



Ciera Richardson '17

Contract Specialist at the U.S. Department of Defense - Defense Logistics Agency

Major: Economics

Minor: International Development & Conflict Management

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ciera-richardson-46b006171>

What do you enjoy most about your current position?

I love being able to support the war-fighter. Although I am not at the front lines, my job still has a significant impact. I also love the work-life balance, the many benefits (tuition assistance, insurance, saving for retirement), and career advancement opportunities.

What is a typical day like in your position?

As a Contract Specialist, I am a buyer for the federal government. Our customers, who happen to be from any branch of the military as we support the troops, have the need for medical supplies. It is my responsibility to seek out companies who provide such items and negotiate them in the most cost effective manner, thus creating a contract. Further, I am currently a part of the PaCE Program, which is a two-year training program that allows me to gain experience and certification in my field to advance. Upon graduation from the program, I become full-performance.

How has your coursework helped you in your current position (i.e. quantitative skills, research techniques, communication skills)?

As an Economics major, my current position and areas of study were directly related. Economics focuses on analyzing how and why people make choices. It involves studying data and trends, which turns into writing research reports and synopses on the findings. My current position focuses on buying goods and services. Therefore, I am required to perform market research by analyzing trends, supply sources, and pricing information. I am also required to know how to read for comprehension and write well. This is because contract clauses require

that acquisition personnel and contractors understand how to perform their jobs and what is expected to be delivered (the final product). If a contract problem arises, then one's problem solving skills come in to remedy the situation. The federal government wants great workmanship for the money that they spend.

Which undergraduate experiences (i.e. internships, on-campus leadership, living learning communities, faculty member, etc.) did you find most helpful in preparing you for your current position?

During my senior year, I became a [Federal Fellow](#) in the Homeland Security Policy concentration. The Federal Fellows Program combines a fall seminar course taught by industry experts with a spring internship in the DC metropolitan area. During the spring semester, I interned at the U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters in the Acquisition division, which helped me prepare for my future assignment at DLA.

Any job or internship advice for students seeking a position in your field?

Keep an eye out for opportunities on USAJobs.gov in the 1102 series. There are plenty of internship opportunities and full-time programs after graduation that open up year round to start in the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters.

Anything else you want to share with undergraduates?

Seek opportunities early in your sophomore and junior years so you can be prepared to search for full-time employment during your senior year.

"Seek opportunities early in your sophomore and junior years"