



**Name:** Kiela Parks

**Josef Korbel School Program:** MA [International Human Rights](#), 2012

**Undergrad Institution:** Hawaii Pacific University; BS Diplomacy and Military Studies

**Tell us about yourself:**

I'm from Santa Cruz, California, a nice little surfing town. The last job that I had before Korbel was at a law firm and when the economy took a dive I thought it was a perfect time for me to go back to school. I knew that I wanted to do this and I had just been putting it off and putting it off. My concentrations are in Security, International Law, and African Studies. Sometimes I feel like there's this dichotomy or tension between the Human Rights and Security sides and I don't think that's necessary. I think the two actually should go hand in hand, and I am trying to do my small part to bridge the gap. My previous work experience wasn't necessarily focused on international relations. I have a lot of professional experience and although it wasn't in this field, that doesn't mean it didn't prepare me. I have a ton of skills that are transferable and have served me well at Korbel. Just because you don't have the extensive years spent abroad doesn't mean there is no place for you here.

**What brought you to the Josef Korbel School?**

I started doing research into International Studies graduate schools and I went to an Idealist fair in San Francisco, where I met with [Admissions Director, Brad Miller](#), and found out about their [scholarship program](#). That was going to make a huge difference. It was also the only human rights program that I had applied to and I was really interested in the program. All of my interactions with the school have been really positive. Someone who worked in the admissions office back then was so friendly every time I called and asked questions and was so encouraging and helpful and that also made a difference. But what sealed it for me was

when I went to "[Discover Korbel](#)," and I got the feeling that I could be happy here, especially after talking to all the current students who seemed genuinely satisfied with their decision to attend Korbel.

At Korbel, there is an openness and obvious willingness of the staff to help the students. You are not just a face; you are not just a number. It's a small enough school that you can get to know the faculty and the staff members if you want to. At Korbel, it really feels like it is a collaborative effort to help students succeed and get into the field. Not because it ups the school's prestige, which it does, but because they genuinely care. Also, I was drawn to the flexibility of the program itself. I didn't want to be trapped into taking courses that I have no interest in. I feel that at this level of education, we should be able to tailor our own degree programs so that was a big draw for me too.

**Internship site:** [Institute of International Education](#) (IIE)

**Intern title:** Communications Intern

### **Main responsibilities:**

IIE administers the Fulbright program and other scholarship programs and then they also have this International Visitor Leadership Program that is sponsored by the State Department. It brings emerging leaders from all around the world to the United States for three week trips where they go around the country and meet with their counterparts. They not only learn new ideas and skills that they can take back to their countries, but also gain a greater appreciation for American culture. It's kind of a citizen diplomacy initiative. I am the communications intern, which means I'm in charge of the social media, their website updates and things like that. I write blogs about each delegation of visitors that we have. I accompany them on site visits. For example, I went with two visitors from Cyprus who were researching at-risk youth issues and prevention of problem behaviors when they went to Fort Morgan, which was great for me because there is a huge Somali refugee population there. Fort Morgan has really struggled with resettlement and the tension between community members and the refugees, which is an issue I am very interested in. We got to meet with the chief of police and some directors of non-profits, and that was great.

### **How did the Josef Korbel School prepare you?**

In my job in admissions, and over the summer, when I worked in the Dean's suite on the Korbel Dinner, a huge fundraising event, I started building additional communications skills. When I was told about this internship, it wasn't necessarily the organization that drew me but the job itself, the communications aspect of it. When I start applying for jobs, those are the kind of jobs I'm going to look for. I have this theory that what is going to get me hired at these organizations isn't necessarily what my degree is in but the skills that I bring to the table. I have been trying this year to really strengthen those skills.

### **How has the Josef Korbel School prepared you for a career?**

I just got back from the New York career connections trip. It was fascinating because I got to not only view New York to determine whether I would want to live there, but also see firsthand the organizational culture of these big names in human rights. Meeting with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Rescue Committee, these huge names within my field was helpful in narrowing down and realizing which organizations wouldn't quite mesh with my career goals or and which ones would. I am planning to use [the Career office](#) for help with cover letters and tailoring my resume for each specific position.

**What are your favorite classes/professors?**

[Peter Van Arsdale](#) has so much practical field experience and is also interested in East Africa and has spent years and years there. So he's a good networking resource and frequently passes jobs along to us. In addition, I just learned a lot about the refugee system from him through his class, Human Rights and International Refugees, which is exactly what I want to do. I want to focus on refugees and resettlement issues. International Campaign management with [Rick Ridder](#) was also fantastic. I took it on a whim, and even though it sounds like it would be geared towards political campaigns it also focused on advocacy and issue campaigns. More than any other class I have taken I came away from that one with hard skills that did not have before, such as messaging, targeting an audience, polling and just seeing a campaign through to completion. He skyped in guest speakers from all over the world that are in the process of campaigns right now.

Sarah Crozier, MA Candidate in International Development  
Josef Korbel School of International Studies