June 1, 2015

Greetings Fletcher Incoming Class:

You are about to embark on a wonderful, demanding, exciting and transformational two years. As was recently communicated by the Registrar’s Office, for those of you interested in a career in international development or peacebuilding those 2 years may need to start earlier than originally anticipated; with the August pre-session.

This online “letter” is specifically for incoming students interested in international development, human rights, peacebuilding, human security etc. as it provides information on who should take the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation 3 part module series. Given the unique timing, coupled with the nature of the workload it is important that students assess their fit to the series prior to enrolling. This series is a unique offering at Fletcher and thus particular attention should be paid to the timing and format. It should be noted there is one other course offered as well in August (see Registrar’s email about pre-registration and orientation).

Design, monitoring and evaluation (DME) are critical skills expected of professionals in international development and peacebuilding whether hoping to work for the UN, Donor Governments, NGOs or Foundations. Fletcher enables students to obtain these skills through a module series offered in an intensive manner. The first two modules are offered exclusively during pre-sessions (August and January). The first 2 modules (1. Design and Monitoring and 2. Evaluation) are aimed at those who wish to work as practitioners and donor officers. Though the first 2 modules are distinct classes they should be viewed as a whole if one wishes to become professionally skilled in these concepts. The third module, Advanced Evaluation and Learning in International Organizations, is intended for those who wish to have careers in the M&E field and is offered during the regular semester.

Each module acts as a pre-requisite for the next one which means that students interested in taking all three MUST start with DM prior to their first full semester at Fletcher or wait until 2nd year to take all of them. By enrolling in Module 1: DM in the August prior to your first year, it enables students to get module 1: DM and 2: Evaluation completed prior to the competitive intern application season. It also offers the possibility of taking Module 3 in first year which is key to embarking on an evaluation related capstone in 2nd year. As modules 1 & 2 are not available during regular term, the courses are intensive in nature and the workload is substantial. This is necessary in order to cover theory and practice in a manner that enables students to master the skillset.
A few words about myself: I have taught DME at Fletcher for almost 9 years in a variety of formats; winning the Paddock Teaching Award in 2010 with 4 nominations. Alumni tell me that the current intensive series, though challenging, is actually a rare opportunity to exclusively focus on one topic which enables mastery. I have been in the DME field for almost 20 years and have authored some of the leading work on the application of these concepts to peacebuilding. My main role is running a small agency, Besa: Catalyzing Strategic Change committed to catalysing significant change on strategic issues in places experiencing conflict and structural or overt physical violence. Our partner base ranges from the US State Department to small NGOs; where we use a whole of organisation approach to optimize the change they are able to make on the ground.

Students need to assess their fit to the series prior to enrolling. In other words, are these the classes you need in order to obtain the career you wish to have post-Fletcher. In order to assess, I encourage you to reach out to the course Teaching Assistant Aditi Patel (Aditi.Patel@tufts.edu) who has completed all three modules and is currently doing a M&E internship in Rwanda. Also recent Alumni have posted on Facebook their willingness to discuss the Series. To understand where these skills can take you there are alumni profiles on the Admissions blog page.

A word of caution: any students thinking that a ‘warm-up’ class to get in shape for graduate school would be a good idea should not select P225m: Design and Monitoring.

Class sizes are limited and therefore registration is on a first come first serve basis. Though the registration deadline is Friday, June 12, there are only a few spots still remaining. https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Fletcher-AUGUST-PRESESSION.

I hope you enjoy your summer and that Grad School prep goes smoothly. See some of you in August.

Prof Scharbatke-Church