Alumna Runs with the Torch in Sochi

The first time Kelsey Guyette (BA ’12, international studies, Russian and German) set foot on DU’s campus, she knew it would be her home for the next four years. And that’s precisely what it became. “DU was exactly where I needed to be, and my decision to study here shaped my future in a profound way,” said Guyette.

For Guyette, the “future” began immediately upon graduating from DU when she was awarded a U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship to study advanced Russian in Vladimir, Russia. Upon returning to the U.S., she joined the Foreign and Security Policy Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Most recently, she volunteered at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

As an assistant to International Olympic Committee Member Angela Ruggiero, Guyette’s job consisted of scheduling, translating, navigating with their drivers and everything in between.

“Working with Angela was great, as I was exposed to the brains of the Olympic Games, the IOC, and developed an appreciation for women’s hockey.” Ruggiero ran with the Olympic flame the morning that it made its way into the Olympic Park, Guyette said. “She passed the torch to me before she ran, and I barely had time to comprehend that I was holding the Olympic torch. Then as she ran, I got to run alongside her, snapping dozens of pictures! It was moments like this, and there were plenty, that I realized I was a part of the Olympic legacy and that I had truly experienced the Olympic spirit.”

Before beginning her undergraduate years at DU, Guyette had studied German for five years and had lived in Russia twice.

“I was drawn to the world outside our borders and how much we could learn from it. I wanted to know more,” she said. She started with international studies and German as her majors, and after returning from her study abroad trip to Russia, she added Russian as a third major.
Guyette was very involved on campus as a student, from working on PLP community engagement initiatives to taking part in CCESL’s Public Achievement successes at South High School, but one experience stands out to her in particular. Upon returning from Russia, Guyette applied and was hired to work at the International House (I-House), and was given the chance to advise future study abroad students.

“As a Daniels Fund Scholar, I knew that the obstacles to studying abroad can vary greatly between students, and it’s often hard to convince those around you that studying abroad is really a benefit to your future career,” Guyette said.

She worked with I-House staff to create an information session specifically designed to reach out to the often underrepresented groups in DU’s study abroad programs, using her personal experience of being a first generation college student to relate to her peers and help them work through the obstacles that stood in their way to studying abroad.

Today, Guyette is living and working in Washington, D.C., and pursuing her dream of representing the United States as a diplomat with the Foreign Service.

“I arrived here without a house, without a job, but with the conviction that this was where I needed to be. Almost two years later, I have both a job and a house, and have brought my dreams within arm’s length,” she said.

She credits DU for putting her on the path towards a successful career, now and in the future.

“DU gave me a group of highly motivated peers, some very wonderful professors and mentors, and the opportunities to broaden my horizons at every turn,” she said. “The number of opportunities and networks that are available to you during your four years are vast. It is then up to you to take advantage of them; and that’s exactly what I tried to do. I’m now equipped with a wonderful network and a great deal of support as I head into any new venture, and that all started at DU!”