

Alumni Highlights (in alphabetical order)



Levi Armlovich

Immigration Attorney

Law Office of Amie Miller

<https://www.immigrate-us.net/>

How have the skills and knowledge you acquired during your tenure with the EUC influenced your work and/or personal life since graduation?

My law practice helps many people from the European Union who wish to immigrate to the United States, and my deep background in EU Studies makes me more aware of EU citizens' unique concerns and needs.

What was the most valuable/memorable part of your experience in studying at and/or working with the EUC as a student?

The many opportunities the EUC provides for enrichment beyond the classroom. The EUC helped me intern in Brussels one summer, and study Turkish in Izmir another summer. And of course, it doesn't hurt that the EUC facilitated my FLAS fellowship to study Turkish, which happens to be my wife's native language. 😊

What advice would you give to current MAEUS students, FLAS fellows, EUC graduate minors, etc.?

Go to all the lectures and events sponsored by the EUC. Even the ones that sound boring. Even the ones that have nothing to do with your individual studies. Exposure to a broad spectrum of cultural and political issues will make you a more well-rounded student and a more interesting person.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

I am proud of how much I learned and how much I grew as a person during the course of my Master's degree. The EUC provides students with a fantastic opportunity to tailor their studies to fit their own interests. Study a language. Apply for an internship abroad. Take classes ranging from Agricultural Science and Art History to Urban Planning and Yiddish. Choose your own adventure.



Raphaella Berding

PhD Candidate, Sociology, Newcastle University, UK

How have the skills and knowledge you acquired during your tenure with the EUC influenced your work and/or personal life since graduation?

The MAEUS programme heavily influenced my career path after graduation. I completed a traineeship with the European Commission for which my interest was raised to a great degree during the MAEUS programme. Furthermore, I really appreciated the training provided by the EUC, in terms of theoretical knowledge about the EU, as well as research and academic skills. I was able to develop those skills through the excellent guidance and supervision provided during the courses in general, and specifically during my Master Thesis research and development. This also influenced my decision to continue my education with PhD studies.

What was the most valuable/memorable part of your experience in studying at and/or working with the EUC as a student?

The most valuable part for me was presenting at the Annual EU Studies Conference during my second year in the programme. It was a great learning experience, and the feedback I received afterwards was very valuable for both my research, as well as personal development.

What advice would you give to current MAEUS students, FLAS fellows, EUC graduate minors, etc.?

Make use of the excellent opportunities the EUC gives to its students (e.g. present at EU Studies Conference, meet EU officials/academics who do research on the EU). Take advantage of the support and guidance the EUC staff and faculty provide during the programme in general but also specifically during the MA Thesis research. Take advantage of the seminars in which current topics in world/EU politics are discussed in a small group.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

Completing my Master Thesis.



Bergen Bassett

Foreign Service Officer for the US Department of State

Why did you choose the MAEUS program and what did you research while you were a student with the EU Center?

I chose the MAEUS program because I liked the flexibility the program offered to a transitioning professional with a family. Being able to complete all of my course work on campus in just over a year and then rejoin my family to complete my thesis on my own as well as participate in 2 internships, really fit well for our family. I was also excited to build on the foundation European Studies, Scandinavian Studies, and Defense

Policies/Relationships I began during my undergraduate time and early professional career. While I was a student, I focused my research on the evolving defense landscape in Scandinavia.

What were your favorite experiences during your time with the MAEUS program?

I really enjoyed my internships at the Department of State and the Department of Defense.

What is your current profession and how did your education as a MAEUS student prepare you for your professional life?

I am a Foreign Service Officer for the Department of State. Though I currently serve in the Philippines, the internship I was able to participate in as a graduate student solidified my decision to pursue the career.

What is your greatest accomplishment(s)?

Balancing a family with 4 kids (11 and under), while pursuing and achieving my dream job in the State Department, with my spouse!

What advice would you give someone considering an M.A. in EU Studies?

Explore as many opportunities as possible while you are a student. Do the internship. Make connections in the field. Network with your professors and peers, both at U of I, but also other institutions. Don't be afraid to take a risk.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I would really like to work for the U.S. Mission to the EU in Brussels or on other trans-Atlantic diplomatic topics.



Natalie Cartwright

Global Opportunities Coordinator
Colorado State University

How have the skills and knowledge you acquired during your tenure with the EUC influenced your work and/or personal life since graduation?

Having the opportunity to study abroad for 9 months while part of the MAEUS program is truly what made me realize I was not ready for a career in government and allowed me to see that my passion actually resided in cross-cultural competence and assisting others in experiencing that. This led to my career of working in international education. Post graduation in May 2013, I worked in the Study Abroad Programs Office at Texas A&M, College Station for two years. Fast-forward three more years, and I am just now celebrating 3 years working as the Global Opportunities Coordinator at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO, a dream job. Some of the skills that MAEUS helped me master that I put to use on a daily basis include, critical thinking, problem solving, cultural analysis, and cultural competence.

What was the most valuable/memorable part of your experience in studying at and/or working with the EUC as a student?

I have many fond memories of my time with the EUC and MAEUS. Studying in Ankara and Istanbul Turkey on FLAS are definitely at the top of the list. Also at the top of the list are working as a GA in the EUC my 1st year in the program where I had the opportunity to get to know Kim, Sebnem and the Asst. Dir. and Dir. at that time. Additionally, getting close with my cohort and bonding over thesis writing. I truly loved the flexibility of choosing our courses depending upon our interests.

What advice would you give to current MAEUS students, FLAS fellows, EUC graduate minors, etc.?

Take advantage of every opportunity you are provided, from lectures, guest speakers, opportunities to go abroad. All of these things might seem minuscule on their own, but added together and you can transform your thinking, expand your knowledge base and experience opportunities you might never have again.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

I am proud of myself for being so persistent with a faculty/lead scholar in the field of my research abroad that he caved in and gave me an independent study so that I could have his guidance when starting the initial research on my thesis. Additionally, while I am not fond of public speaking, I am grateful that my UIUC faculty convinced me to present my work up to that point at a spring conference, providing me the confidence I grasped onto for helping me through my defense.



Allyce Husband

Designer

U.S. Digital Service

How have the skills and knowledge you acquired during your tenure with the EUC influenced your work and/or personal life since graduation?

After graduating from the EU Studies program, I worked as a Content Strategist at a private sector design firm. As a consultant, I was always interested in projects where we could partner with public sector clients and local governments to create real, tangible impact. This translated into my

passion for making government services easier for people to interact with. I'm currently a Designer at the U.S. Digital Service. I'm detailed to the Department of Veterans Affairs to help them modernize their appeals process and make it more veteran-friendly. My time at the EUC provided me with a greater understanding of people and how their government plays a role in their lives.

What was the most valuable/memorable part of your experience in studying at and/or working with the EUC as a student?

The most memorable part of my experience as an EUC student was interning in the Press and Public Affairs Department at the U.S. Embassy in Paris during the summer between my first and second year of the program. After learning about the EU for some time, it was interesting to get a glimpse into what it was like to work for the U.S. government, especially with a department that was responsible for connecting and engaging with EU citizens.

What advice would you give to current MAEUS students, FLAS fellows, EUC graduate minors, etc.?

My advice (which was given to me by Dr. Ozkan) is to take classes and write your thesis about topics that you are interested in. My take on that: avoid thinking too hard about how what you focus on will get you your “dream job”. Don’t lose sight of what you’re truly passionate about. Someone, somewhere will think that what you studied and what you’re interested in is really cool!

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

I am proud that I was an EU Studies student and that I chose to pursue a degree that was interesting to me. My path to becoming an EU Studies student and now working for the U.S. government wasn’t linear or “traditional” in any sense, and I’m proud of what I’ve been able to do so far. When I am asked about my educational background, my Masters in EU Studies is always something I am proud to talk about.



Christopher Jackson

PhD Candidate

Political Science, Georgia State University

How have the skills and knowledge you acquired during your tenure with the EUC influenced your work and/or personal life since graduation?

Pretty much my experience at the EUC has entirely influenced my life since. After graduation I worked as an International

Advisor at Parkland College in Champaign, while my wife finished her doctorate at Illinois. I decided to pursue a PhD in political science at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Having a completed thesis and the language and skills training I received through the EUC greatly helped my admission to the program, the funding I received, and have guided my research agenda. Two projects I am currently working on deal directly with EU foreign policy and it is probably where my dissertation will go to.

What was the most valuable/memorable part of your experience in studying at and/or working with the EUC as a student?

The most valuable/memorable part of my experience at the EUC was the summer (2014) that I spent conducting my thesis research project in Prishtina, Kosovo. It was an invaluable educational experience that has since guided my research interests, and experience that sets me apart from my current grad school peers.

What advice would you give to current MAEUS students, FLAS fellows, EUC graduate minors, etc.?

The advice I would give is to make use of the opportunities and leeway that the EUC and Illinois as a whole provide. Having now gone onto another graduate program, I have some perspective about how fortunate I was to have so many opportunities at Illinois to study what I wanted and be exposed a variety of events that related to topics I was interested in. If current students are interested in pursuing either continued grad studies or a job in international policy fields, my advice would be to focus on developing skills that set you apart from others. I was awarded a FLAS fellowship to study Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian while at the EUC, but really wish I had taken some courses to develop skills like GIS, statistical modeling methods, and formal modeling.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

Accomplishments I'm proud of – in life in general? Marrying my best friend obviously, also at Parkland coaching their women's soccer team to the national quarterfinals. But in a professional/academic sense its all about small victories – earning my MA, being accepted to a doctoral program, having my own original research accepted at national conferences, not failing statistical methods...



Michael Nelson

Assistant Director for Global Engagement

Illinois Abroad and Global Exchange (IAGE)

University of Illinois

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Mike joined IAGE in September 2016. He oversees partner relations, media and marketing, exchange programs, and student initiatives. Previously, Mike worked for the European Union Center and Global Education and Training at the University of Illinois. He became passionate about study abroad after interning and studying in Belgium, Finland, and

Sweden. Mike earned a B.A. in Political Science and an M.A. in European Union Studies from the University of Illinois, as well as an M.Sc. in International and Comparative Education from Stockholm University.

Why did you choose the MAEUS program and what did you research while you were a student with the EU Center?

I chose the MAEUS program because I was interested in European culture and politics and wanted to learn more. My interests were quite broad, so an interdisciplinary degree appealed to me. I transferred to U of I as an undergrad and knew I didn't have enough time to benefit from all of the faculty expertise here, so staying for grad school seemed like a natural choice.

I completed the non-thesis research track for the degree, which involved writing two significant research papers. One of those papers was about the Erasmus study abroad program in Europe, which was especially useful for me because I now work as a study abroad advisor.

What were your favorite experiences during your time with the MAEUS program?

My favorite experience was working as a graduate assistant for the EU Center. I had previously had some part-time jobs before working at the EU Center, but I consider that position to be my first professional experience that got me on the career path that I'm on today.

I also took very interesting courses about European languages, including regional and minority languages, translation services in the EU, and Swedish language courses. I have been interested in European languages since high school when I studied French, German, and Spanish, so it was interesting to dive deeper into language topics.

During the MAEUS program, I was awarded a travel grant to intern at the Fulbright Commission in Belgium. That was my first time out of the country for a prolonged period of time, which will always be a special memory. It made sense to go to Brussels, in particular, so I could also visit several EU institutions.

How did your education as a MAEUS student prepare you for your professional life?

My previous education introduced me to research about the field of international education and gave me greater insights into European culture. The professional work experience I gained during the MAEUS program helped me develop the right skills for my current position.

The biggest professional impact from my MAEUS studies was the mentorship I received from the EU Center staff. Six years later, I am still in close contact with several current and former EU Center staff members, who have given me advice along the way about my academic interests and professional goals. I sincerely thank the staff for all of their guidance and support.

What is your greatest accomplishment(s)?

My greatest academic accomplishment is securing the Kungstenen Scholarship to pursue a fully-funded Master's degree in International and Comparative Education at Stockholm University. On a personal level, I really enjoyed my time in Stockholm, and it was very relevant to my career interests in international education.

What advice would you give someone considering an M.A. in EU Studies?

I urge prospective students to seriously consider this program. The MAEUS program was an important step for me to accomplish my academic, personal, and professional goals, and I think I'm not alone amongst the alumni in feeling that way. An important point, too, is that there are many funding opportunities available for graduate students in the program.



Brent Rosenstein

PhD Student and Teaching Assistant at the University at Buffalo

How did your education as a MAEUS student prepare you for your professional life?

I feel that my experiences as a student at the EUC had a profound impact on the direction of my career. Through the MAEUS

coursework and the thesis writing process, I not only found a field of research that I am passionate about – the historical relationship between France and North Africa, and the resulting impact of this relationship on French notions of identity – but I also gained the skills necessary to help me pursue this research at higher levels.

What were your favorite experiences during your time with the MAEUS program?

Overall, the most memorable part of my time at the EUC was the sense of community that was present between the students, staff, and faculty. There was always a collegial, welcoming atmosphere in the office and at EUC events that is difficult to find elsewhere.

What advice would you give someone considering an M.A. in EU Studies?

My main piece of advice for EUC students would be to take advantage of the program's interdisciplinary nature. Being able to take classes in different fields and conduct research using approaches, tools, and perspectives from multiple disciplines greatly helped me to gain a broader understanding of what I was studying. Also, take some time to get know your fellow students and FLAS fellows. The mutual support of your friends and colleagues goes a long way to helping ease the stresses of graduate study.

What is your greatest accomplishment(s)?

My biggest accomplishment was probably the completion and defense of my thesis. It pushed me to the limits of what I thought I was capable of as a person and a researcher, but in the end, the sense of accomplishment and fulfillment that came from it – and the skills I gained along the way – definitely made the stresses worthwhile.