

MID-YEAR REPORT

IEEE DIPLOMATIC FELLOWSHIP

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This report is in response to the questions, structure and format for the Mid-Year AAAS Diplomatic Fellowship Report specified in the Emily MacGillivray (AAAS) Memo of May 28.

Lead – Major Projects:

I am currently the lead on three major projects at CITELOAS (Inter-American Telecommunications Commission at the Organization of American States):

- Serving as the special representative to the Caribbean Members of OAS, the CARICOM countries, and associated regional organizations, for telecom/ICT activities;
- designing a pilot project and preparing a proposal for a specific Telemedicine/e-health application in a Caribbean country, in coordination with the various country Ministers, representatives and related organizations (e.g., Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), regional telecom carriers); and
- Managing coordination of the CITELOAS-USAID-Pan American Development Fund (PADF) Reconstruction of the Haitian Government Telecom/ICT Network.

Assistance – Major Projects:

I am providing technical assistance for another major project: Engineering for the Americas (EftA), an OAS program to improve engineering education in the Latin America-Caribbean (LAC) region. Two other major programs I supported are essentially complete: preparation of the CITELOAS Strategic Plan for 2010-2014 and the related Mexico Assembly Meetings; and participation in the CITELOAS-FCC Task Force for Earthquake Emergency Assistance for Haiti and Chile.

Other Activities:

Many other activities have been related to the major programs noted above. These include, for example: coordinating satellite/technical data for Haiti, Chile and Caribbean with the Director and staff at Dept. of State (EB/CIP/SP), USAID, FCC, Inter-American Defense Board and others; acquiring and providing information to the Latin America-Caribbean (LAC) countries (e.g., USTTI courses, scholarship information, IPv6, Spectrum Management, and other technical areas); acquiring new CITELOAS Associate Members; acquiring and consolidating telecom/ICT data from Caribbean regional and international carriers; providing analytical assistance in developing alternative measures of “Competitiveness”; preparing and coordinating presentations for various meetings; coordinating with, attending and participating in engineering society, e-health, and other agency technical meetings (e.g., World Bank, InterAmerican Bank, International Telecommunications Union, U.N., CONATEL-Haiti, FCC, USAID, PADF, PAHO).

Work Significance:

Colleagues have told me that my initiatives, technical expertise, private sector experience, and perspectives are significant and positive contributions to the OAS offices with which I am working. I also believe the projects in which I am involved are both important and personally rewarding.

Success Highlights:

There are several highlights of the Assignment so far, including: (1) developing a conceptual pilot project and proposal for the EftA program to ensure a near-term startup for the program; (2) preparing and presenting a program for CITELOAS cooperation at the Caribbean Telecommunications (CTU) Ministerial Meeting in St. Vincent/Grenadines; (3) advancing a formal CTU-CITELOAS Cooperation Agreement to be signed in June by the Secretary General of

CTU and the Executive Secretary of CITEL; (4) developing the e-health/telemedicine data base and pilot program for the Caribbean region; (5) development and coordination of several inter-organizational committees/groups to support CITEL activities.

Supervisors/Advisors:

I am learning a great deal from my Supervisor/Advisor, the Executive Secretary of CITEL, particularly in regard to the need for coordination with various agencies and organizations, and even moreso – the value of patience (and persistence) in achieving required coordination and participation of others. My supervisor appears to recognize my industry history of working independently and treats me accordingly, providing overall objectives and guidance and allowing me the freedom to follow-through as required. In return, I am sensitive to the potential effects of my actions on his activities so that I seek his approval/recommendations to reflect operating in the highly structured multilateral agency environment.

Challenges/Opportunities:

The foremost challenge has been my transition to working within a “bureaucratic” environment; one which is highly structured and for which various hierarchical levels are required for program/project approvals, as well as the need for coordination among the various entities involved and, of course, the patience required to achieve progress within this framework. Working in the private sector with my own consulting firm has made this transition difficult, but not impossible.

Of equal importance has been the unique Diplomatic Fellowship assignment to CITEL/OAS by being “seconded” (loaned) to the organization, although officially assigned to the US Mission to the OAS at the Department of State (USOAS). The challenge in this instance is that I have no personal or professional connection to State as part of the Diplomatic Fellowship, except in rare instances where the Office of the S&T Adviser to the Secretary of State has provided some special assistance. Consequently, I am missing out on those parts of the Fellowship, including, for example, absence of camaraderie and experience-sharing with other State Fellows, no access to DOS intranet, no notices, difficulties for all administrative actions, and lack of professional support. The natural consequence is my complete identification with OAS rather than any affiliation with the DOS for the Diplomatic Fellowship.

Related to this latter challenge has been the deficiency in my Spanish language capabilities. While conversational English is used extensively (with me) at OAS, Spanish is frequently required, especially so for the many technical documents that are not translated and for meetings with multiple personnel. While this was expected and communicated to the U.S. Mission Office, and a language review course was requested, no action was ever taken. I believe my performance can still be improved for the balance of the Fellowship with better language skills, which is why I am still trying to enroll in a language course as well as improve on my own by practicing with Spanish speaking associates in the office and using personal review material.

Nevertheless, I believe my Fellowship to CITEL is benefitting that office. I also believe that additional Fellowships – other than through the U.S. Mission at State - to CITEL in particular and OAS in general should be considered; there are numerous other areas for assignment in addition to telecom/ICT. Additional Fellowships would enhance the mission of the OAS and improve the status and direct, explicit acceptance of American contributions and presence in this multinational organization.

Program Enhancement:

The AAAS/Fellowship staff is absolutely excellent; they have continually provided responsive, knowledgeable, helpful and relevant support to my entire Diplomatic Fellowship process when needed. For the most part, the orientation program was extremely interesting and helpful as well. I have not participated in any of the development workshops, only some (a few) of the Fellowship events, and I have not gone to the State Fellows lunches nor the Friday Happy

Hours. Regarding lunches, since I am “seconded” from State to OAS and not collocated with State, it’s difficult to have a rapport with other present and/or past State Fellows. For HH, my interests diverge somewhat from that type of celebration on Fridays.

However, I have developed and maintained a collegial relationship with several of the Jefferson Fellows. In this regard, I would suggest the program encourage more interaction between the “more senior” AAAS Fellows and the Jefferson Fellows, both of whom likely have more in common, both professionally and personally. Similarly, I would also suggest that the Jeffersons’ and others’ Listserves be shared so that this congeniality can be expanded.