

GLOBAL HEALTH

Middlebury College Global Health Newsletter
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Alumni Profile: David Torres

“At some point, you have to make the call for yourself: how long do you want to do this? What brings you joy and fulfillment?” Middlebury’s new Professor of the Practice, David Torres, recalled the turning point in his unique path to mothers2mothers, the organization he currently serves as Senior Advisor. **mothers2mothers (m2m)** is an internationally recognized nonprofit organization dedicated to **preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV**. The organization is a **social enterprise** that employs, trains, and helps to empower HIV-positive women as community health workers. It hires and works with “Mentor Mothers” to impact the health of mothers by putting them at the center as the driving force of preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV and improving reproductive, maternal, and child health. m2m engages with the government and local partners to educate and employ women within communities. Rooted in empowering of women, the organization works to address the acute shortage of health-care workers and the stigma around HIV. Currently based in Cape Town, South Africa, David has been responsible for a range of initiatives over the past 12 years, including **partnership and donor relationship management, financial advising, and strategic support** for international fundraising and business development. He also serves as a member of the Senior Management Team and as the Secretary for the Board of Directors of mothers2mothers International.

David’s journey to m2m and the global health world at large was an atypical one with twists and turns.



After graduating from Middlebury in 1984 with a degree in Political Science and International Relations, he spent nearly 22 years at **JPMorgan Chase & Co.** to become Managing Director in the UK, after having spent some time in Latin America and the US. During this long career in banking, he specialized in **fixed income sales, sales management, investment banking, and business management**. Though it seems like forever-ago, he recalls the 12-hour work days and the stressful work environment that he was living under. It was difficult to balance the work and family life, and he was not spending enough time with his two children who were only getting older. It was at this point that he and his wife Kathryn decided that his life style was unsustainable. Together they decided to put a timeline to his banking career and gave himself five years to transition out of JPMorgan. “My wife actually made me put this writing and sign it!”

In 2005, he kept his promise, and took a **sabbatical** from his role at JPMorgan to travel to various corners of the world with his family. During the trip, he worked as a volunteer at m2m in Cape Town for two months, working on a business plan for a project. He immediately fell in love with this new environment, as the work was engaging and he already had some personal network in the region.

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He has always been interested in the social sector, and this opportunity allowed him to dive deep into the world of global health. Upon returning to London, David decided to put an end to his long banking career, and move to **South Africa** with his family to join m2m as a permanent staff member. In describing this transition, David was surprised by the similarities and overlap of skills required in both the banking and not-for-profit worlds. At m2m, he has been directly involved in local and international fundraising and development, as well as the business development. He has drawn from his background in financial analysis and management to help the organization with financial planning and negotiation with various ministries and stakeholders. The wealth of experiences and skills that he was able to develop from his time at JP Morgan translated well into his role at m2m, once he understood the technical aspects and legal language of the work. David admitted, **“the connection between the two worlds was something that I did not expect.”** As for the major differences between the two fields, David emphasized how his current work is less transactional, and how he needs to approach his current role with a lot more patience and humility, as he is constantly interacting with people of various backgrounds.

Though his banking career opened many doors for him, he pointed to his liberal arts background that set the groundwork and foundation for his career. **“At the core, not a lot has changed—we still need people who can synthesize and articulate ideas to solve difficult problems,”** David explained as he spoke on the practical application of his liberal arts background to the world of global health and finance. As a new Professor of the Practice (starting in January 2019), he is excited to contribute and give back to the Panther community by teaching classes in social entrepreneurship and global health, advising students with professional and personal inquiries, and bringing his practical expertise of the subject matter. He will teach **“Social Entrepreneurship and Global Health”** over J-Term, which is now at full capacity, and **“Global Health”** over the spring semester. He is a huge believer in **social entrepreneurship—marrying business means with humanitarian goals**—and its potential to solve some of the oldest problems in new ways. He will also be serving as an advisor and consultant to early stage social entrepreneurs, and he will be engaged with the efforts by the **Center for Careers & Internships (CCI)** to help students find opportunities in global health, social entrepreneurship, and banking.



Alumni Profile: Lian Folger



A recent graduate, Lian Folger ('14.5) joined the **Global Newborn Health Lab at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH)** upon graduating from Middlebury with a degree in **neuroscience and global health**. Having studied these disciplines during her time at Middlebury, she was eager to seek research opportunities in the field of global health, especially around issues of **maternal health, pregnancy, and early child development**. In her current role as the research program coordinator at Global Newborn Health Lab, Lian works to improve the survival, health, and potential of mothers and newborns in low-income countries. Prior to joining BWH in 2015, she interned with pediatricians and obstetrician-gynecologists, and also has worked in a neurobiology lab and a maternal nutrition lab. Outside of her professional and academic interests, she ran the **Classical Dance Club** at Middlebury for 3 years, and was involved with a variety of dance clubs and classes, with styles ranging from swing to classical. When asked about her favorite memories at Middlebury, she recalled the 8 a.m. Saturday youth ballet classes she taught, where she was able to engage with families from the local community in a fun, non-academic environment. She also loves to mentor and empower girls through programs like **Sister-to-Sister**, which brings together middle school girls from the community with Middlebury college student-mentors for personal development.

The BWH Global Newborn Health Lab is focused on **preventing, managing, and improving the outcomes**

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for the major newborn illnesses in low-income countries. Childbirth is a time of high risk for mothers and babies, especially in low-resource environments, and currently, deaths in the first month of life account for the largest proportion under-five child mortality. The research team at BWH approaches this larger mission from several angles, including improving **epidemiologic evidence on major causes of newborn morbidity and mortality** in low-income settings, as well as designing **public health interventions and innovations** to address those issues.

In her three years as part of the BWH team, Lian has worked primarily on developing and validating a newborn survival tool kit, and conducting and coordinating a systematic review on methods of gestational determination. Her day-to-day duties include a variety of tasks, ranging from conducting literature reviews and editing grant proposals, to coordinating students and volunteers for various projects. Though not every day is filled with groundbreaking discoveries and research, she credits her inspiring and value-driven teammates, mentors, and colleagues who constantly help her to connect the daily tasks, which can sometimes be more mundane, to the larger goals. **“I felt this immediately from my first interview with this team—I knew I wanted to work with people who care deeply about these issues and who can see the big picture in our day-to-day work.”**

As with many young professionals, Lian faced a steep learning curve when she transitioned from the classroom setting to the “real world.” She believes that her wide-ranging background in the Neuroscience and Global Health Programs helped her to more flexibly navigate the transition. “Perhaps I had a bit of an idealized vision of what working in global health is like, but I learned a lot about what it takes for global health projects to materialize—**grant-writing, local politics, economics, and mobilization of local communities** are aspects many students may not have the chance to learn about in undergraduate training.” The multi-disciplinary nature of the Global Health Program provided her with the tools and framework to consider these issues not in a vacuum, but through a diversified and intersectional set of lenses. Her background and training in the field of neuroscience unexpectedly proved to be an asset to the team for several projects that included neurodevelopment as an outcome measure. Her basic understanding of the technical language within the field meant that she was able to help analyze and review scientific articles on molecular and structural neuroscience in detail. She also found great value in the independent projects she did

with for the Global Health minor, including one that focused on understanding disparities in healthcare access in Addison County’s through the lens of social justice. Though the project was specific to the local community, Lian pointed out how **applicable these local issues can be to work on a global scale, and how the boundary between the two worlds is often blurred.** She also talked about how her experiences in the Middlebury community were foundational to better understanding socioeconomic determinants of health.

In the near future, she hopes to continue her interest in maternal health and pregnancy by connecting it more directly to mental health and neurodevelopment. She hopes to pursue a medical or doctoral degree in the next few years. When asked to give advice to current students who are looking into pursuing the global health field, she reminded them to not be discouraged by lack of experiences or specific skills immediately coming out of college. “Skills can be taught and experiences can be gained through a job—while in school, take the time to understand why it is that you care so deeply about certain issues, and build your classes, extracurricular activities, and story around the bigger questions that drive your interests.”

Student Profile: Corbin Dameron

Corbin Dameron is a current senior majoring in neuroscience on a pre-med track. While it is not common that a student finds a passion for a particular topic so early on in their college career, Corbin knew she wanted to dive into the intersectionality of **socio-economic, political, and neurological factors of addiction**, and its impact on low-income communities. She shaped a variety of academic and extracurricular experiences around this topic. She worked at **HIV Alliance**, which provides needle exchange services in Oregon, and she interned at a lab at the University of Virginia, looking at the sex disparity in cocaine addiction in socio-economic, political, and biological aspects all intersect one another. It is also an issue that is painted heavily by negative public perception and government framing. She is eager to work towards solving

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the problem of drug addiction, especially in low-income communities, with the understanding of the complex and deep-rooted nature of the issue.

Outside of classes, Corbin can be spotted throwing a disk around on Battell Beach, as she is an involved member of the infamous Pranksterz, the Frisbee club at Middlebury. She also loves spending time with children and is involved with **Page One Literacy**, which is an organization that strives to promote a love of reading in elementary school students within the local community. She's eager to explore various opportunities to continue her interest in drug addiction and in the global health field at large.

EVENTS ON CAMPUS

This fall the Global Health Program sponsored two series of events.

- Dr. Catherine Florio Pipas, Professor in Community and Family Medicine at Dartmouth's School of Medicine and author of the new book *A Doctor's Dozen: Twelve Strategies for Personal Health and a Culture of Wellness* visited the campus on November 12. She conducted a terrific wellness workshop for staff and managers, and gave a talk for students in the evening, followed by a dinner with students in the President's dining room. Both audiences appreciated her energy, warmth, and passion for wellness. Thanks, Dr. Pipas!
- GlobeMed, Middlebury College's global health organization, organized a fantastic series of events on November 29 & 30 in honor of World AIDS Day: a sex ed workshop, a screening of the film *How to Survive a Plague*, and an expert panel discussion moderated by Pam Berenbaum. (They also raised the bar on event snacks: sushi!) A wide variety of programs and offices sponsored the World AIDS Day observance including the Student Government Association, Sexual & Relationship Respect, Feminist Action at Middlebury, the MCAB Speakers Committee, Chellis House, Feminist Resource Center, and the Global Health program.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Global Health program director Pam Berenbaum, a faculty affiliate of the Privilege & Poverty academic cluster, participated in the 2nd annual symposium of the Vermont Educational Alliance on Poverty (VEAP), a collaboration between Middlebury College and the University of Vermont. The symposium was held at Kirk Alumni Center on October 26. A highlight of the day was hearing the observations and reflections of an incredible panel of students, who reported on their summer internships through the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP).**
- **Got internships? Internships are a wonderful way for Global Health students to test classroom learning against the realities, constraints, and opportunities faced by real-world organizations. If your organization can offer a summer internship placement for a global health student, please notify our Center for Careers & Internships (CCI) by calling 802-443-5100. The Global Health program (thanks to our generous donor) can fund unpaid internships for students who otherwise could not take advantage of the opportunity.**
- **We would love to hear updates from you too -- please email them to globalhealth@middlebury.edu.**
- **We wish you a happy and healthy 2019!**

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