



Embracing Learning Opportunities

Sydney Outzen remembers watching her dad read the *Washington Post* every night after he returned home from work. Outzen would usually read the comics over her bowl of cereal, but eventually she began to glance through the rest of the newspaper. And her international curiosity grew.

In high school Outzen took all the social studies classes her small school offered and a course on human rights. Her teachers discussed current headlines in the context of past events and made them relevant for the students. “Suddenly, events in the news seemed much more connected to each other and to me,” she noted, and following international affairs became a daily habit.

College provided Outzen the opportunity to do more than just read the news. She chose to develop the skill set necessary to work in national security, deciding to study

Arabic and the Middle East specifically but maintain involvement in international development, realizing that the subject areas influence each other. Her interest in international development led her to become involved with the Ballard Center and landed her an internship with Teach for America. She then interned in the nation's capital for two consecutive summers, spending the first summer in an office focused on applying mathematical modeling to transnational issues and the second in an office for Middle East affairs.

Outzen also kept busy with other out-of-classroom experiences. She participated in an intensive Arabic study abroad in Amman, Jordan, taking side trips to Israel and Turkey, and she volunteered at an after-school center, where she taught remedial mathematics in Arabic to elementary- and middle-school students.

Her other activities at BYU have included working as a teaching assistant (quantitative methodology, women's studies, and Middle East politics) for four semesters and participating in Amnesty International, a human rights club on campus. Outzen also spent two years writing analytical articles for *Praemon*, the student publication for national security analysis. Outzen found the most satisfaction in her education when she chose to embrace every aspect of school as a learning opportunity and dedicated herself to doing things well, not just getting things done. "Education has always been my number-one priority," she said.

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