

Matt Contursi:

It's been now 5 years now since I've graduated from SPA. When I graduated, we were a class of 47 and had been one of the last few classes to remember being in that now seemingly small building on Tierra Buena. Since then, I've taken a less traditional trajectory. I entered college as an electrical engineer and subsequently (and quickly) left engineering to study genetics and Biotechnology - engineering wasn't really my fit for many reasons; primary reason being I wanted to know more than what the curriculum offered. While studying genetics, I added a second major, English Rhetorics and Literacies, because I wanted to round out my education. Either because of my own desire to have a more comprehensive education and love of learning or an instilled desire to know more, I then struggled with the workload for 2 majors for an unplanned 9 semesters.

Four graduate school acceptance letters, two completed bachelors magna cum laude, and one incomplete senior thesis later, I now am studying Science and Technology Policy (SciTech). Thematic to the story, I wanted to study SciTech policy to figure out why antivaxers!?! What was it about our time now that was causing people to distrust institutions and what was wrong with our communication of science?

Now I'm stuck in the thick of things larger than what I had planned. Currently, my projects are based in security in space and how concepts of biosecurity play out in that context, I'm helping establish a first of its kind policy clinic at ASU, I'm planning projects over emergent policy issues with state legislators, and I'm maintaining my own projects in Science Communication.

Point is, I'm not writing to brag and show off what I've done since leaving high school, in fact I have things to not brag about as well, but what has been consistent in just a short 5 years is that things change, and quickly so. Where SPA helped me was giving me tools to be adaptable. I believe my love to learn is natural to me, but the skills SPA taught me were not. Those skills are what gave me the confidence to switch and work in fields I hadn't planned on, from engineering to Biotech and Rhetorics to Space Policy and Science Communication. There is a lot anyone can gain from an SPA education, but what I find most valuable is the adaptability of the tools I gained at SPA.

