DAWN ORTIZ-LEGG B’08 is a self-described advocate for smart business growth and environmental balance. A second-generation Mexican-American, she is a fourth-generation small-business owner, working as a community affairs and construction liaison for renewable energy companies. In 2016 Dawn ran for public office, bringing renewable energy to the forefront of her campaign to represent California’s 35th district in the State Assembly. Originally from a small town outside Chicago, Ortiz-Legg has lived on California’s central coast for 24 years, contributing to the development of utility-scale solar power projects, including one of the world’s largest: Topaz Solar Farms.

Energy and technology were focus areas for Ortiz-Legg at SAIS, where she earned her Master of International Public Policy degree. She spent a year at SAIS Europe in Bologna with her daughter, Georgia, then 12. She remembers the Johns Hopkins SAIS experience as a formative one, laying the foundation for her work on clean energy infrastructure projects and her interest in public service.

“My philosophy is that when people have economic opportunity, they are happier and more productive. I feel the majority of people just want to do good work and contribute to society,” Ortiz-Legg says. “At SAIS I was exposed to the international challenges of balancing economic development with environmental protection and quality of life.

“It is now my turn to put this into practice at home,” she adds.