



Minari Fernando

IWU Major(s)/Minor(s): International Relations and Political Science double major, Theatre Arts minor

Collegiate activities: Resident Assistant, Model Illinois Government (founding member), Model UN, Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (founding member), Habitat for Humanity, Costume Studio in the School of Theatre Arts

Graduation year: 1999

Current role/title and location: Project Manager with a social justice start up in Sydney, Australia

Advice for current international students: Get involved in everything that interests you, especially things that scare you. The life skills you learn from non-academic pursuits will take you through life, particularly if your degree isn't directly connected to your career.

Persevere, especially when looking for jobs. Until you have sent 100 applications out, you haven't tried hard enough!

Did you complete an internship? If so, please briefly describe that experience. My first summer internship was with Citibank, N.A. in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This internship was important in that it showed me what I didn't want to do with the rest of my life!

The summer after my sophomore year I interned with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. She was in the process of completing her report on violence against women during wartime and I was able to assist her with that process.

How did you successfully navigate the grad school/job search process? My first job out of college was with a small non-governmental organization that was the leading research institution looking at issues of human rights, multiculturalism, diversity, etc. The Executive Director of the institute was also the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women who I interned for during the summer after my

sophomore year. I made very little money but had the experience of a lifetime: I made amazing contacts and travelled around the world.

In 2003, I was awarded the Chevening Scholarship by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK. This funded my master's in Human Rights at the University College London in the UK.

Since then, I have worked with the Global Fund for Women in San Francisco, UNDP, The Asia Foundation, USAID projects in Sri Lanka, and with the International Federation of Journalists in Sydney, Australia. I took time off my career to raise my daughter and during this time I started a business making handmade leather shoes for babies and toddlers.