

Frank Caliva '04

International Trade Specialist | U.S. Department of Commerce , DC

Major: Political Science

Briefly describe your position, organization and industry.

I work as an energy analyst in the International Trade Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce. My job is to work with U.S. industries to strengthen their global competitiveness, by identifying market access and trade barriers overseas, and policy and regulatory barriers here at home.

Please specify your job responsibilities, including a typical day on the job.

I work with U.S. companies in the biofuels and energy efficiency technologies industries. Each day is different - I might field a call from a U.S. biodiesel producer with a question about exporting to Europe, or organize an industry roundtable on business and climate change. My job involves everything from writing briefing memos for senior U.S. government officials, to organizing trade missions for U.S. companies overseas; from speaking at industry conferences, to working with my colleagues in the U.S. government on developing new policies and regulations.

How did you break into your career field? What, if any, obstacles did you face?

During graduate school, I was selected as a Presidential Management Fellow, a program open to graduate students who are in their final year of school. The program fast-tracks committed, qualified individuals into public service positions with the federal government. I knew I wanted to be involved in government, but I also wanted to be able to work closely with U.S. companies. Working for the Department of Commerce allows me to fulfill both these objectives.

Indicate any previous experiences and how that led to your current position.

I interned for several think tanks and consulting firms which specialized in international trade and policy analysis. This background was very helpful in attaining my current position.

What does it take to succeed in your field? Please specify any important trends.

To succeed in government requires first a commitment to public service. Promotions and pay raises often don't come as fast as they do in the private sector, and it's not always easy to see tangible results from your work. A desire to serve the common good needs to be your primary motivation. More practically, solid writing and analytical skills are crucial. You will be asked to provide your superiors with clear, concise explanations of complex issues, along with analysis and recommendations - usually under very tight deadlines!

Alumni Career Snapshot



PROVIDENCE
COLLEGE

Get more career information and advice from PC alumni by participating in Career Services events throughout the year!

Frank Caliva '04

International Trade Specialist | U.S. Department of Commerce , DC

How can students prepare themselves while still in college?

To prepare for a career in public service, an internship with a government agency - local, state, or federal - is invaluable. It's a great way to get a feel for how government offices work as compared with the private sector. Courses in public policy and political science are also worthwhile.

How important is a graduate degree or other training? Specify preferred degrees, programs or certificates.

Many government agencies do require graduate degrees, or several years of work experience, for more senior positions. Language training is a big plus, as is coursework in public policy, economics, and foreign affairs (if you're interested in foreign policy and international trade positions). Each government agency has different missions, and therefore different requirements for new employees.

What entry career areas would provide the best experience for students aspiring to your field? What strategies or resources would you recommend for landing an entry-level position or internship?

Landing a job with the federal government can be a time-consuming process, sometimes requiring lengthy background investigations for security clearances. Fortunately, landing internships is much easier - a great way to start is to visit the websites of government agencies you're interested in, and identify which areas of the agency seem interesting. Some agencies have formal internship programs, but often offices like my own are very open to taking students who just express interest.

What resources or websites would you suggest for students interested in your field?

Usajobs.gov is the official website for federal government jobs and should be the primary resource for students looking at careers in government service. Check out www.pmf.opm.gov for more information on the Presidential Management Fellowship. The websites for Cabinet departments (www.commerce.gov, www.state.gov, www.treasury.gov, etc.) are also a great resource.

How did your Providence College education and experience help to prepare you for success?

My political science courses were very valuable in teaching me fundamentals of analysis and writing. Courses like Model Organization of American States, taught by Dr. Trudeau, provided a more hands-on approach to understanding international relations (as well as providing exposure to Washington DC!) Participating in the Liberal Arts Honors Program helped me immensely in learning how knowledge from seemingly unrelated fields can be brought together to provide new insights.

Alumni Career Snapshot



PROVIDENCE
COLLEGE

Get more career information and advice from PC alumni by participating in Career Services events throughout the year!