Like most high school students, Kristen had stereotypical views of what college would be like. But those views changed dramatically in her first few weeks on campus. "What surprised me most," she said, "was the openness of the professors. They're willing to spend so much time with you. And the small classes in the political science department added to the sense of community I felt. You definitely do not feel like a number here."

Thompson opted to focus her studies on world politics. As a sophomore, she helped establish the College's chapter of Americans for Informed Democracy. Then she heard David Batstone, an expert on the contemporary slave trade, speak at the political science department's annual convocation. That experience led to a summer internship in Baltimore, Md., with Not For Sale, which is an advocacy group. Back on campus, she organized a workshop on human trafficking, and then began working with faculty advisors on a bachelor's essay entitled the "Modern Slave Trade in South Carolina."

As a junior, Thompson spent a semester at sea. "Our ship transited the Red Sea," she recalls. "On board, I took a course on international terrorism, and I ended up doing an independent study on that topic when I returned to Charleston. Ultimately, I wrote three papers comparing and contrasting different ideas, including religion and terrorism." And, in order to put the subject matter into context, Thompson read several novels for a special topics course – From Utopia to Dystopia.

When she graduated, Thompson earned the College's highest academic honors and won a Rotary Ambassadorial scholarship to study politics in South Africa. Obviously, she was an exceptional student, but her story isn't all that rare. A major in political science can bring you into contact with inspiration you didn't know existed, and it can open doors to places you never dreamed of going. This major can be the key to a whole new world.