Advancing Space Policy

Working at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), I interact regularly with both the elected political leadership of the nation and the country’s best technical and scientific minds, and I work to communicate effectively with both groups. Space policy is a constantly evolving field, and understanding the intricacies of space policy—from both a public policy and a technological perspective—is vital to success in this field.

Tell us about what you studied at the Elliott School and what your job currently entails at NASA.

At the Elliott School, I earned my master’s degree in science and technology and public policy, with a focus on space policy. My coursework complemented and enhanced the work that I already had been doing in the public and non-profit sectors. While my early career was geared more towards public policy, working with Senator John Glenn piqued my interest in space and set me on my current path. At the Elliott School, I was able to combine my interests in space and policy and tailor my graduate study to suit my career goals.

As the Deputy Administrator at NASA, I am involved in a wide range of activities, from overseeing our functional offices to working closely with NASA’s Administrator to set the organization’s policy agenda. I represent NASA and its mission to the public as well as to other governmental entities—from Congress to the White House—and my job requires a daily balance between technical knowledge and public policy expertise.

How did your Elliott School education help you achieve your career goals?

The Elliott School provided me with the educational foundation for my career. The program actually had more to do with setting my professional trajectory than even the goals I had set for myself. I was able to combine my interests in public policy and space and to study with some of the leading experts in these two fields. In addition, the program allows for a strong mix of theoretical and practical work and gives students the opportunity to apply theory to the real-world issues that they will likely face after graduation. The Elliott School’s Space Policy Institute is an invaluable resource for anyone who is considering a career in this field and is a tremendous asset for the space community.

What do you think sets the Elliott School apart from other international affairs programs?

The Elliott School combines a solid academic experience with the ability to simultaneously gain practical experience at some of the world’s leading foreign policy institutions. Elliott School faculty are among the leaders in their fields, and the school’s unique location in Foggy Bottom gives students the opportunity to work or intern in any area of international affairs—from government to non-profit to private sector organizations. Studying international affairs in the heart of Washington, DC provides an invaluable dimension to this field. This gave me the ability to see first-hand how the critical issues that we were examining from an academic perspective were being addressed in the international policy community.