

Suggestions for the Future

On Sunday morning, March 28th, Colloquium speakers and GPS Board members convened in the Leidecker Center for Asian Studies at the University of Maryland Washington to share perspectives on future opportunities for Global Peace Services USA to expand its peacebuilding activities.

Participants noted the frequent divide between academic programs in peace studies and NGO work “in the field” – but also observed that over the past few years a number of initiatives have focused on enhancing the skills and best practices of NGO staff members. Several participants underscored the importance of introducing the concepts of peace service and global awareness in a wide array of courses across college and university curricula. Developing a guide on peace service/global awareness opportunities for students at their own college or university and in their broader region could catalyze student interest in this area, and also serve to link students interested in the field to each other. An array of materials including brochures and Web pages could be created, directed to faculty as well as students. These print and electronic publications could address career opportunities in peace service, the kind of experience needed, internship and practicum placements available, and

linkages to professional and academic resources.

Participants underscored that supervision and mentorship of students involved in service-related internships at community organizations is an area requiring additional support. Participants agreed that students needed attentive and engaged supervision for optimal benefit from their internships. They noted that creative service learning opportunities, meeting community needs, have been developed by faculty and students working in fields not customarily identified with service learning, such as engineering.

Colloquium speakers observed that Global Peace Services USA could fill a particularly important existing need for enhanced communication on the importance of and rewards from peace service and the opportunities available for education and training in this area. GPS, participants noted, could also strengthen the peace movement through continuing and expanding its intergenerational work and reaching out to high school students and to students enrolled in community colleges. GPS could also facilitate the involvement of students from diverse ethnic and racial communities in peace service by encouraging institutions to provide them with scholarship assistance. ■

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