

*Never stop learning. Improve every day*



## **Daren McCurdy**

**College: Social Sciences and Public Policy**

**Program: International Affairs**

**Degree: Master's**

### **Why you are pursuing a graduate degree in your discipline**

When I taught English in Seoul, South Korea, I was astonished by the generosity and kindness of the people I met. Total strangers would oftentimes go out of their way to make my day better, even though I could hardly speak their language. One of the more memorable experiences I had there was during a long and arduous hike to one of the many Seoul mountains when an older Korean man offered to share his lunch with me. It was people like him who made me want to pursue a degree in [international affairs](#). I wanted to bridge borders between people and countries to make the world a better place to live for everybody.

### **Importance of research**

Most of my IA research focused on North/South Korean relations, which is obviously of major importance in the current world. Trying to create peace between the two countries is becoming increasingly important as North Korea continues to develop its nuclear program. I'm also interested in North Korean defectors and trying to help them transition to a world that is completely different from everything they know and understand in North Korea. This work will be especially important if North and South Korea ever reunify.

### **Career aspirations**

This is a question that I cannot definitively answer. I have been aiming to become a foreign service officer, but it is quite a difficult position to obtain. Because of this, my options are currently open. I have found that I have been most successful in my life when I keep my options open and go with the flow, which is what I'm currently doing.

### **Major accomplishments during academic career**

The [Critical Language Scholarship](#) is an intense language study that has really helped bolster my graduate degree. International affairs majors must have a strong background in foreign languages, and since the CLS Program teaches students one year of a language in only two months, it has been great help toward improving my Korean.

My friend and I manage the startup organization [Unhoused Humanity](#) that was founded last year to house individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Since starting the organization, we have housed more than ninety people. While it's not directly related to my degree, bridging the gap between people and helping others is the main reason that I decided to pursue my degree, and I am glad that I have been able to achieve that in some manner over the past year.