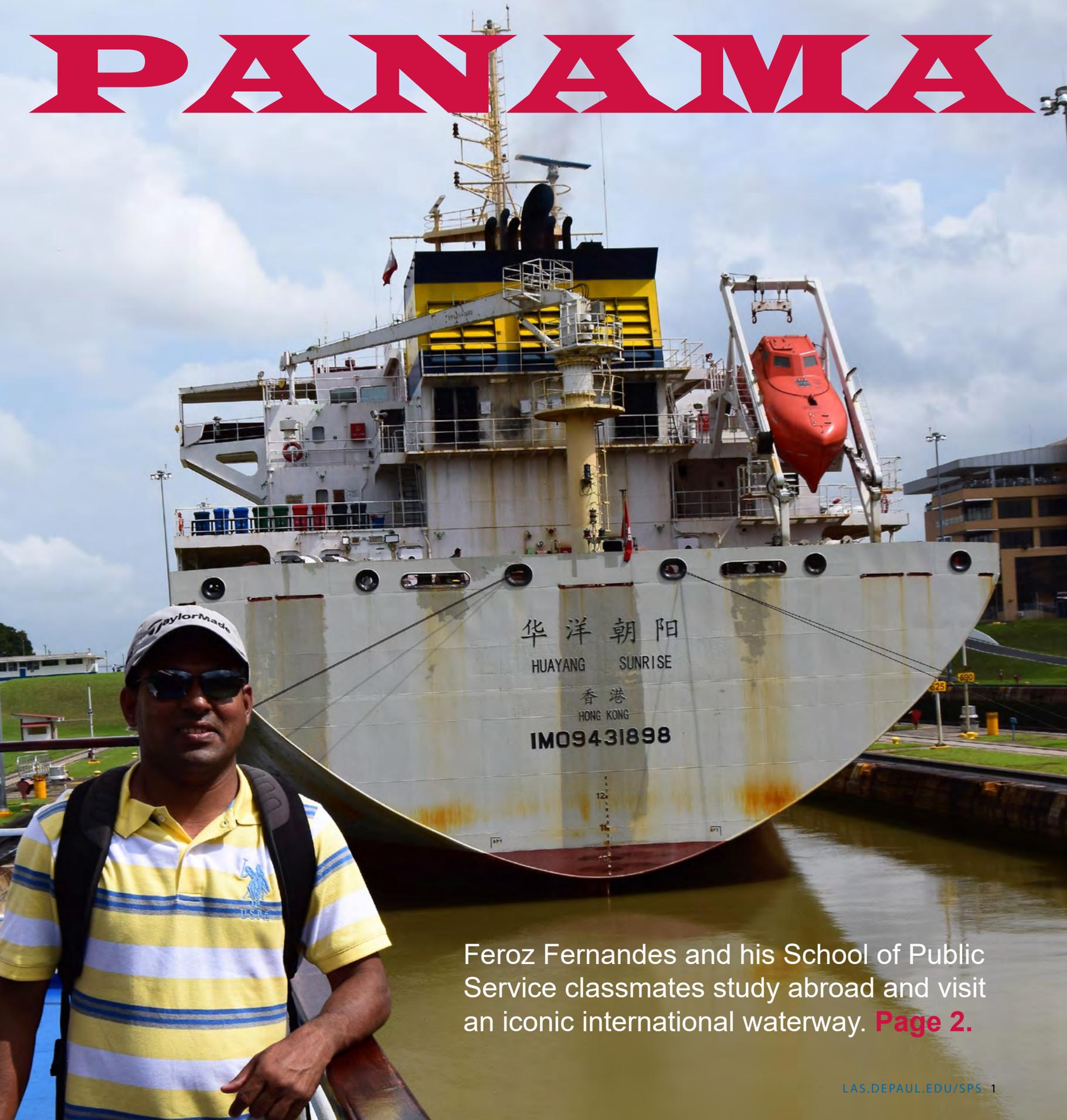


# PANAMA



Feroz Fernandes and his School of Public Service classmates study abroad and visit an iconic international waterway. **Page 2.**

# 'A life-changing experience'



Feroz Fernandes

*School of Public Service students Kaliah Liggons, Brittany Williams, Jasmine Wilson, John Borthwick and Jameelah Adas take a moment to capture a breathtaking view of modern Panama City. One student remarked: "The Panama study abroad trip is an eye opener to understand how the United States has influenced a country's political system, culture, and urban development."*

## Panama trip includes Canal, locals, lessons and, yes, Trump

### By Feroz Fernandes

School of Public Service

Fifteen students from DePaul University's [School of Public Service](#) sailed through the 100-year-old Panama Canal in July.

Professors [Barbara Kraemer](#) and [Nick Kachiroubas](#) led the Panama Study Abroad program, which fueled the interest of those students.

We visited institutions, met with public officials and talked to local people, all of which made me one of the lucky 15.

### Tourism and Trump

Gustavo Zevallos served as the official English-speaking guide and Spanish interpreter for our group. He said, "Panama is a boiling pot of race, ethnicity, and culture." Then he added: "Well, it was ... until tourism started." His comments implored us to keep

local sentiments in mind when engaging in public policy.

During our first two days, we explored the Pacific side of the Canal — one of the world's most important waterways — and the historic city of Panama. [Flamenco Marina](#) was our point of departure for sailing through the old locks of the Canal.

We were in a small tugboat, following a 5,000-container-capacity-cargo ship. We had a captivating view of the Pacific Ocean along Panama Bay. The passengers clicked selfies or groupies to capture memories.

Interestingly, we learned that the Canal relies on a lock system that uses millions of gallons of water to raise ships to the Canal's level. Ships get lowered again as they depart the Canal and return to the ocean — to the Atlantic if they enter from the Pacific, and to the Pacific if they enter from the Atlantic.

J.C. Carlos, guide of Canal and Bay Tours, told us the easiest way to remember how the

Canal operated was in five steps: IN. UP. THROUGH. DOWN. And OUT. One can picture it as "a water bridge for cargo ships," he said.

We walked about the old city of Panama under a midday sun as the sea breeze tried to combat the humidity. Gustavo offered some advice, "Do it the Panamanian way — stay in the shade."

In the old town, high-rise buildings and the buzz of tourism co-existed with people living in dismal shelters. I wondered whether the prosperity in Panama was dispelling poverty or increasing it. "There is progress in Panama," said Melwin Rubin, a tourist taxi operator whom I had hired with classmates Arlinda Bajrami and Kaliah Liggons the day before our program started. "But the share of benefits is never equal."

I wanted to know the locals feel about then-Republican candidate and now-President Donald Trump.

**COVER PHOTO:** Feroz Fernandes stands in a small boat near the Hong Kong-flagged Huayang Sunrise, a 600-foot cargo ship preparing to make the 48-mile trip through the Panama Canal. An online tracker showed that on March 17, the ship was located off the southwest coast of Taiwan (Photo by Kaliah Liggons).

## REFLECTIONS

“Panamanians knew Trump long before the 2016 Presidential race began,” Melwin said. “Trump owns the biggest casino in Panama. Trump said really disturbing things about Panama. But this guy has something; when he started to invest, real estate prices zoomed in Panama.”

I asked Melwin about the [Panama Papers](#), the leaked documents that revealed information on thousands of offshore business activities and shell companies of wealthy people and public officials from around the world. Melwin defended the government, putting the blame on private companies.

Panama has a long history with the United States due to the building and operation of the Panama Canal Zone. On Dec. 31, 1999, the Canal was handed over to Panama, ending decades of U.S. strategic presence there.

Arlinda said it with confidence: “The Panama study abroad trip is an eye opener to understand how the United States has influenced a country’s political system, culture, and urban development.”

### Climate and crisis

“Due to the El Niño,” said our guide, Gustavo, “I have seen the lowest level of the lake basins.”

When it rains in Panama, it pours for hours without stopping. Still, during the dry season, the taps run out of water. Even the Canal restricts traffic due to the availability of water.

As Professor Guillermo Castro, vice president of research and education at Panama’s [City of Knowledge](#) sustainable development platform, told us, “If we do not understand water management, then we cannot have sustainable development in Panama.”

We observed the results of the Canal’s [\\$5 billion expansion project](#), which doubled its capacity through a new set of locks and creation of wider and deeper lanes that allow larger ships to pass.

Ana Vazquez, a young guide at Panama’s Frank Gehry Museum



Courtesy of Feroz Fernandes

*School of Public Service students Jasmine Wilson, Cecilia Mendoza, Feroz Fernandes, John Borthwick and Arlinda Bajrami sail under the mile-long Bridge of the Americas, which spans the Pacific Ocean entrance of the Panama Canal.*



Feroz Fernandes

*Students on the Panama study abroad trip observed the results of the Panama Canal’s \$5 billion expansion project. The Canal relies on a lock system that uses millions of gallons of water to raise ships to the Canal’s level. Ships get lowered again as they depart the Canal and return to sea.*

of Biodiversity, made a simple observation: “Why not make the old locks of the Canal more environmentally friendly by installing water-saving basins ...

like in the newly expanded locks?” Will the Panama Canal Authority build new reservoirs? The organization has a major policy decision to consider.

### Poverty and policy

The The bilingual program of the Ministry of Education focuses on the young. One can notice the economic divide between those who speak English and others who can speak only Spanish.

We visited various institutions to gauge their leadership initiatives. Each institution had a unique mission and challenges.

At the [Technological University of Panama](#), Prof. Augusto A. Cedeno touted the geographic location of Panama as an asset.

“We have a stable government and weaker public institutions,” said Prof. Castro of the City of Knowledge. “Leaders of the indigenous communities feel their people have done their part, but the government has not kept its promise to provide infrastructure and support.”

We visited the Inter-American Cooperative Institute, involved in the integral formation of leaders.



Feroz Fernandes

*Panama City serves as the capital of the country of 4 million. “There is progress in Panama,” one taxi driver said. “But the share of benefits is never equal.”*

Dr. Carlos Manuel Lee Vasquez, the executive director, advocates solidarity economies, rooting economic activity in principles of solidarity, participation, cooperation and reciprocity.

This is a contrary view to mainstream capitalistic economies based on individual competition with less emphasis on community.

Alfredo Junca Wendehake, director of the plenary at the National Assembly of Panama, views representation, even unequal, as an imperative for the implementation of public policy.

Prof. Kachiroubas asked Flor Eugenia Villalobos, founder and national coordinator of the Madres Maestras (Mother-Teachers) organization, to share leadership lessons for success. Flora responded with a quick sense of humor, “Don’t get sick.”

### Risk and rewards

The SPS Panama Study Abroad program was a life-changing experience.

From our trip, I learned to risk in favor of possible positive change and to view leadership as service.

I owe these insights to the diversity of our group. You will face it: Group decisions are tough. We found it difficult to decide which restaurant to choose for dinner.



Feroz Fernandes

*School of Public Service students Kaliah Liggons and Arlinda Bajrami enjoy a strategic spot, where visitors can get a view of ships waiting to enter the Panama Canal from the Pacific Ocean.*

“We understand better why the School of Public Service is International by Design,” wrote Prof. Kraemer before reading our executive memos.

DePaul gives its best to its students — meet real faces, face challenges and offer

policy solutions to positively change people’s lives.

*Feroz Fernandes is pursuing a Master’s of Science degree in Public Service Management at the School of Public Service.*

# Why we feel changed

*Study far away from home contributes to a sense of transformation*

By [Pete Reinwald](#)

SPS publication editor

We who've had a Study Abroad experience speak of a common phenomenon.

We find ourselves changed.

"I've heard many students say that," said Prof. [Ron Fernandes](#), an India native who chairs the Study Abroad Committee at DePaul University's [School of Public Service](#). "It's interesting, too. For me to go back to India, it's like, I'm just going home and taking some visitors with me."

For many others, it's like we're finally opening our eyes.

My 2006 trip to Chiapas, Mexico, as a student in the School of Public Service, featured a walk across an unruly jungle river, a visit to an impoverished community of indigenous people and an optional trip to the mysterious Mayan ruins of Palenque.

We met with state government officials and representatives of local non-government organizations, and we learned about the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement on Mexico's indigenous communities.

We visited a fair-trade coffee cooperative. We listened to the perspective of revolutionary Zapatista leaders. We ate, slept and heard stories from Mexico's poorest and most oppressed.

You don't see or do any of those things in Hudson, Fla., where I grew up. And I think that's the value of Study Abroad.

When we experience a different culture, language and setting and engage in sincere and focused conversation with our hosts, I think, we come to reject our assumptions, biases and prejudices about other people and places. We explore beyond the "what is" that we see in newspapers and videos, and we embark on the why and the how.

Why do these communities lack sufficient water, food, health care and education? Why do more women than men experience extreme poverty? Why are so many children exposed to the horrors of sex trafficking and other violence? Why are farms failing? Why are coastlines eroding?

How do we as public servants help fix those and related problems throughout the world?

We talk with engaged volunteers, public servants, government officials — and the residents themselves — about what gave



Pete Reinwald

*The SPS Study Abroad trip to Chiapas, Mexico, included a visit to the [Las Abejas](#) community, a civil society of Mayan descendants. SPS discontinued that program but maintains a host of others.*

rise to these problems and why the problems persist. We hear stories of human struggle, of human loss and of mighty individual and collective efforts to make life better.

I think we thereby enter the doorway to empathy.

Maybe that's why so many of us find ourselves changed.

"I think it's a combination of two things," said Fernandes, assistant director of SPS.

"You're not going to this country as a tourist, to take in the sights or enjoy the food. While doing that, you also have a much more focused study not as somebody just visiting the country but as somebody focusing on a specific issue in the country. You're learning especially about development management, policy and leadership, around the context of climate change, gender issues, children, etc. Students select an area of study that's of interest to them. Now you're getting a chance to study in the field. That leads you to examine and even question accepted ideas or the conventional wisdom. That changes the way you think."

It sure does.

"The second thing is that it's learning at an emotional level as well," Fernandes said. "In each country, it depends more or less on the extent of the differences there to America. Sometimes it can be the sights and sounds of the country and the friendliness and openness of the people. Sometimes it's just being out of your comfort zone. It really makes you aware of yourself in terms of how patient you are or

focused as well as your flexibility in dealing with cultural differences."

Consider this passage from student Sara Lepro in a previous School of Public Service publication about her Study Abroad experience in India, which included an initially unsure and unsteady ride on an elephant:

"Once I took my seat, the elephant lumbered down the dusty road with the four of us on its back, our squeals of laughter trailing behind us. The elephant ride is just a snapshot of my time in India, but it is analogous to my entire experience in that vibrant, amazing country, when I was forced to step outside my comfort zone, and now am better off for doing so."

I thoroughly get her drift. In southern Mexico, our elephant came in the form of transportation on high, narrow and harrowing roads that inspired a connection to Dramamine.

We had time to explore on our own and briefly become tourists. But we otherwise focused on the problems and the people through a careful and methodical itinerary that made Mexico's poorest state our classroom for a week — 10 days including our optional side trip.

The School of Public Service adopted its Study Abroad model about 15 years ago. SPS created its seven-day programs to provide access and encouragement to students who lacked the time or money to take trips that lasted, say, two or three months.

## SPS OVERVIEW

“It was definitely unique when it was first conceptualized by Dr. [J. Patrick Murphy](#), the former SPS Director,” Fernandes said. “And remains so in terms of its sustainability and faculty/student interest. Now other U.S. programs are adopting our model.”

SPS discontinued the Chiapas program several years ago. But it maintains similar Study Abroad opportunities in Belgium, Brazil, Tanzania, India, Panama, Northern Ireland and occasionally in the Philippines.

Students take a 4-credit course that corresponds with their Study Abroad setting and focus. For example, students on the trip to Brussels with Prof. [Joe Schwieterman](#) take “MPS 575: Seminar in Administration/Brussels.” That trip focuses on NATO and the EU. Those on the trip to Tanzania with Prof. [Raphael Ogom](#) take “MPS 543: Policy Implementation” or “MPS 604: Graduate Studies in Public Service, Non-profits and Sustainable Development.”

If they already have taken the course associated with the program, students on any Study Abroad program can opt for an Independent Study or a Special Topics course. They would then carve out an area of interest to them related to the program in collaboration with the program director.

“One thing that we emphasize in designing our programs is flexibility,” Fernandes said.

Those who show need also can receive financial support, he said.

Fernandes emphasized SPS’s partnerships in the countries of study. That often comes through faculty members who’ve established lasting relationships there — a key to effective teaching, learning and sustainability, he said. “We focus on the mission, solid learning opportunities and program facilities that meet budgetary constraints.”

He also emphasized the [Vincentian mission](#) of Study Abroad and the aim to keep students’ expenses within a reasonable

budget. That often comes through use of a host institution’s lodging facilities.

“We partner with people, with institutions that share our values and beliefs,” Fernandes said. “We focus on the mission and that facilities for the students are not too expensive.”

Students could find themselves changed, just as some did in a December trip to Panama.

“At the debriefing on the last day, students spoke about the kindness of the people, their love and respect for their original culture, their solidarity, their dedication for helping those in need, and the pride (passion) they have for caring for one another and their communities,” Prof. [Barbara Kraemer](#) wrote in an email response to questions about the trip to Panama. “They also mentioned the cultural interconnections between the U.S. and Panama. These were some of the ‘life-changing’ experiences.”

## MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

# Treated like a guest, not a stranger

By [Alicja Feduniec](#)

School of Public Service

India is colorful, noisy, crowded, hectic, peaceful and serene — a country of enormous, stunning and beautiful contrasts.

But this short essay is not about that. It is not about the colors and smells and sounds that any brochure or advertisement will sell you to get you on the next plane out. This is about something much more basic than that. This is about hospitality.

Think about it: We pride ourselves on hospitality and have built an industry on it. But this is not about that hospitality. It is not about hotels and resorts and five-star restaurants and infinite entertainment options.

It is just about hospitality, the root concept of it — welcoming others into one’s own sphere of being and space. It is about being good hosts to those who are not from here, wherever here is, and treating them with warmth and kindness.

This is the hospitality that I, along with my fellow DePaul colleagues and Prof. [Ramya Ramanath](#), experienced while in Maharashtra, India, during the winter.

We met [Gram Panchayat](#) representatives, NGO workers, women from self-help groups, medical professionals, teachers,



Courtesy of Alicja Feduniec

*Alicja Feduniec receives a coconut as a gift from students at a secondary school outside the village of Satichiwadi.*

students, farmers, host families and passersby. In every case, we were greeted and welcomed with smiles, warmth and even an occasional paparazzi blitz.

The moments that stick with me the most are the random, and unexpected, ones: a conspicuous tourist getting eager help at the metro from strangers who sacrificed their next train in the process; receiving warm smiles and even warmer masala upon entering one’s home; and getting showered with coconuts as gestures of gratitude from children and teachers for the simple act of entering — or perhaps intruding into — a classroom.

Also sticking with me is the infinite curiosity: questions about my

homeland and life. These moments a brochure cannot capture.

Considering the current climate of populist, xenophobic and isolationist policies emanating from some of the world’s most inveterate and robust democracies, I found it incredible to experience the warmth and love that the people of India have for people from other countries.

Consider the history of the subcontinent. India experienced one of the longest periods of colonial rule and suppression under the British crown, along with one of the longest struggles for its independence. Yet instead of treating us with anger and suspicion, our hosts treated us as special guests.

This is not to homogenize and romanticize India. As any diverse nation, it maintains its own struggles and conflicts. But my study abroad experience attests to the value that nations like India, and many others no doubt, place on interconnection, global exchange and plain old hospitality.

Perhaps we can take something from this the next time we are confronted with a “stranger” in this land.

*Alicja Feduniec is pursuing a degree in International Public Service.*

## SPS GLOBAL TRIPS

### BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Apply by: Nov. Contact: Prof. [Joe Schwieterman](#)

### CURTIBA, BRAZIL

Apply by: Dec. Contact: Prof. [Joe Schwieterman](#)

### MAHARASHTRA AND KERALA, INDIA

Apply by: July 2018. Contact: Prof. [Ramya Ramanath](#)

### TANZANIA

Apply by: July 1. Contact: Prof. [Raphael Ogom](#)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

Apply by: May. Contact: Prof. [Nick Kachiroubas](#)

### PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

Apply by: Feb. 2018. Contact: Prof. [Barbara Kraemer](#)

# Reaping the benefits of an SPS degree

This article was first published by the *Chicago Tribune* on April 23, 2014. Reprinted by permission.

By **Pete Reinwald**

Chicago Tribune

It's all about the journey.

That's what I tell my kids about their college education. They roll their eyes. But that's how I see college, and that's how I see my midcareer graduate-school experience. I received my master's degree about five years ago, yet the journey continues. And it still brings rewards.

I embarked several years ago on a master's degree in public service management at DePaul University. I wanted an advanced degree that would complement my journalism background and provide career flexibility. More than anything, I wanted a meaningful experience.

For me, it really wasn't about the money. You're rolling your eyes. But, really, I'm weird that way.

Sure, it was expensive. But in many ways, I've already recouped the costs through my experiences, friendships, connections, opportunities and discoveries.

Here's how:

**Experiences.** My degree program included a strong study-abroad component. So I went on a 10-day trip to Chiapas, Mexico, where our class met with government and nonprofit leaders to learn about the plight of the indigenous people in Mexico's poorest

state. We visited some of those Mayan descendants. We ate with them. We slept among them. We laughed with them. We connected with them and with one another. I emerged with a deeper understanding of the way in which U.S. policy affects so many abroad. I emerged with a lasting experience.

**Friendships.** I maintain that college isn't for everybody, especially as costs soar and as the global economy morphs. When I finished high school, I wasn't sure college was for me, which explains why it took me 11 years — and six higher-education institutions — to earn a bachelor's degree. Having lacked a traditional undergraduate experience, I came away from my graduate-school experience with far more meaningful friendships. Some I count among my best friends. We share a bond of public service and greater good. We go out for a beer. We baby-sit each other's pets. We conspire to change the world.

**Connections.** I've always found myself uncomfortable with forced connections, including networking events. My graduate-school experience gave me professional connections that emerged naturally. While in the graduate program, I sought freelance-writing work. A fellow student put me in touch with her colleague, a magazine editor at a nonprofit organization with whom I established a working relationship. The editor and I remain connected and friends. And more connections followed.

**Opportunities.** After graduation, the director of the graduate program asked me if I'd be interested in teaching a writing course. I pounced. Although I could never survive on

the income of the writing course, professionally speaking, I love it as much as anything I've done. When I see students improve their writing, I see accomplishment and victory in their eyes. Then I understand what's in it for the person who volunteers to coach a soccer or baseball team. When a player scores a goal or hits a home run, the coach beams for the player, who had connected with the coach. Therein we find the purpose and compensation.

**Discoveries.** As a journalist, I ask questions. As a student, I sought the next inspiration. My first college inspiration came at age 26, when I took my first university-level course, world geography. When University of South Florida professor Harry Schaleman pointed to his big map, I saw not words and colors. I saw lives and rivers. Professor Schaleman brought the world to life and my life to the world: I majored in geography. Twenty years later, I sought that inspiration again. The journalist in me asked: What are you waiting for? So I enrolled in the DePaul program. One course and discovery led to another, and I built an intense interest in the environment and cultural sustainability. I wrote my capstone project on the emergence of ecovillages — why they exist, how they operate and who lives in them. Now I can see myself and my wife living in one. And now she's rolling her eyes.

*Pete Reinwald, editor of the SPS publication and a 2009 graduate of the School of Public Service, works as an editor on the national-foreign desk of the Chicago Tribune.*

## SPS COMMUNITY



Courtesy of Prof. Barbara Kraemer

**HELLO, MR. PRESIDENT:** School of Public Service Prof. Barbara Kraemer and students met up early this year with DePaul's new president, Dr. Gabriel Esteban. From left to right: the president's wife, Josephine Esteban, SPS student Zonzarias MCGowin-Woods, Dr. Esteban, Prof. Kraemer and SPS student Erika Healy.

## A crown for her public service

School of Public Service graduate [Tiffany Shivers](#) (2015) has been named Miss Black California US Ambassador.

The Miss Black US Ambassador and Miss Black Teen US Ambassador scholarship pageants encourage, empower and enlighten girls and young women in their respective communities and state, organizers say.

"The organization has a strong emphasis on being a change agent in our communities, which I believe is something that DePaul University and the School of Public Service has instilled in me," Shivers says. "I am



extremely excited and honored to hold the title of Miss Black California US Ambassador and to use this platform to advocate

for mental health, which is an issue that is often overlooked in minority communities."

Shivers is founder of [Crown of Courage](#), a nonprofit organization that empowers young girls and women of color to create their own narrative when it comes to their emotional health.

## A course that's truly global

The Hay Project, a partner of the School of Public Service, has sponsored a quarterly non-credit online leadership development course since September 2010, with more than 430 participants from 20 countries completing the course to date.

These include DePaul employees, staff of the [St. Vincent de Paul Society](#) in the U.S. and Australia, [Depaul International](#) subsidiaries in the U.S. and Ukraine, Catholic sisters and priests from Kenya, and faculty and staff of the [University of Sulaimani](#) in Iraq.

The organization offers courses and events, and its website features Web resources and relevant podcasts, including one featuring director [Patricia M. Bombard](#), chairman [J. Patrick Murphy](#) and [William Hay](#).

The Hay project invites you to browse its website and find a resource, article or event that is useful to you or your organization.

Visit:

[Vincent on Leadership: The Hay Project](#)

## Coming up this spring

**April 26**

### *Municipal Policy Webinar Series*

This third installment of the Chaddick series will share activities of the Governmental Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force and discuss efforts by local government groups to streamline service delivery, boost efficiency and reduce overlap. For more information and to register, email [chaddick@depaul.edu](mailto:chaddick@depaul.edu).

**May 9-10**

### *Study trip to Springfield*

Join SPS Professor Nick Kachiroubas and graduate students in our state capital for a unique opportunity to see the Illinois legislature in action and shadow a state representative during session. The cost to attend is \$30, which includes one night lodging in Springfield. [Email Professor Kachiroubas](#) for additional details.

**May 18**

### *Large Data: An architectural history of race and the suburbs*

Dianna Harris of the University of Utah will be the featured speaker at this event, hosted by [Studio Chi](#), on DePaul's Lincoln Park campus.

## PROGRAMS

### Internship and Career Development Program

The School of Public Service has launched an Internship and Career Development Program to help students prepare for their professional and volunteer lives after graduation.

We have designed a number of programs, and we invite you to explore the issues and opportunities that interest you.

Further, an internship course will be offered again in the Summer Quarter, and students can take it for credit.

Please discuss your professional and academic career interests and goals with your academic advisor and faculty mentor.

For more information about professional opportunities and internships, please contact [Michael Diamond](#), Professional Lecturer and Director of our Internship and Career Development program.

To read previous SPS newsletters, visit the [School of Public Service website](#)

## 'JOURNEYS' PROFILES

**Pete Reinwald**, editor



**Feroz Fernandes**  
SPS student

[Feroz Fernandes](#) is a Catholic missionary priest from Goa, India, a state of about 2 million people on the Arabian Sea. He is pursuing a Master's of Science degree in Public Service Management. Apart from the Panama program, Feroz also participated in the Brussels study abroad program in spring 2016.



**Alicja Feduniec**  
SPS student

[Alicja Feduniec](#) was born in Poland and came to Chicago at age 8. She attended Loyola University Chicago, where she majored in Anthropology and International Studies. Afterward, she attended graduate school for Education, taught science in Cambodia, then in Philadelphia and Chicago. She's working on a master's degree in International Public Service at SPS.