

**ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AFFAIRS
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Welcoming Address

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OPENING

- Good morning.
- Thank you for this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on doing things international. I am honored to be here.
- I am the Director of the Global Affairs Center and teach Political Science at Shoreline Community College.
- Before moving to Edmonds, I was a Foreign Agricultural Affairs Officer, which I will explain in a moment, and I worked overseas for about half of that career.
- I have been asked to speak to you today about the Global Affairs Center or the GAC as we call it.
- I'm delighted! I love to talk about the GAC. I also want to make a few remarks about our efforts to internationalize the campus at Shoreline.
- And as part of that effort I would like to say a few words about how we can do a better job of integrating international student AND enhancing international education for ALL students, something all of us care about.

THE GLOBAL AFFAIRS CENTER

- I began having conversations in 2007 with people on campus about what would eventually become the Global Affairs Center.
- From the start, four principles have guided the GAC. These are Awareness, Engagement, Collaboration, and Sustainability. Let me speak to each of them briefly.
 - AWARENESS – our chief concern has been to create more opportunities on campus to help students think more analytically about global issues.
 - ENGAGEMENT – we also wanted to create opportunities where people can discuss and exchange ideas. In short, we wanted to find ways for students and members of our community to become more involved in international problem finding and solving.

- COLLABORATION – We want students and others to appreciate that working with others is not just necessary but more effective.
- SUSTAINABILITY -- Understanding global issues and realities is not just something we do at a particular time in our lives. These issues and realities will always be a part of us, and we owe it ourselves, to our families, friends, and others to remain attentive.
- The mainstay of GAC activities has been quarterly symposiums that focus on a particular theme or issue.
- For example, we just finished this week a Ten Years After (9/11) Symposium. It included four weekly discussions of how our thinking has evolved over the past decade regarding security, our responses to terrorism, religious tolerance and cooperation, and the needs and challenges of supporting military veterans.
- Last year, we organized three similar symposiums:
- Fall quarter we hosted a symposium on Human Migration in which we discussed:
 - immigration policy in the U.S. and in other countries
 - political asylum, and
 - the impact of immigration on one's identity and citizenship
- Several of the speakers at that symposium spoke from personal experience as immigrants and political refugees which resonated in particular with student audiences.
- Winter quarter we organized a symposium on International Humanitarian Assistance which highlighted the work of several local nongovernment organizations (NGOs), such as Schools for Salone, in the delivery of humanitarian assistance overseas.
- Spring quarter we hosted a Global Commons Symposium that sought to highlight some of the “newer” international challenges, such as public health, food, and ocean resources.
- For a complete list of events held in earlier years, go to the GAC website listed on my business card, copies of which I will leave with Monica.
- We strive for these events to be conversations rather than lectures. And it would appear that we are succeeding. Evening events are always scheduled to end by 8:30 pm but most of the time people hang around to continue chatting. Some of the best conversations it seems have happened after the event was formally over.
- Most of our programs combine evening and daytime events, which tend to draw somewhat different audiences. Evening events draw more people from the off-campus community, whereas daytime events tend to draw more students, faculty and staff on campus.
- Attendance ranges from 20 to 100, but I never felt that audience size was the major measure of success. Rather it was the intensity of the discussions that a presentation provoked. A really successful event is one at which members of the

audience begin talking with and challenging each other. The speaker becomes just another discussant. This is what occurred two nights ago: attendance was lower than hoped for, but the discussion of the needs of military veterans was animated and thought-provoking.

- We try to be responsive to both student interests and to what is going on in the world currently.
- For example, last spring during the start of the uprising in Libya, some international students asked us to help them organize a sort of town hall meeting on the subject. What they presented at the meeting was not your usual PBS Newshour backgrounder.
- But it gave them ownership of the conversation which is an important step in enhancing student involvement. And it prompted a bit of critical thinking and dialogue about the Middle East that likely would not have happened otherwise.
- Just yesterday I received an email from the Libyan student who came to me for help with this project. Two pictures were attached of him back in Libya sporting army fatigues and weapons. He says that he will return to campus in January; I trust he will leave his AK-47 behind.
- Other activities we have undertaken include:
 - Great Discussions, weekly small group dialogues with community members, faculty and students centered on current foreign policy issues.
 - We are entering into a partnership with the Evans School at the University of Washington that will result in us occasionally hosting members of the Humphrey Fellows Program at Shoreline.
 - The Humphrey Fellows Program, organized and funded by the U.S. Department of State, brings mid-level professionals from a dozen other countries to Seattle for a year to gain hands-on experience and knowledge of life in the U.S.
 - This year's class includes participants from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.
 - We are looking forward to connecting our students with this outstanding group of professionals, and the Humphrey Fellows seem eager to interact with us in order to understand the role that community colleges play in our education system.
 - Finally, we hope to launch soon a program that will help students find internationally oriented internship opportunities with local business, non-profit organization, and public agencies
 - Are we making a difference? That is a tough question. I can only mention a few examples of things that, in my humble opinion, suggest that we are.
 - Last winter we hosted a symposium on International Humanitarian Assistance, as mentioned earlier. One guest was the Director of a nonprofit organization that collects and refurbishes computers, and then sends them overseas to support NGOs doing development work. As a result of what students learned from him,

they organized a computer collection drive that netted scores of computers and monitors for the refurbishment program.

- In total, a dozen individuals came to campus during that particular symposium to discuss their international humanitarian work, and in several instances students and members of the community asked how they could become more involved.
- One more example, just after the earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010, students asked for help in creating a venue for the community to discuss relief efforts and what they could do to help.

FOREIGN SERVICE CAREER

- Before my current career as educator and “international provocateur” I was a mid-level officer in a small U.S. Government agency, the Foreign Agricultural Service.
- Now, my training was in Political Science. I dabbled a bit in Economics, but I was never very good at it. And I never had a class in the agricultural sciences or even agricultural economics. I used to say that I would not know wheat if I tripped over it! So, what the hell was I doing being an agricultural specialist?
- The answer, as anyone familiar with U.S. agricultural policy -- or for that matter the agricultural policy of any country -- is that my training as a political scientist probably prepared me more for what I was doing than any of that other stuff.
- I spent about half of my government career living overseas in China, Peru and Guatemala, and I traveled extensively throughout China, and in Central and South America.
- My work varied by location which made it interesting. In China I mostly reported on local production and trade of things like wheat, kind of important crop to the economy of Washington State.
- An appreciation for local politics, especially outside Beijing, and finding independent, reliable sources of information, was critical to figuring out what was real and what was not.
- In Central America and again in South America I negotiated some 15 food aid agreements. The U.S. donated or sold on very cheap credit products like wheat and soybeans, and the local governments in exchange would agree to undertake certain development projects.
- Before joining the government I lived in Nigeria for a year where I taught political science at the University of Jos. So I guess I have about 12 or 13 years of international experience in total.
- And what did I learn from living and working overseas that is of benefit to my work at Shoreline Community College?
 - First, that absolutes do not work in trying to understand people and problems. Most of the time it is not clear who are the “good guys” and the “bad guys,” and even asking that question was usually not very helpful in solving problems.

- Second, the importance of seeing things from another person's perspective. In theory, this often seems easy to do, but in reality putting aside your own preconceptions can be challenging.
- Third, appreciation for what we have in the United States, and what others yearn for. I'll elaborate on that in a moment, but before I do, I want to add that of course you do not have to go overseas to learn these lessons, but I would argue it helps.
- I recently had the opportunity to participate in a discussion of American values with the current class of Humphrey Program Fellows at mentioned earlier.
- The topic was "How Americans View America," and I was one of four persons on the panel.
- One of the questions was "what is the most important thing to me about being an American?" My answer was probably as much a product of living overseas as it was growing up in this country.
- What I said, In brief, was:
 - First, the opportunities we have for self advancement.
 - Second, low levels of political instability here in the U.S. and the high cost of protest elsewhere. Think about it, in Syria hundred of people are being killed exercising their right to protest. Here the mayor is serving coffee to the Occupy protesters in downtown Seattle.
 - Third, the lack of worry about money in the bank. Not "do I have enough?" – we all worry about that -- but rather:
 - Will the bank steal my money?
 - Will the bank be seized by the government and I lose everything?
 - Or, will the value of my money suddenly collapse overnight because of a devaluation of the national currency?
 - Finally, we have an abundance of choices and variety of just about everything here, from climate, to food, to education, to career choices.
- The point is that living overseas and dealing with other cultures increased my awareness of differences and complexity, and I will never lose the urge to engage internationally.

WORKING TO ADVANCE CAMPUS INTERNATIONALIZATION AT SCC

- I would like to say a few words about efforts to internationalize our campuses and about our roles in that.
- Many, probably most, campuses including those represented here have stepped up their game of recruiting international students.
- This has been driven by both program and financial concerns:

- Almost everyone realizes the benefits of being “global,” and how can you do that without having a robust international student (and faculty) presence on your campus?! ...
- ... and, let’s be honest, international students are an increasingly important revenue stream, as the state continues to lower its financial support for colleges and universities. [“Cash cows” is a term that even some of our own international students use to refer to their status.]
- For several years Shoreline too has been involved in efforts to internationalize its campus.
- The International Education Director is the primary person who has tried to keep that goal on track and on the minds of the College’s leaders, not an easy task as we lurch from one financial crisis to another.
- The GAC works closely with International Education and others on campus to support programs that have a similar motive. For example, the college has student/faculty exchange agreements with several foreign colleges and schools and a Study Abroad program, both of which the International Education office directs.
- A Campus Internationalization Leadership Team has been formed at SCC and I am a member of that team. One of the things we are doing is setting goals and trying to measure our progress in, for example, internationalizing our curriculum, and deepening exchanges among students.
- As advisors we play an important role in many of these efforts.
- One of most important ways we can help it to encourage and nurture interactions between international and local students, both inside and outside the classroom.
- We can empower international students and build their self-confidence by encouraging them to share their perspectives on their own country, their impressions of the United States, and events in third countries.
- Just think about recent events in the Middle East, Haiti, Japan, and China. How can we leverage those events to further global education? And how can our students from those places help us?
- As advisors we undoubtedly have the greatest contact with international students on our campus. But why stop there?
- Think of yourself as advising not just international students but encouraging them to interact and learn from each other.
 - How can we encourage international students to attend issue forums such as meeting the challenges of world hunger?
 - How can international students make domestic students comfortable to attend international celebrations, such as Dia de Los Muertos, International Labor Day, or events like Japanese culture day last week on the SCC campus?

- Such events offer an opportunity to reinforce skills and concepts being taught in classes such as writing, logic, business, and nursing. They encourage cross-cultural learning. And, they give ownership of part of campus life to international students.
- All of this involves breaking down a lot of cultural, language, and logistical barriers, as well as institutional and bureaucratic barriers that we all know exist. Let's get on with it!
- And to those of you who advise domestic students on opportunities such as work and study abroad, please remind them ...
 - You don't have to go overseas to be globally aware and engaged. There are plenty of opportunities in our own communities and on our campuses.
 - Even if you do not go overseas, you will quickly realize that almost every job and profession is somehow globally-related – trade, banking, farming, to name just a few – and you will be affected by global affairs.

CLOSING

- I would like to end with a few “tips for life” that have worked for me.
- First, all of us on occasion stand on the shoulders of giants. There is nothing wrong with building on the ideas of others and acknowledging it.
- Second and closely related, I believe in “R&D”: “rip-off and duplicate” (wise words from Tonya Drake, Dean of Student Success at SCC). For example, I have no qualms about acknowledge that the GAC is modeled after the World Affairs Council that has existed in Seattle for many years.
- Third, do not reinvent wheels, or anything else for that matter. Instead go back to R&D.
- Fourth, there is an abundance of experience and expertise out there, sometimes very close by. Tap into it. Puget Sound is rich in human and organizational resources with experience in global development, trade, diplomacy and education.
- For example, how many other states have the equivalent of Global Washington, a non-profit organization that advocates on international development issues?
- Fifth, we often end up preaching to the choir. That's worthy in itself, to share your passion with other like-minded individuals. But the real challenge is to reach new audiences, to grow the choir.
- Sixth and closely related, recognize that not every new choir member will share your policy views or your passion.
- And finally, I believe that it isn't just famous people or folks living far away in major urban centers like New York, Beijing, or even Seattle who are globally affected and effective.

- Maybe that was true a century ago, or even fifty years ago. But today we are living in a world in which the great “out there” affects the great “in here.” and visa versa, and we all need to be better aware of it and dealing with it.
- Help us make a better world for everyone, no exceptions!
- Thank you and enjoy the rest of the conference.