**DOCTOR OF ARTS PORTFOLIO GOALS STATEMENT**

**Doctoral Beginnings**

My interest in veterans’ transitions to higher education institutions began when I was leaving active military duty and applying to a Master of Business Administration program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. I had a difficult time applying from overseas and a more difficult time readjusting to a civilian environment once I arrived at campus. Not knowing what offices to visit or who to contact on campus with questions about using my veterans' benefits was frustrating. I did not want other veterans attending college on a campus for the first time to experience the same frustrations and quit a degree program altogether. I pursued this interest for three semesters and discovered the scholarly information available is not only limited, but focuses heavily on physical and mental impairments or injuries - specifically on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).  As much as I wanted to continue helping my fellow servicemembers and veterans, I knew I would not be satisfied reading about PTSD and TBI for the next five to ten years while trying to develop my own research.

Between my first and second doctoral semesters, I took a year off to teach English conversation skills in Spain.  I returned to the United States (U.S.) knowing I wanted to work in international education, but I also knew I only had a student's perspective.  I eventually enrolled in a course about managing international programs and found the area of studies I was looking for immediately after reading the syllabus and attending the first class.  I sat in the company of other world travelers - students, educators, tourists - who also wanted to share their experiences and benefits from studying, working, and living abroad. By sharing and advising, higher education administrators and international program managers can help graduate students recognize and take advantage of the global opportunities available as part of the students’ studies. Ideally, the graduate students will find studying abroad lets them discover and develop new personal and professional skills and abilities (e.g., project management and negotiation skills, the ability to identify risks, and increased cultural awareness).All I had to do was narrow down my topic to begin researching - both for a class project and a possible dissertation topic. I opted to write my final case study for the course about U.S. graduate students studying abroad and the potential for them to suffer from homesickness and/or adjustment issues. After completing my readings and case study, I wanted to learn more about graduate students’ experiences with study abroad. I do not want to focus solely on adjustment issues or homesickness because I feel there are areas of graduate study abroad that might be researched to make it easier and more enticing for a majority of graduate students, rather than the few studying in disciplines with international ties. For example, as part of the Graduate Learning Experiences and Outcomes: The Landscape of Graduate Study Abroad (GLEO) Project, Michigan State University will host the 2013 Erickson Global View Symposium - Globalizing Graduate Education: The Role of Study Abroad. Discussion topics of the Symposium include influences of the professional disciplines on graduate study abroad and study abroad as a form of internationalization in graduate education. As a result of seeing the topics for the Symposium, I am interested to know more about the design and management of U.S. graduate-level study abroad programs, particularly programs related to business.

**Internships**

I am considering several potential career paths influenced by the managing international students course.  My interests are in continuing to work for the U.S. federal government in some capacity and eventually retiring as a civil servant.  An internship will likely help me identify potential federal opportunities. For example, I am exploring an internship with the organization formerly known as the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors, and now named NAFSA: the Association of International Educators. Since I am not interested in teaching in a traditional sense (i.e., on a semester-long class basis), I am seeking internships with administrative assignments. NAFSA affords its employees organizational-level perspectives of the international education field with a focus on policy development.  Other organizations I have in mind are the Institute for International Education (IIE) and the Council for International Education and Exchange (CIEE).  IIE works with the Department of State's International Visitors Program (IVP), and CIEE is a third-party (i.e., non-educational institution) provider of study abroad programs.  Both organizations would allow insight into managing programs abroad and allow for networking with other professionals in the field.

**Foreign Languages; Overseas Travel**

Finally, I would like to continue improving my Spanish-speaking abilities, and given the chance, learn another language. I returned to the U.S. two years ago, and I now experience a difficult time understanding people from Latin/South America, particularly because people often speak in manners specific to their regions and because I lack exposure to the vocabulary and accents of those regions.  I want to improve my Spanish-speaking abilities by fulfilling an internship or fellowship in Latin/South America as part of my studies.  After exploring available possibilities, I am discovered the Boren Fellowships and the Fulbright Programs as potential internship opportunities where I would not only learn how study abroad programs are managed in countries U.S. students attend, but I would also be able to improve my Spanish.