



Institute for Public Diplomacy & Global Communication

Annual Report 2015-2016
The George Washington University

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Overview

This year, IPDGC continued many of its ongoing programs and events, in addition to reaching out to new organizations to expand its programs.

IPDGC presented the fifth Blogs & Bullets report last fall, in partnership with the U.S. Institute of Peace. New partnerships included partnering with Sister Cities International, the U.S. Department of State, and the Atlantic Council for successful events throughout the year. IPDGC hosted the annual Walter Roberts Lecture as well. Lastly, Public Diplomacy Fellow Thomas Miller jumpstarted student outreach in doing a PD brown bag series and reaching out to students for new blog posts on TakeFive.

The Walter Roberts Endowment and its board continued to support the Institute's activities with their leadership and contributions.

Events

Building Bridges: Strengthening Educational and Citizen Exchange Linkages between the United States and Cuba



On September 9, IPDGC, the U.S. Department of State, and Sister Cities International hosted a timely event on the changing nature of US-Cuba relationship. The symposium explored how the new U.S. policy approach toward Cuba can promote more educational and cultural exchanges between the two countries. It provided an opportunity to learn from practitioners in the United States who have had experience managing academic and cultural exchange partnerships and programs in Cuba. The two panel discussions included presentations by U.S. government officials from the departments of State, Treasury and Commerce, and practitioners representing Academic Programs International (API), Educational Travel Alliance and The Smithsonian Institute.

The event was held in Jack Morton Auditorium at the School of Media and Public Affairs. Opening remarks were given by Evan Ryan, the Assistant Secretary of Educational and Cultural

Affairs, followed by two panel discussion: the first on US government regulations, and the second on best practices for operating exchanges. The event was attended by GW students, State Department Officials, and many from the international educational community in DC. IPDGC and the State Department both featured the event on their respective blogs, and a video of the event is available online.

After the Dust Settles: Social Media in Political Transitions

Part of the Blogs and Bullets Initiative



For the past five years, the PeaceTech Lab at the U.S. Institute of Peace and George Washington University have partnered on the Blogs & Bullets initiative, a series of studies examining the role of social and digital media in global political protest movements. The resulting research program has produced three widely-cited Peaceworks reports looking at the Iranian Green Revolution, the early months of the Arab Spring protests, and the Syrian crisis.

On September 29, the panels examined a new report that looks at the relatively understudied transitional phases following those often euphoric moments of protest. The report explored the ways social media contributes to political and social polarization in transitional periods, and how such dangerous trends might be overcome to give transitions a greater chance of success.

The event featured a summary of the report's major findings, two panel discussions, and a keynote address by Michael Posner, the former assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor. The first panel discussed Egypt, and the second looked at other countries attempting to transition from protest to peaceful, stable, and functional democracies. The event was well-attended by GW students and USIP staff, as well as others from around DC.

Annual Walter Roberts Lecture: The Role of Voice of America and Values Journalism in Combating Propaganda and Violent Extremism

The fifth Annual Walter Roberts Lecture was held on February 21. The keynote speaker was David Ensor, formerly the Director of Voice of America and currently



Executive Vice President for External Relations at the Atlantic Council, in a conversation with SMPA Director Frank Sesno. The discussion focused on American public diplomacy, and how Voice of America and Radio Free programs help contribute to those efforts. The event was well attended by GW graduates and undergraduates, the WRE board members, and others from GW community.

Recognizing and Countering Russian Propaganda



The final event of the school year was hosted on April 21. IPDGC partnered with the Atlantic Council to for a half-day conference about recognizing and countering Russian disinformation featured a keynote address by Peter Pomerantsev, author of *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, followed by two panels with speakers from NYU, Columbia University, National

Endowment for Democracy, and Brookings, among others. The event was attended by approximately 100 people from GW and the DC community.

Other Activities

Public Diplomacy Brown Bags

The current Public Diplomacy Fellow attached to IPDGC, Thomas Miller, has hosted monthly discussions with undergraduate and graduate students from ESIA and SMPA. The series is an hour long discussion with a practitioner in the field of public diplomacy. Speakers have been from the US State Department, the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, and US Institute of Peace. Topics range from the everyday life of a Public Diplomacy officer in an embassy overseas to the use of social media in dangerous environments. It has been well attended by students, averaging about 20 students per event.

Take Five Blogs

The Public Diplomacy fellow has also spearheaded an initiative to allow undergraduate students to be able to publish blogs on TakeFive, the public diplomacy focused blog run by IPDGC. Thirteen undergraduates, all who took Mr. Miller's PD class in spring 2016, have submitted posts to be published. Topics are wide-ranging, and include women's issues, engaging millennials, US domestic policy, and digital diplomacy.

Walter Roberts Award for Public Diplomacy Studies



This year, the Endowment is pleased to award John Melville. A second year Master's student in the Global Communications program, he also works as the speechwriter to the Ambassador at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea where he helps communicate, advocate, and explain South Korean policies to American audiences. After graduation, he hopes to either become a Public Diplomacy Officer in the US Department of State or continue his career in international speechwriting and strategic communications.

IPDGC Director, Sean Aday, Stepping Down

In December, IPDGC Director Sean Aday announced that he would be stepping down following the 2015-2016 academic year. Aday has served in that capacity since 2008, during which time the Institute has expanded its programming, executive education, revenue, and overall profile nationally and internationally.



“Being director of IPDGC has been a wonderful and rewarding experience,” Aday said. “I’m proud of the work we’ve done over the years, and happy to have worked with so many amazing people, from our State Department appointed Public Diplomacy Fellows, to our various speakers, to GW’s incredible faculty, staff and our fantastic students. But by far the most meaningful experience for me, personally, had to be getting to know and learn from the late Walter Roberts, a legendary practitioner and teacher of public diplomacy – or just “diplomacy,” as he would insist it be called.”



Aday will be replaced by SMPA Associate Professor Janet Steele. Steele’s research focuses on media in Southeast Asia and the developing world, especially Muslim majority countries. She has participated in numerous public diplomacy related programs, including speaker tours and media trainings. She is the author of two books, *Wars Within: The Story of Tempo, an Independent Magazine in Soeharto’s Indonesia*, and *The Sun Shines for All: Journalism and Ideology in the Life of Charles A. Dana*.

Aday will remain an Associate Professor of Media and Public Affairs and International Affairs at GW.

Walter Roberts Endowment

IPDGC operates in large part on the generosity of the late Dr. Walter Roberts (1916-2014). Roberts was a foreign policy consultant and former Foreign Service Officer who began his public diplomacy career with the Voice of America and retired as associate director of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). He was appointed by President George H.W. Bush and reappointed by President Bill Clinton to the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

In addition to his career in government, Dr. Roberts also taught the first course on public diplomacy at GW's Elliott School of International Affairs, teaching for 10 years. He is the author of *Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies, 1941-1945* and wrote numerous articles on foreign policy and public diplomacy. He was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs.

In 2005, Dr. Roberts established the Walter Roberts Endowment to support public diplomacy research and programming at GW. The Institute for Public Diplomacy was formed to carry out such activities, later becoming the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication. Housed jointly between the School of Media and Public Affairs and the Elliott School of International Affairs, the Endowment supports events, research, and other programming on the practice and study of public diplomacy. Dr. Roberts passed away in June 2014. IPDGC and GW remember Dr. Roberts' generosity and legacy through the Endowment and its activities.

This year, the endowment gave out their annual award to a second year Global Communication student who has focused their studies and professional experiences on Public Diplomacy, and supported the Cuba event, Walter Roberts Lecture, and the Russia conference with monetary support for logistics, travel, and honoraria.