

Inside U.S. Foreign Policy

From Study Abroad to the State Department: How Developing Global Perspectives Supports U.S. Foreign Policy

Speaker Bios

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS



Anthony Koliha

Director, Office of Global Educational Programs
U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Anthony Koliha is the Director of the Office of Global Educational Programs at the U.S. Department of State, where he oversees a portfolio of international teacher, professional, and global mobility programs and services across four branches. Prior to joining ECA, he was the Director of International Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University, Bloomington, where he helped successfully launch a new

School of Global and International Studies, in addition to expanding international programs and providing senior leadership for over a dozen federally- funded international, area studies, and foreign language centers. Mr. Koliha previously held joint posts as Director of the Fulbright Program in Russia and International Director of the Russia/Eurasia office for the Institute of International Education. Mr. Koliha has also worked at the Social Science Research Council and American Councils for International Education. He holds degrees from Kenyon College and Indiana University, Bloomington.

RECORDED VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH SECRETARY BLINKEN



Anthony J. Blinken

U.S. Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

Anthony J. Blinken is the 71st U.S. Secretary of State. He was nominated by President Biden on November 23, 2020; confirmed by the U.S. Senate on January 26, 2021; and sworn in by Vice President Kamala Harris the following day.

Over three decades and three presidential administrations, Mr. Blinken has helped shape U.S. foreign policy to ensure it protects U.S. interests and delivers results for the American people. He served as deputy secretary of state for President Barack Obama from 2015 to 2017, and before that, as President Obama's principal deputy national security advisor. In that role, Mr. Blinken chaired the interagency deputies committee, the main forum for hammering out the administration's foreign policy.



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During the first term of the Obama Administration, Mr. Blinken was national security advisor to then-Vice President Joe Biden. This was the continuation of a long professional relationship that stretched back to 2002, when Mr. Blinken began his six-year stint as Democratic staff director for the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Then-Senator Biden was the chair of that committee from 2001 to 2003 and 2007 to 2009.

During the Clinton Administration, Mr. Blinken served as a member of the National Security Council staff, including two years as the senior director for European affairs, the president's principal advisor on the countries of Europe, the European Union, and NATO. He also spent four years as President Clinton's chief foreign policy speechwriter, and he led the NSC's strategic planning team.

Mr. Blinken's public service began at the State Department. From 1993 to 1994, he was a special assistant in what was then called the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs. Now he is proud to lead the department where he got his start in government nearly 30 years ago.

Outside of government, Mr. Blinken has worked in the private sector, civil society, and journalism. He was a founder of WestExec Advisors, an international strategic consulting firm focused on geopolitics and national security. He was a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies from 2001 and 2002. Before joining government, Mr. Blinken practiced law in New York and Paris. He was also a reporter for The New Republic magazine and is the author of *Ally Versus Ally: America, Europe and the Siberian Pipeline Crisis* (Praeger, 1987).

Mr. Blinken attended grade school and high school in Paris, where he received a French Baccalaureat degree with high honors. He is a graduate of Harvard College and Columbia Law School. He and his wife Evan Ryan have two children.



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Jenny Abamu
Public Diplomacy Officer
U.S. Department of State

Jenny Abamu is a public diplomacy coned FSO currently in training ahead of an assignment as a consular officer in Madrid, Spain. She joined the Foreign Service in 2019.

Previously, she served as the Information Officer at the U.S. Consul General in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Jenny came to the Foreign Service from WAMU, the local NPR news station in Washington, D.C. There she worked as an education reporter, appearing on shows and producing local and national content. She received multiple award nominations for her work.

Prior to her time with WAMU, Jenny worked for EdSurge focusing on K-12 education technology and co-hosting the podcast EdSurge On Air. She previously worked at Columbia University's EdLab and at NY1 News Channel as a field journalist, researcher, planner, and an overnight assignment editor.

A native of Dallas, Texas, she has a bachelor's degree from Baylor University, and a master's in International and Comparative Education from Columbia University's Teacher's College. While an undergraduate student at Baylor, Jenny used funding from the Gilman Scholarship to study abroad in Cairo, Egypt. She speaks Arabic, Spanish, and Turkish. She is married to Sedat Akbas and they have a two-year-old and 3-month-old son.



Hermes Gullon
Political Officer
U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States

Hermes Gullon joined the Foreign Service in June 2015. A political coned FSO, he currently serves as a Political Officer in the U.S. mission to the OAS. He previously served as a Watch Officer in the Operations Center; a Consular Officer/Acting Deputy Consul General in U.S. Embassy Managua; and the Political Section Chief at U.S. Embassy Djibouti.

Hermes is the VP of the Pickering and Rangel Fellowship Association and an adviser on the Hispanic Employee Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies. He is an alumnus of the Gilman



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Scholarship; Pickering Fellowship; Rangel Scholars Program; International Career Advancement Program; and Institute for International Public Policy Fellowship.

As a first-generation college student, Hermes completed his bachelor's degree at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, and his master's degree in International Relations at Johns Hopkins' SAIS, while also completing coursework at Howard University. As an undergraduate, Hermes received the Gilman Scholarship which he used to study abroad in Nicaragua. He speaks French and Spanish.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, born to Dominican parents, Hermes is married to Audrey Lopez. They have a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter and a son born in June 2022.

SESSION I - FROM STUDY ABROAD TO FOREIGN POLICY: FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER (FSO) PANEL



Jenny Abamu
Public Diplomacy Officer
U.S. Department of State

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Hermes Grullon

Political Officer

U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States

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James Wesley (Wes) Jeffers

Deputy Public Affairs Officer
U.S. Embassy in New Zealand

James Wesley (Wes) Jeffers is the Deputy Public Affairs Officer in U.S. Embassy Wellington, New Zealand. He has been a U.S. diplomat for 12 years. He has served overseas in Pakistan, Canada, and the Republic of the Congo, and he has served in Washington DC in the Bureau of African Affairs and Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. Prior to joining the U.S. Foreign Service, Wes worked in Malawi with UNICEF.

Wesley is from Petersburg, West Virginia. He obtained a B.A. in Political Science and Sociology at Tulane University and an M.A. in International Affairs and Human Rights at Columbia University. He is a 2003 Horatio Alger National Scholar and served as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Russia in 2007-2008. He speaks Russian, French, and is working on learning te reo Māori.



Naomi Mattos

Public Affairs Officer
U.S. Mission to the U.N. Agencies in Rome

Naomi Mattos joined the Foreign Service in January 2009. Currently, she is the Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations Rome-based Agencies. In this role, she increases worldwide visibility of and builds support for USG humanitarian and development initiatives and collaborates among the UN food and agriculture agencies, public and private sector, and civil society to address hunger, endangered cultural heritage, and lack of justice throughout the world.

Naomi also served as the Information Officer for the U.S. Embassy in Accra, Ghana. In this role, she was the Mission's spokesperson for the 14 plus USG agencies and director of Ghana's American Spaces Program, cultural and information centers abroad that provide free and open access for communities worldwide about the United States. Previously, she was the Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Embassy in Luanda, Angola, where she served as the senior public affairs advisor, developing the strategy and providing oversight of all Mission public diplomacy activities and resources.



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Prior to Luanda, Naomi worked as the Public Diplomacy Desk Officer for Southern Africa acting as the principal liaison between Washington and 13 Public Affairs Sections for policy, programs, and guidance. Other roles include Assistant Information Officer in Islamabad, Pakistan; American Citizens Services Chief in Recife, Brazil; and Consular Officer in New Delhi, India.

Before the Foreign Service, Naomi worked for Booz Allen Hamilton as a Senior Consultant focused on IT project management with U.S. government clients such as the Department of Homeland Security. Naomi holds a bachelor's in business administration, marketing as well as a bachelor's in African American Studies from the College of William and Mary.

SESSION II – INTERNSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND PATHWAYS TO A STATE DEPARTMENT CAREER



Amanda (Mandy) Johnson

Recruiter Coordinator
Bureau of Global Talent Management, U.S. Department of State

Amanda Johnson joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 2002 and currently serves as the Recruiter Coordinator in the Bureau of Global Talent Management. She previously served as Diplomat in Residence for the Central region from 2019-2022 covering the states of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.

Amanda previously served as the Spokesperson and Deputy Public Affairs Advisor at the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Brussels, Belgium from 2016-2019. She has held assignments as the Senior Poland Desk Officer (2014-2016) and as a Special Assistant in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (2013-2014) in Washington, DC and as the Public Affairs Officer in Beirut, Lebanon (2011-2013). Other assignments include Libya Desk Officer in Washington, DC, Cultural Affairs Officer in Algiers, Algeria, and Vice Consul and Political Officer in Lagos, Nigeria.



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Amanda holds a M.A. in Communication from Johns Hopkins University and a B.A. in both History and French Language and Literature from the University of Montana. She was raised in Montana and speaks Arabic, French, and intermediate German.

SESSION II - FROM STUDY ABROAD TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT- REFLECTIONS ON STATE DEPARTMENT CAREERS

Room 1: FSO Perspective - Life & Work in the Foreign Service – From West Virginia to Wellington



James Wesley (Wes) Jeffers
Deputy Public Affairs Officer
U.S. Embassy in New Zealand

James Wesley (Wes) Jeffers is the Deputy Public Affairs Officer in U.S. Embassy Wellington, New Zealand. He has been a U.S. diplomat for 12 years. He has served overseas in Pakistan, Canada, and the Republic of the Congo, and he has served in Washington DC in the Bureau of African Affairs and Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. Prior to joining the U.S. Foreign Service, Wes worked in Malawi with UNICEF.

Wesley is from Petersburg, West Virginia. He obtained a B.A. in Political Science and Sociology at Tulane University and an M.A. in International Affairs and Human Rights at Columbia University. He is a 2003 Horatio Alger National Scholar and served as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Russia in 2007-2008. He speaks Russian, French, and is working on learning te reo Māori.



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Room 2: Essentials of Leadership in Foreign Affairs – A View from the Senior Foreign Service



Rachna Korhonen

Ambassador-Nominee to Mali
U.S. Department of State

Rachna Korhonen is the Executive Director for the Joint Executive Office for NEA and SCA. She was previously the Consul General at the Consulate General of the United States in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. She has served in Sri Lanka, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and India as well as working for the Under Secretary for Management in Washington, DC. Rachna completed her undergraduate degree

in Computer Science and Mathematics and worked in the corporate sector for AT&T, IBM, as well as internet startup Zed before joining the State Department. She is from Flemington, New Jersey, and is married with three children.

Room 3: Grad School AND a Job! - Pickering & Rangel Fellowships



Hermes Gullon

Political Officer
U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States

Hermes Gullon joined the Foreign Service in June 2015. A political coned FSO, he currently serves as a Political Officer in the U.S. mission to the OAS. He previously served as a Watch Officer in the Operations Center; a Consular Officer/Acting Deputy Consul General in U.S. Embassy Managua; and the Political Section Chief at U.S. Embassy Djibouti.

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A native of Brooklyn, New York, born to Dominican parents, Hermes is married to Audrey Lopez. They have a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter and a son born in June 2022.

Room 4: Foreign Service Specialist View – Always in the Room Where it Happens – Office Management Specialists



Alejandra Ferreira-Sachero

Foreign Service Specialist
U.S. Department of State

Alejandra Ferreira-Sachero joined the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Service Specialist in 2011. She is currently serving in the U.S. Consulate Montreal, where she is responsible for maintaining engagement through meetings, programs, and representational events the Consul General participates in or hosts. Alejandra previously served as an Office Management Specialist in Spain, Switzerland, Kuwait, and Ecuador. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Alejandra was an Office Manager for the Career

Development Resource Center at the U.S. Department of State. She has also worked as Marketing Coordinator for the consulting company Independent Project Analysis and as an Executive Assistant to the Director of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, an international organization managing tuna fisheries regulations for the Eastern Pacific. Alejandra received her Master of Science in Human Resources and Organizational Development from Catholic University of America and her Bachelor of Arts in Print Journalism from Ithaca College. Alejandra also holds a Certificate for Translation/interpretation for English-Spanish from the University of California, San Diego. She is fluent in Spanish and French and has a basic knowledge of Portuguese and Italian.

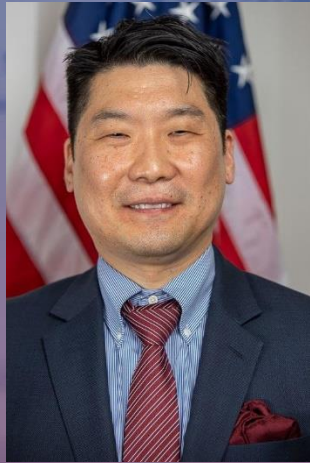


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Room 5: Foreign Language in the Foreign Service: Talking the Talk



Michael CheKim

U.S. Assistance Coordinator for the Arabian Peninsula
U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Assistance Coordination

Michael CheKim currently serves as the U.S. Assistance Coordinator for the Arabian Peninsula in the U.S. Department of State's (State) Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Assistance Coordination after completing a year as a staff assistant at the Bureau of International Organizational Affairs (IO). Before that, he supported IO's Senior Advisor on advancing U.S. policies on racial equity and justice policies at the United Nations and improving relations with the Group of 77 (the Global South). Michael started his Federal career in November 2006 when he joined the Korea Taiwan Team at the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration (ITA). In ITA, he supported the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, also known as the KORUS FTA, as a member of the U.S. delegation, and participated in the U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) talks, facilitated by the non-governmental organization the American Institute in Taiwan. In 2012, he joined the Foreign Service (at State), starting as a Vice Consul in Manila. In 2014, he served in Seoul as a Vice Consul for a year, followed by a year as a Trade Officer, focusing on KORUS FTA implementation. In 2016, he went to the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs' Office of Agricultural Policy, joined the U.S. Delegation to the World Trade Organization Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the U.S. Delegation to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Food Security Week. From 2018-2020, he was the Kyrgyzstan Desk Officer, supporting the U.S. Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic and being the first point of contact for the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic. He also has work experience at J.P. Morgan in New York, the office of South Korea National Assemblyman (retired) Hwang Woo Yea, the New Mexico Senate, and the humanitarian organization Eugene Bell Foundation. He has a BA in History from the College of William and Mary, a MA in Liberal Arts, and a MA in Eastern Classics, both from St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



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Room 6: FSO Perspective - Life & Work in the Foreign Service – You Speak Arabic? -Try German.



Cybèle Cochran

Foreign Service Officer

U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Cybèle Cochran oversees outreach to higher education institutions for USA Study Abroad in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. As a Foreign Service Officer, her previous tours include coordinating U.S. climate policy in the Americas, adjudicating visas at U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt, and serving as the Assistant Public Affairs Officer in Bern, Switzerland. Cybèle served as a conflict analyst at the U.S. Agency for International Development from 2009-2015. She holds a Master's degree in Islamic Civilization from The Fletcher School at Tufts University and an undergraduate degree in French from Mount Holyoke College. Cybèle is passionate about study abroad! She spent her junior year in Paris, France and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in rural Morocco.

Room 7: Consular Affairs & the Civil Service: Passports, Visas, & Travel, Oh My!



Jared Tharp

Community Relations Program Analyst

Passport Services

Jared Tharp began his career with the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs almost 12 years ago after serving two years in the Peace Corps in Senegal. His first job in the department was adjudicating passport applications at the San Francisco Passport Agency. He then moved on to supervise a team of passport specialists and later managed the agency's customer service office. In 2019 Jared moved to a Passport Headquarters position as a Community Relations Program Analyst for Passport Services. In his current role he focuses on passport related public messaging and outreach.



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Room 8: State Department Exchange & Scholarship Programs: Developing Tomorrow's Global Perspectives, Today



Theresa Gagnon

Gilman Program Officer

U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Theresa Gagnon serves as a Program Officer in the USA Study Abroad Branch of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State in Washington D.C. She is responsible for managing the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program (Gilman Program). She is a Civil Service Officer and has been with the Department of State since 2010. Prior to joining ECA, she was a senior analyst in the Office of Inspector General and previously worked in strategic planning in the Department of State's central budget office. Before joining the federal government, she taught English in rural Spain through the Spanish Ministry of Education's North American Language and Culture Assistants Program (NALCAP). She is originally from Seattle, Washington and is a graduate of the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University, where she spent her junior year studying Latin American Politics and Spanish in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She lives in the Washington D.C. area with her husband and two small children.

Room 9: Foreign Service Specialist View – Securing Diplomacy Around the World - Even If That Means Guarding a Desk - Diplomatic Security Special Agents



Justin Diaz

Supervisory Special Agent
Diplomatic Security Service

Justin Diaz is a Supervisory Special Agent with the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS). The DSS is the law enforcement arm of the U.S. Department of State, which ensures the safety of U.S. Diplomats overseas for them to conduct foreign policy without fear of harm. Domestically the DSS protects the Secretary of State, visiting Foreign Dignitaries, and others designated for protection by the Secretary of State. In addition to protective duties, the DSS investigates passport and visa fraud, and is assigned to various joint task forces throughout the U.S. Justin has been a Special Agent for 17 years, having served in the San Francisco Field office, the Office of Counterintelligence, and overseas at the U.S. Embassy's in



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Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Islamabad, Pakistan, Vienna, Austria, and Dakar, Senegal. Justin is currently the Special Agent in Charge of the Protective Liaison office in Washington, D.C., actively engaging with U.S. foreign Embassy's and their personnel in the DC area to ensure they are getting the protection they need while also not abusing the diplomatic immunity's they get. Justin is originally from Long Island, New York and received a Bachelor of Art in Economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

CLOSING



Dan Pattarini

Foreign Service Officer

U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Dan Pattarini was born and spent the early part of his childhood in New York (Long Island) with a brief stint during toddlerhood in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. At the age of 8, his family moved to southern Virginia where 3rd grade Dan first experienced culture shock. Decades later, Dan considers Virginia home.

As a Public Diplomacy-coned Foreign Service Officer, Dan's career has centered mainly on public affairs with significant connections to educational and cultural affairs programming and a fair bit of experience with consular work. Dan has recently taken up his assignment with the USA Study Abroad office within the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, having spent the previous year as the Public Affairs Officer in the Office of Foreign Missions. Immediately prior, Dan was an Outreach Officer with the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Office of Public and Congressional Affairs (CA/P). Dan's overseas tours include assignments in Oman (Assistant Public Affairs Officer), Egypt (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer + Vice Consul), Iraq (Environment Science Technology and Health Officer), and Luxembourg as Public Affairs Officer. Prior to joining State, Dan worked at IIE for almost five years.



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Dan is married with three children (two in college, one HS senior) and an awesome Labrador named Mosby. His wife Katy is a career educator. Dan has a master's degree in International Affairs from American University and a bachelor's in Government from the College of William and Mary. Dan was inspired to pursue a career in the Foreign Service, in part, by his experience studying abroad in Aleppo, Syria.

