

The USF School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies Presents

# SIGS Newsletter

Fall 2023

## Letter from the Director

I am excited to share this Fall 2023 newsletter from the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies (SIGS). Whether you are a graduate of our Political Science, International Studies, or Africana Studies undergraduate degrees, or one of our government and international affairs graduate programs, we hope you'll find something to enjoy. The past year has been an exciting one for SIGS faculty, staff, and students, and this year promises to be just as action packed.

As you can see from this newsletter, our current students are engaged in a variety of programs to further their education and career goals. Our alumni continue to accomplish amazing things and are frequently recognized by the USF Alumni Association. Our faculty are teaching more students than ever, producing cutting-edge research, and engaging policymakers and the public on a regular basis.

Since our last newsletter USF & SIGS have seen a lot of changes. In July 2020 USF consolidated its three formerly separately accredited campuses into "One USF." This means that SIGS is now a three-campus school with nearly 30 faculty members. Consolidation has allowed SIGS to greatly enhance its research and teaching profile with the addition of six outstanding faculty from USF-St. Petersburg and USF-Sarasota. In case you have not heard the exciting news, in June 2023 USF accepted an invitation to join the Association of American Universities, an organization that now represents the 71 leading research universities in the United States and Canada.

Finally, we are looking forward to welcoming our inaugural class of students pursuing the new Master of Arts (MA) degree in International Affairs offered by SIGS. This two-year professional program will replace the former MA in Political Science degree with coursework designed to prepare graduates for careers in international affairs.

We're excited about what we've accomplished and look forward to new opportunities ahead. We hope you'll follow us on social media (linked below) to engage with your fellow SIGS alumni. Your generosity fuels our success! To make a gift to support SIGS please visit: [Giving to SIGS](#).

We hope you enjoy our newsletter and have a wonderful fall!



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*Scott Solomon*

# SIGS Newsletter

## Department News

We are excited to announce the launch of a new Master of Arts in International Affairs program! This 30-credit hour professional degree program aims to develop the critical thinking, analytic writing, and briefing skills necessary to enter or advance within careers in national service or the private sector. These skills are cultivated through required seminars in International Relations and International Political Economy, an advanced methods course, and a set of courses to support a concentration in Security and Diplomacy or Society and Development. Students develop specialized expertise through elective courses and have the option of writing a thesis.



**"Tampa Bay is home to several globally engaged organizations and a rich network of national security and diplomatic professionals. Our Master of Arts in International Affairs program leverages these regional strengths to develop skills that are in high demand with public and private sector employers."**



Our goal is to become an academic center of excellence in preparing students for careers in national security, diplomacy, intelligence, international development, and the private sector. We will capitalize on the Tampa Bay metropolitan area's status as a nexus of global affairs and national security activity to have students learn from defense officials and diplomats. This will enable students to gain access to existing professional networks, while developing their own. The MA in International Affairs program can be completed in three or four semesters, with classes offered on USF's Tampa campus. We anticipate attracting a diverse mix of students, ranging from recent college graduates to early- and mid-career professionals.

# SIGS Newsletter

## Alumni News

SIGS alumni were among those honored by the USF 2021 and 2022 Outstanding Young Alumni awards, a university-wide program which recognizes alumni aged 35 or younger who have demonstrated innovation, creativity and success in their chosen career.

Winners from SIGS are:



### **Daniel Erazo Pinto- International Studies 2013**

Pinto has served as consul general of El Salvador in New York since July, providing services for citizens of El Salvador and representing his country in the United States. He previously directed consular affairs for El Salvador in the Dominican Republic and worked for World Vision in San Salvador. He received the Outstanding Young Alumnus Award in 2022.



### **Lauren Shumate Marcil- Criminology 2010 and MA Political Science 2014**

Following a career as a world-ranked professional tennis player, Marcil now is an associate at corporate law firm Gunster, where she focuses on civil litigation. A Bulls varsity team tennis player from 2008-10, she taught as a Fulbright Scholar in Serbia in 2011-12. She received the Outstanding Young Alumnus Award in 2022.



### **Danielle Weaver-Rogers- Political Science 2010**

Weaver-Rogers has served as the Legal Advisor for the Committee for Persons with Impairments (CAPI) since 2015, and is an Assistant City Attorney for the City of St. Petersburg. Weaver-Rogers is committed to diversity and inclusion initiatives serving on the Florida Bar's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc and has been a Big Sister for Big Brother Big Sisters of Tampa Bay for the past 8 years. She received the Outstanding Young Alumnus Award in 2021.

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# SIGS Newsletter

## Alumni News

A record number of University of South Florida students have been awarded grants from the Fulbright U.S. Student Program for the 2022-2023 academic year! Program participants spend the year abroad teaching English, undertaking an independent research project, or pursuing graduate study. The Fulbright U.S. Student Program aims to help participants expand perspectives and create connections during their grant time, as they meet and work with people from their host country. Two of the participants selected for this year's Fulbright are former SIGS students:



Sarah Glaser is a recent graduate from the USF Judy Genshaft Honors College, the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Public Health with bachelor's degrees in political science and public health. Sarah has received a Fulbright U.S. Student Program Grant to study in the United Kingdom. Sarah will undertake a master's degree in Elections, Campaigns and Democracy at Royal Holloway, University of London.



Kylie (Ky) Pontious is an alumnus of the USF Judy Genshaft Honors College and the College of Arts and Sciences bachelor's degree program in International Studies. Ky has received a Fulbright U.S. Student Program English Teaching Assistantship to South Korea. Ky is currently employed by the Judy Genshaft Honors College as their Experiential Learning Assistant. In South Korea, Ky will teach students at the secondary level.

We are so proud of the achievements of our SIGS cohort as they use the tools they learned here at USF to make connections all over the world!

# SIGS Newsletter

## Faculty Profile

### Dr. Golfo Alexopoulos- SIGS Faculty and Director of IREES



#### Department of Defense Grant

Dr. Golfo Alexopoulos, an esteemed member of the SIGS faculty, was recently awarded a \$700,000 grant by the Department of Defense! Dr. Alexopoulos, the principal investigator on the grant, will study Russian speakers in online spaces, including Kremlin propaganda and internet usage patterns among Russians.

Dr. Alexopoulos will collaborate with Mark Kramer of Harvard University and Nadia Boyadijeva of the Bulgarian Academy of Science on the grant, which is awarded as part of the Minerva Research Institute. More information about this grant can be found in the College of Arts and Sciences' profile of Dr.

Alexopoulos [here](#).

#### Institute for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies

In addition to her position as a faculty member, Dr. Alexopoulos also serves as director of USF's Institute for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies, or IREES. IREES was founded in 2017 and seeks to improve knowledge and understanding of Russia, Europe, and Eurasia. IREES has supported SIGS students in a variety of ways:

- Thanks to IREES' past partnership with ASU's Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies, SIGS graduate students Emma Lowery and Mackenzie Swan will represent USF at the Melikian Center workshop on multimedia methods in public scholarship! The workshop will be held at Arizona state in August.
- Another SIGS graduate student, Muhammed Erdem, presented a paper at a conference at UF which was fully funded by IREES

More information on IREES can be found on their [website](#).

# SIGS Newsletter

## Faculty News

Dr. Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan, a SIGS faculty member from our St. Petersburg campus, recently won the inaugural PSA/APSA International Partnerships Award!

This award honors Political Studies academics engaged in global work that contributes to the discipline in the areas of teaching, research, or civic engagement. Dr. Scourfield McLauchlan, alongside Larisa Patlis of the Free International University of Moldova, provided undergraduate students a chance to work together in a cross-national partnership. This Global Classroom experience allowed students from USF and the Free University of Moldova to work together in comparing decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the U.S. Supreme Court. More information on the "Creating a Global Classroom" project and the International Partnership award can be found [here](#).

CONGRATULATIONS CONGRATULATIONS CONGRAT



'CREATING A GLOBAL CLASSROOM'

**PSA/APSA  
INTERNATIONAL  
PARTNERSHIP AWARD**

**WINNER**



An article written by Dr. Tatsiana Kulakevich, SIGS faculty member, was recently featured in The Conversation, an online independent news organization that publishes articles written by academic experts.

Dr. Kulakevich's article recounts her June 2023 trip to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital city. Dr. Kulakevich touches on her personal experience visiting an old friend in Kyiv and observing how the war with Russia has impacted Ukrainians' daily lives. The full article can be found [here](#).

# SIGS Newsletter

## Student Profile

### Maarya Ibrahim- Mark Orr Fellow

Each year SIGS nominates up to three to serve as Mark Orr Fellows with the Tampa Bay Committee on Foreign Relations (TBCFR). Maarya Ibrahim was selected as a Mark Orr Fellow in the summer of 2021, and she describes it as, “the highlight of my college career, thus far.” The fellowship involves attendance at monthly meetings, where prominent academics, policymakers, journalists, and other international affairs professionals speak on contemporary international issues.

All Mark Orr Fellows can apply to attend the annual American Committee on Foreign Relations Young Leaders Initiative Conference in June. Each year a small number of Mark Orr Fellows are selected by the TBCFR, in a highly competitive process. Initially, Ibrahim wasn't sure if she was going to apply to attend the conference, but after taking part in the experience, she recommends it to other Mark Orr Fellows who are interested in international affairs.



Some of Ibrahim's key takeaways from the conference include advice from Former Ambassador Omar Samad, a diplomat, who encouraged the attendees to never take one individual's understanding as fact and educate themselves on issues from multiple sources. This is the way one becomes a well-informed and rounded academic and scholar of global affairs.

To get the best out of the conference, Ibrahim encourages fellows to move past the daunting feeling that might come from being surrounded by accomplished professionals and engage with committee members regardless of background knowledge on a topic.

Ibrahim is currently completing a B.A. in International Studies and Psychology, with a minor in legal studies. She plans to attend law school and aspires to pursue a career in international women's rights. She is determined to take the knowledge and guidance she received as a Mark Orr Fellow into the future.

# SIGS Newsletter

## Student Profile Eric Brandenburg- Helman Scholarship Recipient

We would like to congratulate undergraduate student Eric Brandenburg on receiving the 2022-2023 Helman Scholarship for International Studies and National Service! The Helman scholarship provides support for tuition payments, allowing students to focus on their career aspirations. The scholarship also enriches student life by putting recipients in contact with other officers.

Growing up in a military family, Eric took inspiration from the stories of his grandfather, a sailor, and his father, an airman. Brandenburg has readily done his part for national service- he has been involved in the University of South Florida Navy ROTC, where he currently serves as the Blue and Gold Officer. He also serves as the president of the Future Naval Officer Association, an organization which he has been a part of for several years.

After a career in the military, Brandenburg would like to draw on his passion for history, government, and national service to work in politics or law. Brandenburg's advice for other students pursuing a career in national service is to "get involved and be excited about what you do."



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# SIGS Newsletter

## USF D.C. Global Experience

The University of South Florida (USF) D.C. Global Experience Program is a new initiative that connects USF students with career opportunities in the fields of diplomacy, national security, and international development. From May 9–13, 2023, twelve USF students participated in the newly launched program in our nation's capital. These students were provided with opportunities to learn from leaders at federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and think tanks during three full days of programming.

The program consisted of a 5-day trip to Washington, D.C., during which the students had the opportunity to meet with leaders at various organizations and individuals involved in global affairs. Events included a visit to the U.S. Department of State, traveling to the Woodrow Wilson Center to learn about U.S. relations with China, Russia, and Korea, and joining a taping of the Trade Guys podcast to talk about trade policy issues. The students even had the chance to hear from USF alumni working in Washington through an interactive panel developed by SIGS director Scott Solomon.



The USF D.C. Global Experience Program showcases USF's commitment to fostering global awareness and engagement among its students and was a valuable learning opportunity.

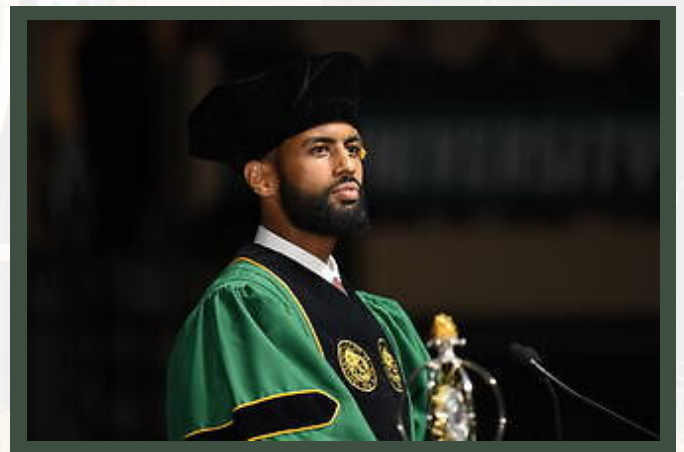
Students gained invaluable exposure to different perspectives and career paths in global affairs, as well as developed their professional skills and networks. Participant Corey Shiver, a SIGS student majoring in Political Science, summed up the experience saying, "The D.C. Global Experience helped my peers and me understand how we can transform our interests into a career with the range of contacts and organizations we visited. Because of the program, I now have the connections necessary to help transition into the workforce upon graduation."

This article was adapted (with permission) from an article written by USF World and featured on their website. The full article can be seen by clicking [here](#).

# SIGS Newsletter

## Recent Graduate News

Dr. Kal Demerew, a recent graduate from the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies (SIGS), has achieved outstanding success during his time at our institution. Recently, he was honored with the Northcutt Award at the CAS Student Success Luncheon, which is a highly esteemed award in recognition of exceptional inclusivity, courageous work, outstanding service, and competence in the field of international studies. The Northcutt Award recognizes not only academic excellence but also significant contributions in advancing women and other minorities in the international studies profession. At the luncheon, Dr. Demerew had the opportunity to make a presentation to the assembled guests, showcasing his passion for interdisciplinary global studies and his commitment to making a positive impact in the world. In addition to being honored with the Northcutt Award, Dr. Demerew was also invited to give the Students Welcome speech at USF's 2023 Doctoral Commencement Ceremony, which is a testament to his leadership and academic excellence.



Throughout his time in our department, Dr. Demerew has been an amazing addition to the community as he contributed three peer reviewed publications on political development & regional conflict in Northeast Africa. Dr. Demerew has accepted an Assistant Professor position at West Texas A&M, where he will no doubt continue his outstanding work and go far with his remarkable leadership skills. We are sure that Dr. Demerew will make a positive impact on the world and are incredibly proud of everything that he has achieved thus far. We look forward to seeing what he will accomplish in the future.

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## Contact Us

**Are you a SIGS student, alumnus, or faculty member with exciting news to share?**

**We'd love to hear from you!**

**Send your news to [jamielane@usf.edu](mailto:jamielane@usf.edu) for the chance to be featured in our next newsletter!**

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