

## ***Where Are They Now?***

### ***UF Russian Studies Alumni Profile***

**Alumnus:** David Pruden (class of '14)

**Concentration(s) at UF:** (major) Russian & International Studies; (minor) French & International Relations

**Current occupation:** I just started my two-year MA in Regional Studies, focusing on Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe, at Columbia University.

**Looking back, what aspects of your UF Russian studies proved particularly useful?** *All of the instructors in the UF Russian department are extremely knowledgeable, professional, and caring toward students. The comprehensive nature of the program's content courses (which cover Russian politics, economics, culture, history, and literature) in addition to all levels of Russian language allowed me to study Russia and Russian in an engaging, interdisciplinary fashion. Additionally, the UF Russian Studies Program has a reputation for its high quality; when I started studying at Columbia, my Russian language professor was happy to hear that I had originally studied Russian at UF!*

**With regard to your pursuit of Russian at UF, is there anything you didn't take or get that would have been useful?** *There was nothing insufficient at all about the UF Russian program.*

**What did you do after you graduated?** *I taught English and Math for 2 years in Kuwait.*

**Are you still using your Russian?** *Yes, I am still using my Russian, and I will continue to do so far into the future!*

**What advice might you have for Russian studies students considering Russian as a major?** *When I first started to study Russian language between my freshman and sophomore years of college, I thought I would only take a few courses. Immediately I fell in love with the language and culture, and I ended up changing my major to Russian. While I don't expect that everyone will have the same experience as I did, I would recommend that if you have any interest in the former Soviet Union, at least try to study Russian to begin to understand this complex and fascinating region. Just give it a try and see where the journey takes you.*

**What advice might you have for Russian studies students on the verge of graduation?**

*On the verge of graduation you are probably stressed, and you may not yet have a job ready for you, but I would highly recommend that you keep an open mind. About two months before graduation I was offered a teaching job in the Middle East, and I took it even though it didn't directly relate to my undergraduate major. After taking two gap years, now I am able to return to studying the former Soviet Union further.*

**In a sentence or two, reflect on your experiences studying Russian at UF and its impact on you personally and/or professionally.**

*Studying Russian at UF opened up several doors for me. For example, I was able to get funding to study abroad in Nizhnii Novgorod, Russia for 5 weeks during summer 2013. Additionally, I was able to write my undergraduate thesis under the supervision of Dr. Ingrid Kleespies of the UF Russian department. Both of these experiences helped to broaden my cultural horizons and deepen my academic study, which enabled me to grow both personally and professionally.*

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