



## International studies graduate and changemaker explores community improvement at DTES non-profit

BY CINDY LI | October 9, 2019

A deep desire to help marginalized communities sent Nicolas Tellez-España on a rich journey that took him as far as Uganda, where he completed a co-op term working as a researcher, and ended up at Mission Possible, an economic development agency in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Tellez-España, an international studies student minoring in economics, recently graduated after transferring from Douglas College to Simon Fraser University (SFU) to pursue a bachelor of arts while

completing the co-op program along the way.

"I had a blast at SFU," says Tellez-España. "The classes I took were exceptional and the friendships I made now span many continents."

A number of factors attracted Tellez-España to SFU, including the financial assistance that the university provided. But what solidified Tellez-España's decision to attend SFU was his interest in joining SFU's School for International Studies,

known for being a well-established yet relatively small program where faculty and staff have a reputation for going above and beyond to provide a quality education for students.

“The classes are smaller and more personalized, which means students and professors have an opportunity to bond, connect and build relationships,” says Tellez-España. “Most importantly, the School allows for plenty of exploration and interdisciplinary learning.”

Tellez-España was quick to get involved during his time at SFU. He joined the International Studies Student Association (ISSA) as vice president, then president, where he learned about leadership and event planning. He also joined the arts co-op program where he pursued numerous opportunities to stretch his learning and develop his professional skills.

“From working at the Consulate General of Mexico in Vancouver, to going abroad to Uganda on behalf of Schools Building Schools, to assisting negotia-

tors at Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada—I got to put theory to practice and learn directly from incredible professionals,” says Tellez-España.

He was even able to write an undergraduate thesis and publish it in an academic journal in Bolivia, South America, where he hopes his research will be more impactful.

Now, Tellez-España is working as a Community Engagement Coordinator for Mission Possible, where he supports individuals overcoming homelessness and poverty and who are interested in joining the workforce.

“This may sound a little clichéd, but the most important takeaway I got from my time at SFU is to remain open to new opportunities and be curious,” says Tellez-España. “I went to SFU to get a BA, but in reality, I got so much more than that.”