

Alumni Spotlight: Olivia Morales (MAIS '21)



Current Title: Assistant Director of Operations and Partnerships at Compass Path

Family: Husband: Jonathan, Child: Miles

Favorite professor: Dr. Paul Martindale

Favorite class: Applied Anthropology

Favorite memory: I was blessed to be part of a wonderful Soul Care group on campus. I'm really grateful for those ladies and that time together.

What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell and what work are you doing now?

Since graduating, I have been working for Compass Path. We are a non-profit organization that empowers people to pursue their purpose. We run a variety of programs in the U.S. and Iceland. We work with faith-based and non-faith-based populations, using community, exploration, and service to guide our participants on their journey. We want to help people discover their place in God's kingdom.

What do you love about your work?

There is so much I love! To begin, I don't take for granted the tremendous blessing it is to be in a ministry that consistently and holistically cares for its staff and their families.

I have had a passion for missions and intercultural work for years; I absolutely delight in having a position that enables me to tangibly apply my passions as well as my education and prior experiences in a meaningful way. I get to train teams in understanding the important role of culture in our day-to-day lives and develop a healthy missiology. It is an honor to be able to help guide others on a journey closer to Christ in this way. I also love being able to serve in an intercultural setting. It is such a joy to meet people from all over the world, serve alongside them, hear their stories, and see what God is doing in and through the global body of Christ.

What are the particular challenges of non-profit work in general and/or in your specific context?

We are an intentionally ecumenical organization, which is both a joy and a challenge. We work closely with churches, but we are not a church and therefore do not operate in the same way a church operates, as some may expect. We get to help people see the unity we have in Christ across denominational lines. It also means that the inverse is true as well; we are more aware of our differences in an interdenominational setting. Those differences such as theological discrepancies, presumptions, and expectations can present themselves in difficult ways across a very wide spectrum of church backgrounds as we journey together.

How has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now? How did you come to be doing your current work?

For my undergrad I double majored in Spanish and Intercultural Studies and had a concentration in Missions. I thought I was going to be a long-term career missionary somewhere in Latin America, but God had other plans. Through a series of other roles in campus ministry, youth ministry, working with international student populations, administrative work, and then my master's at Gordon-Conwell, God redirected my passions for missions, culture, and language in a way I never expected.

While in seminary, I worked briefly at Gordon College and connected with the Compass, as it used to be a Gordon program. When the pandemic hit, I was laid off, and the college discontinued the programs I was leading, including Compass. I was discouraged and trying to figure out my next steps when the director of Compass decided to revamp the program and launch it as an independent organization in January 2021. He contacted me shortly afterwards to invite me to apply to work for this new start-up and we have been working together ever since!

I now work remotely from my home in Western MA, which allows me to be more present with my family. I am in-person for our programming here in the States and frequently lead groups to Iceland for service trips. In Iceland, there is a large population of Spanish-speaking refugees/immigrants, and I never would have guessed my Spanish would be helpful in Iceland! I continue to be amazed by how perfect a fit Compass is for me, and how impeccable God's timing was in all of it.



How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work?

I focused my Intercultural Studies capstone on short-term missions. I examined the partnership Compass has with the Salvation Army in Iceland as my case study. The research has helped me personally to understand what healthy short-term missions look like and also helped to strengthen our relationship with the Salvation Army by creating intentional listening and dialogue. That was one of many instances in which I was able to directly apply the content I learned and the research I did during my time at the seminary to my current work. My seminary degree also empowered me to get ordained and has truly equipped me to be a better minister of the Gospel in the context I am in.

What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are considering working in the non-profit sector?

Finding the right job is half the battle. You may need to relocate or create your own role. Expect that networking will be your primary means of finding the kind of role you desire. If you want to work in non-profit for the long run, make sure you find a role and

organization that is going to be wholistically sustainable and will treat you like a human being. Be sure to celebrate the wins as they come and surround yourself with a support network to stand alongside you when those hard moments happen!

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