

PROPOSED FORUM
TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP THROUGH SERVICE
Concept Note

CONTEXT

- Many university students are seeking meaningful internships/volunteer experiences before they graduate to gain clarity in vocational direction, practical and grass-roots experience, but often need some encouragement and guidance to take the next steps;
- The current job market continues to show high levels of unemployment (about 35% for ages 18-29, recent Pew study), which makes it especially challenging for undergraduate students, often with limited work experience, to secure paid employment; hence internships and volunteer experiences are becoming an essential requirement to enhance the prospects for meaningful paid employment (especially in the non-for-profit world and other service jobs); the job market is likely to be tight for the next few years;
- There are various organizations which could provide meaningful overseas and domestic internship/volunteer experiences to university students/graduates who are attending one of the many universities (about 10) located in the Washington DC area, and whose leaders can provide inspirational presentations and opportunities for dialogue which can encourage university students to explore meaningful options. But there are limited gatherings for this kind of forum and dialogue;
- All universities have some kind of career service office which would be interested in being a part of this type of gathering (combining a forum with a “job fair” of NGOs offering volunteer opportunities);

OBJECTIVES

- To bring together various inspirational service-oriented leaders of credible organizations who can share and stimulate dialogue regarding current thinking about global affairs and trends and the importance of getting university students engaged in addressing issues of compassion, justice, peace and empowerment through meaningful internships/volunteer work; and
- To encourage university students to make more informed decisions and to actively seek options for pursuing meaningful internships/volunteer work following the completion of their university degree.

SPEAKERS & PANEL MEMBERS: A select number of speakers are proposed to make inspirational presentations and to engage in dialogue with the audience using a question/answer & panel approach. Proposed speakers are: (20-25 minutes each= 2 hrs + 1.5 hrs. for Q&A, including a panel dialogue) (speakers are TBC)

- Fareed Zakaria: CNN global affairs commentator and Editor in Chief of Time Magazine
- Aaron Williams: Director of the Peace Corps
- Mr. Robert Velasco: Director of Americorps Vista
- Ms. Carolyn Woo: President of Catholic Relief Services (as of Jan. 1, 2012)
- Dr. Kent Hill: Senior Vice President, Internal Programs Group, World Vision

It is proposed that the forum moderator be Judy Woodruff (Senior Correspondent for the PBS News Hour).

FORMAT: Presentations, followed by Q&A and a panel Q&A session; F. Zakaria could provide a global context and challenges and opportunities for students to get engaged, followed by the organizations’ leader presentations; the specific details would be worked out once the speakers and moderator are confirmed. Co-sponsoring service organizations (above, and several others) would have booths in the form of a “mini-job fair” to provide information to prospective volunteers, following the forum;

PROPOSED VENUE: George Washington University (auditorium of the Elliot School of Int’al Affairs)/TBC

TARGET AUDIENCE: University students (undergraduate & graduate) located in the Washington DC area (GWU, Georgetown U., American U., G. Mason U., U. of Md., Trinity Wash. U., Howard U., J. Hopkins/SAIS)

PROPOSED DATE: Saturday, March 24, 2012, from 9:00 to 12:30 pm, taking into account the availability of an appropriate venue and of the proposed speakers moderator.

CO-SPONSORS: the participating universities in the Washington DC area (especially the career development office), Ezekiel’s Place, and the volunteer organizations of the guest speakers. Participants would pre-register. There would be no charge, although participants would be encouraged to provide a donation to help cover costs.