

Entry into Foreign Affairs

This issue of *Public Diplomacy Today* focuses on ways that Americans, and especially Rising Professionals, can gain entry into the world of foreign affairs.

The idea for this issue came from a new member of the PDCA Board, **Shaz Akram**, who argued at a recent PDCA Communication Committee meeting that the organization should do more in terms of mentoring and advising our younger members about how to begin their careers in the international arena.

We are fortunate to have articles by four Rising Professionals and a recent graduate outlining their experiences.

✦ **Adam Footlik** provides the perspective of a Civil Service employee.

✦ **Aaron Franke** speaks as a new FSO.

✦ **Loren Hurst** went the route of a contractor.

✦ **Jeffrey Simmons** describes his experience with the Rangel Fellowship.

✦ **Riley Busbee** describes her efforts to secure an undergraduate internship in the State Department. ▣

Beginning with this issue, we will send the "hard" copy of the newsletter only to those who have paid their dues.

Comments may be sent to editor@publicdiplomacy.org.

USAGM CEO Amanda Bennett to Focus on U.S. International Broadcast Media

Amanda Bennett, the CEO of the U.S. Agency for Global Media, will discuss USAGM and its entities at a hybrid program on Monday, Sept. 11, 2023, at noon EDT.

Bennett's appearance marks the year anniversary since she was confirmed by the Senate to run the agency that oversees VOA, RFE/RL, Radio-TV Martí, the Middle East Broadcasting Network, Radio Free Asia, and the Open Technology Fund. Bennett will discuss new developments at US-AGM, including reaching new Russian- and Mandarin-speaking audiences, efforts to fight censorship and disinfor-

mation, and a proposed move from the Cohen Building on Independence Ave.

Before assuming the CEO's position, Bennett served as the VOA Director 2016-2020. A graduate of Harvard College, Bennett spent more than two decades at the *Wall Street Journal*,

including serving as a correspondent in China. A longtime journalist, Bennett was the editor of the *Philadelphia Enquirer* and the *Lexington, Ky, Herald-Leader*, among other positions.

A light lunch will be provided to those who register. Information on registering for the in-person and Zoom sessions is available on the PDCA [web-site](#). ▣



Amanda Bennett is the September speaker.
(Wilson Center)

Capturing The News: Trump and the Voice of America

The August 7 First Monday Forum will feature Dr. Kate Wright (University of Edinburgh), who will discuss the new Oxford University Press book *Capturing the News: Trump and the Voice of America*.

The book analyzes how political appointees, White



House officials, and right-wing media influenced VOA—changing its reporting of the Black Lives Matter movement, the presidential

election, and its contested aftermath.

Along with her co-authors Martin Scott and Mel Bunce, Wright asks: "How did the Trump administration capture one of the world's most important public service news networks?"

The program will take place at noon ET on August 7 via Zoom. To register, go to the [website](#).

The mission of the Public Diplomacy Council of America is to encourage excellence and honor achievement in the professional practice, academic study, and advocacy for public diplomacy.

President's Column

PDCA's NEW BOARD MEMBERS

By Joel Anthony Fischman

On May 17 PDCA completed its first annual cycle and elected a new slate of officers and directors to lead its second-year growth. Board members serve for staggered three-year terms, with terms expiring on May 31. They may serve for two consecutive terms. The new Board (2023-24) has 21 members, the full complement stipulated in the bylaws. The complete list is in the masthead on page 8.

Six members of the 2022-23 Board, **Aaron Franke, Alan Heil, Claudia Anyaso, Ambassador Greta Morris, Helle Dale, and Michael Schneider**, stepped down. Several had served for years in one or both of PDCA's predecessor organizations, the PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA and the PUBLIC DIPLOMACY COUNCIL. We thank them all for their service and look forward to years of their continued active participation.

We welcome seven new members to the Board, **Ambassador Larry Wohlers, Tania Chomiak-Salvi, Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne, Vivian Walker, Arthur Berger, Shaz Akram, and Adam Footlik**. They represent a breadth of experience that enriches PDCA and brings perspective to our mission.

Amb. Larry Wohlers, vice president: Larry's 37-year career in USIA and State included PAO at Embassy Moscow



when it was overseeing \$35 million in exchanges in the early 2000s. He also served as chief of staff to the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and U.S. ambassador to the Central African Republic. In retirement, he has worked on African security issues for the UN and USG, while settling with his wife onto a 40-acre property in rural Virginia, where he is learning how to restore native habitat. He was a long-time board member of Youth for Understanding, a high school exchange non-profit.

Tania Chomiak-Salvi, secretary: Tania retired in 2017, after 25 years with USIA and State. She has since been teaching public diplomacy, devoting a good chunk of her time as a PD instructor. This summer she is conducting a second session of a course she developed called "Diplomatic Skills Training for Scientists" for Meridian International and the National Science Policy Network. Tania is devoted to legislative advocacy to end breast cancer, working with the National Breast Cancer Coalition. She also spends significant time supporting her heritage-homeland of Ukraine.

Amb. Earl Anthony Wayne, Membership and Outreach co-chair: Tony is a Distinguished Diplomat in Residence and Professorial Lecturer at AU's School of International Service and Advisory Board Co-Chair of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Mexico Institute. He served at State from 1975 to 2015, including as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and



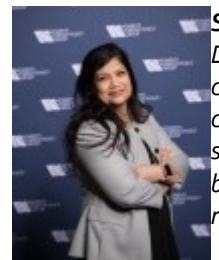
to Argentina, DCM in Afghanistan, and Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs, achieving the rank of Career Ambassador.

Vivian Walker, Training, Mentoring, and Professional Development co-chair: Vivian, who holds the rank of Minister-Counselor, is Executive Director of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, an Adjunct Professor at GU's School of Foreign Service, and a member of the Foreign Service Journal Editorial Board. She graduated from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and earned her doctorate in English language and literature from the University of Chicago.

Arthur Berger, Communication Committee co-chair: Arthur retired as a senior Foreign Service officer in 1995 after a 25-year career, including a tour as NEA spokesman (1986-89). Arthur subsequently directed public affairs and communications at the American Jewish Committee and the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science. In 2000, he joined the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as communications director, focusing on the museum's international and diplomatic relations.

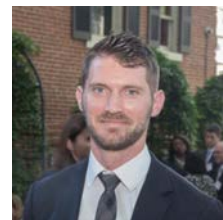


Shaz Akram, Development chair: Shaz currently serves on the board of directors of



mentee.org. She most recently was Executive Director of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. Shaz brings a wealth of experience in program development, nonprofit management, international education, and foreign affairs, including as deputy director of the Fulbright Association. Shaz, a Nigerian-born Pakistani, began her career working for the civil services in Pakistan before moving to the U.S.

Adam Footlik, Rising Professionals representative: Adam is currently a program officer in State/ECA for the International Visitor Leadership Program, focusing on projects for Iraq and Qatar



and regional projects for the Middle East and North Africa. He previously worked at the U.S. Department of Justice, where he assisted foreign authorities in obtaining electronic evidence from the U.S. to advance criminal investigations. Adam has also designed and implemented international exchange programs for the US-China Education Trust and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guiyang, China. See also his article on page three.

Special thanks goes to **Michael Schneider**, who chaired the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee that nominated the new Board. Mike, a former PDAA president, has stepped down from the Board, but he promises to remain active. We will rely on his good counsel. ▣

Joel

Entry into Foreign Affairs Work

THE CIVIL SERVICE ROUTE: THREE CAREER TIPS FOR RISING PROFESSIONALS

By Adam Footlik

Navigating a career path in public diplomacy can be a daunting task for young professionals, but it is attainable. As a newly-elected PDCA Board member, I'd like to share three lessons learned in my journey to becoming a program officer for the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP).

ence. In 2017, I began working as a program associate at the US-China Education Trust (USCET), a non-profit with only five employees dedicated to promoting mutual understanding between the United States and China. USCET entrusted me with conducting program evaluations, drafting remarks, and even leading a speaking tour across China for two renowned authors. These professional growth opportunities may not have been available at a larger organization with strictly administrative entry-level positions.

joined the Public Diplomacy Council at the invitation of former PDCA co-president and current Board member Sherry Mueller. Participating in Rising Professionals networking events, I connected with members who shared my passion for international exchange, including **Jim Kelman** and **Peter Kovach**. From meeting for a cup of coffee to providing a reference, Sherry, Jim, and Peter each generously offered his/her time and expertise to aid me in reaching my career goals. Peter continues to serve as my mentor in the PDCA mentorship program, which I encourage all members to join.

tersects with diverse disciplines.

While there is no single path to a career in public diplomacy, gaining experience at a small organization, connecting with PDCA colleagues, and embracing your full professional background can all contribute to your success.✉

Adam Footlik is a program officer for the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and a Board member of the Public Diplomacy Council of America. His comments here do not necessarily reflect the views of the State Department or any U.S. government entity.



PDCA Board Member Adam Footlik

1) Small Organizations Can Offer Big Responsibility

Embarking on your career at a small organization can offer unique opportunities to build substantive experi-

2) Get Involved in the PDCA Community

PDCA members are incredibly supportive and eager to aid in one another's career development. In 2021, I

3) Embrace Diverse Experience

Don't hesitate to apply for a public diplomacy position, even if your current field seems unrelated. Preparing for my State Department interview, I worried that my previous three years' experience at the Justice Department would be considered irrelevant. A key step was to reframe my work in international law enforcement as an asset to work in public diplomacy. Now, as I design exchange projects around the themes of combating transnational crime and anti-corruption, it's clear that my fears were unfounded. Whether you have experience in music, entrepreneurship, or law enforcement, public diplomacy in-

MY ROAD TO THE FOREIGN SERVICE

By Aaron Franke

My road to the Foreign Service began early. By 7th grade, I was certain I wanted to become a diplomat. Despite coming from a small town where international travel is non-existent and interest in global affairs is limited, I nevertheless had a strong draw to Foreign Service. By the age of ten, I was a current events buff consuming anything related to world events. Naturally, the State Department was frequently encountered. For this reason, answering how I first learned about the Foreign Service is difficult: It simply feels like something I have always known.

Preparation for the Foreign Service thus began ear-

(Continued from page 3)

ly. Many future FSOs, through their parents and background, start early accumulating global life experiences that act as perfect fodder for potential Personal Narratives and stellar resumes. I didn't have those advantages, and I knew that to be competitive, I would need to work for it.

My undergraduate degree at Seton Hall University in Diplomacy further clarified that I needed to stand out in an accomplished field. Many class-



Aaron Franke, FSO and former PDCA Board Member

mates had family working in international business, spoke multiple languages, and possessed a passport full of stamps, whereas I didn't even have a passport. Nevertheless, I worked hard earning the grades, pursuing internships, and building experience. Ultimately, I credit Peace Corps with truly opening the door of possibility for the Foreign Service. Two years in western China allowed me to build international experience, polish a citizen diplomat mindset, and see much of Asia, not only making me more competitive, but also cementing my desire to become a diplomat.

Following Peace Corps, I began at American University's School of International Service. Completing Dr. Mueller's practicum introduced me to the Public Diplomacy Council of America and, for the first time, allowed me the opportunity to interact with actual FSOs, an experience that up until that point felt abstract. The advice I received from these FSOs and PDCA members ultimately made all the difference in my Personal Narrative editing.

Finally passing all stages of the FSOT in late 2021, I was sworn in April 2022. Now I am happily serving my first tour in Guangzhou, China, and look forward to the rest of my career as an economic officer. When asked my advice for passing the FSOT, I say that becoming a qualified candidate isn't about a week or two brushing up on current events, nor about one solid work or internship experience: it's truly about building the qualifications and experiences over years of work and dedication. For a job such as this, it is truly worth the effort.✕

Aaron Franke is a former member of the PDCA Board of Directors.

UTILIZING INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY SKILLS SETS: THE CONTRACTOR ROUTE INTO FOREIGN AFFAIRS

By Loren Hurst

When I first began my foreign affairs journey as a college junior, overseas studies and work was an exotic experience. Taking the risk to leave home and explore strange new lands was not all that common. However, technology has largely redefined what a career in foreign affairs looks like today. One of my favorite phrases is "the Internet killed geography." A simple Zoom call can connect you to anyone, anywhere in the world. This has a big impact on how diplomacy is



Loren Hurst, left, as moderator of a studio program on planetary defense

conducted and the evolution of how one can work internationally.

In my current role as a State Department contractor, technology management and deployment is a key part of what I do. Contractors are specialists—they are brought on board to perform specific, often technical functions within the overall mission of a bureau. In this sense, contractors are consultants and are often relied on to demonstrate their expertise and innovative capacity. A big difference between contractors and civil service employees is that civil service are generalists and perform management roles. Practically-speaking, the two types work closely together, and in many cases, the two functions blend together.

My own journey with the State Department began as a locally employed staff member, or LES, in the U.S. Mission to the European Union. Technically, I was a federal government employee, but my role was very specialized as the Public Diplomacy Network Coordinator. Working closely with Foreign Service



As a virtual program producer and moderator, Hurst uses imagery and storytelling as a basis for compelling presentations

Officers and other local staffers, my role combined editorial duties, press relations, and technology management. Upon my return to Washington, D.C., I became a contractor, tasked with developing the first State Department podcasting program.

In my experience, the contractor role aligns better with my professional temperament and the type of work I enjoy doing day-to-day. I am entrepreneurial in nature and enjoy building projects through stakeholder engagement and iterative methods. The podcasting project was a good example of this, in that I was able to take a concept that had never been tried before and build it into a useful tool for overseas public affairs offices. In my work today, I also indulge my innovation and media proclivities by employing design-thinking methodologies to virtual program development and moderating live programs.

For anyone looking to work at the State Department who enjoys some flexibility and using their innovative side, contracting may be a good fit. Whereas federal government employees are required to perform core management functions, contractors have a bit more room to develop their innovation and technology skill sets. **Loren Hurst produces, directs, and mod-**

erates live stream and broadcast media programs in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Global Public Affairs. He is a PDCA Rising Professional; his blogs can be viewed [here](#).

STAR TREK AND THE RANGEL FELLOWSHIP

By Jeffrey Simmons, Jr.

When I was sworn into the Foreign Service on July 6, 2021, a lifelong dream came to fruition. A love of *Star Trek* drove me to consider the unknown, a Model UN experience taught me that I could thrive on an international stage, and a commitment to service inspired me to protect my home. These passions cemented themselves into my dream to become a diplomat. However, in my hometown, Birmingham, AL, the Foreign Service rarely came up in casual conversation. The only diplomats I knew of worked at the UN. It was my own research and initiative that landed me on the webpage of careers.state.gov. And boldly, I thought to myself, I want to be an FSO.

In pursuit of this journey, I chose to attend the HBCU that would best prepare me for the future and became a third generation *Rattler* at Florida Ag-

ricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). At FAMU, I met a Diplomat in Residence who urged me to apply for the [Rangel Summer Enrichment program](#), a 6-week congressionally-funded program to introduce diverse students to the Foreign Service. I excitedly agreed. In Summer 2017, I became a Rangel Scholar. I traveled to DC, studied diplomacy, honed my professional skills, and met real-life diplomats. By summer's end, I wanted nothing more than to become a public diplomacy officer. Enter, the Rangel Fellowship.

The [Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship Program](#)

was established in 2002 by Congressman Charles B. Rangel after a trip to an overseas post exposed a lack of diversity in the Foreign Service. This led him to petition Congress to ensure our diplomatic corps truly represented America. The program and its sister program, the [Pickering Fellowship](#), provide Fellows graduate school funding, two summer internships, and an appointment to the Foreign Ser-

(Continued on page 7)



Senator Chuck Schumer and Jeffrey Simmons who was Agra site officer for a February 2023 CODEL.

In Memoriam

Frank Albert, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer with USIA and the State Department, died June 15 in Washington, DC, at age 82. After graduating from the University of Oregon, Albert began his career in international affairs by working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand. His other overseas assignments took him to Laos, Papua New Guinea, Belgium, The Netherlands, Latvia, South Africa, Myanmar, and Indonesia. Albert also worked for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and a private consulting firm. In retirement he continued his lifelong love of travel.

Michael Canning, a retired USIA Foreign Service officer, died at his home in Washington, DC, June 1 from leukemia at age 82. A graduate of North Dakota State University, Canning began his

USIA career in 1965. His assignments as an information or cultural affairs officer included Managua, Lima, Kampala, Nairobi, Tehran, Rome, Buenos Aires, and Brasilia. After retiring in 1992, he became a movie reviewer for his local newspaper, *The Hill Rag*. Canning also wrote *Hollywood on the Potomac*, a guide to movies made in or about Washington, and was active in many local groups, including the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, the Hill Center, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, and Friends of Southeast Library. He also served as a past president of the USIA Alumni Association (USIAAA), one of the predecessor organizations of PDCA.

Hodding Carter III, the State Department spokesman during the latter part of the Carter Administration, died May 11 in Chapel Hill, NC, due to complications from a series of strokes. He was 88. A Princeton graduate, Marine Corps veteran, and Mississippi journalist, Carter became Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs in 1979 and gained prominence with his televised news conferences during the

Iran hostage crisis. After leaving the State Department in 1980, he worked as a columnist, broadcast journalist, and panelist, frequently appearing on such program as "This Week With David Brinkley" and PBS' "Frontline".

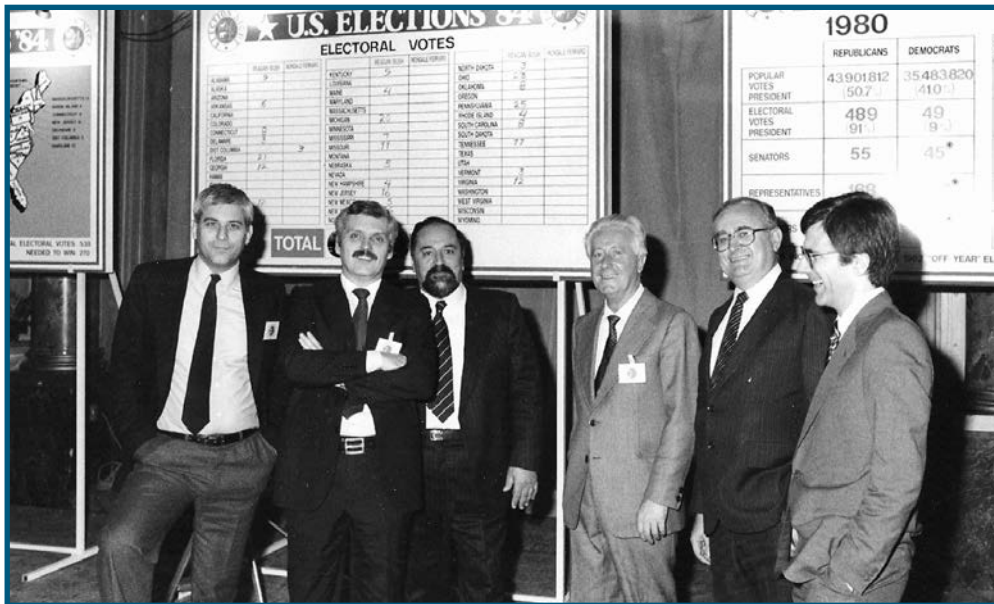
Vello Ederma, a 35-year veteran of the Voice of America and USIA, passed away at his home in Springfield, VA, May 11. He was 88. Born in in Rakvere, Estonia, he and his family

man Resources. Following his retirement in 2009, Ledford served nine years on the Foreign Service Labor Relations Board. He was also active in local politics, his homeowners association, and a variety of charitable activities.

Jean Louise Perelli, 81, a longtime USIA employee, died May 21 at English Meadows Assisted Living in Manassas, VA. A native of Boswell, PA, her career with the federal government

spanned more than 43 years, 38 of them with USIA and then an additional five years at State as a waiver review officer in the Office of Consular Affairs.

Cornelius "Neal" Walsh, a retired USIA and State Foreign Service officer, died May 18. His overseas assignments included working at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations agencies based in Geneva. Walsh later served as a senior advisor to the Under Secretary for Public Di-



Election Night party at the Excelsior Hotel in Rome, 1984. L-r: David Wagner, Michael Canning, Bruno Scarfi, Enrico Chini, Leonard J. Baldyga, Joe B. Johnson. Joe's Appreciation of Mike Canning is available on the [PDCA website](#).

fled the country in 1944 to escape the Soviet invasion. The family lived as refugees in Germany until immigrating to the United States in 1949 through the Displaced Persons Act. Graduating from George Washington University in 1957, Ederma worked at VOA and USIA as a writer, journalist, and political analyst. In retirement he served as vice president of the Estonian American National Council and the Estonian World Council, as well as the three-time chairman of the Joint Baltic American National Committee—positions in which he tirelessly advocated NATO membership for the Baltic nations.

Stephen Reid Ledford, 69, died February 21 at the Virginia Hospital Center due to septic shock. Ledford graduated from the University of Virginia in 1975 and went on to a 34-year career in the federal government that included work at the Departments of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and State, as well as the U.S. Information Agency. At USIA he was the head of the labor, policies, and benefits division in the Agency's Office of Hu-

plomacy and Public Affairs at the State Department. As his colleague, retired Ambassador Harry Thomas, noted, "Neal stressed the importance of talking (very long in his case) and listening quietly to everyone no matter how humble their station in life, in their language, often without an interpreter, to ensure that our government knew exactly what they thought and what they expected of the United State, to ensure that Washington knew their real beliefs and expectations."²⁴

Obituaries are compiled by Interim Member News Editor Domenick DiPasquale. Obituaries and Appreciations may be submitted to Editor@publicdiplomacy.org



Jeffrey Simmons greets visiting students at Kolkata's American Center prior to a program during a TDY as PAO.

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vice in exchange for a 5-year service commitment.

I prepared myself to apply for the Rangel Fellowship by illustrating how I demonstrated each of the 13 dimensions with the STAR method, serving as a student leader, conducting mock interviews, working extensively on my personal statements, and connecting with Fellows. I treated my fellowship preparation like a job—and it paid off on November 9, 2018, when I called my mom and told her that her son was going to be a diplomat.

After receiving the fellowship, I graduated from FAMU, completed my M.A. at American University in 2021, and joined the 201st/164th FS Orientation Class.

Currently, I serve as a Public Diplomacy Officer at U.S. Embassy New Delhi. It's my first post, but it has become a new home for me. Every day, I get to support PD operations in one of our largest foreign missions and work with colleagues who continually inspire me. I volunteer on the FAST [First and Second Tour] Committee, serve as a social

sponsor, and am famous for my sweet potato pie.

My time as a Fellow helped mold me into the person that I am today, and I am proud of the value that my background and story bring to U.S. foreign policy.▣

Jeffrey Simmons is a *First Tour officer in New*

Delhi and a member of PDCA.

THE UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIP ROUTE

By Riley Busbee

Connecting with the State Department through an undergraduate internship is one of the most accessible and exciting ways to begin a Public Diplomacy-based career. It opened a world of opportunity for me, gave me many incredible mentors, and started me in a career I love.

I spent much of high school and early college participating in Model

United Nations where I learned the importance of diplomacy, leadership, and international affairs. This work pointed me toward the State Department, where I could utilize these skills in real life rather than in a simulation.

State Department internships are notoriously competitive, so to be successful it is essential to prepare ahead of time. Typically, the in-person internship application is released 8-10 months before the session. If you're interested in an internship, sign up for the mailing list and be prepared to submit your application on USAJOBS whenever it drops.

Showing your passion for the internship rather than simply a desire to pad your resume will take you far, so make sure you're applying for offices you're actually interested in! If you are unable to do an in-person internship, investigate the Virtual Foreign Service Internship Program. It is a lower time commitment, allows for remote work, and still gives you many opportunities to meet Foreign and Civil Service Officers working in this field. State Department internships can give you a foot in the door to a career in Public Diplomacy if you are willing

to put in the work.▣

Riley Busbee graduated from the College of William & Mary, where she was Secretary-General of the Model United Nations. She was an intern in the Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources (R/PPR) on the Professional Development Unit (PDU).



Riley Busbee (center) while serving as an undergraduate intern in the Department of State.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TODAY

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