Alumni Spotlight: Joseph Williams, Research Team Leader, IW Financial

Education/Work History
After completing his political science degree at the College of Charleston in 2003, Joseph Williams worked in sales to support himself through the MBA program at the Citadel. This degree combination allowed him to see various sides of important social and political issues (such as Human Rights and Globalization), dissect the issues and make knowledgeable decisions. The MBA added the ability to look at a situation in a dispassionate way focusing on what decision would be the best from a financial or strategic perspective.

Working as a personal banker at a financial institution after earning his MBA, Joseph gained experience in mortgage underwriting, consumer banking and investment services. When Joseph took a position with IW Financial, an ESG (Environmental and Social Governance) research firm, he moved to Johnson City, TN. He is currently a Research Team Leader, managing the Global Security Risk Group. In this role, he is responsible for the interpretation of state legislation regarding publicly traded companies’ involvement in countries of concern (i.e. Iran, Syria, Sudan, North Korea and Cuba), designing state specific investment screens for use by institutional investors. Joseph advises institutional investors, including government pension plans and state treasurers, as to whether their investments violate legislatively mandated divestment laws. When asked about his current career, Joseph notes, “I help provide information to those investors who want to utilize their investments to effect change in corporate and government practices. Helping people to invest in companies whose practices are in line with their personal beliefs is what ESG investing is about.”

How the political science degree helped get him to where he is today
“While working on the political science degree I have to say the most important lesson that I learned is that there are two sides to every conflict, argument, stance etc. It is the ability to discuss these differences whether they be in Dr. Curtis’ Political Theory class or Dr. France's Globalization class) that are important to learn so that you will know how to deal with different types of people in your future work life. Also, the difficult questions that are tackled in political science classes prepare you to think critically in areas that other people just take for granted, for instance, basic freedoms, the creation of a government, etc. It is this ability to see both sides of an issue that allows me to offer impartial data for our clients. While I, of course, have my own views and the varying stances our clients take on a particular issue, I understand why our clients are so passionate about what they believe in and I am able to support their cause.”