On Campus

SIPA Launches Undergraduate Major in Global Affairs and Public Policy

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Columbia University

Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) recently announced the creation of an undergraduate major in global affairs and public policy, an interdisciplinary program that will be open to students starting in the 2026–27 academic year.

For eighty years, SIPA has trained diplomats, policymakers, and public servants at the graduate level, producing alumni who run foreign ministries, international institutions, and government agencies worldwide. This new major brings that tradition to undergraduate education at Columbia for the first time, offering a course of study taught by the same scholars and experienced practitioners who lead SIPA’s graduate programs.

“Building on the breadth and depth of Columbia’s Core Curriculum and excellence across the arts and sciences, the major provides Columbia College and Columbia General Studies students with the knowledge, analytical tools, and practical skills to enable them to address complex policy challenges at every level, from their own communities to the global stage,” says SIPA dean Keren Yarhi-Milo ’03GS.

The 32.5-credit major involves courses in political science, economics, history, ethics, data science, and regional studies. Students will learn how different political systems, economic frameworks, historical contexts, and leadership choices shape policymaking at the local, national, and international levels. A “policy practicum” will give students the opportunity to work directly with external clients, applying their classroom learning to real-world situations. After graduating, those interested in pursuing a master’s degree in international affairs or public administration at Columbia will be able to do so in one year instead of the customary two.

The program launches at a moment when SIPA is investing significant resources in instructional capacity and research initiatives that tackle current foreign-policy concerns. In May, the school’s Institute of Global Politics (IGP) announced a task force with Rice University focused on assessing the strategic rationale for providing US assistance overseas. “Recent events remind us that meeting international challenges requires using diplomacy and development alongside defense, and to do that means modernizing and strengthening all three,” says Hillary Rodham Clinton ’22HON, cofounder and chair of IGP’s Faculty Advisory Board.

Guide to school abbreviations

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