In the winter of 2011, Brittany Eskridge, Jonathan Howard, and Adam Brown began developing an on-campus dispute resolution center at the University of Denver. At that time [See Winter 2011 Newsletter] the dispute resolution center was still in its drafting stage; however, fall quarter of 2012, CRI reconnected with Adam Brown to discuss the progress of the project which is now known as Conflict Resolution Services (CRS). Eskridge, Howard, and Brown all have graduated from the Conflict Resolution program at the University of Denver since founding CRS. Brown is now the Assistant Director of Student Conduct at the University of Denver, pursuing his second Master of Arts degree in Higher Education. As the Assistant Director of Student Conduct, Brown continues to advocate for the long-term sustainability of CRS through various resources, trainings, and facilitations.

When implementing the theories they earned in the classroom, the founding team of CRS quickly realized that they needed to adjust their plans in order to work within the limitations of what was actually achievable. Brown explains, "In our proposal we outlined doing three different services: mediation, conflict coaching, and restorative justice; but once we realized we were short on resources, we decided to ask what we could do to best utilize our time and energy. We decided to start with conflict coaching.” He went on to say, “Conflict coaching has been great because we have connected with conflict coaches in communities from all throughout Denver and its surrounding areas.” CRS has brought these practitioners in to do conflict coaching cases at the University of Denver, where they are able to transfer their understanding of conflict resolution to students and staff utilizing third party neutrals.

Along with utilizing outside practitioners and professionals to share their skills and knowledge with the University of Denver, Brown has also focused on using educational workshops to extend the reach of CRS. Initially, the idea was for CRS to concentrate on directly resolving undergraduate and graduate, student-to-student disputes as well as student-to-faculty conflicts; however, due to the limited resources at the disposal of CRS, it was concluded that the next best thing would be to train intermediaries in basic conflict resolution skills and practices. They decided that the best intermediaries to train were Assistants in Housing, because they supervise dorm activities. So Brown and a group of second year Conflict Resolution students coached the

Continued on Next Page
Assistants in Housing in conflict resolution practices with the hope that this would provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to handle disputes of low-level risk before they escalate and become higher risk. In turn, this has been a way for CRS to reach out to students while at the same time remain open and capable of handling higher level campus disputes that require a more advanced degree of expertise and training, which students of the Conflict Resolution Institute receive in the course of their studies.

Brown remarks that, “CRS has been fortunate to have grad students come in from the Conflict Resolution Institute to help. What has been very exciting is that for the different workshops, in which we have been teaching about conflict styles, communication, and mediation, CRS has been able to bring in students from the Conflict Resolution Institute in order to have them co-facilitate.” One example of this is that Brown brought in Conflict Resolution students as mediation coaches for the Assistants in Housing mediation workshop CRS held at the beginning of the year. The workshop consisted of a number of scenarios in which one person acted as a mediator and two others as disputants. Throughout the scenarios, the Conflict Resolution students who had mediation training were able to collaborate with professional housing staff to coach the Assistants in Housing.

Brown notes that he has received positive feedback from a number of the Conflict Resolution students who participated in the workshop, who say that it was a great learning experience. Brown says that the Conflict Resolution students who facilitated were able to build upon what they had learned in the classroom by teaching and transferring the skills and knowledge honed in class to others. Brown says that participation in the mediation workshops has, “in a way been a transformation of how the Conflict Resolution students understand mediation.” When asked if he would recommend involvement in CRS workshops to all Conflict Resolution students, Brown responded, “Conflict Resolution in higher education is not readily known by everyone based upon U.S. socialization. However, I think it’s really important because there are skills that can be learned here, working with students and staff in our workshops, that are applicable anywhere.”

As to Brown’s work with CRS, he says that he hopes to remain involved for as long as he is at the University of Denver, and his goal is to leave the program with long-term sustainability so that it can continue to help staff and students well into the future. Brown is currently trying to find interns from the Conflict Resolution Institute to help CRS take on the enormous task of handling Alternative Dispute Resolution at the University of Denver. Brown explains that he has the option of bringing on interns from any academic program at the university, but that students from other programs do not have the same skill-set as Conflict Resolution students. Brown states that by bringing aboard interns with conflict resolution skills, “CRS would become more sustainable and likely to be around in the future.” Brown comments, “ideally it would also be great to have one or two Graduate Assistant positions within the Office of Student Conduct that only do this area of conflict resolution, once again, for sustainability.”

This winter, CRS will celebrate its second year of pilot programs at the University of Denver. In the development phase of CRS, Eskridge, Howard, and Brown envisioned offering mediation, conflict coaching, and restorative justice to university students and staff. Through mediation workshops, CRS is accomplishing its first goal of providing additional mediation to the University of Denver community. Through training Assistants in Housing, CRS is fulfilling its second goal of conflict coaching. This year, Brown and the Office of Student Conduct is beginning to fulfill CRS’s third goal of offering restorative justice by holding Restorative Justice Conferences (RJC). This process, while currently in the pilot and development phase, will act to bring together members from the University of Denver, along with members of the greater community, who have been impacted by an incident in order to repair any harm that has taken place. In less than two years, CRS has moved from an abstract idea to an actualized on-campus dispute resolution center that offers mediation, conflict coaching, and restorative justice to students, faculty, and staff, to find alternative ways of dealing with and overcoming conflict in order to reach more constructive outcomes.

Adam Brown can be contacted at: Adam.Brown@du.edu.

--Andrew Godziek
Dr. Douglas Allen has been a staple and founding faculty member of the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver since 1989, and lives by the expression that a rolling stone gathers no moss. From an early age, Dr. Allen’s parents instilled in him an appreciation of global cultures that has been a continuous way of thinking not only throughout his career, but life as well.

Primarily interested in the regions of Southern Africa and China, Dr. Allen spent most of his life abroad, in part thanks to his mother and father who raised him in the Bahá’í Faith. Dr. Allen’s Bahá’í faith encourages world unity and understanding, a guiding principle in conflict resolution and increasingly in business management. Dr. Allen’s office in the Daniel’s College of Business is a testament to his travels: a model airplane collection from South Africa and Zimbabwe, a globe, a world map, as well as a model of the World Expo in Shanghai.

As the Director of the International MBA program, Dr. Allen has dedicated much of his life to building bridges between businesses and cross-cultural understanding. In an increasingly globalized world, it is important to recognize that business management includes not only interpersonal skills, but inter-cultural skills now as well. In 1991 Dr. Allen’s father, Dr. Dwight Allen, Professor Emeritus of Old Dominion University in Virginia, told him that, “No self-respecting MBA program should not send their students to China”, and after becoming curious about that statement, Dr. Douglas Allen spent three weeks in China visiting various cities. Dr. Allen went on to write publications about China and repatriation issues, as well as management challenges that they face. Currently, he is researching how well expats from mainly China, but other various countries readjust to returning their home country after studying abroad, and the trials they face on that front concerning loss of respect, wages, and so on. His father has traveled to China more than 50 times to work on education reform projects there, and has also worked in southern Africa with UNESCO and USAID developing national teacher training colleges in Lesotho and Botswana for about 5 years.

Repatriation issues are particularly relevant since many of the students at the Daniels College of Business are expats from the Asian region. With classes offered in Global Management, Conflict Resolution, International Law and Human Rights, it is one of the top business schools in the world, producing IMBA graduates who are ethical, sharp, and trained in cross-cultural communication in a business setting. Furthermore, Alternative Dispute Resolution will become more of a necessity in future times of war due to the increasing interdependence of nations on one another for resources and labor. Therefore conflict resolution will be a necessary skill and tool for professionals in International Business worldwide. Today within the United States, Dr. Allen sees our society becoming more polarized, where two sides cannot agree on identical data to base their political projections. The 2012 Elections in the United States has served as a reminder that we must change with the times, and hostility is not the best path to forming a more united tomorrow.

On that note, Dr. Allen sees the future of conflict resolution playing a larger part in litigation and alternative dispute resolution through mediation. He states that this has to be on a micro and macro level: beginning with families and ending on the national and international stage, it is all interconnected. Dr. Allen lamented the toll that being litigious has cost the US, and that most of these disputes have arisen from one or both parties not understanding or willing to agree on a common goal. In an international setting, these misunderstandings can be resolved with a better comprehension and appreciation of the other’s culture.

Dr. Allen advises students in the Conflict Resolution and the IMBA programs to get outside of their comfort zones to really push themselves in exploring other cultures, whether on campus at the University of Denver, in the local community, or traveling abroad “The more cross-cultural experience, the better”.

Dr. Allen can be contacted at: Douglas.Allen@du.edu.

--Charlotte Prewitt
DU’s Conflict Resolution Institute Leads in Academic Excellence with Advancements in Practicum Experience

In the spring of 2010 the Conflict Resolution Institute implemented its first practicum module for students in the Master’s program in Conflict Resolution. The addition of this practicum was intended to make the DU program superior to other Conflict Resolution programs and to increase the immediate employability of the students by providing extensive practical experience for the students, and also to help connect them to working professionals in the various Conflict Resolution fields. From the beginning the practicum was designed to be a “learning” program, utilizing student and faculty feedback to continually improve the experience for students with each passing year. This design characteristic has ensured that the DU practicum is currently and continually providing the best possible practical experience to their Conflict Resolution students.

Although many Masters Programs in Conflict Resolution offer top-notch academic training, few if any emphasize the importance of practical experience. Program designers at the Conflict Resolution Institute at the University of Denver recognized the need to integrate theory with practice as well as the importance of creating opportunities that could be opened up to students through working with practitioners active in the field. It was for these reasons that the Conflict Resolution Institute implemented its first practicum module for students in the Conflict Resolution Master’s program in the spring of 2010. Reasons to create the Practicum included developing opportunities to experience and engage in the integration of theory and practice, and providing students with apprenticing that goes beyond what is possible in the internships. As CRI Co-Director Dr. Tamra Pearson d’Estree explains, “While internships expose students to actual practice settings, they are often more like observers, and the type of experience they obtain from these settings varies widely. In order to provide the experience students need to be employable when they graduate, CRI offers the practicum as an intensive supervised apprenticeship”. The addition of the Practicum distinguishes the DU Conflict Resolution program from many others around the country and worldwide.

In addition to increasing the level of practical experience that the DU students will receive, the practicum experience is intended to improve the employability of the Master’s candidates so they can make the transition from student to practitioner in the increasingly competitive field of Dispute Resolution. These goals are accomplished in two ways, first, by creating the necessary conditions for the students to further develop their dispute resolution skills, and second by connecting students to the larger professional community. In this way, the Practicum not only provides a unique and rich environment for participants to further develop practical skills but also ensures exposure to working professionals and programs so that the future practitioners will be better equipped with the skills, experience and connections that they will need to enter directly into the field of Dispute Resolution upon graduation from the Master’s program. As d’Estree explains, “the program provides practical experience, which improves the ability of students to apply theory and skills to real-time experiences.”

Program Construction

The practicum program is broken into basic and advanced phases. During the basic phase, all of the students participate in an intensive regimen of mediation practice as co-mediators. This phase integrates theoretical skills from course work with mediation training to both continue building a foundation in interpersonal skills and to gain experience operating in the conflict environment. The advanced phase of the practicum is intended to allow students to tailor their particular experience to best suit their future careers. It allows them to choose a specific area of focus, or “track” to follow through the duration of the practicum experience. Students choose a specialized track in either interpersonal, environmental and public policy, or international conflict resolution.

Students pursuing the interpersonal track continue to hone their skills in mediation and interpersonal communication. More importantly, this track allows them to connect with practicing professionals with advanced experience in specific areas in a mentoring relationship to more comprehensively synthesize theory and practice. For example, students have chosen to specialize in organizational, domestic and family mediation, organizational ombudsmanship and re-
storative justice. This approach provides participants with the opportunity to both meet and work with practicing professionals and experience the “real world” of interpersonal conflict resolution. Students in this track further develop and solidify skills that they will use when dealing one-on-one, or in small groups with their clients to manage and resolve personal conflicts.

Students pursuing the environmental and public policy track work with professionals who actively develop public policy or who intervene to help resolve contentious policy or environmental issues. Students pursuing this track gain hands-on experience working on the different stages of such projects including research, planning, execution and review of the project. This track provides the student with first-hand experience that will help them understand and address the many parameters that they will have to manage when working on contentious public issues.

Finally, students who want to work on international or intercommunal conflicts undergo intensive training with their peers from around the United States and the world. This practicum track has participants working with other students and practitioners to engage in international problem solving workshop training in Washington D.C. where they both receive hands on experience working at the international level, and network with colleagues working around the world in peace and conflict studies. These students also gain hands-on experience during all phases of planning, executing and evaluating an intergroup intervention.

Program Development and Evolution

Now in its fourth year, the practicum has proven to be a very educational and productive path for the Conflict Resolution Institute. The Practicum was implemented first to raise the bar on the field education provided by the Conflict Resolution program at the University of Denver and second to give students a distinct advantage in creating a viable career in the increasingly competitive field of dispute resolution. From the beginning, the program designers have made every effort to ensure that their practicum experience is second to none. Former participant Suzy Compton comments about her experience with the international practicum, “The practicum was the most educational experience in the program for me. Although I obviously wouldn't have been able to do it without all the other classes and experiences, it was the best chance to put everything I had learned into practice. For the first time, I was no longer a student learning theory; instead, I was treated as an equal, a colleague who helped plan and make important decisions.”

Of course, developing a top notch practicum experience for students has been a challenging and evolutionary process. To ensure the highest quality, program designers receive feedback from faculty and participants before, during and after the practicum in order to make value added adjustments to the program. This continuous monitoring has resulted in numerous “tweaks” to various aspects of the program which have had various short and long term as well as indirect and direct impact on the experience of the participants.

The unique design approach, emphasizing feedback and reflection, has resulted in a “learning” program that can change and adapt with each cycle to improve the experience of the participants. This ensures that the practicum experience is always evolving and utilizing the best possible resources to adapt to an ever-changing field of practice, and also results in a program that can be more easily and effectively tailored to each student and unique group of participants.

For more information about CRI’s Practicum, contact us at cricrp@du.edu.

--Devin Rau
Katie Manderson (MA ’08): ADR Specialist with the US Agency for International Development

Since March 2007, Katie Manderson (MA ’08) has worked in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to ensure compliance of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations for the largest federal agencies in international relations. From 2007-2011 Manderson served as an ADR Specialist for the US Department of State (DOS), and most recently, she is working in the same capacity for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Her duties include meeting with individuals on staff in these agencies to resolve various workplace conflicts, as well as being a mediator with the US government’s Shared Neutrals Program where she not only assists her own agency but other agencies with their workplace conflict.

In her own words, Manderson says “Basically, I do a ton of conflict resolution work, from conducting mediations or facilitations to just meeting with an employee or manager who is in a dispute and coaching them through it.” She stated that most of the disputes that she mediates center around respect, where both parties feel that there is a lack of respect for them in their workplace. Her career as ADR Specialist in the US Department of State and USAID has given Manderson the opportunity to travel all over the globe. She has traveled to Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Tanzania, South Africa, Ghana, Germany, Iraq, Vietnam, and looks forward to many more trips to many more exotic locations. In her line of work, Manderson gets a unique perspective of these federal agencies and their organizational culture because she meets with everyone from the gardeners to Ambassadors. She enjoys the relational aspect of her line of work because in every country people are friendly and eager to show her around the best their country has to offer.

One of her most memorable experiences while traveling was in Sri Lanka. With only one day to explore the country, Manderson headed to Kandy for the Festival of the Tooth which is called, Esala Perahera. This festival was crowded with people everywhere, in true South Asian style, making it hard to move through the crowds. Manderson and a co-worker had to hurry through the crowds to make a flight to Vietnam the next morning. In order to make the flight and push through the crowds, she had to convince people to help them get back to the car.

Currently, Manderson constantly refers back to the theoretical knowledge she gained in the classroom while pursuing her MA in Conflict Resolution at DU along with the experiences she collected in her internship at the Department of State, Office of Civil Rights. Manderson’s internship at the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity opened doors to her current position at USAID. In respect to current Conflict Resolution students, or those considering a course of study in this field, Manderson advises that they should, “think broadly” in that this field can be applied to many areas across various sectors.

Manderson remarks that everyone at the DOS has been extraordinary in helping her learn the nuances of the EEO process as well as develop her career at both DOS and USAID. Additionally, the Foreign Service staffers have been amazing in helping Manderson understand the culture of the DOS.

Manderson goes on to say that to really understand a place and people, you must understand the conflict that they are going through, even within an organization.

Preparing for her next assignment trip Afghanistan, Manderson looks back at her journey in the field of Conflict Resolution which started at DU, she remarks, “I am blessed in the fact that I use my degree every day!”

Katie Manderson can be contacted at: mmanderson@usaid.gov

---Charlotte Prewitt
**Rachel Tardiff (MA ’13): Summer Intern at the Mercy Corps Headquarters in Portland, Oregon**

During the summer of 2012, Rachel Tardiff had the exciting opportunity to intern with Mercy Corps at their headquarters in Portland, Oregon. Mercy Corps is a global aid agency that seeks to alleviate poverty, conflict, and oppressive conditions in countries that are experiencing or have recently experienced considerable turmoil. When asked why she chose to intern at Mercy Corps, Tardiff responded, “I thought there might be a good opportunity to provide assistance while also gaining valuable experience in the Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness division (LOE) of Mercy Corps.”

Upon initial investigation, Tardiff found that Mercy Corps did not offer an internship for a conflict resolution and leadership development position within the LOE division. Even so, she was not deterred. Tardiff was able to secure an internship with Mercy Corps by writing a proposal detailing how both Mercy Corps and herself would benefit from her internship in the area of conflict management. Mercy Corps was interested in utilizing Tardiff’s expertise in the field of conflict resolution, and in turn worked with her to find the optimal way to use her abilities at Mercy Corps’ headquarters. They decided that the best way to utilize Tardiff’s talents was to arrange an internship for her in the LOE division.

During Tardiff’s internship, she shadowed the Senior Director for Global Leadership Development. Tardiff’s internship included attending meetings with the directors of the LOE division of Mercy Corps, reviewing documents relating to the organization’s core competency model of evaluating effectiveness in the field, developing and delivering three conflict management workshops, and constructing a quick reference guide for managers on how to provide feedback to employees. The conflict management workshops, which Tardiff designed and held, were an example of how she was able to directly apply her education in conflict resolution to her internship at Mercy Corps’ headquarters.

Tardiff’s conflict management workshops were met with enthusiasm by the staff at Mercy Corps’ headquarters. Tardiff notes, “Initially, it was supposed to be just one workshop, and we were concerned that only 8–10 people would be interested. In the first hour after advertising it, 12 people had responded that they wanted to attend. By the end of that day, all 25 spots were full, so an additional session was added and it was also filled by the end of the week, with a waiting list. We added a third workshop as a result, which also filled, and all three had waiting lists.” In the end, almost 40% of the employees at Mercy Corps’ headquarters were trained in the conflict management workshops provided by Tardiff.

The staff of Mercy Corps’ headquarters viewed Tardiff’s internship and her effort to bring her conflict resolution skills to their workforce as a very constructive experience. Tardiff says, “Having a conflict resolution intern come into Mercy Corps was viewed as a positive sign of support from management for enhancing both workplace conflict resolution skills and also for individual career development.” The experience at Mercy Corps was likewise very beneficial for Rachel. Looking back on her internship experience, she remarks, “I learned quite a lot while working at Mercy Corps—more than I could have imagined. Not only did I have the opportunity to facilitate workshops, but the Senior Director who I shadowed did an amazing job in teaching me about the field, and in providing me with constructive feedback.” Further, the internship allowed Tardiff to see the inner workings of a nonprofit and to identify and to address specific challenges to implementing sustainable solutions to conflict in the workplace.

For those students who are currently looking for an internship, Rachel says, “My general advice on internships is to do a lot of investigation and find a place where you think you can learn as well as add value to the organization, and if an internship doesn’t yet exist for conflict resolution, create your own proposal and see what happens.” She urges students not to be dismayed if in this process they have trouble finding the right opportunity. Tardiff notes that “If nothing less, you will make contacts and practice selling yourself. A lot of organizations, especially nonprofits, are looking for driven people who will make a difference and be of help in the organization. By showing initiative and creativity, you can make a good first impression and hopefully have a valuable learning experience.”

Rachel Tardiff can be contacted at: racheltardiff@gmail.com

--Andrew Godziek
Perhaps you have heard of an Ombudsman, but did not know who they are, or what they do. On October 25th, the University of Denver's Conflict Resolution Institute hosted a panel of distinguished Ombuds to educate on their role. From various institutions throughout Colorado, the Ombuds discussed issues of conflict resolution, justice, advocacy, systems reform, and change-management in large agencies and organizations.

The three panelists Jenna Brown (University of Denver), Mary Rudolph Chavez (University of Colorado-Denver), and Rebecca Updike (Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman) discussed and shared what the title of Ombudsman means and what people in their positions typically do. As the Ombudsman at the University of Denver, Jenna Brown, works closely with domestic and international colleagues to ensure that the University's Ombuds Office complies with on-going professional ethics and standards of practice. Mary Rudolph Chavez is the Ombudsman at the University of Colorado in Denver and has, for the past six years, specialized in organizational conflict and collaboration working as an internal consultant to assist and coach constituents. In 2011, Rebecca Updike was named Colorado's first Child Protection Ombudsman and has recently been elected to Chair the Children and Families Committee for the US Ombudsman Association.

The panel event got off to a great start with humor. Jenna Brown asked the audience, “What do you call a room-full of happy Ombudsmen?” Brown then replied, “Cheeri-O-s!” The panelists first explained the early history and definitions of the word: Ombudsman. With roots in Scandinavia, and derived from an Old Norse word for “representative”, the idea of an impartial intermediary was instituted in Sweden in the 19th century, but since then, has spread internationally. Today, there is now at least one “O-person” in every nation in various agencies, capacities, and levels.

There are Classical and Organizational Ombudsmen; the latter are more prevalent in the United States, whereas globally, Classical Ombudsmen are more common in Canada, Asia, Europe, etc. Often appointed, Classical Os view themselves as more of a “watchdog” unit, with the intention of being completely autonomous and uninfluenced from the government agency in which it is to intercede. The main objective of the Classical O is to field complaints from outside of the governing agency in which it is appointed, and to substantiate any of the complaints. Most often Classical Os then publish a formal, public report with recommendations for change for that agency. The Classical O in most countries does not have the power to initiate legal proceedings on the grounds of the grievance.

Organizational Os take a more alternative dispute resolution attitude toward matters within private companies, non-profit organizations, academic institutions and government agencies. The Organizational O works as a designated neutral party who specifically works on the behalf of the organization's employees, managers, and any other internal constituents. Reporting directly to the executive-level leadership, the structure that the Organizational O operates allows whistleblowers (managers, employees, and other internal constituents) with ethical concerns access to the appropriate support for addressing their concerns. Often the support offered by an Organizational O comes in the form of mediation, conflict coaching, tracking of the issue at hand, and providing recommendations to the executive officer for orderly systemic change.

Ombudsmen have the unique role in understanding organizational trends by way of keeping the pulse of the “grievances” or conflicts that they become privy to through their work. Organizational Os usually inform executive-level leadership of the trends they are experiencing, as such, this role plays a major role in systems-reform and change management. Different from the Organizational O, Classical Os can conduct investigations into recurring matters of interest that have been brought to the attention of Os by “Visitors”.

Visitors can anonymously report a problem to the Office of the Ombuds; this organizational structure should allow the visitor to do so without fear of retribution. To promote transparency, social justice, and systems change the need for an Ombudsman’s office in large organizations and agencies is critical because the fear of retribution is real among many of these stakeholders. Brown, the University of Denver’s Ombud, explained to the audience that she perceived her role to be an “Advocate for Access” for any of the visitors that come through her office. An Organizational Ombud, Brown views herself a conduit to the appropriate people and channels for visitors to be heard and to be connected to the resources that they need to
resolve their conflicts. Updike, considered a Classical Ombud, shared experiences in her work for Colorado’s Office of Child Protection where individuals, families, and even non-governmental organizations have come to her office for help because they had nowhere else to go due to politics with the established agencies in power.

The panel discussion with the Ombuds was so engaging and interesting that the session went over its time limit. The Conflict Resolution Institute at the University of Denver hopes that the discussion informed current students about potential roles and career opportunities within the wide field of conflict resolution.

-- Charlotte Prewitt

Continued: The Ombuds

Creating Regional Connections & Building Local Capacity

CRI’s Center for Research and Practice held two events at the end of 2012 which brought practitioners together to collaborate and discuss the future for their field on a local and regional level.

Building Capacity for Collaboration in Natural Resources Symposium & Summit - November 15 & 16, 2012

In November 2012, DU’s Conflict Resolution Institute set out to determine whether or not there was a niche to be filled amongst Colorado collaboratives, practitioners, and networks to develop an initiative that increased capacity to tackle the contentious natural resources issues in the state. Dr. Frank Dukes and his colleagues at the University of Virginia’s Institute for Environmental Negotiation served as partners in this endeavor by providing invaluable knowledge in best practices and cross-sector collaboration gleaned from their own Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute, which serves as a training and networking experience for those who work with natural resources in their state.

The Building Capacity for Collaboration in Natural Resources Symposium and Summit brought together leading practitioners and efforts in the state of Colorado to showcase their work, explore the shape of a possible Colorado NRLI, as well as to identify potential Colorado organizational and institutional partners. Information on specific needs, goals, and resources was collected and collaborators are currently working to shape a pilot program.

Cross-Community Working Group in Partnership with Building Bridges - December 7, 2012

In conjunction with Building Bridges (formerly Seeking Common Ground), CRI hosted a Cross-Community Working Group at the University of Denver which invited organizations based in Denver working with youth and youth-workers in inter-group conflict, anti-discrimination awareness, cross-cultural awareness, and peacebuilding to share best practices, identify opportunities for partnership between the organizations and to explore the value of a continuing professional network. Organizations present included; Building Bridges, PeaceJam, Facing History and Ourselves, Bold Leaders and Challenge Day—Denver Office. Leaders from within these organizations gathered for an all-day session to describe and share their experiences with one another and to discuss topics of shared interest such as alumni relations and engagement, resource allocation, and organizational collaboration. One of the main outcomes of the meeting is that this discussion should become more frequent and intentional as the cross-community working group attempts to collaborate more in the future.
With the advent of the Arab Spring in December of 2010, mass unrest spread throughout the Middle East, leading to large-scale demonstrations and protests in Syria in March of 2011. In April of the same year, President Bashar al-Assad’s regime, using the Syrian Army, resorted to brutal force, opening fire on protesters in an attempt to quell the unrest. Assad’s violent show of force turned the civil unrest into an all-out revolution. Civil war erupted, resulting in violence that has led to the deaths of tens of thousands and to the displacement of many more.

With the death toll rising and the relations between the Syrian opposition and the Assad regime as bitter as ever, the University of Denver’s Center for Middle East Studies held a two-day event on January 10-11 of 2013, co-sponsored by the Conflict Resolution Institute. Titled, “Resolving the Syrian Crisis,” the goal of the event was threefold: to outline the changing nature of the conflict, to detail who the key players in the civil war are, and to contemplate the possible outcomes and their repercussions for the Syrian people.

The event included some of the world’s most prominent voices on the Syrian conflict and its underlying issues. Some of these voices included Radwan Ziadeh, the founder and director of the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, Rafif Jouejati, the director of FREE-Syria, and Richard Falk, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights. For a full list of the renowned participants visit the Center for Middle East Studies’ website.

The event began with a panel Thursday evening titled, “Surviving the Syrian Crisis.” Tamra Pearson d’Estree, the director of the Conflict Resolution Institute’s Center for Research and Practice, moderated the panel, which included Oliver Kaplan, a Lecturer in Human Rights at DU’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies, and distinguished international reporter Kristen Gillespie.

Kristen Gillespie presented an intimate view of the situation
CONFERENCE WITH THE CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

in Syria that included the opinions and desires of people she has interviewed in Syria who live every day under the heavy burden of the conflict. She described horrific scenes in which the Assad regime commits such atrocious acts as dropping unloaded shells from helicopters and waiting until children come to play with the shells, as if they are toys, only to drop a loaded shell on the same spot.

Through years of researching civil strife, Professor Kaplan has found that certain actors in society can act to protect their members from becoming victims of violence – these actors can be tribes, cooperatives, religious sects, ethnicities, or other groups. Professor Kaplan has documented this type of civilian protection in the civil wars that have occurred in Colombia, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Russia, Mexico, Vietnam, Congo, and Mozambique. His research suggests that these types of protective groups exist within the current crisis in Syria. Professor Kaplan stated that, in the Syrian context, a significant contributor to this protection has been that minorities have largely opted to restrain themselves from joining the fight, and diverse communities have come together to renounce blaming or becoming fearful of each other or of other groups of people.

Gillespie added insight into Professor Kaplan’s findings by explaining that since the start of the conflict, the Assad Regime did not want minorities to join in the fight because many of the minorities would have supported and participated in peaceful protests and demonstrations. The Assad regime did not want peaceful protests because it would have had a much harder time justifying its violent crackdown of its own people. What the Assad regime wanted was a Sunni-Alawi showdown that would allow it to portray the conflict as a sectarian struggle against terrorist combatants. Gillespie stated that this sectarian (Sunni-Alawi) conflict is what the Assad regime has achieved, and that “[the Assad Regime] has realized the myth that it has been propagating since the beginning, that these are terrorists.” Gillespie detailed how Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries are literally procuring divisions. Continued on Back Page
Resolving the Syria Crisis

within the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and then forcing the men to grow beards, pray, and do other practices that they would not typically do. Gillespie stated that this has occurred because the FSA fighters do not have many alternatives. The U.S. will not give the aid they need to stay away from these other, much less desirable, options.

Closing the panel, Professor Tamra Pearson d’Estree observed, “[when] we move into the post-conflict phase, and even as we try to get out of the conflict, we often forget the importance of positive models.... Humans operate on the basis not just of abstract notions of what to do next but of watching others, both in terms of watching other individuals and in terms of looking at what are the norms suggesting is the right thing to do here. It is very important to have alternative models for how people can act differently. It clearly is important for us to hear more about some of these positive models of how people are cooperating together.” Communities that are trying to cope with the conflict in Syria and the organizations who are trying to help them to do so can benefit by looking at how communities in other civil wars have protected themselves.

Check out the video footage of this event on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95Ku-7SgzKg

--Andrew Godziek

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