

INTRO

Stephanie Jackson: Now That's INTAresting. This podcast is about the Georgia Tech Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, its graduates, their careers, and how the Nunn School has helped to shape their future. Take a listen.

Stephanie Jackson: Welcome back to *Now That's INTAresting*. I'm Stephanie Jackson.

Sydney Piwonka: And I'm Sydney Piwonka.

Stephanie Jackson: We are continuing our conversations on this podcast with Nunn School alumni who have received STEM minors. So today, we are joined by Kathryn Allred who graduated with a degree in International Affairs from the Nunn School with a Minor in Women, Science and Technology.

Sydney Piwonka: At Georgia Tech, Kathryn was a part of the Georgia Tech Chamber Choir, a Peer Leader for the GT Department of Housing, a member of Alpha Delta Chi, and an Intern at Praying Pelican Missions. After graduating, Kathryn was a Special Education Teacher at Mary Persons High School, a Project Assistant at King & Spalding, an Annual Giving Intern at Grameen Foundation, a Program Assistant at Global Kids, a Global Philanthropy Fellow with Grameen Foundation at Katha, a Program Services Assessment Analyst at Association of Writers & Writing Programs, a Haiti Program Manager at Free the Kids, and was a Peace Corps Volunteer. Kathryn also received a Master's degree in Public Policy at the University of Maryland and is currently working as Special Education Teacher at the Wake County Public School System.

Stephanie Jackson: I think it is fair to say Kathryn has enjoyed a widely varied career thus far, and we're glad to have her here with us today. So, welcome Kathryn.

Kathryn Allred: Thank you so much for having me, y'all.

Stephanie Jackson: We do have a bit to delve into, but we would like to begin by talking about your undergraduate studies

Kathryn Allred: Sure.

Stephanie Jackson: Specifically, the Minor in Women, Science, and Technology. So, tell us, why did you choose to pursue that minor?

Kathryn Allred: Sure. So, I, I kind of grew up in a pretty open-minded household and was always interested, kind of, in women's studies. But being at Georgia Tech, that wasn't really an option. And so, you know, the Women, Science, and Technology Minor was really the closest thing while I was there to a, kind of, gender studies or women's studies focus. And it really turned out to be an awesome thing for me because it did everything that I wanted a gender studies program to do as far as kind of, you know, exposing me to new thoughts and ideas but, of course, it had that very tech lens of how have women and how have different genders influenced science and technology and vice versa.

Stephanie Jackson: And did any of those perspectives in terms of, you know, gender studies and, and the study of women or, and technology, how did that, or what kind of perspectives or value did that add to your INTA degree?

Kathryn Allred: Sure. So, I, when I started my INTA degree, was kind of thinking I was going to go into more of the, I guess, policy side of things, as far as, you know, I, I was thinking about working for the State Department or, you know, CIA maybe. Through those lenses, throughout my time at Tech, I decided that I was really more interested in the development side of things. And so, that Women, Science, and Technology Minor really helped me look at international development through a gender lens, and it really helped me see how international development is absolutely integral to uplifting women and girls, especially around the world, and uplifting women and girls is vital to uplifting whole communities worldwide. And that, that minor was really my first exposure to those kinds of thoughts and ideas.

Stephanie Jackson: Did you find that there were any number of other international affairs students involved in that program or was it mostly engineering or computing or other majors who were part of that minor program?

Kathryn Allred: It was actually a good mix, if I remember correctly. I do remember that a lot of like engineers would take these classes as their, you know, humanities or whatever and kind of walk away thinking like 'wow that was more difficult than I thought it was going to be. That was more work than I thought it was going to be,' you know. It was kind of like that typical 'oh, I'm doing thermodynamics all day. This is going to be cake.' Kind of thought.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: And they would walk out of those—and it was the same with all of my INTA classes as well, right—they would walk out of those classes like 'wait. This is using a whole different set of skills that's just as difficult in its own way.'

Stephanie Jackson: That's the, precisely the point. I'm glad you brought that up. It is a whole different set of skills that they have to utilize and then that are also strengthened when they take classes

Kathryn Allred: Absolutely.

Stephanie Jackson: That are in the social sciences or the humanities.

Kathryn Allred: Yeah.

Stephanie Jackson: We're gonna talk more about later on about how this minor has shaped your career path.

Kathryn Allred: Sure.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah. So, while you were an undergraduate student, you held some internships and opportunities with a number of nonprofits and also some mission-driven organizations. So, you were an intern at Praying Pelican Missions and also worked with the Fuller Center for Housing, and so, tell us about your roles within these organizations.

Kathryn Allred: Sure. So, I worked more with Praying Pelican, and again, you know, when I started my INTA degree, I was really interested in the policy side of things. But I was exposed, after my freshman year, I actually went on one week-long trip with the Fuller Center to New Orleans. This was after Hurricane Katrina which, you know, we're still cleaning up after the storm. And so, I did some just, kind of, hands on construction work done there and then a couple weeks later went to Haiti. And seeing

Haiti, this again was about a year after the big earthquake in Haiti that destroyed most of downtown Port-au-Prince. So, really being exposed firsthand to the needs in international development shifted that desire for me of how I wanted to use my INTA degree. So, after that first exposure, after my sophomore year at Tech, I knew that I wanted to do a longer-term internship type opportunity overseas, and the opportunity with Praying Pelican just kind of presented itself. And it was great for me not only because I was exposed to those international development concepts that I was learning in class, but I was also getting experience managing people, managing resources, and being a leader in an organization that wasn't just college students, which is what I was doing at Tech, right. So, it gave me the opportunity to lead adults and lead kids throughout different kinds of projects, and we did all kinds of stuff. We did construction; we worked with kids and held camps; we, you know, gave out food and planted trees for people. And so, it was just a really great diverse experience, and I worked with some really awesome people who saw those qualities in me, saw those leadership qualities and really allowed me to grow in those.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah, that's great that you had such an awesome experience with that and were able to kind of apply some of the stuff that you've learned in international affairs there, but then also learn some of that hands on experience as well.

Kathryn Allred: Yeah.

Sydney Piwonka: And so, for students who may be interested in working in similar organizations, what advice do you have for them to get involved in similar work?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah, so that's interesting. I think I had a bias, while I was an undergrad definitely, that the name of an organization meant more to me than maybe the work that they did, because I was so concerned about building my resume and being able to find a job afterward and, you know, all of those things—and those are certainly important things to consider. I'm not saying don't think about those things. But I think doing your work and doing the research on an organization, seeing if they're aligned with your values, especially when you're doing nonprofit work on the ground, there are a lot of ways to do more harm than good in those situations. And so, it's really important to think about the values and the overall goals of the organization that you're working with when you make those decisions. And that being said, it may be that you get an awesome opportunity with CARE, that's based in Atlanta, right. Which is an awesome international development org, and they do great work. But if you don't get that, there's some really awesome small organizations that are doing really great work on the ground. And just because you may not have that name recognition at the end of the day, the skills that you gain are going to be worth that time and worth that internship.

Sydney Piwonka: For sure. I definitely think that's really good advice. Going into those internships, not just looking for some of the big names that you think of when you think of international development, but looking for some of those, just an organization that aligns with what you want to do.

Kathryn Allred: Right. Absolutely

Sydney Piwonka: Definitely.

Kathryn Allred: And being open to like doing an internship and it not being what you wanted it to be right, like

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah. For sure.

Kathryn Allred: You know, if I had done an internship for the State Department, I would have found that that wasn't what I wanted to do. And that is just as important as finding what you do you want to do.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah, that's one thing I tell students all the time. Internships can help you decide what you like, as well as what you don't like.

Kathryn Allred: Absolutely.

Stephanie Jackson: And so, you know, take them for the learning experiences that they are. And so, you've said a couple of important things in, in those answers that you gave. You know, one of them is that you need to honor your own values in your job search.

Kathryn Allred: Yeah.

Stephanie Jackson: I really think that is important. And you talked about how these opportunities allowed you to grow into your own leadership qualities. And those

Kathryn Allred: Yes.

Stephanie Jackson: Are things that students really need to think about as they pursue different internships for sure.

Kathryn Allred: Absolutely. Yeah.

Stephanie Jackson: So, one thing that has been clear throughout your career is an emphasis on education.

Kathryn Allred: Yes.

Stephanie Jackson: So, we would like to talk to you a little bit about some of your experiences in the field. So, to begin with, let's start with you were initially a Special Education teacher at Mary Persons High School after you graduated from Georgia Tech, right?

Kathryn Allred: I was. Yeah.

Stephanie Jackson: So, tell us what drew you to that particular role.

Kathryn Allred: Sure, so it's kind of one of those things where the doors, just opened, and the stars aligned. Mary Persons was actually my alma mater, so I graduated with my high school diploma from Mary Persons. And the opportunity arose for me to teach Special Ed. My mom has been a Special Education teacher for much longer than I've been alive. And so, I knew a little bit. I thought I knew a lot more than I actually did, but I knew a little bit about it going in. And there was a need, right. And so, it, it just so happened that there was an opening in Special Ed in Science, and so, I got to co-teach in Biology and Environmental Science classes. And I absolutely loved it. It just became really clear to me that education—even within international development—education was going to be the thing that I cared about the most. And that year really shaped what we're going to talk about next. You know, the next several years of kind of fine-tuning those interests. And again, it's one of those things where I can wax poetic on how awesome teachers are, but you don't really know everything that teachers do until you've

done the job, right. And that's true of so many, so many occupations. But the, the management skills both like people management but also just time management and paperwork management

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: And the technical writing that comes with being a Special Education teacher, specifically. You know, you're drafting federal documents that have to be upheld. They are legal documents, once you have written them. Building relationships with people is absolutely vital. Building relationships with your students is so important. So, all of those skills too, you know, I was learning hard skills definitely, but I was learning interpersonal skills that I still use today. I mean, you know, I'm a Special Ed teacher again, now. Life has come full circle, full circle.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: But, but I'm using those interpersonal skills with other people as well.

Stephanie Jackson: So, okay so, you talked about your interpersonal skills, your leadership skills, the management skills. Were any of these skills that you develop, per se, while pursuing the major in International Affairs or the Minor in Women, Science, and Technology?

Kathryn Allred: Definitely. Well, I think, I think those overall, first of all, the technical writing piece I think I've definitely learned while I was at Tech—the, you know, paying attention to detail. When you're doing research in the humanities, you've got to be able to understand what you're reading and then analyze and succinctly tell someone about it, right. You have to be able to communicate that knowledge well. And that's definitely something that I use every day as a teacher, is how do I take this giant concept, and make it understandable to someone.

Stephanie Jackson: Right.

Kathryn Allred: And, and those management skills too. I'm, I don't know that I necessarily, you know, I didn't take any specific network management type classes at Tech, but I did take some in my master's program later on. And I use, I use those skills all the time as well. So.

Stephanie Jackson: Okay. Okay and we're gonna, we're gonna come back to how education remains prominent in your career path shortly and a little bit more about your master's degree, but Sydney wants to ask you some questions about your experiences outside of education.

Kathryn Allred: Okay.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah, so in between your undergraduate and graduate degrees, you were a Project Assistant at King and Spalding, right? So, how did you arrive at this shift away from teaching? How did you arrive at this Project Assistant job?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah. So, it's definitely an instance for me of, it's as important to know what you don't want to do as what you do want to do. So, I moved, like I said, you know, I went back to my alma mater, which is in a very small town in Georgia. And I felt like I was a 16-year-old walking down the hall every day. And I was like you know I do love teaching and I love these kids, but I've gotta get out of here.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: And I wanted to be back in Atlanta, the greatest city in the world. And so, I basically, I found a way. And I had a connection at King and Spalding that was able to hook me up with an interview there. Props to networking, and

Stephanie Jackson: I was gonna say. The power of relationships.

Kathryn Allred: Keeping up those relationships. Yes. Absolutely.

Stephanie Jackson: The power of connecting.

Kathryn Allred: Absolutely. And so, that was really the only thing that I was qualified for in the building. And I said yeah sure it'll get me back to Atlanta; I'm in. And I learned a lot. It was kind of, for me, you know, I was a year out of my undergrad, and I was kind of trying to figure out what my next steps were long-term. And I was definitely considering law as maybe a career path, and that was a way for me to kind of get exposed to that without jumping headfirst into law school. And, and I was, I mean, it was everything I would have asked for in order to really see the inner workings of what a corporate law office works like, you know. I learned a ton. But I, I was ready to go back to school after about a year there. And yeah, I mean I enjoyed it. I loved living in Atlanta again. Again, the greatest city in the world. But yeah.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah. Okay.

Sydney Piwonka: And so, throughout this job, throughout your, your time as a Project Assistant there do, did you see your major or any of your minor coursework or skills that you learned in that prepare you for that specific role?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah. Well again, the attention to detail. I was working on one case for the entire year that I was there. And it was, again, you know like with the Special Education teaching, it was integral that I was conveying the details well, because it was going to have an impact long-term on this case. And so, definitely those things. Being able to read something and summarize it well so that lawyers who were going to be presenting in court the next day had what they needed in order to do their jobs. And I think something that I learned in that job, and, and I can see kind of reflected is, I was definitely the bottom of the totem pole in that in that instance. And yet, I knew that my role was important to the overall team's role. I can think of specific instances for my INTA degree, where that was the case—where we would have a group project or some kind of group goal. And if each one of us did not carry our weight we weren't going to succeed. So, those, those instances practicing that during my degree, definitely helped me understand that I might be, you know, the, the new guy or the, the, you know, the plebe as some would say, but I knew that I was still important in that group dynamic.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah, and then tell us a little bit about after this when you worked with Global Kids as a Program Assistant. So, where did you see any sort of some of these skills that you learned within your major or minor apply in this job, or throughout your, your role, your time at Global Kids?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah. So, Global Kids is a really cool organization that operates in New York City, and DC, and last time I heard, they were, they were starting to operate in Houston. And it's an after-school program that has one of their focuses is on international education. Okay. And so, it was almost a direct line from my undergrad experience.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: And I will stress too, you know, I'm talking a lot more about my INTA experience, but my Women, Science, and Technology Minor really shifted my lens. So, when I'm doing these educational programs, I'm doing then normally, but I'm also specifically thinking about how am I reaching the girls in the class? Am I being equitable when I'm calling on students in the class? You know, am I giving favoritism to, you know, one gender more than the other? Those kinds of things, and that's constantly going in the back of my mind. So, with Global Kids it's the same thing, right. If I'm facilitating a program for a group of students, or if I'm helping someone else facilitate that, how are we making sure that we're being equitable amongst our population? So that, you know, socioeconomic status is taken into account; gender is taken into account; race and ethnicity is taken into account. And those skills, being taught to think that way with my Women, Science, and Technology Minor have carried me, and truly to the day have carried me, in my work.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah, for sure, that's, that's awesome that you've been able to apply both of those things and definitely seeing the need for equity in terms of education and just what, in whatever you're doing, making sure that you are being equitable. That's definitely a great perspective that that minor has given you. And so, then while you were in graduate school, you held a couple of different positions that were affiliated with the Grameen Foundation. And so, you were both an Annual Giving Intern, as well as you also held a Global Philanthropy Fellowship. And so, tell us a little bit about each of these positions.

Kathryn Allred: Sure. Well, I, I actually learned about the Grameen Foundation while I was at Tech—and I think that's probably true for a good number of people—and their incredible, you know, reputation around the world long-term and the amazing work that they've done. And so, when I had the opportunity to work with them, I jumped at it.

Stephanie Jackson: That was a name that you recognized could work for you, right?

Kathryn Allred: Absolutely. Absolutely. That was one of those instances where I was like 'yes. Values align, and I've got a name?' Absolutely.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah. Go for it.

Kathryn Allred: So, yeah. So, I started as the Annual Giving Intern. And that was really interesting for me because I was studying at the time Nonprofit Management was one of the focuses that I had in my graduate studies. And so, being able to see that administrative side of things and really understanding like okay, I don't get paid—well, I was an unpaid intern—but the people around me don't get paid, you know, unless they're doing the development, unless they're doing the fundraising. And I had a really great supervisor in that position who was a young woman, and she had been with him for about five years. And I remember her sitting down with me and talking about you know, I love that I can talk to, you know, a philanthropist in New York City who has, is sitting on some money, and connect him to a specific woman in, you know wherever, Thailand, who is starting her own business. And I can see that direct link, and that link doesn't happen unless I'm there. And that to me was just, it was really inspiring, because I think, for me, I was so focused on on-the-ground work. I want to be on the ground doing, you know, getting my hands dirty. But, again, you know, that stuff was not possible without the administrative stuff. And so, being exposed to that was awesome and very cool, and I met a lot of great people. And then, I had the opportunity to do the Global Philanthropy Fellowship, which honestly is one of the best experiences of my life to date.

Stephanie Jackson: Oh.

Kathryn Allred: The University of Maryland has a program that pays for a study abroad. And you work in a group, and you are paired with a nonprofit organization that aligns with your interests in some ways. And they have a problem. They have something that needs to be solved—and this is a program that Grameen actually does. It's called Bankers Without Borders—very much like Doctors Without Borders, where they will pair, a businessperson, or people, with a, an organization overseas that needs those services. And so, this is kind of the student version of that. And I know Maryland has it. I think Vanderbilt has it. They may have stretched that, you know, to more places since I did it. But I was paired with an organization. My team and I worked with an organization called Katha, which is two-pronged. It does literacy programs throughout India in, you know, all kinds of places. They are directly in slums like you see on TV all the time, but they're also in big cities, and working, you know with all kinds of populations. And their goal is to have all children reading throughout India by 2050. And so, our task was to create a volunteer management strategy so that they could stretch across the country and get this goal started—these 300 million goal to get all of these children reading. And we, you know, did about three months of prep work, four months of prep work before we went, and then we went to India for a month and worked with the organization. We got to see the work that they did. We got to visit some of the kids they work with. They have this incredible lab school with almost like they've taken all of the latest education research, and put it into a school in the middle of a slum, just outside

Stephanie Jackson: Oh.

Kathryn Allred: Of Delhi. And they're experimenting and saying 'hey, does this work with our kids or not?' And if it does, they keep it, and if not, they move on. It was just, just incredible and really cemented the fact that international education is, you know, the place that I want to be long-term.

Stephanie Jackson: Right. So, what advice can you share for students who want to pursue similar positions?

Kathryn Allred: I think, I don't know. I mean, I think it's just kind of a matter of keeping your eyes open, keeping your mind open, talking to people. I am extremely introverted. And so, the networking piece of this all, even thinking about it stresses me out. But you'll find in international development specifically, I think that everybody wants to talk about their work. You know, if you're doing this work, especially if you're doing the on-the-ground, nitty gritty kind of stuff, people want to share about the mission of their organization. They believe in what they're doing, and it's not going to be pulling teeth to get somebody to talk about, you know, what they do and why they do it.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: And so, I think just being open to opportunities. And again, you know, going back to what I was saying earlier, if you get an awesome opportunity with a great org, that's nationally and internationally known, that's so awesome. But

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: Also, there are a lot of really small nonprofits around the world that are doing this work. And you, it, it's been my experience in smaller organizations, that I've been able to use more of my skills, because all of my skills are needed

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: In order to reach the goal.

Stephanie Jackson: Okay. So, we have visited this a few times in passing already, but you pursued a graduate degree in Public Policy at the University of Maryland a few years after you finished at Tech.

Kathryn Allred: Yes.

Stephanie Jackson: So, at that point, why did you choose to pursue that graduate degree?

Kathryn Allred: Well, several reasons. I was interested in policy, obviously. They had a specific area of study in international development that I was really interested in. And I could, I didn't have to specialize in that though.

Stephanie Jackson: Okay.

Kathryn Allred: So, what I ended up doing is taking a lot of, a, a couple of classes out of the education school that were specifically geared toward international education. And then, I balanced that with some nonprofit management courses, along with the core which is just really well rounded, as far as, you know, those management skill-based courses, and then, financial management. And, you know, I, I took some really awesome classes from one of my favorite professors on dignity—human dignity. What does that mean? You know, what are we talking about when we say that? Who decides who has dignity and who doesn't? So, it, it just really fit all of my interests and didn't box me in as far as, you know, you have to declare a specialty or anything like that. And I really, really wanted to be outside of DC. If you're studying policy or something, that is the place that you want to do it. The opportunities are all there. So.

Stephanie Jackson: So, you mentioned the well-roundedness of that program, and, and that particular course on human dignity sounds like it probably would have had some strong linkages to some of the topics you talked about with your minor from undergrad. What other overlaps have you seen between your degree in Public Policy and your degrees in International Affairs and your Minor in Women, Science, and Technology?

Kathryn Allred: Sure. Well, I think the INTA degree, and the WST degree, minor really kind of revealed the, the inequalities for me, right. And then my master's degree was like okay, you see these inequalities, and you see kind of how the structures are broken. And here are some tools that you can use to fix them. My Public Policy degree really has helped me see that everything we do is policy, especially I'm back in the classroom now and I'm like wow, this is a policy, made by someone who probably hasn't ever been a classroom teacher, you know. And I can identify that because I studied it. So, things like that, having kind of ways, it put more tools in my toolbox as far as ways to solve those inequalities, rather than just identifying them.

Stephanie Jackson: Right. So, here's a question because you did not opt to go right into graduate school right after you finished your undergrad. So, what do you think the pros and cons of, of waiting a few years are

Kathryn Allred: Sure.

Stephanie Jackson: If you're thinking about graduate school for pursuing graduate school a few years after you finish your undergraduate degree?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah. Well, I think the biggest thing is knowing yourself. For me, when I finished at Tech, I, I wanted a break from school. I love school, obviously. We've talked about education a lot in this discussion. I love school, but it was time for me to take a break and kind of just better define what I wanted to do. I think there's a lot of people who finish undergrad and know exactly what they want to do. They've used those four years to really figure that out, and I think for those people going to graduate school is an awesome choice, if that's what you want to do. For me, I think I would have, I'm not sure I would have pursued the same things, and it wouldn't have been as beneficial for me, because I needed a couple of years off to really get to know my interests and try some things and fail at some things truly, you know, in order for me to really know what steps I wanted to take. But again, you know, I have friends at Tech who went directly into a master's or PhD program and it worked really well for them. I think it's really about knowing yourself and your needs.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah, I think that that's super important. And I think that going back to what you were talking about how you think that maybe your interest would have been different, or

Kathryn Allred: Yeah.

Sydney Piwonka: You would have ended up somewhere else had you gone immediately.

Kathryn Allred: Yep.

Sydney Piwonka: I think is also super interesting. And so, I guess, as part of that, with this focus on education that you've had, after your graduate degree you also, you also were an Education Volunteer in the Peace Corps.

Kathryn Allred: Yes.

Sydney Piwonka: And so, what drew you to the Peace Corps, to joining the Peace Corps as an Education Volunteer?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah. So, I really wanted more hands-on experience. And the, you know, the Peace Corps is really the gold standard, especially if you want to work in any sort of international development field long-term. The reputation of the Peace Corps really drew me and being able to specifically choose to be an Education Volunteer because I did, you know, at that point I had finished my graduate studies, and I knew that's what I wanted to do. And it ended up being a really, really great thing for me. It was a really good move for me, because the Peace Corps is, it's a really interesting organization in that you are, you know, working in international development. And so, you are hopefully contributing to the community that you're serving. But I think the Peace Corps pours a lot into their volunteers of, you know, skills-based training definitely, but also just kind of community development and more of those interpersonal skills. And so, I feel like that time, I just learned so much. I learned more than I think my community learned for me, and I don't know that that's a bad thing, you know, I think it was a really symbiotic relationship between me and my community. And, yeah, I really enjoyed that.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah. That's awesome that you had such a great experience there. And so, where did you serve in the Peace Corps?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah. I was in Kosovo in the Balkans.

Sydney Piwonka: Awesome. That's, that's so interesting. And what was your role as an education volunteer in Kosovo?

Kathryn Allred: Sure. So, I was one of the two fortunate ones--I mean it were, we were all fortunate, but I worked in a high school. Most, most volunteers and most of all go to elementary schools, and we are all ESL teachers. So, teaching English as a foreign language, and we had three months of training on the front end of our service, and then, we were placed in communities over on Kosovo. So, I worked directly with an Albanian counterpart, and we co-taught, we co-taught English together in a high school.

Sydney Piwonka: That's awesome.

Kathryn Allred: Yeah.

Sydney Piwonka: And so, obviously, you had a lot of education background. But do you have any specific points, any specific moments of your past internships or jobs that helps you prepare for the Peace Corps, for being an Education Volunteer?

Kathryn Allred: Oh man. Well, definitely my experience as a teacher at Mary Persons was probably the most directly valuable, but I do think my, my internships, you know with Praying Pelican and I had worked just directly before Peace Corps with another organization in Haiti, helped, helped me really be prepared for the immersion piece and the, the, you know, the cultural kind of, I guess culture shock piece of all of it. I had been in and out of the states so often and had for, for long periods of time, you know. And so, I think there were a lot of people who hadn't done that yet in my cohort, and so I think that transition was a little bit more difficult for them. But I was really able to kind of transition pretty smoothly, I would say into my role in the Peace Corps simply because I had been exposed to other cultures so frequently before joining the Peace Corps.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah. And do you have any final advice for students who may be interested in joining the Peace Corps or a similar organization, to the Peace Corps?

Kathryn Allred: Yeah, absolutely. I think the, the biggest thing I would say is find someone who's done it, especially if you're interested in the Peace Corps. Any Returned Peace Corps volunteer would love to share their story. This is one of the most inclusive, accepting group of people that I've ever been a part of. And any one of us would be more than happy to share about our experiences one on one. You can find us on LinkedIn, its listed. And country, if you have a specific country in mind, you can probably even search that way. Just, yeah. Just talk to people that would be my advice for Peace Corps, and really anywhere else that does immersion type stuff like that, because it is going to be a super varied experience. My experience was incredible and very positive with Peace Corps, but that's definitely not everybody's experience. So, I would search out for, you know, a specific country or a specific region. That would be my first stop, if you're interested in doing something like that.

Stephanie Jackson: I think that's great advice as someone who used to work with Peace Corps in the headquarters and think you for the great advice and great, good insight on what that Peace Corps process is like.

Kathryn Allred: Good.

Stephanie Jackson: So, coming full circle after being a Special Education teacher in the beginning of your career, now you have returned to Special Education as a teacher in the Wake County Public School

System. So, my questions are, what did you learn from your experiences? Are there any changes in your perspectives?

Kathryn Allred: Yes. Wow. Definitely yes. I was actually talking to my mom about this last night about how I feel like I'm coming to this, a very similar role with completely new eyes this go around.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: And I'm really, really grateful for that. I've been exposed to a lot more and varied cultures, than I had at the last time, you know, the last point, doing this. And I think I have grown in my ability to empathize with people. And that, you know, that helps, helps me not only with my colleagues but that helps me with my students, especially in a time when school is so weird y'all. Like

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: It is so weird in COVID land. And so, just to be able to be empathetic with 'Hey my internet's not working,' like, yeah. I get that. Or 'hey'

Stephanie Jackson: Or your wifi's out.

Kathryn Allred: Right. 'My wifi's out.' Or, or 'my mom had to go to work and I'm, I'm babysitting my little siblings' or whatever it is. I have a lot more grace and a lot more empathy for people and it's directly because of my experiences abroad, and my experiences here in the States, you know, living in a different region of the United States, even. Living in DC was eye-opening for me in a lot of ways. So, I'm really really grateful for all of the stops along the way. You know, we said at the beginning I've done a lot of different things. I'm sure to some employers that would look like I can't keep a job at this point. But I really and truly have taken something from every single one of my experiences, and I'm grateful for that.

Stephanie Jackson: So, you've also spoken a lot already about how your, both of your degrees your undergraduate degree, your graduate degree, and your minor have added capacity for you to serve in all of these various roles. So, I just have a general question about for students who might be interested in the education field, generally speaking, what advice that you have for them as they're considering that?

Kathryn Allred: I would say one of the first things is to kind of know the landscape. So, if you're interested in education, being a teacher is an awesome pathway, but it's definitely not the only pathway.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: You know, working internationally is always an option. Working at the state or even local level is an option if you're interested in more of the policy kind of things. And they're all different kinds of teachers too, you know. I'm a public-school teacher. I was publicly educated, my entire you know, tenure, educational tenure.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: But they're incredible, really innovative types of schools all around the United States and around the world, so you may be someone who wants to work at a charter school and teach. Or you maybe want to go private, you know. There are all different kinds of pedagogies, to try. There's one where you, you work with young children and they explore learning on their own, so it's way less

structure than a typical classroom environment, and you encourage students in their own pathways to learning.

Stephanie Jackson: Sounds like Montessori Schools.

Kathryn Allred: Thank you. Thank you. That's exactly what I was trying to think of.

Stephanie Jackson: Good.

Kathryn Allred: It was not coming to my brain.

Stephanie Jackson: Yeah.

Kathryn Allred: But yeah, so I would, I would look at the landscape. See what you're really interested in. If you're interested in education policy and want to go to grad school, that is not, you know, that's not a bad thing to do. There are tons of really good education policy schools. So, ask questions. Talk to a teacher. Talk to someone who works for your local government. Maybe talk to somebody on your school board, and find out what kind of jobs are available, because it's not all standing at the front of the classroom and teaching English. So.

Sydney Piwonka: Yeah, that's great advice. Definitely super, super important to, to think of education field, not specifically as one set type of teacher but you can definitely be involved in many

Kathryn Allred: For sure. Yeah.

Sydney Piwonka: Different areas. And so, one last question to tie all of this, our entire conversation back to our original

Kathryn Allred: Sure.

Sydney Piwonka: Question. So, what advice, overall, do you have for students who may be thinking about pursuing a minor in a STEM field or a subject that is STEM-related?

Kathryn Allred: I would say, you will not regret it. You will not regret, especially at Georgia Tech, you will not regret it. It will give you vocabulary and language to talk to an incredible variety of people. It will help you develop skills, and especially critical thinking skills that you don't necessarily develop in a straight INTA classroom, because you're looking at things through different lenses. You're looking at things from a different perspective than you naturally would. And those classes really teach you how to think that way. And when you're presented with a real-life issue or obstacle or problem, you're going to want to have those skills to be able to see that problem from all sides before you start to try to solve it. And I definitely think my classes at Tech especially in the Women, Science, and Technology Minor helped me develop those skills.

Stephanie Jackson: Well, that sounds wonderful. We want to thank you for joining us today, Kathryn. This has really been an insightful conversation about the path that you've taken with your degrees in International Affairs and your Minor in Women, Science, and Technology. So, we hope that you're staying safe and healthy in this pandemic time and we are certainly excited to hear about your future successes

Kathryn Allred: Yes.

Stephanie Jackson: To come.

Kathryn Allred: Thank you both so much. I appreciate your time.

Sydney Piwonka: Thank you. Thank you for joining us.

OUTRO

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