intern title: Political-Economic Affairs Intern

What were your primary responsibilities?

In the summer, I interned at the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia for the Political-Economic section. It was a time of great transition – over half of the Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) were returning to D.C. and the new team was coming in. I was there to help with the transition. I learned how to host a congressional delegation, drafted cables, and worked on a commercial business guide. I also worked on political-military, trafficking in persons, and internally displaced peoples issues. I also got into the consular office and sat in on visa interviews. I even created a presentation on media freedoms in the U.S. for the Public Affairs section. Since Tbilisi is a small embassy, I got to experience a little bit of everything.

What's the most important lesson you learned during your internship?

I was able to sit down and have a conversation with [Ambassador Bass](#), and he shared the 'who, what, where' example. Who you work with, what your job is, and where you work. Entering your career, ultimately you will find that if you enjoy the people you work with, it won't matter what your job is or where you're working. If you can't get along with the people you work with, you're not going to be happy or productive. The what and the where can be challenging but if you're surrounded by a great team then it will go smoother.

How did the Josef Korbel School prepare you for your internship?

The Josef Korbel School helped me to analyze and assess problems better. These skills can not only be directly applied to the Foreign Service but anywhere. The solution isn't always at the surface and what I learned here helps me to think outside the box.

What are your career goals?

I definitely think this summer solidified that I want to be with the Department of State. However, I do not want to be a Political or Economic Officer. Each cone has a target audience and the Political and Economic cones mainly work with foreign governments. I am passionate about working with foreign nationals so I want to work within the Public Diplomacy cone. Here I can work on cultural and educational exchanges and interact with the foreign press corps. I think this passion stems from helping my mother adjust to life in America. She emigrated from the Philippines and as I grew up and learned about American culture, I was able to pass those lessons on to her.