

John Edwin Mroz Global Leadership Institute



Annual Report 2025-2026



COLLEGE OF
CHARLESTON
MROZ GLOBAL
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



COLLEGE OF
CHARLESTON
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES,
CULTURES, AND WORLD AFFAIRS

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It's hard to believe that the Mroz Global Leadership Institute has been around for 5+ years. During this time, we've established a strong reputation on campus and in the Charleston community. We've been bringing distinguished guests to campus to discuss important global challenges. Our speakers are current and former diplomats, civil and foreign

servants, foreign policy experts, academics, and practitioners. Our professional development programs prepare students to pursue competitive opportunities, leading to placements in the Peace Corps, Fulbright programs, Critical Language Scholarships, and graduate programs.

In 2025-26, we continued helping our students develop skills of global fluency and promoting diplomatic literacy on campus by organizing public talks and multi-day summits, small-group discussions, and class visits with guest speakers. Our goal is to help our students have a better understanding of diplomacy, interconnected global challenges, and the role of languages and cultures in fostering international cooperation and cross-cultural understanding.

In the World Affairs Colloquium Series, our speaker, Dr. Ryan Berg, focused on Latin America and the redirection of the US foreign policy towards the Western Hemisphere. The Portuguese Ambassador to the US discussed multilateral cooperation and its importance for Portugal and the challenges facing the NATO alliance. Ambassador Lopes gave our students important advice about lifelong education and curiosity: "When you graduate, you are not finishing studying. Instead, you obtain a license to study further."

Our 5th Summit on Diplomacy and International Development was held in conjunction with the 20th Anniversary celebration of the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs (LCWA), in partnership with the College of Charleston Libraries. The summit brought together foreign policy and diplomacy practitioners to examine the intersection of security and development, soft power and foreign assistance, democracy and civil society, and the role of international development in advancing the US's foreign policy.

Our speakers at the summit were NGO leaders and career foreign service officers who have worked at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Department of State. Dr. Rajiv Shah, the President of the Rockefeller Foundation, gave a keynote address highlighting the profound changes in the rules-based world order. In this world, Dr. Shah noted, US moral leadership matters as much as ever, as the world faces global health challenges, energy crises, and food insecurity.





2026 Mroz Institute Annual Report

The students in the Global Ambassadors Program spent a year learning about the challenges and opportunities of foreign service careers. They also worked on practical skills needed to succeed in any foreign policy environment, such as memo writing, policy analysis and briefings. The program culminated in a week-long trip to Washington DC for visits to the Embassy of Ireland, Embassy of Portugal, EU Delegation to the US, National Endowment for Democracy, Pyxera Global, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Meridian International Center, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Through these visits, students heard directly from foreign policy practitioners about the skills, experiences, and professional pathways that contribute to success in the field.

Since we launched the Mroz Institute, the Steering Committee has played a vital role in supporting its vision, goals, and programs. I appreciate the support from the Steering Committee members: Aimee Arias, Vincent Fraley, Larry Gillespie, Theo Groh, Beatriz Maldonado, Malte Pehl, Hilton Smith, and Mitch Sonkin.

Thank you all for your continued support of the Mroz Institute and our programs and your commitment to preparing the next generation of informed, interested, and globally minded leaders.

Max Kovalov

Max Kovalov, Ph.D.
Instructor, Department of International Studies
Bennett Director, Mroz Global Leadership Institute
College of Charleston



Summit guest speakers: David Kramer, Greg Howell, Dr. Rajiv Shah, Nancy Ostrowski, Kawa Hassan, Peter Natiello



2025-2026 ACADEMIC YEAR AT A GLANCE

World Affairs Colloquium Series – 187 guests in attendance

- **The pivot to Latin America and great power competition** – Dr. Berg, Director of the Americas Program at CSIS.
- **Portugal, a NATO ally and a European partner** – Francisco Duarte Lopes, Ambassador of Portugal to the US.

5th Annual Mroz Institute Summit, “Diplomacy and International Development” – 420 guests in attendance

- **Panel Discussion on the State of International Development** – David Kramer, Peter Natiello, Nancy Ostrowski, Greg Howell, Kawa Hassan.
- **Civil Society and Post-Conflict Development in Syria and Iraq** – Kawa Hassan, Nonresident Fellow, Stimson’s Middle East & North Africa Program.
- **Big Bets, keynote address** by Dr. Rajiv Shah, President of the Rockefeller Foundation.
- **Bringing Together Diplomacy, Development, and Defense in Addressing Global Fragility** – Greg Howell, formerly Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID’s Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- **The Case of the Colombian Peace Accords: A 3D Success?** – Peter Natiello, career diplomat with 35 years in the Foreign Service. He served as USAID’s Senior Humanitarian and Development Counselor.
- **The Power of Private Sector Partnerships in Advancing 3D Goals in Africa** – Nancy Ostrowski, a former career diplomat who worked on national economic strategy, the intersection between security and development.
- **Democracy and Human Rights as Pillars of US Foreign Policy** – David Kramer, Executive Director of the George W. Bush Institute.





Student leadership and professional development programs – high-impact interactions with diplomats, foreign service officers, and international leaders

- Chloe Hudgens, Former Global Ambassador and Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand
- Dr. Ryan Berg, Director of the Americas Program at CSIS
- Ambassador Jimmy Story, US Ambassador to Venezuela, 2018-2023
- Ambassador Francisco Duarte Lopes, Ambassador of Portugal to the US
- Dr. Rajiv Shah, President of the Rockefeller Foundation

Field trip to Washington, DC with Global Ambassadors – 7 students

- Embassy of Portugal to the US
- Embassy of Ireland to the US
- EU Delegation to the US
- Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Americas Program
- The Rockefeller Foundation
- National Endowment for Democracy
- Pyxera Global
- Meridian International Center



Student discussion with Dr. Rajiv Shah, President of the Rockefeller Foundation



ABOUT MROZ INSTITUTE: FOUNDING, MISSION & STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The Founding

The John Edwin Mroz Global Leadership Institute (Mroz Institute) is a collaborative partnership between the College of Charleston's School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs (LCWA) and the EastWest Institute (EWI). Since 1980, EWI has facilitated candid discourse among world leaders to form sustainable solutions for major political, economic and security issues. After 40 years of work, the EWI transitioned its operations to several strategic partners, chief among them was the College of Charleston. The formation of the Mroz Institute came with a more than \$2 million gift from the EWI Board of Directors and a nearly \$500,000 gift from longtime EWI supporters, the late Marshall and Arlene Bennett through the Bennett Family Foundation.



John Edwin Mroz



LCWA has a special connection to EWI, as John Mroz was instrumental in the school's creation at the College of Charleston. One of the key initiators, local entrepreneur Hilton Smith, tapped the expertise of his friend, John Mroz, founder of the New York City-based EastWest Institute.

With the help of Mroz's international vision, LCWA opened its doors in 2006. To preserve the legacy of EWI's visionary leader, who passed away in 2014, we created the new John Edwin Mroz Global Leadership Institute housed within LCWA.



The Mission

The mission of the John Edwin Mroz Global Leadership Institute is to promote essential skills of global fluency, educate students about diplomacy, and prepare them to become future global leaders through a comprehensive strategy of international education and experiential learning. We seek to preserve and continue the values and legacy of EWI and its founder, John Edwin Mroz, a fiercely independent champion of conflict prevention and resolution. Issues surrounding public health, the economy, the environment and sustainability, food security and migration affect everyone, everywhere, and are at the heart of our international security. The Mroz Institute cultivates the skills students need to engage with such challenges and, through an emphasis on mentoring, helps develop students who will become international agents of change and global leaders. The programming, colloquia, and archival projects at the heart of the Mroz Institute's mission ensure every College of Charleston degree is an asset in the international marketplace and every student is a potential leader in a tightly interconnected global world.



Strategic Partners

The College of Charleston inherited the EWI legacy alongside four prominent foreign policy organizations that adopted existing EWI programs: the Atlantic Council, the George H. W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations, the Observer Research Foundation America, and the Stimson Center.

EWI's Balkan Dialogues initiative migrated to the Future Europe Initiative at the Atlantic Council, complementing the initiative's existing work on the Western Balkans, which seeks to build further Euro-Atlantic political and economic integration.

EWI's US-China High-Level Political Party Leaders Dialogue is now hosted by the George H. W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations, which has extensive experience organizing Track-2 diplomatic discussions between current and former government officials from the United States and China.

EWI's Middle East and North Africa work moved to the Stimson Center, an independent research center promoting international security, shared prosperity, and justice. Stimson has three decades of experience conducting Track-2 and Track-1.5 diplomacy. Its well-recognized work on water and energy issues will be enhanced by the addition of the hydro-diplomacy project. Stimson also took on both the US-China military-to-military dialogue and the US-Russia military-to-military dialogue.

The institute's Global Cooperation in Cyberspace programmatic work encouraging countries in the Global South to participate in international efforts to moderate the use of cyber weapons and research to improve the security of the technology supply chain transitioned to Observer Research Foundation America, the new Washington-based center of India's leading think tank, the Observer Research Foundation.



GEORGE H. W. BUSH FOUNDATION
FOR U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS
乔治布什美中关系基金会



Atlantic Council

STIMSON



**OBSERVER
RESEARCH
FOUNDATION**



2025-26 PROGRAMMING

World Affairs Colloquium Series

The World Affairs Colloquium Series brings to the campus prominent international leaders who engage our students and campus community in discussions about pressing global challenges. In Fall 2025, we invited Dr. Berg, Director of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.



Ambassador Lopes, President Andrew Hsu, Dean Aimee Arias and Dr. Max Kovalov

In Spring 2026, in partnership with the Zeitgeist Foundation and its President, Klaus Becker, we hosted Francisco Duarte Lopes, the Ambassador of Portugal to the United States, for a timely public talk about the importance of multilateral alliances in addressing security challenges.

In addition to public talks, our speakers visited classes, participated in small-group discussions with students, and shared their perspectives about the interconnected world and the importance of cultivating the next generation of leaders. They shared practical suggestions with students on how to prepare for future careers. Ambassador Lopes' advice to students was to follow their curiosity and resist the pressure to specialize too quickly. He stressed that broad exploration and intellectual openness can create opportunities that are difficult to anticipate early in one's career. Dr. Berg encouraged students to embrace uncertainty and remain open to unexpected opportunities, noting that successful careers are rarely linear. Rather than focusing exclusively on a distant end goal, he advised students to concentrate on producing good work, developing adaptable skills, and taking advantage of opportunities as they arise.



Dr. Berg, Susan Story, and Ambassador Jimmy Story



Ambassador Lopes answering student questions



"The pivot to Latin America and great power competition," Dr. Ryan Berg, Director of the Americas Program at CSIS. September 15, 2025

Dr. Ryan Berg examined the growing strategic importance of Latin America in an era of great power competition. He argued that the region has become an increasingly important arena for US-China rivalry, particularly as China expands its economic, technological, and diplomatic presence through the Belt and Road Initiative. Dr. Berg discussed concerns about declining US influence, China's expanding role in trade, infrastructure, and space activities, and the implications of Beijing's relationships across the hemisphere. He also explored how recent US administrations have placed renewed emphasis on Latin America, highlighting the region's importance for economic security, geopolitical competition, and the broader US national security agenda.



Dr. Ryan Berg



Global Ambassador Annie Sylvester introducing the guest speaker



Dr. Berg's talk on Latin America



2026 Mroz Institute Annual Report

Portugal, a NATO ally and a European partner - by Francisco Duarte Lopes, Ambassador of Portugal to the US. February 4, 2026.



Ambassador Lopes

Ambassador Lopes discussed the importance of multilateralism, international cooperation, and transatlantic partnerships in addressing today's global security challenges. Drawing on Portugal's experience as a member of the European Union and NATO, he argued that openness, predictability, and a rules-based international order remain essential for economic prosperity and international security. Ambassador Lopes strongly believes in the value of US-Portugal relations, academic partnerships, and collaborative approaches to issues such as climate change, migration, and global security.



Ambassador Lopes, President Andrew Hsu,
Dean Aimee Arias and Dr. Max Kovalov



Ambassador Lopes, Dean Aimee
Arias and Dr. Max Kovalov



Ambassador Lopes with students and faculty



5th Annual Mroz Institute Summit: Diplomacy & International Development

Diplomacy Summits became a signature event organized by the Mroz Institute in the spring. The summits are highly anticipated by students, faculty, and community members because they give a unique opportunity to learn from and interact with global experts. This year, we hosted the 5th Annual Summit focusing on Diplomacy & International Development. The summit was held in conjunction with the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs (LCWA) in partnership with the College of Charleston Libraries.



We brought together foreign policy and diplomacy practitioners to examine the intersection of security and development, soft power and foreign assistance, democracy and civil society, and the role of international development in advancing the US's foreign policy. Our speakers were NGO leaders and career foreign service officers who have worked at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Department of State.

Dr. Rajiv Shah, the President of the Rockefeller Foundation, gave an inspiring keynote address. Dr. Shah has been committed to advancing the mission of USAID to end extreme global poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies, while advancing security and prosperity.



Left to right: Max Kovalov, David Kramer, Greg Howell, Nancy Ostrowski, Aimee Arias, Rajiv Shah, Kawa Hassan, John White, Peter Natiello.



Dr. Rajiv Shah

Keynote address by Dr. Rajiv Shah, President of the Rockefeller Foundation.

Dr. Rajiv Shah examined the future of international development at a time of growing uncertainty about global cooperation and foreign assistance. He used examples from his work during the Ebola response efforts, Haiti earthquake recovery, energy access initiatives, and vaccine production in Africa, and showed that evidence-based development programs deliver measurable results. Dr. Shah expressed concern about declining public support for foreign aid and suggested that development organizations must do a better job demonstrating results and explaining why international engagement serves both humanitarian goals and long-term US interests.

Panel discussion on the state of international development – with David Kramer, Peter Natiello, Nancy Ostrowski, Greg Howell, Kawa Hassan.

This panel discussion focused on the current state of international development through the experiences of practitioners who have worked in democracy promotion, humanitarian assistance, public health, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. Panelists reflected on their paths into the field, debated common misconceptions about foreign aid and development assistance, and considered the consequences of recent reductions in US development funding. The conversation also explored the roles of governments, NGOs, and the private sector in supporting development, while addressing both the achievements of past efforts and the challenges that continue to shape the field.



Panel Discussion on international development and foreign aid



Civil society and post-conflict development in Syria and Iraq

- by Kawa Hassan, Nonresident Fellow with Stimson's Middle East and North Africa Program. Kawa Hassan discussed the role of civil society in post-conflict and authoritarian settings, particularly in Iraq and Syria. He argued that durable change often begins with local initiatives, from community discussion groups to medical centers serving vulnerable populations. Authoritarian regimes seek to weaken social trust and civic engagement, while civil society organizations help rebuild community ties, strengthen resilience, and create the foundations for long-term political and social change.



Kawa Hassan



Greg Howell

Bringing Together Diplomacy, Development & Defense in Addressing Global Fragility

- by Greg Howell, former Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. Greg Howell discussed the Global Fragility Act and its emphasis on conflict prevention as a tool of US foreign policy. Howell spent decades in the US Foreign Service and USAID, sharing his insights from his work in development in the Sahel region, Haiti, Niger, and Benin. He explained how coordinated efforts by USAID, the State Department, and the Department of Defense seek to strengthen local institutions, reduce violence, and promote long-term stability before crises emerge. The 3Ds - defense, diplomacy, and development - are essential to addressing the root causes of conflict, creating conditions for lasting peace and regional stability, and advancing US interests.



Peter Natiello

The Case of the Colombian Peace Accords: A 3D Success?

– by Peter Natiello, career diplomat with 35 years in the Foreign Service. He served as USAID’s Senior Humanitarian and Development Counselor.

Peter Natiello drew on his experience working in development in Colombia to explain how security, development, and diplomacy (3Ds) reinforced one another during Colombia’s peace process in the aftermath of the FARC armed conflict. He discussed reintegration programs, rural development, and efforts to weaken armed groups while strengthening state institutions.

The Power of Private Sector Partnerships in Advancing 3D Goals in Africa

– by Nancy Ostrowski, a former career diplomat who worked on national economic strategy, the intersection between security and development.

Nancy Ostrowski challenged the assumption that development is driven primarily by governments and aid agencies. In her view, long-term progress in Africa increasingly depends on attracting private investment to places where political instability, weak infrastructure, and environmental pressures discourage capital. Based on her development work on Djibouti’s water-access projects, she demonstrated how development programs can reduce risk, create commercial opportunities, and offer alternatives to state-directed Chinese investment.



Nancy Ostrowski



David Kramer

Democracy and Human Rights as Pillars of US Foreign Policy - by David Kramer, Executive Director of the George W. Bush Institute.

David Kramer's central question was why Americans should care about democracy abroad. His answer linked events in distant countries to everyday security concerns at home, from Russian cyberattacks targeting US hospitals to the broader effects of corruption and authoritarian influence. Rather than advocating intervention, he focused on helping citizens build independent institutions capable of holding governments accountable and protecting political freedoms. American security is linked to the expansion of freedom abroad.



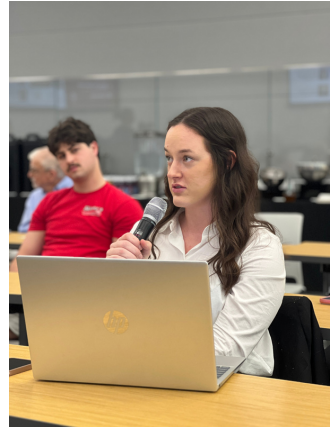
Summit Howell, Nancy Ostrowski, David Kramer



Summit guest speakers



Summit guest speakers at the keynote address



Student questions



Global Ambassador Jake Castino introducing the speaker



Greg Howell, David Kramer,
Nancy Ostrowski, and Peter Natiello



Dr. Blake Scott asking a question



Dr. Rajiv Shah at the welcome reception



Welcome reception



Kawa Hassan and Greg Howell with students



Nancy Ostrowski with students



Kawa Hassan with students



Ambassador Jimmy Story at the welcome reception



Welcome reception



Global Ambassadors Program

The Global Ambassadors program offers students hands-on exposure to international careers, particularly in the Foreign Service, civil service, and foreign affairs organizations. Designed as a yearlong professional development experience, the program connects students with diplomats, civil servants, and experts tackling global challenges.

In 2025–26, seven students met regularly with the Mroz Institute’s director for in-depth discussions on US foreign policy, global affairs, and the inner workings of diplomatic service. Beyond the classroom, they played an active role in Institute programming by helping coordinate guest visits, introducing speakers, and participating in events. The cohort also built professional skills through weekly policy memos and presentations.



Cultural immersion at the
Ethiopian restaurant



Global Ambassadors at the Embassy of Portugal



Global Ambassadors at the EU Delegation to the US



Brief profiles of 2025-26 Global Ambassadors

- **Rhys Baker** is a sophomore majoring in Political Science and International Studies, with a concentration in Global Studies. He is interested in international politics and alternative forms of governance. Rhys hopes to pursue a career in international affairs.
- **Jake Castino** is a rising senior double majoring in International Studies, with a concentration in Global Studies, and History, and minoring in Education. He has studied history and international relations in Athens, Greece, and plans to pursue additional international study and work opportunities. Jake is interested in a career in foreign service, potentially through an NGO, the US Department of State, a diplomatic role, or a related pathway.
- **Lauren Ferhat** is a junior double majoring in International Studies and Spanish, with a concentration in Latin America and the Caribbean and a minor in Leadership for Sustainability. She has studied alongside students in both Iceland and Cuba. Lauren is passionate about community-led international development and plans to work abroad with a B Corp-certified organization.
- **Samantha Goldfrank** is a rising sophomore in the Honors College, working toward a dual degree in Economics and Political Science, with a concentration in Politics, Philosophy, and Law, and a certificate in Global Leadership. She is interested in international law, foreign agreements and trade, and the mitigation of cultural tensions across borders. After graduation, Samantha hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in foreign policy or international relations.
- **Lucas Guyton** is a rising senior in the Honors College, double majoring in History and Political Science with a concentration in Politics, Philosophy, and Law (PPLW). He has a strong interest in international law and multilateral organizations. Lucas has participated in Model U.N., Model O.A.S., and Model A.U., and has studied history in London and Edinburgh. He also serves on the Honor Board and plans to pursue a J.D. to become an international lawyer.
- **Jorja Jersek** is a junior in the Honors College, double majoring in Public Health and Biology on the pre-medical track. With a strong interest in global health, she plans to pursue both a Master's in Public Health and a medical degree. Jorja aspires to practice medicine while consulting for international health organizations to address global health challenges and shape policy.
- **Annie Sylvester** is a senior in the Honors College majoring in International Studies, with a concentration in Global Studies, and minoring in Political Science and Spanish. She studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain, where she developed a passion for language learning. Annie is interested in international migration policy in the Mediterranean region and hopes to pursue a career in foreign service.



High-impact interactions with guest speakers

- **Chloe Hudgens**, Former Global Ambassador and Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand
- **Dr. Ryan Berg**, Director of the Americas Program at CSIS
- **Ambassador Jimmy Story**, US Ambassador to Venezuela, 2018–2023
- **Francisco Duarte Lopes**, Ambassador of Portugal to the US
- **Dr. Rajiv Shah**, President of the Rockefeller Foundation



After small-group discussion with Dr. Ryan Berg



Global Ambassadors at the talk



Discussion about foreign service with Ambassador Story



Field trip to Washington, March 2-6, 2026



At the Embassy of Portugal

Embassy of Portugal to the US

We met with Ambassador Lopes and his team to discuss how embassies collect information, interpret political developments, and communicate their significance to policymakers in Lisbon. Embassy staff described the challenges of forecasting events, the impact of near-instant communication, and Portugal's foreign-policy priorities, including Europe, the Portuguese-speaking world, multilateralism, and cooperation with the United States on climate and ocean issues.



Discussion at the
Meridian International Center

Meridian International Center

At Meridian, we met professionals whose careers spanned the Peace Corps, Fulbright, refugee resettlement, education policy, and international affairs. Our host, Sarah Gentry, a College of Charleston alumna, emphasized that careers rarely follow a straight path and encouraged students to focus on building relationships, gaining experience, and remaining open to opportunities. They also highlighted the value of exchange programs, people-to-people diplomacy, and long-term trust building.



Visiting the NED

National Endowment for Democracy

The National Endowment for Democracy's President Damon Wilson and Eamon McGoldrick focused on how democracy assistance relies on long-term partnerships with civil society organizations and local leaders. We talked about NED's work in Ukraine, Haiti, Honduras, and Cuba, particularly how the organization balances long-term partnerships with rapid responses to political crises. This visit showed the students how democracy-support organizations operate and adapt to changing political environments.



Embassy of Ireland

We met with Stephen O'Shea, Press and Public Diplomacy Counselor, to discuss Ireland's diplomatic priorities and public outreach efforts in the US. He described how the embassy balances public engagement, political communication, and event management while representing Ireland in Washington. Because our visit took place just a week before St. Patrick's Day, students were able to see firsthand the extensive preparation required for one of the embassy's busiest periods of the year. Our host walked us through the work involved in organizing high-profile events and visits by Irish government officials, including preparing briefings and speeches, coordinating speech clearance with Dublin, managing logistics and schedules, engaging with the media, and maintaining constant communication between Washington and headquarters.



Discussion at the Embassy of Ireland

Pyxera Global

The visit to Pyxera Global was especially exciting for the students because they had the opportunity to hear from College of Charleston alumna Christina Ferrell, a former Global Ambassador and now a Program Officer at Pyxera Global. Christina talked about how her experiences studying abroad, volunteering on campus, and interning with NGOs helped launch her career in international development, providing students with a relatable example of the professional paths available to graduates interested in global affairs. The Pyxera team discussed how the organization partners with businesses, governments, and communities to address development challenges through capacity building, economic development programs, and skills-based volunteering initiatives.



Students with the Pyxera Global staff



The Americas Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS

This year, our students met with Henry Ziemer, who focused on the role of policy researchers in shaping public debates and the challenges facing the Western Hemisphere. He discussed organized crime, China's growing presence in Latin America, and debates over regional security. He also provided students with a behind-the-scenes look at how think tanks operate, from fundraising and event planning to media engagement and rapid-response policy analysis. He encouraged students to pursue internships, develop strong analytical and quantitative skills, and build their arguments on evidence rather than assumptions.



At the Americas Program, CSIS



Global Ambassadors at the EU Delegation

EU Delegation to the US

Visits to the EU Delegation are among student favorites because a CofC alumna, Deniz Houston, serves as a Digital Policy Analyst. Deniz and Vassilis Coutifaris, a Senior Officer, talked about the growing intersection of technology, economic security, and diplomacy. Using semiconductors as an example, they explained how technologies once viewed primarily through a commercial lens have become central to geopolitical competition and national security. The advice from Deniz and Vassilis is to focus on gaining broad experience, strong communication skills, and the ability to explain complex topics to diverse audiences. They also noted that generalists remain important in diplomacy, where responsibilities can range from speechwriting and event planning to foreign policy and security issues.



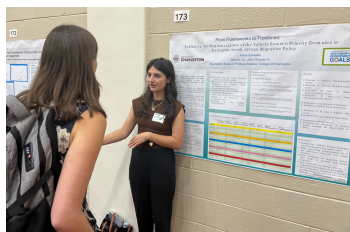
Students at the Lincoln Memorial



Jorja Jersey



Jake Castino



Annie Sylvester

Three Global Ambassadors presented their research at the CofC Expo in April. Congratulations to Annie Sylvester, Jorja Jersek, and Jake Castino! Jorja's project focused on climate change, tick ecology, and Lyme disease in the US. Annie's research examined the implementation of the EU's migration policy in the Mediterranean. Jake's oral presentation was on the history of study abroad education at the College of Charleston.

Where are Global Ambassadors now?

Joseph Drobina (Global Ambassador 2024-25) serves as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cambodia, working with youth.

Christina Ferrell (Global Ambassador 2020-21) was promoted to Program Officer at Pyxera Global, an NGO working on global challenges in local contexts by creating innovative partnerships across the public and private sectors and building local capacity.

Cadence Gillaspie (Global Ambassador 2024-25) completed her first year in the Master of Public Health Program at George Washington University, focusing on Humanitarian Health and Disaster Response.

Syd Jackson (Global Ambassador 2024-25) finished her first year of law school at the University of South Carolina. In 2024, she interned at the State Department, working in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.



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Haley Hawkins (Global Ambassador 2023-24) finished her first year of the Master's Program at Johns Hopkins SAIS, focusing on the Middle East, Geopolitics, and Counterterrorism. In summer 2025, she participated in an 8-week Arabic language immersion program at Middlebury Language School.

Chloe Hudgins (Global Ambassador 2023-24) serves a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand, working with grassroots organizations on youth development.

Elizabeth Marchese (Global Ambassador 2022-23) served in Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer in the education sector. She was admitted to the Masters of International Relations Program at Johns Hopkins University. This program is designed for students to spend a year in Nanjing, China, and a year in DC.

Gracie Pace (Global Ambassador 2023-24) was awarded a Fulbright ETA Scholarship to teach English in Colombia for 2026-27.

Adeline Rios (Global Ambassador 2021-22) was admitted to Harvard Law School. In 2025, she received a Rotary Grant and attended Oxford University for a master's degree in conflict resolution. Adeline was a recipient of the prestigious Boren Scholarship and studied abroad in Brazil and Costa Rica.

Jack Watson (Global Ambassador 2021-22) taught English through the Fulbright program in Algiers, Algeria, in 2026. Taught English through the TAPIF program in Paris in 2025 and was awarded the Critical Language Scholarship to study Arabic in Amman, Jordan in the summer of 2024. He received a CASA@AUC scholarship to study Arabic in Cairo in 2026-27.

Rhi Wilkinson (Global Ambassador 2022-23) was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to teach English in Leipzig, Germany, in 2025-2026. Plans to apply to graduate school.



Global Ambassadors with Dr. Kovalov
at the 2026 LCWA Award Ceremony:
Piper Walrad, Alexis Richter,
Annie Sylvester, and Lauren Ferhat



Meet the new cohort of Global Ambassadors, 2026-2027

- **Rosa Brencic** is a junior student-athlete majoring in International Studies at CofC and pursuing a second degree in International Law in Slovenia. She is fluent in Slovenian, Croatian, English, and French, and holds an International Baccalaureate diploma from a high school in France. She is interested in foreign affairs and hopes to work at embassies around the world.
- **Emma Brinkman** is a junior double-majoring in International Studies and German Studies with a concentration in Europe and a minor in Political Science. She studied abroad in Lugano, Switzerland for a year and is fluent in German and Bosnian. She is interested in pursuing a career in international affairs, with a focus on foreign policy, global development, and diplomacy.
- **Josie Brinkman** (she/her) is a Senior in the Honors College, double-majoring in International Studies with a Global Studies concentration and Political Science with a minor in French. She has a strong interest in multilateral cooperation and national identity, wanting to pursue work that addresses the legacies of colonization, contributes to an inclusive society and supports the preservation of cultural heritage through interdisciplinary approaches. She also wanted to travel to 25 countries before the age of 25!
- **Simona Carnovale** is a senior double-majoring in International Business and International Studies, with a concentration in Europe. She is also pursuing double minors in Italian Studies and Business Administration. She has advanced proficiency in the Italian language and has studied abroad in Brussels, Belgium; Athens, Greece; and Sicily, Italy. Simona is interested in pursuing a career within the European Union or UNESCO cultural sectors, with an emphasis on business, fashion, and Italian culture.
- **Julia Gess** is a senior majoring in Marketing and International Studies with a concentration in Europe. She is interested in the intersection of international affairs and communications, with a focus on public diplomacy and global engagement. She wants to pursue a career within European Union institutions.
- **Lainey Hargett** is a sophomore in the Honors College triple majoring in international studies with a concentration in Europe, environmental science and sustainability, and German studies. She is interested in the overlap between global environmental challenges and geopolitical conflicts and plans to pursue a career in foreign service.
- **Cole Lefko** is a sophomore in the Honors College majoring in International Studies with a concentration in Global Studies and minoring in Crime, Law, and Society. He has participated in Model United Nations, Model European Union, and studied the European Union abroad in Brussels. Cole is interested in geopolitics and international security and aspires to join the U.S. Diplomatic Security Service.
- **Stephanie (Anie) Nickel** is a senior majoring in international studies concentrated in Europe with a double minor in French and art history. She spent a year abroad in France immersing herself in the French language and culture and is interested in pursuing a career as a U.S. foreign service officer and working at an embassy abroad.
- **Audrey Palmadessa** is a Junior in the Honors College, double-majoring in international studies and political science, with a concentration in politics, philosophy, and law, and a minor in Spanish. After graduating, she plans on attending law school to become an international human rights lawyer for an NGO.



EWI Archives and Oral History Project

In partnership with the College of Charleston Libraries, we continue recording interviews for the EWI Oral History Project to tell the story of EWI's global efforts to develop sustainable solutions for today's political, economic, and security challenges. We interview our guest speakers in person and remotely about little known stories of EWI's work on conflict resolution and mediation. We update the project's page as we conduct and process the interviews. Here are some of the recent additions to the Oral History Collection:

- David Firestein, President and CEO of the Bush China Foundation. He served as senior VP and Perot Fellow at the EWI.
- General Michael Moseley, 18th Chief of Staff of the Air Force, EWI Board Member.
- Allen Collinsworth, EWI Board Member, president and founder of Fara Group Inc., an Istanbul based consulting company
- Ambassador Cameron Munter, EWI CEO and President (2015-2019), US ambassador to Pakistan (2010-2012).
- The Honorable James Creighton, EWI Chief Operating Officer (2011-2015).

The interviews and the transcripts are available for students, faculty, and researchers in the [Oral History Collection](#). Consider an oral history interview to tell the important stories of EWI. Contact Max Kovalov (kovalovm@cofc.edu) to schedule an interview.

Mroz Institute Steering Committee

Aimee Arias, Vincent Fraley, Larry Gillespie, Theo Groh, Max Kovalov, Beatriz Maldonado, Malte Pehl, Hilton Smith, Mitchell Sonkin. See their bios on our website mrozinstitute.charleston.edu

Upcoming programs in 2026-27

SAVE THE DATE!

"Soft Power in Hard Times: Leveraging American Ideas in a Complex World"

Speaker: Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau, Managing Director of Global Policy, George W. Bush Institute

When: September 28, 5:30pm.

Where: Wells Fargo Auditorium, Beatty 115 (5 Liberty St)

More programming will be announced soon. Check out our website at <https://mrozinstitute.charleston.edu/events/>





How can you help?

We welcome your support at any level of engagement as we prepare our students for future global careers. There are multiple ways to engage with the Mroz Institute:

- Contribute to the Oral History Project. You can either visit us in Charleston or we can plan an interview remotely, depending on your schedule.
- Join us as a speaker or connect us to speakers who can be invited to present at our programs – World Affairs Colloquium Series and thematic summits.
- Join the EWI Society – a group of friends and colleagues from the EastWest Institute.
- Visit us in Charleston in person or join remotely for the talks and meet our speakers.
- Mentor our International Scholars and Global Ambassadors.
- Include the Mroz Institute in your annual philanthropy. LCWA's development representative Brian Rowe will be glad to speak with you about various giving opportunities. Brian can be reached at 843.991.4361 or rowebp@charleston.edu
- Contribute to the Mroz Institute general fund, the Global Ambassadors Program or Karen Linehan Mroz Global Leaders Scholarship fund.



All these engagement opportunities will be meaningful to our efforts, so please let us know what would be meaningful to you.

Find us online

- Our Website <https://mrozinstitute.charleston.edu>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mrozinstitute>
- Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/@MrozInstitute
- Join EWI Society <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1396441/>
- Contact Max Kovalov at kovalovm@charleston.edu about any programming questions.
- Mailing address:

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