A Fletcher education is highly customizable, and each student may decide on a different academic trajectory to suit his or her own professional and academic goals. To get a better sense of how these individual curricular decisions can play out, we asked recent students in their final semester to talk about their goals, their classes, and the decisions made during their Fletcher career. Meet Rizwan:

Pre-Fletcher Experience:
Undergraduate degree in International Affairs with a focus on security studies / 1 year in business development at Bank of America (Atlanta) / 2 years in tech consulting at Infosys Technologies (Mysore, India and Boston)

Fields of Study:
1. International Security Studies
2. Southwest Asia & Islamic Civilization

Capstone Project
*U.S. Legal Innovation in Arms Control and Non-Proliferation*
My thesis, under the supervision of the late Professor William C. Martel, examined the creative ways in which U.S. negotiators have made progress on international arms control and non-proliferation agendas without being held hostage by domestic constituents. I employed Putnam’s two-level game model to demonstrate how negotiators were able to overcome resistance at Table 2 (the domestic level) by making slight legal adjustments, without sacrificing the substance of the negotiations or agreements at Table 1 (the international level).

Post-Fletcher Professional Goals:
I’m focused on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by both state and non-state actors. While I don’t have a single regional focus, I have done most of my work in the Middle East / Central Asia, South Asia, and East Asia. My professional emphasis is on becoming a policy expert in national security broadly, and nuclear weapons specifically. So, rather than place an employer or a role at the top of my career “mountain,” instead I place “expertise” at my apex. The only way to get there is by getting deep experience in (1) making, (2) implementing, and (3) evaluating policy in my field. As a result, my professional trajectory will include serving in government, the private sector, think tanks, academia, and international organizations. If, by the end of my career, I have done all of the above, I will be satisfied.

Curriculum Overview

**Semester One**
- B205 — Statistics for Decision-Making
- D220 — The Processes of International Negotiation
- E201 — Economic Theory
- L220 — International Organizations

*In my first semester, I chose to knock out most of my breadth courses. Having been out of the classroom for a few years, I wanted to ease my way back in and develop a renewed appreciation for being a student again.*

**Semester Two**
- D260 — Southwest and Central Asia: History, Politics, and Culture
In my second semester, I wanted to dive into my fields of study. Coming to Fletcher with the explicit goal of understanding nuclear stability in South Asia, I felt it necessary to get into both fields simultaneously and find opportunities to bring them together wherever possible. At the same time, I wanted to also develop my skills base, and the Treaty Behavior and Policy Analysis courses were immensely helpful in this regard.

Summer Internship
As a Januarian, I was fortunate to have two summer internships, both of which were directly and strongly correlated with my academic and professional interest in nuclear nonproliferation. For summer 2010, I was an unpaid Summer Research Associate at the Project on Managing the Atom at the Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge Mass. There, I conducted research on nuclear terrorism for the Project’s principal investigator. Frankly, I was surprised to get this opportunity, having taken only breadth courses in my first term at Fletcher (spring 2010), but I believe my affiliation with ISSP and my relationship with the late Professor William C. Martel as my faculty advisor helped tremendously. For summer 2011, I was a paid Summer Intern at Ploughshares Fund in Washington, DC, where I produced research reports and talking points for the foundation’s president. Through Fletcher, I was able to cultivate a relationship with the president during the 2010-2011 academic year, which I believe helped me secure this internship.

Semester Three
IGA321 — Controlling Weapons Proliferation (HKS)
P244 — Modern Terrorism and Counterterrorism
P248 — Technology and International Security
P262 — Contemporary South Asia

Having fulfilled my breadth requirements and the foundational requirements for my fields of study in my first two terms, I felt it was time to really zero in on the nexus of security studies and regional (South Asia) studies. This semester was especially unique in this regard, as in every class I took I developed papers, memos, and presentations that got to the heart of nuclear stability between India and Pakistan.

Semester Four
D210 — The Art and Science of Statecraft
D263 — The Arabs and Their Neighbors
P260 — Islam and the West
P212m — Social Networks in Organizations
L264m — Non-Proliferation Law and Institutions

In my final semester, I decided to switch my focus from intellectual deep dive to transferable skills building by taking Statecraft, Social Networks, and Non-Proliferation Law. I rounded out my SWAIC field with D263 and P260, where I focused my work on the Iranian nuclear program and the root causes of so-called "Islamic terrorism."