

Living Her Passion

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Elle Fersan is Director of Provost's Immigrants and Global Migration Initiative at USC Gould

By Jill Barone

Eliane “Elle” Fersan is passionate about immigration and global migration. Born and raised in Lebanon, Fersan’s own experiences have had a lasting effect on her interests, activism and career.

“I grew up in Lebanon during the Syrian occupation of my country. Witnessing ongoing conflict and corruption inspired my early activism,” she says. “I wanted to play my part as a citizen and change the system from within.”

Fersan received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in history from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, where her studies focused on Lebanese and Syrian migration to the United States and Brazil. After graduating, she dedicated her life to advocating for women, LGBTQ communities and immigrants in areas including Lebanon, the Middle East, North Africa and the U.S. through international development, advocacy, policy reform and fundraising.



She has collaborated with the U.S Department of State, the United Nations and local and state governments to improve equity. Included among her accomplishments are exposing a

sex trafficking network of LGBTQ Syrian refugees, passing the first public non-smoking ban in a Middle Eastern city and obtaining program funding to increase women's political participation at local and national levels in Lebanon.

Fersan spent time in Jordan and Canada before moving to the U.S. in 2015 and founding Global Nexus Solutions, LLC, a consulting firm that brings together a network of experts and advisers in global public affairs. Through this work, she advises agencies and governments and trains diplomats, non-governmental organization executives and policy advocates on topics including global migration, gender inclusion, coalition building, fundraising, governance and mobilization.

In 2018, she joined USC Gould as founding director of the Immigrants and Global Migration Initiative (IGMI). Months later, she became a naturalized U.S. citizen through the law school's Immigration Clinic. "I am a product of the law school," she says, laughing.

A USC provost initiative, IGMI "advances USC immigration and migration work and provides direct services to immigrant communities. Through research, advocacy and service, IGMI strives to become the premier national hub for intellectual discussion, debate and insight regarding immigration, migration and immigrant populations."

Since its start, the initiative has been the driving force behind more than 30 events and organized three symposia on and around campus.

There are many ways for law school alumni to get involved, Fersan says. Engagement on social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; volunteering time; and contributing through writing or public speaking are all ways to support IGMI and be a part of its voice.

"What excites me most about IGMI is our unique placement at USC in the center of Los Angeles," Fersan says. "USC has the power to deepen our understanding of immigration and be an objective voice around immigration issues through research and policy recommendations. We aim to be at the forefront of conversation on these issues with non-partisan, fact-based information."

On Sept. 18, Fersan will present a keynote speech at the United Nations Association of the United States of America 12th Annual West Coast Global Forum. Register [here](#).