



PANETTA INSTITUTE

update

Lecture Series Examines Revolutions of the 21st Century and Their Impact on the Future

The 15th annual Panetta Institute Lecture Series this spring focused on revolutionary change around the globe, with an outstanding lineup of public policy and technology experts taking the stage at the Monterey Conference Center.

Institute director **Sylvia Panetta** challenged the speakers to explore the context of dramatic, transformational developments in the world's political and economic landscape and in cyberspace. "These great global and national events are fundamentally affecting our way of life," she said. "As we experience these revolutions, what can we anticipate for the future and how can we determine the best course forward?"

The series began on March 19 with a focus on the sweeping nature of the challenges in the Middle East. International policy experts and presidential advisers **Dennis Ross** and **Fran Townsend** discussed at length what both described as the stubborn complexity of conflict in the region.

In a discussion moderated by former CNN bureau chief **Frank Sesno**, the speakers agreed that an Iran armed with nuclear weapons—and a possible military response from Israel—pose the gravest threat to the entire region. As for last year's "Arab Spring," Ross and Townsend agreed that the process of democracy can be messy and that citizens from Libya to Iraq are

finding their way toward freedom in ways that are impossible to predict.

On April 9, attention turned to domestic policy as former Labor Secretary **Robert Reich** and former Senator **Alan Simpson**, R-WY, focused on the thorny problems associated with the U.S. economy in general and the national debt in particular.

Responding to questions from CNBC senior analyst **Ron Insana**, Simpson and Reich lamented the lack of bipartisan negotiation in Washington as Democrats and Republicans continue to focus on partisan concerns and not on solving the nation's financial problems.

On May 7, two celebrated scholars looked back in time to consider presidential leadership and what current-day candidates can learn. The scholars, **Michael Beschloss** and **Douglas Brinkley**, explained how the

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Lecture series speakers also meet with students from area high schools, colleges and military installations to answer their questions.



Reading Volunteers Honored as Monterey County Reads Celebrates its 15th year

In late April, the Monterey County Reads program honored 225 volunteers at a special ceremony for helping more than 1,300 children learn to read. The program is based at the Panetta Institute and just completed its 15th year of helping area children discover the world of books and improve their reading skills. It's the Institute's longest-running program.

In honoring and thanking volunteers and program sponsors, Institute director Sylvia Panetta observed, "There is no such thing as a viable democracy if people can't read."

Celebrated author **Jane Smiley** was the event's keynote speaker, telling the audience, "Reading is every citizen's primary survival skill."



Institute director Sylvia Panetta (right) honors volunteers who have served for five years. From left, Julie Irinco, Andrea Eisler, Vicki Cooper and Kevan Clarke. Not pictured is Cassandra Cooper.

Monterey County Reads enlists volunteers from area colleges, businesses, military installations, faith groups and many other organizations.

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Speakers Address Legacy for Next Generation

need for honesty and integrity continues to be a cornerstone of presidential leadership.

Moderator Judy Woodruff, co-anchor of PBS *NewsHour*, asked the scholars about past presidents and what made them successful. "Being honest," said Brinkley. "You don't want to be seen lying to the public and doing so would not play well in history."

Beschloss said presidential excellence results from "the willingness to do the right thing and not worry about the consequences to one's political career. That's hard, because these people are politically successful."

For the season finale, **Frank Sesno** returned to explore the revolutionary impact of the Internet with three leaders on the cutting edge: **Vinton Cerf** of Google, **Arianna Huffington**, founder of the Huffington Post and an executive with AOL, and journalist and technology analyst **Larry Magid** of CBS News.

The speakers touted the Internet's ability to empower citizens to bypass and outmaneuver major organized interests such as well-funded Super PACs. All three, however, acknowledged that a hyper-connected world can lead to unintended consequences.



This year's Panetta Institute Lecture speakers: former presidential adviser Dennis Ross, former presidential adviser Fran Townsend, former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, former Senator Alan Simpson, presidential historians Michael Beschloss and Douglas Brinkley, Google pioneer Vinton Cerf, Huffington Post founder Arianna Huffington and CBS technology journalist Larry Magid. Watch the lectures online at PanettaInstitute.org.

Panetta Institute Supporters Cite Ongoing Commitment to Education

Since its founding in 1997, the Panetta Institute has placed education at the heart of its mission, introducing young people to the world of politics and public service in a nonpartisan setting.

That commitment has attracted a loyal contingent of supporters from around the Monterey Bay and around the country who cite the Institute's unique educational programs as the reason they got involved as volunteers and contributors.

For example, although the Lecture Series may be the best-known Institute program, supporters note that the nationally prominent guest speakers also meet with students from the region's colleges, high schools and military campuses during special afternoon sessions at CSU Monterey Bay.

As Institute director Sylvia Panetta said to several hundred students at one of this year's sessions, "The leaders you hear from today won't be around forever. It's critical that you start gaining the background and understanding now to become the informed decision makers of the future."

Institute volunteers and supporters include people like **Ricky Cabrera** of Salinas. Cabrera not only volunteers for the Monterey County Reads program, but he has been active in transporting high school students from Salinas who attend the lecture-related events. He says: "The Panetta Institute is the guardian angel for so many underserved kids.

Cabrera's first involvement with the Institute was through Monterey County Reads, the program where volunteers work with children who are having trouble with their reading. "I have seen these kids so inspired by what they learn that they've opened up their eyes and



Institute supporter Helen Rucker meets with Seaside High senior Veronica Standifer as part of her work with the Institute.

seen the world in a whole new way," says Cabrera. "The Panetta Institute has given them a whole new future."

Bill Doolittle of Carmel says he supports the Institute because "In this day and age, when many high school students don't understand how things work at the city, county and state levels, the Panetta Institute helps to ignite an interest in basic civics."

Doolittle adds that the same holds true for members of the general public who attend the Lecture Series or watch it live on cable television simulcasts. "We get to see key decision-makers first-hand and gain a deeper understanding of their positions and ideas."

No one has supported and worked with the Institute longer than community leader **Helen Rucker**, who serves as a Monterey Peninsula Unified School District trustee and is a former Seaside city council member.

"When Sylvia (Panetta) calls, I come running," she says. Like others, Rucker helps coordinate student involvement at the afternoon educational programs, focusing on under-represented minorities. As she puts it: "We find ways for youngsters who typically don't ask questions to get involved."

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Despite pessimism, college students look forward to public service, survey says

America's college students remain pessimistic about the nation's future, but their perceptions of the country's leadership have brightened slightly in the past year, according to the Panetta Institute's annual survey of college students.

Since 2001, the spring survey has explored students' attitudes and opinions on a wide range of issues and measured their level of interest in politics and public service.

This year, only 24 percent of college students say they feel "confident and secure" about the country's future – a drop from 32 percent a year ago.

Curiously, however, students have grown a bit more optimistic about the country as measured on the classic right direction/wrong track scale. Although a plurality of students (46 percent) still believe America is "on the wrong track" rather than headed in the right direction (43 percent), that margin is smaller than it was in 2011, when 50 percent said wrong track and 37 percent said right direction.

At the same time, although 49 percent say they are confident about their personal future, only 21 percent say the national economy is either excellent or good, and confidence about one's personal prospects is significantly lower among college seniors than it is among freshmen.

"While some economic indicators suggest the economy is improving," says Institute director Sylvia Panetta, "in the minds of these students the recession is still very much with us, particularly when it comes to job opportunities."

A substantial portion of students may be considering new forms of employment. Thirty-eight percent express an interest in working for a not-for-profit community organization or foundation, and 38 percent – a record high in the history of the survey – say they have considered pursuing a service-oriented experience such as Teach for America, VISTA or AmeriCorps after they graduate.

The Institute's survey was conducted by Hart Research Associates from March 27 to April 3. A more extensive summary is posted at PanettaInstitute.org.



An increasing number of students are considering public service