

Intro: You are on with Career Talks presented by the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech a regular podcast featuring students, alumni, and friends of the school offering advice to help you succeed in your career endeavors.

Host: Welcome to Career Talks a podcast service of the Academic Services Office of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs. Today we are talking with Sara Schmitt a fourth-year International Affairs student. Sara is here to talk to us about her interest in military intelligence and how this led to her interning at the Air Force Institute of Technology and the Office of Arms Control Association where she published 2 articles.

Do you mind if we start with introductions can you tell us more about yourself including some background information, how you came to Georgia Tech for International Affairs, and some detail into what you have done in and out of the classroom these past three years?

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Sara: Certainly, thanks Jessica! So I was born in Baltimore and moved around quite a bit growing up across the United States but ended up graduating high school here in Georgia and actually I'll be completely honest with you since I know this is the case for some of our incoming students Georgia Tech was not my 1st choice for, but just due to different circumstances this is where I ended up and so my freshman year OK Well here I am better make the best of this.

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And I jumped right in and I have loved every second of being here it was absolutely the right place for me to end up, so I don't know just me or whatever. It's been great. As far as International Affairs go, I have always been interested in politics and when I was a kid, my mom had a copy of Time magazine I used to look at the pictures and I think it was a bright colors or something that maybe got me interested. I've always been interested in international politics. I think there's something about the complexity of states working together or not working together sometimes that is really fascinating to me and something I've always wanted to be a part of.

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As far as things I've done in and out of the classroom these past few years. I guess out of the classroom, I played on my club tennis team here in track for a few years and was editor of photography for the Technique for about a year and that was a lot of fun.

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Let's see what else I've been on some advisory boards here in the Nunn School. I've loved living in and exploring Atlanta. Lots of great food I am a huge fan of Southern Comfort food, so it's been fun. In the classroom, I guess I've been doing research with Dr Margaret close off for the past year and a half now I'm working on my undergraduate thesis with her.

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And I've had some really cool internships I've also interned at the Carter Center here in Atlanta that was an amazing experience and in D.C. at the Office of Arms Control Associations and the Air Force this summer in Ohio a little bit all over the place and keep yourself busy.

Host: how did you discover an interest in military and intelligence and how did this lead to your internships at the Office of Arms Control Associations and then at the Air Force Institute of Technology?

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So again, military intelligence was not my first plan. My mom always tried it was pushing me towards the intelligence field because she thought I would enjoy it and as usual she was right. I was actually started out more focused on human rights issues I really wanted to work in the nonprofit sector I wanted to work on the ground somewhere abroad and then my sophomore year I was applying for internships and I was just sending out resumes to absolutely everywhere I could apply because I knew I needed to be on the ground in D.C. to do the networking because everyone I talked to said that that was the very best place to do your networking and you just had to be on the ground to meet people and shake hands and that was the best way to break into that world so I was just applying to anything I could in D.C. and ended up at the arms controls Association with their

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The conventional arms division and worked with my boss and my focus that I've sort of been telling my classes to here is Middle Eastern Affairs and so my thoughts really let me run with that and focus on the Middle East and North Africa within arms control work that we are doing and so the things I was looking into within Congress and the arms sales the foreign military sales that get passed through Congress so that was how I jumped into that field and then through my summer and through the work and everything I learned there from supervisor who was just an amazing person and great for supervisor. Everything I went there really made me passionate about arms control, and foreign military sales.

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That sort of led to undergraduate thesis I'm doing with Dr Kosal now, which is on lethal autonomy and the lethal autonomy between states so think killer robots. And then from there I met the people from the Air Force actually from the National Air and Space Intelligence Center at the Career Fair last year and that was where I was supposed to be in the summer and then some things and stuff happening and I ended up working at the Air Force Institute of

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Technology for the summer, which was an absolutely amazing experience and I'm actually going back when I graduate actually.

Host: That's awesome! Congratulations!

Sara: Thank you! I just signed my offer letter

Host: I think Stephanie had mentioned something that you were that you found an internship at the Fall Career Fair.

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Sara: It was kind of all over the place.

Host: Where did you find these positions and why did you decide to apply?

Sara: So I think I may have jumped the gun there on that question a little bit on the last question but I think I found that I'm controllers position

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Honestly I think I just did a google search for International Affairs internships and Washington D.C. I think I think the word undergraduate because I kept almost applying to graduate programs as a sophomore, so I threw that out into Google and did several iterations of that search for weeks and weeks. I probably sent out 25 or 30 resumes just getting in touch with people and I think I heard back from 2.

Host: So what was your typical day-to-day like and what was most enjoyable?

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Sara: So I think that at the Arms Control Association I had a lot of different responsibility because my boss sort of wore a lot of different hats I was just sort of a shadow for the summer, which was an amazing experience that I learned so much about so many people there but my day to day experience but

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Going to briefings on the Hill and I've spent a lot of time in Congress actually just sort of getting a feel for sort of what was going on and what was the public opinion on a lot of issues. We were following. we were following U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia at the time because there's been an issue with Saudi Arabia is misusing some of those U.S. weapons in Yemen and so we were tracking that motion and there was a motion in Congress that was really historic actually to stop that sale and it failed by only 2 votes, which is the closest Congress has ever come to failing a pass a foreign military sale even though it was sort of lost in the end anyway.

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And then I was sort of taking the idea of what's our public opinion was like with Congress and then also attending briefings by think tanks in the area just to see what the other experts were sort of saying. There was some social media work involved and some writing. I maintained a couple of websites, which was a new and that wasn't anything I had ever done before and a little bit of writing for the Arms Controls publication.

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Host: How did your internship with the Arms Control Association lead to two published articles

that you wrote for them?

Sara: So that was actually something that happened much later in the summer, I didn't walk in the door and get handed the opportunity to publish two articles, which was just so cool, and it was a lot of work in the beginning and a lot of learning. I had a really steep learning curve because arms control and foreign military sales wasn't really something I had experience and so my supervisor just gave me articles and articles to read and it was a really steep learning curve the first couple of weeks but then once I started to prove I had an OK grasp of the topics that we were dealing with, there were some topics that came up. So the Arms Control Association handles mostly nuclear nonproliferation and they've been really involved in a lot of the push for nuclear nonproliferation across the world but they have a conventional weapons division called Forum arms trained and that is where I did most of my work for the summer in the forum f and so when the Arms Control Association publication wants to do article in conventional weapons they turn to my supervisor and my supervisor handed some stuff to me to me, which is really cool and got to get published twice that summer.

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Host: So I'm done with my questions. Do you have anything else to add?

Sara: I think that's about it I guess and as far as career stuff goes, put yourself out there and don't be afraid to get rejected. I had been plenty of times and still ended up with some very very cool internships so go for it.

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Host: It's really good advice. So thank you for talking to us today about your internships and your articles that you published so we hope that our audience found this interview as intriguing as I did and let's hope it leads to internships in the military intelligence field.

Outro: This has been career talks a podcast of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech brought to you by the Nunn School academic services this and other podcast can be found on our website at www.inta.gatech.edu. Thank you for listening.