

## **Where Are They Now? UF Russian Studies Alumni Profile**

**Alumna:** *Isabelle Solomon (class of '12)*

**Concentration(s) at UF:** *Russian Studies & Psychology*

**Current occupation:** *Management and Program Analyst at the Department of Justice*

**Looking back, what aspects of your UF Russian studies proved particularly useful?**

*Having a combination of native and non-native Russian professors was very beneficial because it made for a more well-rounded study of the language and culture. The more immersion-based language classes, as well as having the opportunity to study abroad and join clubs such as the Russian Conversation Club, also helped solidify my understanding of and comfort in using Russian. Finally, studying the language in conjunction with Russia's culture, history, literature, and so forth allowed me to feel more connected to the language and in turn fueled my motivation to continue learning.*

**With regard to your pursuit of Russian at UF, is there anything you didn't take or get that would have been useful?** *I do wish I had taken Dr. Gorham's media classes – and I'm not trying to curry any favor here! I got very caught up in pre-Soviet and Soviet Russia and did not focus too much on modern Russia in undergrad, and I wish I had taken my studies that much further.*

**What did you do after you graduated? How, if at all, did your UF Russian studies inform or influence these activities?** *I went on to get my master's degree immediately after graduating from UF. I ultimately decided to continue with Russian instead of psychology and enrolled in the Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian (REECA) regional studies program at Harvard University. My time at UF very much influenced my decision to join the REECA program for two reasons. First, the array of backgrounds, interests, and expertise amongst the professors at UF showed me that Russian studies has a virtually endless list of research possibilities, and I always liked that flexibility. Second, once you're part of the Russia "family," it's hard to move on. Thanks to UF, I was able to build empathy for a culture outside of my own, and I knew I had to continue studying Russian.*

**Are you still using your Russian?** *Not in my regular job, but DOJ has a lot of great language incentive programs to help employees continue to study and use their language of choice. It's hard to not take advantage of such opportunities!*

**What advice might you have for Russian studies students considering Russian as a major?** *Make sure you're ready for the commitment! Russian isn't a language you can learn casually without interest or passion for two years and expect to retain anything – if you take the leap, you have to be ready to swim. (IT IS TOTALLY WORTH IT.)*

**What advice might you have for Russian studies students on the verge of graduation?** *Three things. 1) Keep up with your Russian over the summer! 2) Don't be afraid to reach out to professors, classmates, or alumni if you need advice – they will be your best allies. 3) Whether you're going on to graduate school or straight into work, stay positive. Graduate school is tough, and your first real career will be initially hard to adjust to, but you can do it. If you can graduate with a major in Russian from a great university, you can do anything!*

**In a sentence or two, reflect on your experiences studying Russian at UF and its impact on you personally and/or professionally.** *On a scholarly level, I learned so much from the wonderful professors and students in this program, and it gave me the confidence and passion I needed to continue my Russian studies in graduate school. On a personal level, I met some of my best friends and mentors at UF, and I wouldn't trade that for anything.*

**If their interests or trajectories correspond to yours, would you be willing to help individual students with career, post-graduate, and/or networking questions?** *Certainly!*