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**Report of Visit to the
Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention
Virginia Tech
October 22-24, 2008
December 5, 2008**

On October 22-24, 2008, staff from the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) visited the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention (CPSVP) at Virginia Tech (VT) in Blacksburg, Virginia to share with CPSVP staff concepts, strategies, and perspectives on developing programmatic initiatives centering on global peacebuilding and conflict resolution. USIP staff included Lauren Van Metre and Willene Johnson of the Education and Training Center/Domestic Programs, and Keith Watenpaugh of the University of California/Davis and USIP Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow. The team was led by David J. Smith, senior program officer, Education and Training Center/Domestic Programs.

USIP was invited to visit by Dr. Jerzy Nowak, founding director of CPSVP (www.cpsvp.vt.edu). Nowak and Smith met at the USIP Groundbreaking on June 5, 2008 at which time an invitation was extended to visit VT. As way of background, after the April 16, 2007 tragedy at VT where over 30 faculty and students were killed, the university made a commitment to establish a permanent programmatic initiative that would "create and facilitate transdisciplinary research, education, and engagement opportunities that promote peace, prevent violence, and advance human security on a global scale." The result was CPSVP which was officially established on July 1, 2008 with the appointment of Nowak. The visit of USIP was the first official outside consultative visit for CPSVP and was the culmination of several weeks of planning. This report constitutes a summary of the visit. It also provides observations and recommendations that CPSVP can consider as it continues to evolve and make meaningful contributions to the Virginia Tech, regional, national, and international communities.

Background

Founded in 1872 as a land-grant college, Virginia Tech is now a comprehensive research university serving over 30,000 students with 9 colleges, a graduate school, 60 bachelor's degree programs, and 140 master's and doctoral degree programs. There are more than 202,000 living alumni from every U.S. state and more than 100 countries.

As indicated, the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention was founded in the aftermath of the 2007 tragedy. Currently CPSVP is occupying temporary quarters in Wallace Hall but will eventually reside in Norris Hall, the site of the tragedy.

In preparation for the visit a number of topics were identified as potential areas that USIP could provide insight and expertise on. CPSVP is committed to developing a minor in peace studies. It is also considering graduate level programming focusing on peace and leadership. In addition, CPSVP is strongly interested in leveraging VT's proficiency in economics, engineering, natural resources and agriculture in developing initiatives that would look at the connection between socio-economic stability and peacebuilding. As a result of the recent Education and Training Center's conflict management course initiatives, USIP was in a position to provide expertise on leadership and economics. In addition, it has long contributed to the field of peace studies through curricular consultation and programming.

An agenda for two days was crafted that included presentations by David Smith on peace studies, Lauren Van Metre on leadership, and Willene Johnson on economics and conflict. In addition, Keith Watenpaugh gave a public lecture on "Learning from Genocide" as a way of broadening CPSVP's reach.

The following is a short description of each meeting and the substance of discussions. At the end of the report, observations and recommendations are made both in the context of the particular areas of peace studies, leadership, and economics, but also more aggregately.

Meetings on October 23, 2008

Presentation by David J. Smith on Peace Studies Approaches in Undergraduate Education in the U.S.

9:00 a.m.

During this session David Smith met with VT faculty and staff interested in collaborating with CPSVP on a peace studies and violence prevention minor. He gave a presentation on peace studies, covering its nature, emphases, and curricular forms at the undergraduate level. Following the presentation, Peter Schmitthenner, Director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program facilitated a discussion on the content and strategies for a peace studies effort through CPSVP. A number of questions and issues were raised including the requirement of a mission statement, the necessity of applied courses in the curriculum, the need to have a capstone course and what that course might be, the need to have grounding principles as part of the curriculum (e.g., nonviolence), the issue of overlap content-wise among courses and how it should be addressed, pedagogical approaches to teaching peace, and learning objectives for students enrolled in the program. Although no specific conclusions were reached, there was general agreement that more discussion is needed on the scope of the minor as well as on the ways of integrating the applied and social sciences with the humanities via a service-learning component in the proposed curriculum.

Peacework Village Network***10:30 a.m.***

A meeting followed with Steve Darr, the director of Peacework Village Network (www.peacework.org). Peacework is a non-profit organization that works with colleges and universities to provide opportunities for faculty and students to engage in economic development partnerships the aims of which are to promote peace and economic prosperity. He is currently working with VT students on a service learning effort in Honduras. Peacework would like to increase their programming and looks forward to providing experiential learning opportunities through CPSVP's efforts. There was also a discussion of Peacework's programming and in particular the role it might play in assisting community college efforts in working overseas.

Lunch Meeting with Political Science Faculty***11:30 a.m.***

A working lunch was held with faculty in the department of political science at VT. The lunch was sponsored by Ilja Luciak, the department chair. At this meeting Smith discussed the various opportunities that USIP can provide for faculty teaching in the international sphere including the Jennings Randolph Senior Fellows Program and grants.

***Meeting with the School of Public and International Affairs
Institute of Policy and Governance******1:30 p.m.***

A meeting was held with the members of the School of Public and International Affairs, hosted by Max Stephenson, director of the Institute of Policy and Governance. The conversation centered on the master's international program and how the program plans to focus more in the future on peacebuilding through leadership. An interesting project was the development of a handbook on peacebuilding and conflict management that would be sponsored by the International Olympic Truce Centre, and would be distributed to all countries that participate in the Olympics.

***Meeting with the Office of International Research, Education and Development, and
Department of Sociology******3:00 p.m.***

During this meeting, VT faculty and administrators discussed programs that could partner with CPSVP including programs focusing on African higher education. A particular interest was in developing student-centered curricula, with a strong component of service learning and study abroad at the University of Liberia through its Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation. This program might have a particular focus on natural resources and sustainability issues.

Presentation by Dr. Willene Johnson on Economics and Conflict***4:00 p.m.***

Willene Johnson gave a presentation on the connections between economics and violent conflict. She focused much of her talk on the objectives of the Sustainable Economies Center of Innovation at USIP. The center's objective is to "develop practical approaches to integrate economic dimensions in effective strategies to manage conflict and promote peace." She also discussed the course she is developing for USIP: Economics and Conflict, which will explore the analytical links between economic activity and conflict as well as the practical constraints and rewards of using economic instruments of conflict management.

Public lecture by Dr. Keith Watenpaugh on Learning from Genocide.***7:00 p.m.***

Keith Watenpaugh gave a public talk on the "Learning from Genocide." Genocide is the definitive social phenomenon of the 20th century and will be a feature of the new century. In his talk, Watenpaugh shared with the audience the historical underpinnings of genocide and posed questions and raised issues relative to legal enforcement and human rights applications.

Meetings on October 24, 2008***Presentation by Dr. Lauren Van Metre on Leadership in Conflict Environments******9:00 a.m.***

Lauren Van Metre gave a presentation on the connections between leadership and conflict. She talked about the need for more effective cross-disciplinary exchange on leadership to enhance decision-making in conflict environments. She also discussed the course she is developing for USIP: Leading Teams in Conflict Environments, which is designed to help students understand core leadership functions critical to working in conflict environments, and to develop the skills necessary to implement them.

Presentation by Dr. Willene Johnson to Microeconomics class***10:10 a.m.***

Willene Johnson presented on the connection between economics and conflict to Prof. Mike Ellerbrock's Microeconomics class. She discussed the role that natural resource mismanagement can play in bringing about conflict as well as how good management can contribute to conflict resolution. She also discussed the work of the Sustainable Economies Center at USIP.

***Meeting with Undergraduate Students participating in Peacework
11:15 a.m.***

The USIP team met with undergraduates participating in the Peacework sponsored program in Honduras.

Findings

The final meeting with CPSVP consisted of a debriefing of the 2-day visit. The comments made by USIP staff are incorporated herein, with additional reflections. For purposes of organization, the recommendations and observations are divided in four areas: leadership, economics and conflict, peace studies, and overall general observations.

Leadership

1. Students at Virginia Tech are interested in courses that teach applied methods for practitioners planning to work in conflict environments. Case studies, simulations, and exercises give them a more realistic understanding of leadership decisions in stressful, but ambiguous conditions. (This educational need was also confirmed by USIP in its educational survey of conflict practitioners.)
2. Virginia Tech is committed to drawing existing international programs into CPSVP, and should be commended for this approach as it ensures that CPSVP will reflect the VT community. CPSVP is considering a masters/post-graduate certificate program where students would take a year of advanced courses in their specialization – agriculture, architecture, engineering, natural resources, or other area of applied science – then come together for a year-long “leadership for sustainability” program that would include an internship experience. Again, based on USIP’s recent work with conflict practitioners, this is a solid approach. Students can gain specialization in areas useful in development and post-conflict work, and through the leadership segment, understand how to work comfortably and effectively in conflict environments.
3. Overcoming the civilian-military divide is paramount if national missions overseas are to be successful. Virginia Tech, with its substantial ROTC program and its relations with neighboring Virginia Military Institute, has an opportunity to bring these communities together for joint education and training. Tufts University has undertaken a similar initiative with its Allies program – a partnership between Tufts and the U.S. Naval Academy. Virginia Tech might want to research and consider a similar program, although, of course, tailored to its community needs and interests.

Economics and Conflict

1. Managing natural resources in an environmentally sustainable and socially equitable manner is now recognized as a key to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Virginia Tech, with its combination of research prowess and outreach experience, is uniquely endowed to design and implement models of resource management that would

be appropriate in a particular conflict environment. The university may choose one or more of the following approaches: develop a broad understanding of the issues through the peace studies minor, design or adapt a graduate program for practitioners, or support research by faculty and graduate students in the frontiers of this emerging field of study. CPSVP should be the analytical hub of this effort, bringing in experts who can help design a set of core courses that, though interdisciplinary, are well-focused and clearly linked to the relevant disciplines.

2. “Peace Through Commerce” is an approach that offers promise in extending the resources available for global peacebuilding. The USIP’s Center for Sustainable Economies recently supported a conference built around this theme, demonstrating the contributions that commerce, trade, and economic development can make toward building sustainable peace. The Pamplin School of Business and the Pamplin Foundation have the capability to offer academic and program assistance in support of the work of CPSVP. In particular, the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management should receive information about the USIP Peace Through Tourism Initiative to determine if this might be an entry point for the business school’s involvement in CPSVP activities. The Pamplin Foundation created the innovative Museum of the Civil War Soldier. Through the Museum and related activities, the Pamplin Foundation has increased awareness of the economic, social, and military aspects of the Civil War.

Peace Studies

1. The efforts of CPSVP to date to develop a peace studies minor are laudable. The approach based on the creation of an interdisciplinary program through collaboration with the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies is consistent with other peace studies strategies that are attempting to bring in wide ranging content and approaches.
2. The founding director and his staff are well positioned to create a relevant and rigorous program that would serve multiple consistencies. Having said that, the following observations and recommendations are made.
 - a. The center should focus its early efforts on further developing its core objectives relative to the peace studies minor (as opposed to the center itself, which has a mission statement). The objectives of the minor should be developed through broad-based consensus building with faculty, staff, and students who would be participating in or contributing to the program. This would lead to determinations of grounding principals, values, and skills that students completing the minor would be expected to have been exposed to or mastered. The development and selection of courses and content would follow the development of curricular objectives.
 - b. In the process of developing content leading to the selection of courses and development of new courses, the center should strongly consider the pedagogical dimensions of teaching peace. The nature of the field requires different paradigms in teaching and learning, often centered on

reconfiguring the student/teacher relationship. For faculty who have taught using more traditional approaches (lecture and research-based), engaging in teaching about peace may require developing new approaches particularly those that are strongly experiential-based.

3. The peace studies minor as envisioned has both global (peace studies) and domestic (violence prevention) characteristics. There is a challenge in creating a minor that has two different foci. Once the issue of the minor's objectives is determined, it may require reconsidering if one minor with two tracks can contain the rigor and comprehensiveness that separately peace studies and violence prevention each require. An alternative may be to consider two separate minors: one in peace studies and one in violence prevention.

Additional General Observations

1. The Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention is ably directed by an individual who has a deep understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of creating peace and sustainability. In addition, in that he was personally impacted by the tragic events that gave birth to the center, he has a strong motivation to see that its full potential is achieved. As indicated previously, the collaboration with the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies will ensure that the programs and curricula that are created will take the broadest approach to building peace.

2. As was discussed during the visit, the field is well-developed with credible faculty and research organizations operating (e.g., Peace & Justice Studies Association, International Peace Research Association, Association for Conflict Resolution, etc.), comprehensive and respected journals published (e.g., *Peace & Change*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, etc.), initiatives centered at international organizations including the United Nations, and a range of academic programs in all sectors of higher education. It will be important for Virginia Tech's efforts to engage with this broader community, not so much to be in alignment, but to present new dimensions and approaches to the field. Because of Virginia Tech's unique characteristics as a state agricultural institution with a strong military culture and programming, but also highly engaged in international efforts, the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention can present models and approaches to peacebuilding and conflict resolution not previously considered. Having said this, the presence of staff and personnel available who are engaged in the field as it is presently constituted will assist in the formulation of relevant and needed programming. To this end:

a. The center should consider, once funding is available, hiring a staff member who is well-connected to the field, has graduated from either a peace studies or conflict resolution program, and can act as a competent resource and catalyst in helping to bring to fruition Virginia Tech's efforts. This person should be prepared to work under the leadership of the current director and provide him with the latest in the field and help develop strategies for the center's work.

- b. The center is in the process of assembling an array of experts who can provide guidance and lend wisdom to Virginia Tech's efforts. Though many of these individuals by necessity need to come from within the VT community, it is recommended that outsiders – national experts in the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution – be asked to participate on any advisory or governance board that is assembled. Having national (and even international experts) will not only provide instant credibility to the program, it will also allow the center to easily navigate the broader global peace studies terrain. Outside experts, however, should not detract from the importance of developing approaches that are local and reflect the needs of the Virginia Tech community.
3. The current efforts of the center are commendable for its interest to seeking partners and resources that may assist in developing its programs and curricula. In particular, groups that currently work with Virginia Tech such as Peacework, and academic programs and initiatives such as the Institute of Policy and Governance, and the Office of International Research, Education and Development are well placed to collaborate with CPSVP. This is a wise strategy in that it allows the center to build on successes already in existence, economize resources (at a time of budget tightening in higher education), and create new synergy for the future. Besides internal VT partners, the center should continue to seek outsiders such as USIP to assist in either a consulting or partnering role in this important effort. The center should also engage other partners both in programming and curriculum collaboration. A potential avenue would be looking at community colleges particularly those that already collaborate with VT. A number of Virginia community colleges are considering peace and conflict initiatives. CPSVP would be wise to identify these programs and work closely with them.

The U.S. Institute of Peace appreciated the opportunity to visit Virginia Tech and the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention and to assist in this important cause of developing curriculum that promotes global peace. In the future, USIP is prepared to offer other support as needed.