

My desire to help others stems from my own childhood experiences. For over four years during my pre-teens, I suffered greatly after my mother and father divorced, stepping up to be a parent to my three younger sisters because of my mother's drug and gambling habits. After years of temporary living arrangements in motels and strangers houses, my siblings and I were finally placed in foster care until my father was able to gain custody. The helplessness I felt during these years is the driving force behind my everyday motivation to help others, as well as to achieve my own goals.

During my undergraduate years, I explored many professional possibilities, always with the idea to find a challenging career with a public service aspect. As the first in my family to attend a four-year university, I took liberty in exploring wide-ranging options. I studied requisite courses and career path trajectories and was also involved in related extracurricular activities. At one point, I aspired to be a psychologist and worked in a psych lab, and at another I explored the work of health care professionals by volunteering at a free clinic. I also participated in a finance and investment club at my university to understand the business world. These few examples of my explorations during university were always motivated by one central theme, how can I give back? When I began my study of public policy, my various investigations started to come together. The interdisciplinary nature of policy intrigues me intellectually and is also congruent with my undergraduate promise to be of benefit to others.

One of my most important experiences as an undergraduate was my work as a peer-advising counselor for the UC Davis Educational Opportunity Program. In this position, I worked passionately to create a climate of academic and personal success with more than 400 students from many diverse backgrounds. Students involved in this program included transfer students, underrepresented minorities, LGBT students, former foster youth, and first generation college students. As a result, my work was multi-faceted. On some occasions I advised students on their academic plans or counseled them about their personal troubles. At other times, I was more of a leader in the community as I worked with new students who were transitioning to the university. My extensive knowledge of university resources allowed me to refer students to those that might be of help. My main goal involved helping students in need, but in turn, I learned an enormous amount about the cultural and social issues that face various different ethnic groups, and the incredible variety of perceptions and understandings that exist. This brought a heightened sensitivity to my work with all students as I began to see the commonalities among people as well as the distinct issues and problems with which they were concerned.

After my undergraduate studies at UC Davis, I became a math instructor in a low-income neighborhood and then decided to become a language teacher in Japan. I wanted to broaden my long-term career horizons and also to grow as a human being. In a globalizing world, it is advantageous to travel in order to adopt a broad worldview that is beneficial in the classroom, my chosen career field, and as a global citizen. Novel work settings and difficult communication barriers both domestically and internationally have also contributed to my development, helping me to adapt to different environments within both professional and informal settings. Living abroad has benefited me in these ways as well as brought more intangible growth, and my energy is now focused on returning to the area of public policy as a confident, adaptable leader eager to serve the public good. I realize my passion lies with helping students and children in the United

States with whom I share a similar background. I want to ensure that they achieve the opportunities and success that I have been fortunate to receive.

My passion for serving the public good grew out of my foster care experience and developed at the university when I came to understand the barriers faced by others. In foster care, a sense of helplessness and a lack of resources directly influenced my predilection to help others and provide resources to those in need. My work experiences have increased my sensitivity to such issues and allowed me to demonstrate my leadership ability. It is for these reasons that I pursue a life-long career of serving the public good and seek admission into the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley.