

Alumni Survey: The Competitive Advantage of SAIS Graduates



Prepared by the 2015 Dean's Fellows

Sean Griffin
Nicola Hil
Alida Uwera

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SCHOOL *of* ADVANCED
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Alumni Survey: The Competitive Advantage of SAIS Graduates

The Survey

For their leadership project, the 2015 Dean's Fellows created and distributed an online survey with the goal of gaining insight into how recent alumni present and leverage their SAIS experience when competing in the job market. To help current students maximize their time at SAIS and prepare for life after graduation, the fellows created profiles of seven sectors detailing the experiences of SAIS alumni and highlighting the skills employers look for in SAIS candidates.

Profiles were developed for the following career fields:

- Consulting
- Energy
- Finance
- Multilateral
- Nonprofit
- Think Tank
- U.S. Government

Data

The survey¹ was sent by email to all graduates from 2010 to 2014 and resulted in a total of 139 responses. Information garnered from the survey and utilized in the profiles includes sectors of employment before SAIS, recommended skills and courses, strategies for securing a job after graduation, and recommendations on how to market the SAIS degree.

To complete the industry profiles, responses were combined with data from Career Services' annual *Graduate Employment Survey*, including information on employers, salaries, and SAIS concentrations of graduates in each industry. The sectors in the *Graduate Employment Survey* were aligned with the seven fields above by individually categorizing the employer of each respondent.

Profiles

Profiles for each sector combine qualitative and quantitative data from the two surveys to allow current students to gain a better understanding of the steps they can take to be competitive applicants in the job market. All data, quotes, and suggestions are drawn from the surveys.

¹ Questions from the full survey can be found in Appendix A.

Career Services Advice

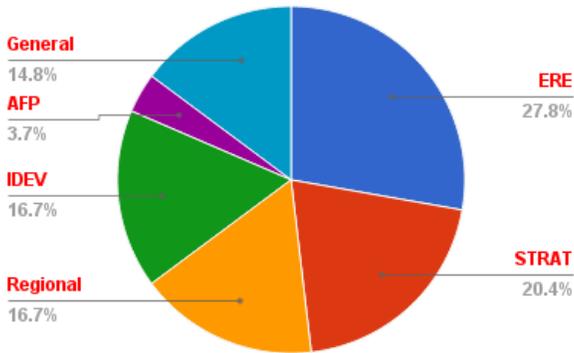
To complement the information received through the alumni surveys, SAIS Career Services also offers the following recommendations:

- Make sure that you ***know which employers are on campus*** each week so that you do not miss an opportunity to meet with them (consult the weekly email).
- ***Always have an updated resume in the SAIS format*** as your default resume in SAISWorks as opportunities pop up every day and you may have to apply immediately and/or your resume may be included in a resume book for employers.
- At least once every semester, take a step back and ***update your professional development plan*** (target employers/jobs, networking outreach goals, etc.) based on interests, new developments based on a better knowledge of an industry/sector, etc. Be flexible and ready to reorient your search based on initial results.
- ***Identify your areas for improvement*** (resume, cover letter, pitch, interviews, salary negotiation), and practice, practice, practice. Do not wait until your last months at SAIS to practice for interviews if you know you need to improve.
- ***Don't follow the 'flavors of the month.'*** You should not focus on industries/sectors/organizations just because 'everyone is doing it' (e.g. banking/consulting in Sept/Oct) unless you have a reasonable interest in these paths.
- ***Set up effective job alerts*** in SAISWorks, LinkedIn, or any relevant job boards based on your interests so that you don't spend long frustrating hours scrolling through hundreds of irrelevant opportunities.
- If you need any help or are in doubt, ***ask Career Services***, we are here to help!



CONSULTING SECTOR

SAIS CONCENTRATION



97% of the 60 respondents going into consulting got **full-time** positions. **Employers** range from **big names** : McKinsey, Booz Allen Hamilton, BCG, FSG to **less known firms**: Spitzberg Partners, Wittenberg Weiner Consulting, Sense Corp.

Median Salary (full-time): **\$87,500**.

Typical position: Associate, Associate Consultant and Consultant .

Sectors before SAIS: Varied, including— government, legal, think tanks, consulting, finance, undergrad studies etc.

Recommended Skills

- Writing skills, writing skills, writing skills!
- Analytical skills
- Research
- Communication
- Presentation
- Foreign language

Recommended Courses

- Range of different classes to reinforce recommended skills
- "Corporate Finance"
- Economics courses
- Strategy courses: Business, Defense
- Political economy courses

Career Strategy

Start Early!

Start networking early. Reach out to alums in the area early and often. Start your job search now because the institution's name won't carry you far when interviewing with non-alums. Connect with alums — not just recent alums, but those in executive positions.

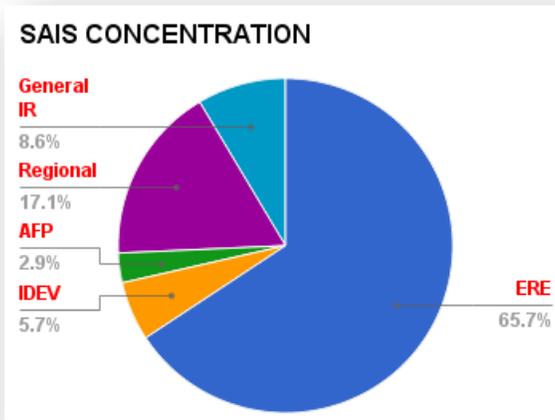
Do the math before you attend. Align your career goals to your financial responsibilities when you leave (not everyone can graduate from a program like SAIS that carries a significant financial burden, then go make \$25k a year doing development work in Africa--this needs to be considered soberly while class and career search decisions are made). - SAISer, American Foreign Policy, 2011

Develop a vision for what you want to do after SAIS as early as possible. It can change over time but a person without a vision is less compelling. And to develop something more specific than "political risk" or "development" or "work at the World Bank." What change do you want to contribute in the world, and what path do you imagine would get you there? Then, do informational interviews as much as possible while still a SAIS student -- start your first year, don't wait until you graduate. - Daniel Kornfield, Latin American Studies, 2012





ENERGY SECTOR



97% of the 36 respondents working in the **energy sector** were hired for **full-time** positions in the private sector. **Employers** varied including IHS Energy Insight, Dept. of Energy, Google, PWC, EleQtra, PFC Energy, GE Energy Financial Services and OCI Chemical.

Median Salary (full-time): **\$62,500.**

Typical position: Analyst, Associate, Associate Analyst, Associate Analyst, Associate Consultant, Business Analyst and Business Strategist.

Sectors before SAIS: Varied, including - government, energy, think tanks, consulting, multilateral, nonprofit etc.

Recommended Skills

- Spreadsheet/financial modeling
- Writing skills
- Research
- Industry knowledge
- Quantitative analysis

Recommended Courses

- "Global Electricity Markets"
- "Corporate Finance"
- "Project Finance"
- International Energy and Environment Practicum
- Quantitative economics classes (e.g. Stats, Econometrics)

Career Strategy

Leverage your SAIS alumni network.

Identify your target company or industry, then find SAIS alumni working there through LinkedIn or Career Services. Informational Interviews will help far more than a SAISworks posting in helping you land a job.

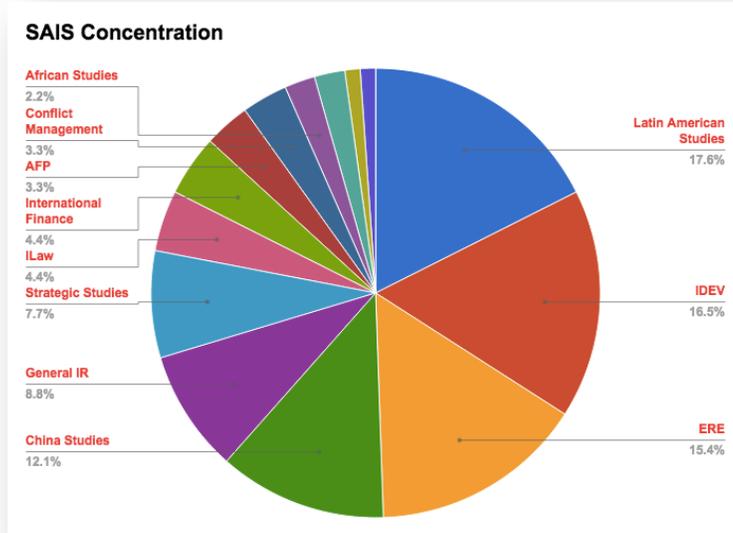
I feel that SAIS sometimes struggles between being an academic institution (e.g. with an emphasis on theory) and a professional institution (e.g. with more practical classes). Unless one is considering getting a PhD, I find it much more useful to focus on the "professional" side of SAIS- including career clubs, classes that are directly applicable, and practicums. - Susan K Harcourt, Energy, Resources and Environment, 2010



SAIS is far more academically rigorous than an MBA program, and requires far more creativity and critical analysis than a JD program. Emphasize the fact that you have analyzed current issues facing your target industry at a very sophisticated level. Emphasize your experience in internships and practicum courses that you have (hopefully) completed during your course of study. - SAISer, Energy, Resources and Environment, 2012



FINANCE SECTOR



Of the 91 respondents working in the finance sector, over 20% of respondents work for **JP Morgan Chase**, and 10% were with **Goldman Sachs**. In addition, SAIS graduates found employment at a **wide range of companies**, including well known names like Citigroup, Morgan Stanley, and Moodys, and lesser known firms like Microvest Capital Management, Calyon Credit Agricole CIB, and Cartica Capital.

Median Salary (full-time): **\$75,000**

Sectors before SAIS: Finance, Non-Profit, US Government

Recommended Skills

- Finance and economics knowledge
- Research
- Writing
- Financial modeling
- Interpersonal skills

Recommended Courses

- "Corporate Finance"
- "Monetary Theory" and other econ courses
- "International Financial Markets/Institutions"
- "Project Finance"

Career Strategy

Utilize all resources available, including Career Services, SAISworks, and your own personal network. Jobs can sometimes be secured through on-campus recruiters or by converting a summer internship into a full-time position.



"SAIS students should market their ability to take large amounts of data (whether geopolitical, regional, economic, other) and synthesize them into key issues, action points, takeaways."
John Ulrich, Energy, Resources and Environment 2012

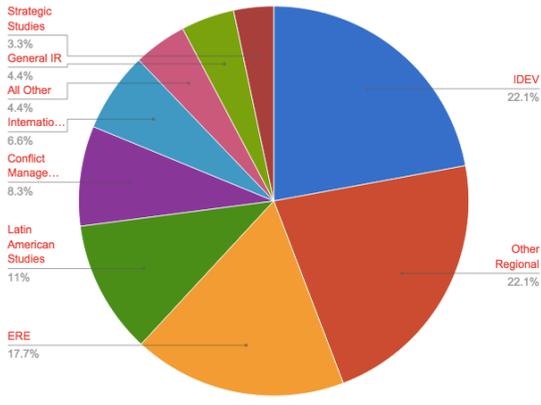
"MBA programs are set up to facilitate large-scale, organized on-campus recruitment programs by investment banks, consulting firms, etc. SAIS students tend to pursue a much broader range of career tracks, so SAIS would have more difficulty in getting the critical mass of students necessary to attract large-scale on-campus recruitment. The great advantage of SAIS over a number of MBA programs is that its location and reputation in the heart of DC provide the ideal footing for students to learn to network for professional success. They graduate with a political savvy and a self-sufficiency that serve them well for years to come."
SAISer, International Development, 2011

"I presented my SAIS experience as a comprehensive education that not only taught me a lot of skills and provided me with a lot of knowledge, but also taught me how to learn quickly, work in an international environment and work with other highly achieving people."
Trevor Clark, Asian Studies 2013



MULTILATERALS

SAIS CONCENTRATION



Of the **181** respondents who reported starting work at a multilateral after graduation, **46%** found a full-time position and **44%** found a temporary contract position, while the remaining **10%** found internships or returned to a prior place of employment. The high number of temporary contract positions reflects the high number of consultancies at multilateral organizations.

Employers: 77 (42.5%) of respondents went to work at the World Bank, **18 (10%)** at the International Monetary Fund, **15 (8%)** at the Inter-American Development Bank, and **15 (8%)** at the United Nations, the remainder went to work for varied multilateral organizations around the world.

Sectors before SAIS are varied:
Consulting, Government, International NGOs, Multilaterals, Peace Corps, Finance, Think Tanks

Median Salary (full-time): **\$57,500**

Median Salary (temporary contract): **\$42,000***

*Contains total amount paid for contract term, not always calculated annually

Recommended Skills

- Writing & research
- Economic & econometric analysis
- Proficiency in STATA and Excel
- Understanding of international financial markets
- Ability to work well in teams

Recommended Courses

- International economics
- Excel skills courses
- "Econometrics" & "Applied Econometrics"
- "Developing Hard and Soft Infrastructure through PPP's"

Career Strategy

Leverage SAIS Professors
Alumni suggest leveraging SAIS professors in particular and the importance of emphasizing any prior work experience related to the position. SAISWorks is a good source of information for potential positions, but networking is crucial.



*As my international law professor taught me, JDs know "what" to do but SAIS'ers know "why" to do it... and that critical thinking is something that SAIS helps to develop - **Maia Daniels, General Intl. Relations, 2011***

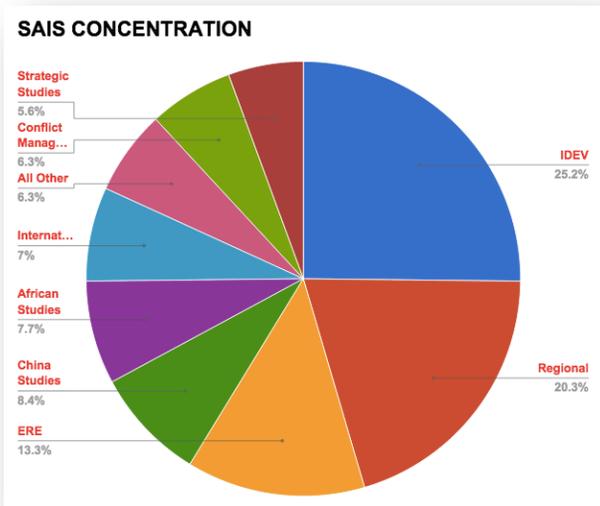
*Position the degree as a technical degree, so emphasize your economics courses - **Adedayo Bolaji-Adio, African Studies, 2010***



*"Take marketable courses. Edit at least one paper to use as a 2-5 page writing sample. Attend small talks on campus and talk to the speaker." - **SAISer, Asian Studies, 2011***



NONPROFIT SECTOR



143 respondents moved into a variety of nonprofit positions at varying career levels including: research assistant, program officer, analyst, consultant, communications officer, and director roles.

Nonprofit **employers** are varied and include direct service providers, impact investors, and nonprofit industry associations including the American Chamber of Commerce. Common employers include: Catholic Relief Services, Acción, PACT, and FINCA.

Median Salary (full-time): \$54,200

Sectors before SAIS: Nonprofit, Government, Peace Corps, Private Sector, Education

Recommended Skills

- Analytical research and writing
- Strategy & problem-solving
- Relationship building & facilitation skills
- Oral communication & presentation skills

Recommended Courses

- Economic development courses
- Practical topics in development (research methods, management, monitoring & evaluation)
- Regional courses with case studies

Career Strategy

Leverage contacts & online resources

Alumni suggest leveraging personal contacts and previous jobs when networking. Organization websites and job boards are useful sources for open positions and information.



"If you have a feeling that you might be interested in a different career path than what you originally planned when entering SAIS, don't be afraid to delve into researching the field early in your time at SAIS... Don't hesitate to take courses outside your concentration that you feel would build your skill set for this type of career change." - **Lisa Ferguson, Asian Studies, 2014**

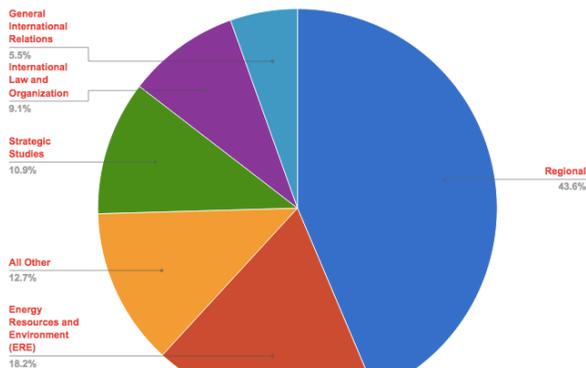
Manage expectations. Do not stress out too much about finding the dream job as soon as you graduate, because that is the rare scenario. Be flexible and willing to experiment until you find the job you want. Also, what you know, who you are and what you can do matters more than the SAIS brand." - **Aichida Ul-Aflaha, Asian Studies, 2014**





THINK TANKS

SAIS CONCENTRATION



Of the **55** respondents working at think tanks, the majority (**62%**) secured a full-time position within 6 months of graduation. Alumni emphasize doing an internship as a key way to move into a full-time position. **Employers** are varied, but companies that appear multiple times include: The Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), RAND Corporation, The Brookings Institute

Median Salary (full-time): **\$53,000**

Sectors before SAIS: Government, Law, Think Tanks

Recommended Skills

- Policy analysis and corresponding policy writing skills
- Analytical thinking and research
- Subject matter expertise

Recommended Courses

- Strategic decision-making and risk analysis courses
- “Art of Strategic Decision”
- “Net Assessment”
- “Research Methods”

Career Strategy

Internship Experience is Key
Alumni suggest completing internships at think tanks of interest and then leveraging internship contacts to transition to employment. SAISWorks is a useful resource for finding opportunities. Make sure to provide recommendations from professors at the interview.



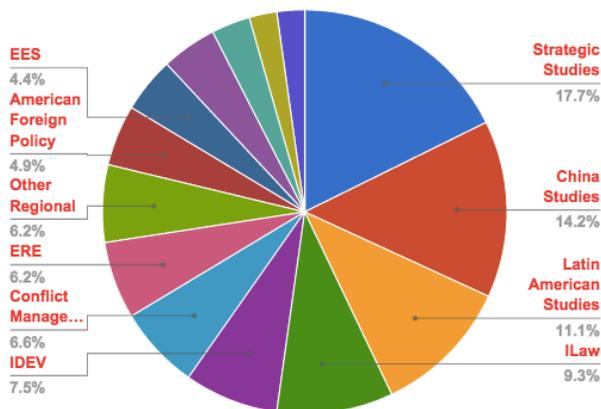
Just realize what a pivotal time SAIS will be for your career. There are so many ways one can use a SAIS degree that it is important to remain focused on your specific career goals when deciding your course of study and when planning your extracurricular life -
Phillip T. Lohaus, Strategic Studies, 2014

SAIS graduates have a deep familiarity with the international system and the strategic issues that animate today's job market. The mix of courses in economics and the student's academic concentration provide the kind of background that employers in international policy require, which simply cannot be replicated by obtaining an MBA/JD-
Paul Schwartz, Strategic Studies, 2012



U.S. GOVERNMENT

SAIS Concentration



Of the 227 respondents working in government, over 30% of respondents were employed in the U.S. Department of State. The Federal Reserve, including the Board of Governors and regional banks was second, employing 18%. Other common employers include Commerce, Treasury, CIA, USAID, DOD, DIA, and DOE. Over 93% received full-time positions.

Median Salary (full-time): \$60,353

Sectors before SAIS: US Government, Consulting, Non-Profit, and others including Think Tanks, Journalism, Finance, and previous academic study

Recommended Skills

- Writing
- Critical thinking/analysis
- Research
- Interpersonal skills
- Communication/presentation

Recommended Courses

- Regional/topical courses
- Energy courses
- "International Trade Theory" and other econ courses
- "Econometrics"
- "Theories of IR"

Career Strategy

Career Services is noted as being helpful in preparing for the U.S. Department of State and PMF. Use alumni networking to become informed and prepare for job interviews. In addition to SAISworks, leverage your personal network, including classmates and professors.

"While interviewing SAIS students, I have heard the same line every time: "SAIS graduates have a unique combination of qualitative and quantitative skills." That's very true, but to compete in the job market, SAIS grads have to go further. They need to be specific about the interesting work they are doing and demonstrate that they have and use both skills. "
Alissa Tafti, Global Theory & History, 2013

"Being competitive comes from having a variety of work experience, knowledge, specific expertise, and flexibility to morph into the job offered while being proactive enough to take that job and improve. The SAIS experience is a part of that-focusing on the economics skills that compliment the area studies was a good competitive edge for me."
Heather Kaufman, European and Eurasian Studies, 2010



Appendix A: The Survey

I. Personal Information

1. Name: _____
2. Current Employer: _____
3. Graduation Year: select 2010-2014
4. SAIS Concentration:
 - American Foreign Policy
 - General International Relations
 - Conflict Management
 - Global Theory and History
 - International Law and Organization
 - Energy, Resources and Environment
 - Strategic Studies
 - International Development
 - African Studies
 - Asian Studies
 - Canadian Studies
 - European and Eurasian Studies
 - Latin American Studies
 - Middle East Studies
 - Russian and Eurasian Studies
5. Years of full-time work experience prior to SAIS: select 0 - 10+
6. SAIS Campus(es) (select all that apply)
 - Washington, DC
 - SAIS Europe at Bologna
 - The Hopkins Nanjing Center

II. Field/Industry

1. Select your current field/industry:
 - Consulting
 - Energy Sector
 - Multilateral
 - Nonprofit
 - Social Impact/Consumer Social Responsibility
 - Think Tank
 - U.S. Government
 - Other: _____

2. Select your field/industry prior to SAIS:

- Consulting
- Energy Sector
- Multilateral
- Nonprofit
- Social Impact/Consumer Social Responsibility
- Think Tank
- U.S. Government
- Other: _____

III. Courses and Skills

1. What 1-3 SAIS courses have you found most useful at your current job and/or for securing your current job?
2. What key skills or professional traits does your current employer require or look for in candidates? (e.g. financial modeling, writing skills, research, etc.)

IV. Job Market Competitiveness

1. How did you find your first job after SAIS? What sources/strategies did you find to be most useful?
2. In the job market, what makes a SAIS student competitive? How do/would you present your SAIS experience in an interview?
3. When competing for the same position in the job market, what do SAIS graduates offer that MBA/JD graduates do not?

V. Additional Comments

1. Please provide any additional information you think would be useful for current SAIS students. e.g. What would you have done differently at SAIS knowing what you know now?
2. Would you be available for follow-up questions or a brief interview? If yes, please provide your email.