

Education

Matt Mulder, '05: After graduating in 2005, my wife and I spent six months in rural western Kenya volunteering with the Ugunja Community Resource Center. UCRC is an indigenous non-governmental organization that has established, among other things, a technical school and a health center. After returning to the US, we and a few other friends established Common Hope for Health, a non-profit organization aimed at building the capacity and effectiveness of the health center in Ugunja. We hope to work with other similar grassroots health organizations in the future. The joys and tragedies of the community that we were a part of in Kenya will stay with us always.

Upon returning from Kenya, I began work at SquashBusters, an afterschool enrichment program serving Boston Public School students in Roxbury. I am working as the middle school education coordinator, now entering my second year in the job. It has been a great pleasure to work with a very diverse and enthusiastic group of students. I am reminded daily of just how valuable and unique each student is, and it is a challenge to try to find the right brand of encouragement for each one.

I count it as a great privilege to have spent my years at Harvard examining international development and domestic urban issues on a theoretical level. It has given me a valuable perspective on the larger forces at work behind these two projects about which I care so much.

William F. Austin, '00: I have had the great fortune and privilege to parlay my concentration in Government and undergraduate experiences into a career in the civil rights movement of this era: urban education reform. For over six years I have served as a math teacher, Enrichment Coordinator, and Summer School Director at Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, the highest performing urban middle school in Massachusetts. Co-founded by John King (College '96) and Evan Rudall (GSE '97), Roxbury Prep is one of a growing number of high-performing urban public schools working to eliminate the racial Achievement Gap and ensure that urban students of color have equal access to college.

Working in a high-performing charter school provides recent Harvard graduates with the unique opportunity to fulfill social and personal ambitions. Working at Roxbury Prep or other schools in the Uncommon Schools network ensures that you will be mentored, become an effective classroom teacher, and create change in students' lives; sadly, hard work in many schools and non-profit organizations often does not result in such successes. It is equally gratifying to know that your efforts are translated in real social goods, while you also have the opportunity to prove your effectiveness and quickly acquire leadership and management exposure and experience. Smaller, meritocratic, and transparent, schools like Roxbury Prep seek and develop personal talents for the benefit of the communities they serve.

For Government concentrators who are interested in having a direct, tangible impact on the challenges of American society, I strongly encourage you to pursue a career in public education. I remember considering the more traditional tracks of public policy, political organizations, and higher education, and coming to this field motivated by the transformative opportunities I had received from my education. If you are grateful for such opportunities and are driven to ensure that your fellow citizens have the same, join the movement to reform urban education.

Joseph Perez, '97: Within my government concentration at Harvard, I was able to tailor a course of study focusing on American government and history. Whatever space was left, I filled with classical and contemporary literature courses. Indeed, one of the aspects of the government concentration I have come to appreciate most was its relative flexibility with respect to course selections. In my senior year, I worked with Harvard's Overseas Schools Teaching (HOST) program, which helped me find a teaching position at an independent high school in San Juan , Puerto Rico . What began as an interesting travel adventure blossomed into a vocation, as I ended up teaching in Puerto Rico for five years. I have since moved to Los Angeles to pursue a doctorate in education at UCLA, and I am currently the principal of a newly established independent middle and high school. Between Puerto Rico and becoming principal, I worked on a variety of education-related projects with local non-profit organizations – many of them partnerships between public and private agencies. In the most notable of these projects, a specialized transition program for incarcerated juvenile offenders involving the collaboration of numerous community-based organizations and the Los Angeles Probation Department, my undergraduate training in government proved invaluable. And insofar as a school – any organization for that matter – can be a highly-charged political atmosphere, the perspective provided by my government coursework informs my decision-making on a daily basis.