

Meet Holly McFarland, MA candidate in International Development, who joined the program in 2008.



To what other schools did you apply and why did you choose the Josef Korbel School of International Studies?

I actually applied exclusively to Korbel with intentions of applying to the University of Melbourne in Australia (my birth place) and the University of Otago in New Zealand in the spring. The major criterion for my graduate school search was a school with a broad range of curriculum in international studies, respected and dedicated academics and a location west of the Mississippi. Nostalgia also played a role because I had positive childhood memories of spending time on DU's campus when my mother was a Ph.D. student at the Iliff School of Theology.

Tell us about the classes/professors that have inspired you the most so far?

I have been really impressed with the breadth of knowledge and availability of Professor Suisheng Zhao. Not only is his catalogue of knowledge pertaining to China's modern history and development impressive, his office door is always open to students. It's refreshing to have a professor who is so thoroughly committed to fostering the intellectual growth of his students. Additionally, I have also enjoyed classes on the topics of religion and politics, particularly in the areas of the Middle East and South Asia.

What academic or extracurricular activities have you taken part in while at Korbel and how have they influenced your view of your program and of the school as a whole?

I spend most of my free time working for Whole Foods Market, a company I have been with for nearly four years. Over the years, I have been involved in several of the company's community projects including a program with Grameen Bank micro-lending recipients in Costa Rica. I spent the fall quarter in China with DU's China Studies Institute, a program I hope to see taken advantage of by more graduate students.

What makes Korbel distinctive?

This is a tough question because I have never been to another graduate school. Unlike some international graduate schools that appear to focus on economics, language, or business, Korbel offers a range of concentrations. I appreciate having students of various backgrounds, experiences and interests such as security, human rights and global finance in class. It certainly adds a degree of sophistication and earnestness to class discourse.

Where did you earn your undergraduate degree and in what?

I received my undergraduate degree from Rice University with a bachelor of arts in anthropology. Rice does not have a minor option but I took numerous courses in religious studies.

What person, alive or dead, inspires you?

Also a challenging question because there are too many people to name. Certainly the writings and philosophies of Charlotte Joko Beck have gotten me through some hard times. I always seem to come back to her work when life seems to be spiraling downward. My college roommate, Emily Holman, is also a wonderful source of inspiration by the fact that her sheer presence elevates my sense of joy whenever we hang out. She is a playful, curious, intelligent, neurotic and selfless person who makes me feel good about the world. I think we all have people in our life who, when we think of them, make us feel happiness and gratitude. Emily would be one of those.

Tell us a bit more about your experience in China - what are you doing there and how does it relate to your studies at Korbel?

I'm back from China but while in Beijing I was working with The Economist as well as taking a course in Sino-U.S. relations at Peking University. My work with the Economist Corporate Network was a great introduction to the corporate world of networking and professional communication. My boss was a master of multi-tasking and seeing the forest for the trees, so to speak. We worked on organizing large conferences and connecting CEOs with the right people and information to advance their goals. The experience enabled me to take a reflective look at my own personal and professional capabilities and shortcomings. Undoubtedly I will take the victories and the failures and emerge as more polished and competent on professional and personal levels.

-- by Shane Eric-Eugene Hensinger, MA candidate in International Security,
Josef Korbel School of International Studies