

South Dakota



World Affairs Council

Portal to the World

South Dakota World Affairs Council provides diverse informational and educational opportunities regarding current world affairs, cultures, and critical global issues for the people of South Dakota and the region. SDWAC is a non-partisan organization.

Annual Report 2019-2020

Executive Committee

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Harriet Swedlund	Past Chairperson
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Kim McCullough	Jennifer Wingate
Lyle Olson	Greg Wymer

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Collaborators and in-kind supporters of programs

South Dakota State University: Office of Academic Affairs; Office of International Affairs; Ness School of Management and Economics; School of American and Global Studies; School of Communications and Journalism; Division of Research and Development; College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science; Agriculture Research Station; Jerome Lohr College of Engineering; Research Park; Athletic Department; Wokini Initiative and Tribal Relations

Brookings City Council; Brookings Country Commission; Brookings School District; Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce; Brookings Economic Development Corporation

Daktronics Inc.; First Bank and Trust; Fishback Financial Corporation; Prairie Aqua Technologies, South Dakota Innovation Patterns; Wooden Legs Brewing Company; Kool Beans Coffee Shop; Identity Engine Marketing

Children's Museum of South Dakota; One Million Cups

National Committee on U.S.-China Relations; Open World Leadership Center; South Dakota Public Broadcasting

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SDWAC Annual Membership Meeting, May 14, 2019: The Old Fire Hall was the site for our 2018-2019 annual membership meeting with approximate 50 members and guests in attendance. Bob Burns, Nicole Klein, Lyle Olson, Larry Rogers, Michael Saba and Harriet Swedlund were elected to renewed three year terms. Jennifer Wingate, Sally Gilman, Mary Jo Lee and Doriane Paso were all elected to their first three year term. Dr. Christi Garst-Santos, Director of SDSU School of American and Global Studies, presented an excellent program titled, "The Land Grant Mission in a Global Society".

SDWAC 2019-2020 Programs:



Democracy in India, July 18, 2019: Dr. Chandradhar Dwivedi, SDSU Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Pharmaceutical Sciences, was the guest presenter for a

program titled, “Democracy in India”. Approximately 60 attendees enjoyed the new Larson Performing Arts Center Founders Hall site presentation tracing India’s evolution to democracy following independence in 1947 to the present day challenges under the populist Hindu leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

US –Iran Relations from the 1950s to the present day period, September 17, 2019: Dr. Tim Shorn, USD Associate Professor of Political Science and Director International Studies, provided approximately 65 attendee an excellent overview US –Iran relations from the 1950s to the present day period of high tension following the Trump Administration’s decision to withdraw from the multinational nuclear pact with Iran. The Larson PAC Founders Hall was the program site.



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Caste Discrimination in America, October 24, 2019: Philip Martin, Senior Investigative Reporter for Boston Public Broadcasting Radio WGBH, presented the 2019 Pulitzer Center lecture titled “Caste Discrimination in America”. SDSU School of Communication and Journalism and SDWAC again collaborated in hosting the annual event. The lecture was attended by approximately 75 persons in the University Student Union Pheasant and Crest Room

Egyptian Agricultural Trade Delegation, November 5, 2019: Michael Saba, SD State Legislator and SDWAC Board member, arranged an Egyptian agricultural trade delegation visit through the International Economic Cooperation for the State of South Dakota. Several SDWAC Board members participated in the Brookings events that were hosted by the Brookings Economic Development Corporation.



CHINA Town Hall, November 18, 2019: Since 2008 SDWAC has served as the local host for CHINA Town Hall, an annual interactive webcast and local discussion event sponsored by National Committee on US-China Relations. This year’s webcast event featured George Stephanopoulos as the moderator of a four person panel of Chinese experts. Dr. Bob Burns then served as the moderator of a local live panel composed of Ms. Sheila Anderson, Daktronics CFO; Dr. George White, SDSU Professor

of Geography; Dr. Jon Stauff, SDSU Assistant Vice-President for International Affairs; Dr. Jihong Cole-Dai, SDSU Professor Chemistry and Dr. Matthew Elliot, SDSU Assistant Professor and Agribusiness Specialist. Daktronics again opened the DAK spacious video conference room for the event that was attended by a diverse audience of 80 community and university members.

Children’s Cultural Appreciation Day, November 21, 2019: The Children’s Museum of South Dakota was the site for the annual Children’s Cultural Appreciation Day. Hundreds of Brookings Camelot School fifth graders were treated to a day of global diversity with the cooperation of many community volunteers including Jennifer Wingate’s SDSU English Culture and Language Institute students. SDWAC is a sponsor of this annual event and SDWAC Board members Amanda Qualm and Trish Matson Buus volunteered as members of the planning and implementation committee. The Brookings School District, Children’s Museum, Dacotah Bank, and First Bank & Trust also sponsor the event.





Open World Leadership Center program for Russian Entrepreneurs, February 14-22, 2020: For the sixth time since 2011, SDWAC was successful in being selected as an Open World host organization. This year we hosted a delegation of five delightful Russian entrepreneurs and a Russian liaison official and an interpreter. The visit theme was “Business and Innovation”. Following a weekend of social events the delegates experienced a week of activities that included day long programs featuring Brookings public-private economic development initiatives, Brookings city and county government economic initiatives, SDSU economic initiatives, Brookings industrial examples and public-private economic development funding sources. The delegates expressed strong satisfaction with our local programming and hosting arrangements.

The Open World Russian Entrepreneurs engaged heartily with the Brookings and South Dakota State University Communities. The Russian Delegates shared their personal business experiences, and stories about their country, through formal and informal meetings, as well as three public presentations. At least 125 local community members attended these open presentations. The public events included One Million Cups, a Brookings entrepreneurial gathering, public program at Wooden Legs Brewing Company sponsored by SDWAC, and All Things International, a weekly opportunity offered by the SDSU Office of International Affairs.



The Open World experience for delegates focused not only on business. Host families played a key role in providing richness for the visitors’ stay. Shopping for everything from chocolate to cowboy boots, attending sporting events, museums, and touring our area towns and countryside gave our visitors a fuller picture about life on the prairie. Hosts did not shy from showing both wealth and poverty, and deep interest in Indigenous population sparked transformative conversation. Wherever the visitors went, they were greeted warmly, delegates, staff and fellow customers laughing and taking selfies at every opportunity. These engaging Russians left a lasting impression on the Brookings community.

Many local organizations and individuals contributed to the success of the Open World visit. Brookings Economic Development Corporation, Innovation Center, Brookings Chamber of Commerce, Kool Beans Coffee ownership, Brookings City and County officials, SDSU research and teaching faculty and administrators, Daktronics and Prairie Aqua Tech leadership, Identity Engine and First Bank and Trust leadership all shared expertise and time with us. And Brookings host families volunteered to support our guests for their eight day stay.

SDWAC Programs put on hold due to COVID-19: Plans for an April global human migration program in collaboration with SDSU School of American and Global Studies and our May annual membership meeting were shelved after SDSU closed and Brookings introduced restrictive COVID-19 measures. As SDSU begins to reopen and Brookings lifts restrictive measures, we anticipate renewed Board planning for those events and other events for 2020-2021.

