

Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions

August 27, 2010

It has been one year since the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions opened its doors at Vanderbilt University and CSDI already has a list of accomplishments. The research center hosted a lunchtime series of research talks. It co-sponsored two academic conferences. It brought nationally-acclaimed journalists to campus to discuss the 2008 Presidential election and the upcoming midterm elections in 2010. All the while, CSDI faculty and student affiliates presented their research across the country.

CSDI Seminar Series

CSDI's seminar series met 15 times throughout the fall and spring semesters. During "lunch and learn" lectures, faculty from Harvard, Duke, Notre Dame, Claremont, and Vanderbilt presented innovative research on the conduct and performance of democratic institutions. The talks were followed by interactive discussions among participants representing an array of Vanderbilt academic departments, including political science, history, management, economics, and law.

Conferences

CSDI co-hosted the "Legislative Elections, Process and Policy: The Influence of Bicameralism" conference with the Political Science department October 22-24, 2009. Twenty-three scholars from Colleges and Universities worldwide presented 17 scholarly papers on six panels over the course of two days. The CSDI co-directors convened the panels and served as panel discussants. On April 2, 2010, CSDI sponsored an International Relations workshop. Six renowned scholars of International Relations from across the country were invited to read and comment on the work of junior Political Science faculty members and CSDI research fellows.

An Evening with Dan Balz and Haynes Johnson

On April 1, 2010, CSDI co-hosted with the First Amendment Center a community forum to discuss the book *The Battle for America: the Story of an Extraordinary Election*, written by Dan Balz and Haynes Johnson. The authors spoke and answered audience questions (the forum was open to the public and approximately 135 people attended) regarding the 2008 election of President Obama and its impact on the 2010 Congressional elections. CSDI Professor John Geer and First Amendment Center director John Seigenthaler served as moderators.

CSDI Research Fellows

2009-2010 CSDI fellow Tana Johnson was named a fellow at Princeton University's Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance. Tana will spend the 2010-2011 academic year at Princeton before joining the faculty of Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy. The other 2009-2010 CSDI Fellow, Dan Pemstein, successfully defended his dissertation on July 21, 2010 and he will continue his research on the policymaking in the European Parliament while remaining at CSDI during 2010-2011.

Undergraduate Research Fellows Gabe Horton and Nick Gallo had the rare opportunity to present their research findings on patronage in presidential appointments at the 2010 annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, IL, April 22-25. Horton and CSDI co-director David Lewis presented "Turkey Farms and Dead Pools: Competence and Connections in Obama Administration Appointments." Turkey farms and dead pools are colloquial terms for government agencies where presidents tend to make appointments based on political connection, rather than job competence. Gallo's research paper, entitled "Patronage and Appointee Management Performance," focused on the impact of patronage appointments during the Bush administration on various agencies' effectiveness.

Community Outreach

As part of the effort to produce research that helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, CSDI personnel wrote white papers, conducted interviews, and offered opinion pieces. They also conducted numerous talks in various venues, from universities to think tanks to public forums. An important component of this work occurs in the context of the Vanderbilt community. For example, David Lewis spoke at a dinner organized by Vanderbilt Student Government on "The Obama Presidency in Historical Perspective." John Geer and David Lewis spoke during graduation festivities on "The Obama Presidency: An Assessment After Sixteen Months."

CSDI supports systematic theoretical and empirical research on questions central to the survival and flourishing of democratic institutions in the United States and abroad. The Center also supports the production of research and public commentary on the connection between democratic values and actual practice. For more information about the Center for Study of Democratic Institutions, please visit the CSDI website at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csci>.