GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

WILLIAM & MARY

Dear Friends,

We write to update you on the Global Research Institute's continuing operations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since we shared our February newsletter, things have changed dramatically in ways that we could not have imagined. GRI faculty have "flipped" their classrooms, delivering content online to students spread around the globe. Our professional staff have continued their work remotely and have implemented dozens of solutions to support faculty research and student programming in this new environment.

To be honest, we really didn't know what to expect during such an unprecedented crisis, but the resilience and creativity of our staff and colleagues have impressed, inspired, and humbled us. Many of our colleagues have done this great work while taking on new "side gigs" that include teaching 3rd grade math, taking care of an aging mother-in-law, and managing Zoom calls while toddlers and pets beg for attention in the background.

We feel extraordinarily fortunate to lead this creative, committed group of scholars and students, and we want to share with you some examples of how our community is adapting to uncertain times.

GRI Students: Our students, like our faculty and staff, have responded to the cancellation of spring and summer plans with flexibility and imagination.

- In a blog post, one of our seniors bid farewell to GRI. As our students often do, she captured the ethos of our work and we thought you might also be interested in reading her farewell.
- Many students have had job or internship offers rescinded, and all GRI-sponsored international travel scheduled for summer 2020 has been cancelled. Our staff are working to identify alternate opportunities for those students whose summer research and internship plans have been upended by COVID-19. If you are interested in offering a remote internship to one of our talented students, please provide more information here.
- GRI-sponsored student groups have pivoted to offering extracurricular activities online. For example, the student team behind this year's W&M Global Innovation Challenge pivoted to an online event with more than 100 remote participants, including over a dozen W&M alumni as mentors and judges.

GRI Research: Our students and faculty continue to work on policy-relevant research questions from the pre-COVID era, and we are extending funds we had allocated to faculty who are unable to use those awards in summer 2020. In addition, some GRI scholars have pivoted to explore how they can use their creativity and data analysis skills in the fight against COVID-19, for example:

- Carrie Dolan, an Assistant Professor of Health Sciences and the Director of the Ignite research lab is working with a private sector partner to assemble a variety of data sets and a machine learning algorithm to forecast local outbreaks in three African countries so that health interventions can be better targeted.
- Professors Ariel Ben Yishay (AidData) and Phil Roessler (Center for African Development) are exploring a partnership with a telecoms company in Sub-Saharan Africa and the World Bank to use satellite imagery, call detail records, and network analysis to identify the locations of future outbreaks and potentially use social networks to disseminate key information about public health advisories.
- GRI's Blockchain Lab, led by Troy Wiipongwii, is leading W&M's participation in a hackathon with ConsenSys Health. At the hackathon, W&M subject matter experts will mentor blockchain development professionals to create data and analytics solutions for fighting COVID-19. One of the winning teams will have the opportunity to incubate at W&M's Entrepreneurship Hub.

GRI Community: Our community is at the heart of what we do. Until we can get together again in person, we're actively working on ways to connect digitally - both to share research and to help each other through these uncharted waters.

- We've launched a digital happy hour series, "Home Brew," to connect our researchers and spark conversation about collaborative projects while we are physically distant. Last week, more than 25 members of our community joined as Professor Dan Maliniak joined us in sharing news about TRIP's new book on the theory-policy divide in international relations. This week, one of our AidData colleagues, Dr. Jonathan Solis, will share his research on journalists' safety in democracies compared to non-democracies.
- We are in the planning stages for new digital events, including a "Coffee Chat" series. If you would be willing to share insights from your field with our students and alums, please email Ana Suarez (aisuarez@wm.edu) to volunteer as a "Coffee Chat" speaker.

Although it will be some time until we can meet again in person or return to our beloved house, we will continue our focus on supporting GRI's student-faculty research and on maintaining a close community of students, scholars, and practitioners. We have been deliberate in building a contingency fund to weather storms such as this and our 10-Year Anniversary Campaign has helped in this regard. For so many of you who have supported us, thank you!

We will continue sharing the ways in which our community of scholars and students is pressing ahead in these uncertain times, and we look forward to being in touch soon.

Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or suggestions.

With best wishes for your continued good health,
Mike Tierney and Sue Peterson
Co-Directors, Global Research Institute