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SPECIAL REPORT

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Graduate Education and Professional Practice in International Peace and Conflict

About the Report

This report, requested by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) as part of its response to the focus on education and training provided for in the legislation that created it,[1] examines the match between graduate academic programs in international peace and conflict, and the needs of organizations and agencies that hire individuals for conflict-focused work in the field. Nike Carstarphen is an independent consultant and a cofounder of the Alliance for Conflict Transformation. Craig Zelizer is the associate director of the Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution Program at Georgetown University and a cofounder of the Alliance for Conflict Transformation. Robert Harris is the conflict management services manager at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration. David J. Smith was previously a senior program officer in the Education and Training Center–Domestic and is currently the National Educational Outreach officer at USIP.

Since its founding in 1984, the Institute's education and training efforts have been wide-ranging. These efforts include sponsoring the National Peace Essay Contest for U.S. high school students; developing programs on peacebuilding for young people, secondary teachers, and college and university faculty in the United States and in zones of conflict; training civil society actors in conflict resolution approaches; and publishing research on best practices and approaches to

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Summary

- Graduate-level academic institutions are not adequately preparing students for careers in international peace and conflict management. Curricula need to incorporate more applied skills, cross-sectoral coursework, and field-experience opportunities.
- Unlike most faculty, students, and alumni, employers see substantial room for improvement in preparing students for the field.
- Overseas experience is, for employers, the most valuable asset.
- General project management skills—program planning and design, monitoring and evaluation, computer literacy, report writing skills, budgeting, staff management, research skills, grant writing, and knowledge of the funding and policy world—and cross-cultural competencies and language skills are critical.
- International peace and conflict management practices increasingly overlap with more traditional work, such as human rights, humanitarian issues, and development programming.
- Employers want candidates who have a holistic understanding of international conflict work, specialized knowledge and skills, practical know-how, and political savvy, yet often fail to grasp what academic programs are in fact teaching students to prepare them for the field.
- Academic programs need to strengthen their outreach and interaction with employers and to market the value of their programs.

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teaching about peace. Recently, because of the need to improve peacebuilding practitioner training, the Institute engaged in a major effort to develop a comprehensive program in conflict management designed for professionals resulting in the establishment of the Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding.

- To better prepare themselves for the field, recent graduates and alumni are seeking to increase their applied education, field experience, project management skills, mentoring, and career guidance.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the number of academic institutions providing education and training in international peace and conflict resolution in the United States has grown.[2] Much of this development has been at the graduate level.[3] In the fall of 2005, to assess the current state of the field more accurately, the United States Institute of Peace commissioned the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) to study the level of academic preparation of graduate students and professionals seeking careers in the international peace and conflict field. The research explored the match between academic program offerings and the needs of the organizations and agencies that hire individuals for international conflict work. Continued contact since then with faculty, students, and employers has both extended and supported the findings. This report offers an overview of those findings, highlights existing gaps, and outlines concrete recommendations on how academic programs can better prepare students.

The Study

The goal of this study was to explore the match between academic program offerings and the needs of the organizations and agencies that hire individuals for international conflict work.

Overall, career opportunities related to international peace and conflict work have increased substantially in recent years.[4] Positions can be grouped into two broad categories: those working in international conflicts and those working on international conflicts.[5] The first refers to efforts that focus on or take place in countries experiencing conflict—such as those offering humanitarian relief, providing development, or helping with democracy and governance. The second refers to efforts that directly or indirectly seek to manage, mitigate, or resolve conflicts—such as negotiating peace agreements, preventing deadly conflict, building positive relations among adversaries, and developing secure and stable societies.[6]

Of late, the line distinguishing these two has blurred. Organizations working in more traditional sectors—such as humanitarian assistance, governance, and public health—increasingly find themselves addressing conflict directly, or at a minimum bringing a conflict-sensitive lens to their work.[7] Those working to prevent, manage, or resolve conflict find that they also need to address the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty and lack of political participation through civil society, which have traditionally been the domain of development organizations.

Given the growth and increasingly overlapping practices in these two areas of work, the number of graduate programs designed to prepare individuals for careers related to international peace and conflict work has also risen significantly. More programs focus specifically on training students to effectively address international conflict. In addition, many programs in other sectors—international affairs, security, public health, development—offer certificates or courses related to international peace and conflict, or both.

For the study, ACT interviewed twenty-five faculty, program administrators, and career development staff from thirteen academic programs at nine postgraduate institutions in the United States that focus on international conflict–related fields—humanitarian work, international relations and affairs, public policy, conflict resolution and analysis, foreign service, government, public health, and military officer training.[8] In addition, sixty-one students and alumni from the graduate programs surveyed completed an online survey and, of those,

fourteen were interviewed for the research. Finally, twenty-one professionals from twenty organizations that conduct work related to international conflict were also interviewed.[9] The majority of groups and individuals focused on humanitarian and operational work. The study was completed in November 2005.

This summary of the research highlights existing strengths and challenges and outlines concrete recommendations both for academic programs to better prepare students and for employers.

In reviewing the findings, it is important to emphasize that the study was limited to international conflict programs. Many of the identified gaps regarding critical skills and knowledge, however, would also be true for most comparable social science degrees.

Academic Programs and Employers

One common feature of the programs surveyed is their aim to train students how to analyze and understand a particular problem (such as war, ethnic violence, and political instability) or set of problems within their respective fields, to teach students about the range of possible approaches to and the associated skills in addressing the problems identified (such as negotiation, mediation, peacebuilding, and economic development), and to provide students with the capacity to intervene effectively to manage, mitigate, and resolve the problem. The emphasis on theory and practice varies across programs.

Programs can be distinguished by their curricular emphasis in four general areas and how they combine these areas:

- sectors—security, political, economic, sociocultural (health and education, for instance);
- levels of analysis—intrastate (local, national), national, regional, international, and global;
- stages of conflict—prevention, escalation, violence, de-escalation, stabilization, transition, and transformation to sustainable peace; and
- approaches to intervention—military, peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding, development, diplomacy, and humanitarian operations.

The employers surveyed all carry out work related to international peace and conflict. Differences are significant, however, in the language used to describe their work, in how they conceptualize its focus, and in the degree to which they emphasize either conflict mainstreaming (that is, the integration of peace and conflict strategies within other discrete fields and across sectors and responsibilities) or stand-alone conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Essential KSAs: Academic Programs Versus Employer Needs

Academic programs across the spectrum offer many of the same knowledge, skills, and abilities—known as KSAs. The majority of differences relate to the relative emphasis placed on particular KSAs. Similarly, most employers valued the same KSAs in their employees, though differences in emphasis related to each organization's area of work were evident. Table 1 compares the five KSAs most emphasized in the graduate programs (according to faculty and staff) and those most valued among the employers. It is premature to identify a consensus on the core competencies given the lack of agreement on the core theories and skills in the academic field and the different conceptualizations of the field as practiced by employers. This report does demonstrate the KSAs identified most often and most strongly among the academic programs and employers, however.

Table 1. Top Five KSAs

Rank	Academic Programs	Employers
1	Theories of conflict analysis: causes, sources, and dynamics of conflict and research skills	Field experience: work and internships abroad
2	Theories of conflict resolution: understanding approaches to intervention	Program management: program planning and design, monitoring and evaluation, budgeting, and writing skills
3	Country- or region-specific: multicultural skills, emerging foci such as evaluation, terrorism, security and conflict, environment, stabilization and reconstruction	Country- or region-specific: multicultural and language skills
4	Political issues: human rights, democracy and governance	Applied conflict analysis and resolution skills
5	Applied knowledge and skills: internships (U.S. and limited international opportunities) that provide students with concrete work skills and practical knowledge of the how the field operates	Sector-specific, practical, technical expertise: civil society, democracy and governance, gender, civilian-military cooperation

Not surprisingly, academic programs emphasize theory and analytical skills related to peace and conflict resolution, while employers stress the importance of field experience and program management skills as key areas. In addition, employers strongly emphasized the need for graduates to have conflict resolution skills—including facilitation, dialogue, training, and conflict resolution mainstreaming[10]—and applied research expertise, such as conducting assessments or evaluations that are critical in conducting successful programs. "The primary concern," one senior staff member responsible for a peacebuilding program explained, "is that people have tangible skills that provide direct benefits to field programs."

The majority of academic programs also encourage students to develop cross-sectoral and country or regional understanding in addition to conflict expertise. Specialization comes with the choice of elective courses, typically one to five across the degree programs. Some programs have designed formal specializations with suggested or recommended coursework. Other programs allow students to design their own specializations and take whatever elective courses they want (with varying degrees of faculty oversight).

Several programs reported emerging interest in terrorism, civilian-military relations, stabilization and reconstruction, disaster preparedness, and conflict (violence) prevention. In addition, all programs seek to provide at least some applied, practical skills training and field experience opportunities.

Most programs enable students to develop practical skills in at least one of several ways:

- regular coursework in a classroom setting;
- special skills-based credit and noncredit courses;
- hands-on training through practical institutes and simulations, workshops, and other activities; and
- field practice through internships, practicums, field projects, working groups, assistantships, and field work fellowships.

All programs provide opportunities for students to develop applied skills in a range of basic, advanced, and specialized knowledge and skills (see table 2).[11] Basic skills courses provide training in analytical thinking and writing, and help provide a foundation in a variety of international conflict careers. Advanced or meta-skills—such as impact assessments, management skills, and negotiation—transcend particular professions and teach skills that are needed in a variety of international careers. Specialized training gives students practical and technical knowledge about the way particular organizations and industries work, specific policies and processes, and particular sectors, regions, or countries.

Table 2. Skills Development Offered by Academic Programs

Basic	Advanced or Meta-Skills	Specialized
Basic quantitative and qualitative research, analysis, and measurement	Research and analysis skills for international conflict (such as conflict, political, or economic analysis)	Sectors and industries: U.S. foreign policy, international development, economics and finance, security, peace and conflict resolution
Analytical, critical thinking skills	Impact assessment (such as peace and conflict impact assessment, human rights impact assessment)	Specific topics (such as democracy and governance, economics and conflict, trade, economic development, security, terrorism, health, human rights, humanitarian emergencies, postconflict stability and reconstruction, protracted conflicts)
Writing skills (such as full reports, one-page briefs, writing for nonspecialists)	Policy formulation and advocacy	Actors and organizations: U.S. agencies (such as the United States Agency for International Development or the National Security Council), intergovernmental agencies (such as the United Nations, Organization of American States, World Bank, and World Trade Organization), nongovernmental organizations
Public speaking (such as presentations and formal briefings)	Leadership, teamwork, and management skills	Country-specific or regional knowledge
Budgets and financial statements	Cross-cultural competency	Foreign language training
Networking	Process skills (such as negotiation, mediation, and facilitation)	Program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
Ethics		Technical skills (such as fundraising, grant, and proposal writing)

Table 2 outlines the key areas that academic programs should cover. Few programs, however, provide opportunities for students to develop the advanced and specialized skills and many do not even adequately address the basic skills set.

Challenges in Gaining Field Experience

All graduate programs recognize the need to ensure that students who want or need additional field experience get that opportunity, whether through internships, practicums, or other fieldwork. The greatest constraints are lack of funding (especially for overseas experiences) and either weak or too few relationships with practicioner organizations. Successful field experience generally requires that academic programs form partnerships with organizations, which helps students build long-term relationships rather than one-off short-term internships. For example, an academic program might develop a relationship with a practitioner organization that include one or more of the following activities: regular placement of student interns each year, guest visits and lectures by practitioners, having students and faculty address issues related to field practice in classes, and providing fellowships for students to conduct in-depth field research on related topics.

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Students who want to do direct intervention work—such as facilitation, negotiation, or mediation—will find some opportunities in the field, though far more of these are available in domestic than in international settings. University, community, or courts-based programs are the most typical. Many of the students and alumni surveyed in this research, however, said that they had few such opportunities and wanted more. Academic programs can provide students with increased opportunities by starting dialogue and conflict programs to address issues both on their campuses and in surrounding communities, and by developing

strong partnerships with conflict organizations that can provide additional field or training opportunities.

Even fewer overseas opportunities—especially at the policymaking, political, or international level—are available, and these typically entail observing and assisting rather than leading efforts. Among the challenges beyond the constraints already described are the sensitive and long-term nature of international interventions. These interventions require senior-level professional oversight, because of both the personal risks and the need to ensure culturally and politically responsive processes. Although it is challenging to provide such opportunities, programs could work to foster opportunities for their students with partner NGOs, offer study abroad or conflict resolution field programs (or both), and assist students in pursuing fellowships and other opportunities that support these types of experiences. In addition, offering more courses on the concrete knowledge and skills needed to pursue international careers is critical.

Conflict Programming: Mainstream or Stand-Alone

Another theme that emerged is whether organizations focus more on mainstreaming conflict sensitivity into their projects or more on directly conducting projects. Much of the discussion has been mistakenly framed as either mainstreaming or stand-alone projects and divisions, when in fact each approach addresses distinct needs and both can be used within intervention initiatives in the field.

Among organizations focused primarily on humanitarian or development relief, almost all respondents stressed active efforts to mainstream conflict sensitivity throughout their work. This means ensuring that programming, regardless of sector, tries to have a positive influence on conflicts, or at a minimum avoids having a negative impact—the do-no-harm approach. "We need people who know how to mainstream conflict resolution into all areas and programs," a senior staffer at a development organization said. Organizations that define themselves as primarily working in conflict tend to mainstream a conflict perspective into their regular programming.

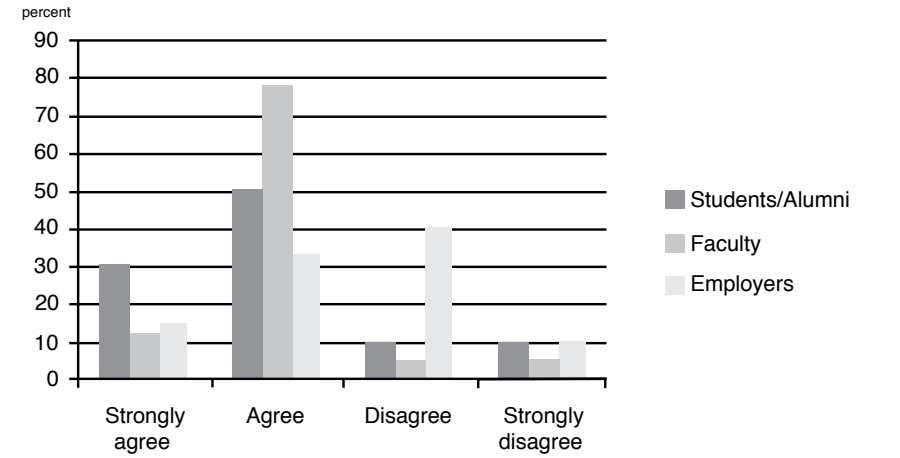
Many of these organizations are also increasingly adding work on conflict to their work in conflict by integrating conflict resolution and peacebuilding into traditional programming, and developing stand-alone projects that seek to address conflict directly. In addition, many primarily development or humanitarian relief-focused organizations are hiring conflict resolution specialists and creating units or departments that specialize in conflict to aid the process of mainstreaming and adding or integrating conflict resolution and peacebuilding projects.[12]

Organizations that define themselves as primarily working on conflict tend to conduct stand-alone conflict resolution and peacebuilding projects. They are, however, increasingly involved in more development work, either by rooting their conflict resolution efforts within development-focused projects or by collaborating with development organizations, or sometimes both. Furthermore, conflict resolution organizations engage more and more frequently in projects that seek to build good governance, contribute to economic growth, and foster the rule of law. These developments are in response to the realization that working in conflict and on conflict are both intertwined and necessary for sustainable peace.

Gaps Between Programs and Needs

Faculty, students, alumni, and employers differed significantly on whether students are adequately prepared for careers in international peace and conflict. As indicated in figure 1, the

Figure 1. Are Students Adequately Prepared?



vast majority of faculty (nearly 90 percent) agreed with the statement whereas the majority of employers (more than 50 percent) disagreed.

The gaps between academic training and employer needs can be summarized as follows:

Theory versus practice. Being able to apply academic expertise to practical needs is of course imperative. All employers rated overseas work and direct applied experience (preferably working on development or conflict-related initiatives) as the most valuable qualification for positions related to international peace and conflict activities. Despite its efforts, academia has not kept up with the needs and expectations of employers. Students and especially alumni have made this clear in almost unanimously calling for academic programs to provide more practical, applied KSAs and increased opportunities for hands-on experience. Several employers felt that students came out of graduate programs filled with theories about the sources and dynamics of conflicts, but not knowing how to translate their knowledge to real-world practice. One practitioner remarked that recent graduates often don't realize that in the field in choosing how to respond to conflict situations, that there is often no ideal response, only the need to choose "the least worst option."

A development specialist explained it this way: "While degrees and/or expertise in conflict resolution are helpful, the majority of the conflict related positions also require additional skills and expertise, such as general program management skills and expertise in another sector (economics, development, health, gender, and so on)."

Program management. Employers overwhelmingly rated program management KSAs as essential, though these tended to receive little emphasis in academic strategies. Many students graduate from programs related to international conflict without a basic understanding of program management, fundraising, budgeting, evaluation, and other related tasks so essential to implementing international conflict intervention programs.

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Generalists versus specialists. Academic programs tend to produce generalists, but what employers say they want are specialists with expertise in particular sectors. Employers seek candidates with a holistic, multidimensional, and multisectoral understanding of the field who can apply that understanding and theory to specific settings and contexts. Employers also emphasized technical skills such as economic development, governance, democratization, or rule of law, more than process skills such as mediation, facilitation, or dialogue. One explanation for this finding is that few positions focus exclusively and directly on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. "Hard subject skills are more important than process skills," a senior consulting professional remarked, "unless it is a project focused exclusively on conflict resolution. Even then, it's important to have some technical skills."

Whether students actually develop a specialization depends largely on the electives they took. Unfortunately, many reported having only general notions of what they wanted to do, or more often only a cursory knowledge of what they needed to study and do to qualify for the careers and positions they sought. The scant specialized career advice typical of many programs may explain this deficiency. Programs also need to do more to help students develop competency in sectoral-based conflict programming.

Conflict resolution mainstreaming and cross-sector development. Many organizations want not only specialists in traditional functional areas but also individuals who can mainstream conflict sensitivity and conflict resolution into general programming. Employers who highly value conflict expertise and conflict resolution skills seek professionals to apply such skills in a variety of situations and sectors. Several areas were identified as the most pressing gaps: the security sector (among nonmilitary people), rule of law (protection and human rights), and democracy and governance. Academic programs need to ensure that students understand how to integrate conflict resolution skills and techniques across diverse sectors, not see conflict as a stand-alone process.

Networking and collaboration. Many employers emphasized the need for people to know the key players in international conflict, both in the United States and internationally. Employers mentioned in particular the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations, the World Bank, and European Union institutions, as well as the key nongovernmental organizations and contractors in the field. Many employers also stressed their need for individuals who can develop and manage cooperative relationships with different actors at different levels (such as civilian-military relations, local field partners, funders).

New language and concepts in the field. Most employers interviewed, both for profit and nonprofit, receive substantial funding from government agencies, notably USAID, and therefore want and need their employees to understand the culture—that is, terminology, jargon, concepts, and frameworks—of such agencies. Employers emphasized that the ability to translate and fit the organization's culture and methods into those of donor agencies is essential. The same is true of international agencies and U.S. government entities. Many graduating students do not have an adequate understanding of how the "business" of peace functions in terms of funding, contracting, and related areas.

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Political savvy. Academic programs that use case studies, that familiarize students with government policies and strategies, and that focus on the role of power and personal, organizational, and national interests better prepare students to understand both "what is" and strategies for "what can/should be." An increasing emphasis on conflict advocacy and knowledge of the field and key players is essential in this area.

Writing skills. Equally important as field savvy and sophisticated analytical skills is to be able to summarize vast amounts of information, materials, and analysis into concise, well-written, and comprehensive reports and concise policy briefs.

Gaps Between Programs and Best Practices

One surprise finding has to do with where employers are falling short. Many faculty, staff, students, and alumni expressed frustration with employers in several areas, including too little employer understanding of what programs actually teach and prepare students to do and of emerging best practices related to international conflict.

Many graduates said their organizations were too traditional in their thinking and approaches to international conflict, and did not adequately understand or appreciate the knowledge, skills, and abilities the graduates had to offer. According to one mid-level alumnus with conflict resolution expertise working in an intergovernmental agency, "They just

don't understand the importance of process [referring to facilitation, dialogue, and interest-based negotiation]. They use the new language of conflict resolution, but still practice distributive bargaining. They still do things the old way. My organization needs to be more strategic and have a conflict resolution perspective of the range of intervention options."

Some employers acknowledged that their organizations had neither adequately conceptualized their work related to international conflict nor adapted to changing realities and needs. An individual in a consulting firm that supports development activities remarked, "We don't know how to define international conflict work and that is one of our problems. One of the things we're trying to do [in my department] is get the rest of the organization to look at programs through a conflict lens; to be able to do conflict assessment and respond to USAID mission requests and be more aware of what donors are interested in. We are still too tied to our traditional sectors of work and too focused on economic development. We need to look at conflict and development. We haven't fully recognized the importance of conflict management and mitigation as an organization."

Although many organizations recognize the need for mainstreaming peace and conflict into their general programming, understanding of the potential benefit that academic programs and their students can provide to these organizations, regardless of the specific job functions, is still in short supply. One faculty program director in peace operations lamented, "A lot of employers don't know they need what we're doing. So, we put students out there with our understanding to help spread the understanding of why what we do is important. Some employers now get it—it's a bottom up approach."

The lack of employer knowledge and understanding is compounded by the difficulties many alumni experience in adequately articulating their perspectives to their supervisor or the organization in general. Graduates need to learn how to translate what they know and do into accessible language and understand the particular jargons associated with different agencies and fields. For example, where most academic programs use the terms *conflict management* and *conflict resolution,* USAID uses *conflict management* and *mitigation,* and the U.S. military tends to use *postconflict stabilization* or *reconstruction*. In addition, as one alumnus from a conflict resolution program said, "The conflict resolution lingo is still not very widespread in the policy community."

The lack of employer knowledge and understanding is compounded by the difficulties many alumni experience in adequately articulating their perspectives to their supervisor or the organization.

As relatively junior-level employees, many alumni responded that they had too little credibility and clout to influence thinking and practices within their organization. They hoped that as more people with newer degrees specializing in international peace and conflict rise up the career ladder, that organizations will be more open to new ideas and practices. One alum working in an intergovernmental agency said, for example, "We have conflict resolution specialists working in specific conflicts on the ground, but so much is shaped and determined by political things and forces and we don't have conflict resolution people at that level. No one is making the translation to that level. We need people with a conflict resolution perspective to get elevated to those high-level positions."

Explaining the Gaps

We offer four possible reasons for the gaps between academic programs and employer needs. We also offer several recommendations on how academic programs can fill the gaps.

First, no consensus has been reached as to the appropriate role of academic programs in relation to employers. An implied assumption in most academic programs is that they provide the foundation on which students can enter the work world, after which each employer is responsible for training the graduates to meet the particular needs of the positions for which they are hired. But a tension remains between academic programs and employers regarding the role of academia in preparing graduate students and the role of employers in

training and mentoring these students as they enter the workplace. As explained earlier, employers want graduates to have not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical skills that fit their organizational needs.

This tension exists between employers and the more traditional social science academic programs, such as political science, international relations, and international development. Another critical issue is the degree to which graduate education is about developing critical thinking and writing skills in tandem with specific sectoral knowledge and the degree to which it focuses more on professional training. A specific challenge to the field of international conflict management is that employers are less familiar with it—a relatively new field—and its graduates. In this case, part of the gap might be perceptual and that graduates of international conflict management and peacebuilding programs are just as prepared (or unprepared) for work as those with more traditional degrees. Nevertheless, the previous sections suggest real gaps and much room for improvement and greater coordination and communication on both sides.

Second, although the university faculty and staff interviewed acknowledged the need to provide students with practical and applied KSAs, academic programs face real constraints related to the number of credit hours or coursework they can demand. Masters programs generally range from thirty-six to forty-five credit hours, which means that students take about twelve to fifteen courses for their degrees. For those who offer only certificate programs or concentrations related to international conflict, the credit hours drop to nine to fifteen credit hours, or three to five courses. Students can therefore take only a limited number of courses. The majority of these courses tend to emphasize theory, knowledge, and understanding more than practical skills and application.

Third, opportunities for students to gain hands-on field experience, especially abroad, are relatively limited. Students face a perpetual Catch-22. Employers want applicants with field experience, but if all employers want this, how are students to get their first experience? Although all programs provide some opportunities for field experience, in general, opportunities are few and far between for people to gain experience abroad, especially hands-on work in conflict areas, whether focused on development practice or directly on conflict resolution practice, and also whether through their academic program, other institutions, or on their own. A significant related obstacle for most students is the lack of funding to enable their travel abroad, especially for unpaid work.

Fourth is the lack of a coherent, well-defined academic discipline that encompasses all the different programs related to international peace and conflict. One academic asked, "One of the big questions is how to measure and define conflict. What do we mean by conflict?" Similarly, a senior staff person in a consulting firm observed, "We don't know how to define international conflict work and that is one of our problems." Given the breadth of programs surveyed for this research, they vary greatly in their program goals and curriculum. No agreed-upon comprehensive, unifying framework shows how different foci are interrelated. In addition, the need remains for both academic institutions and employers from the West to identify how best to "export" Western-based conflict resolution theories and practice and make them culturally and contextually appropriate and to develop improved practice and models based on local practices. The lack of a coherent, well-defined field makes it difficult for both academia and employers to meet each other's expectations and needs.

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Similarly, consensus is also limited on what core competencies might be used to guide academic curricular development.[13] This, of course, makes it difficult for people within the field to clearly articulate what the field is and how their particular program or expertise fits into an overall conceptualization of the field. At the same time, academic programs could make the field more coherent by better addressing the needs of employers. A two-way conversation would benefit both sides.

It is clear that both academic programs and employers need help in conceptualizing the field, their place in it, and the core knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for effective practice.

Recommendations for the Field

Academic institutions providing international peace and conflict curricula and organizations employing graduates from those programs can advance the field by working together to close the gap revealed in this study. Obligations fall on both sides to make sincere efforts to reform how the field trains its professionals and how it engages those professionals in the work of international peace and conflict.

For faculty teaching in the field and for academic international peace and conflict programs, the recommendations are broad. Many focus on getting a better handle on field experience requirements. International peace and conflict programs need to improve their applied offerings such as internships that provide students the opportunity to work on real world problems, especially work abroad in conflict areas. Strong partnerships with practitioner organizations to facilitate on-going learning and field placements need to be developed. This also will require innovative funding to help support students who undertake field work. In addition, students would benefit from more mentoring with faculty and potential employers, as well as stronger links with organizations and professionals in the field. Faculty also can do a better job of promoting the field with organizations and constituencies that hire graduates. In addition, academic advising and in particular career counseling needs to be emphasized more. Depending on the size of a program, career and professional development staff with significant knowledge and understanding of the field would help considerably in placing graduates in jobs.

Academics also need to reconsider some of the 'in class' curricular direction of programs. International peace and conflict efforts would be improved with more courses that emphasize the program management aspects of the field. Consensus needs to be reached on conceptual frameworks and core competencies. On a related note, more time needs to be devoted to helping students understand the theory-practice link. Employers want to see graduates who can translate theory into practice.

International peace and conflict efforts would be improved with more courses that emphasize the program management aspects of the field.

Finally, students would benefit by interacting with faculty and students from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds. The learning environment would also be greatly enhanced by further exploring conflict in the developing parts of the world with those who have experienced conflict first hand.

In addition, employers need to partner with graduate programs in developing more applied opportunities for students. In doing so, employers would also benefit by learning more about what international peace and conflict programs actually teach and prepare students for, which would in turn enable them to better understand the benefit of graduate work and degrees in this field.

A related issue is the overall lack of influence and credibility that graduates of international peace and conflict programs have. This might (and should) be counteracted several ways: by better publicizing the successes and achievements of the academic programs, faculty, and students; by ensuring that research is closely tied to policy and practice; by fostering long-term partnerships with practitioner and policy organizations, and by fostering greater understanding of the field through individual meetings and networking organizations. Advocates for using conflict resolution knowledge, skills, and abilities who are well placed in senior positions across employment environments especially, within government, are definitely needed.

These recommendations support strategies that will help close the gap between academic programs and employers in the international conflict field. To better prepare peace

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and conflict professionals in the future, graduate education must align itself more closely with the expectations of employers in the field. The rapidly evolving and frequently unstable global environment demands that international actors devote more financial, human, and technical resources to international peace and conflict efforts.

Notes

1. Public Law No. 98-525 (Oct. 19, 1984), 98 Stat. 2492, 22 U.S.C. 4601–11, as amended.
2. Christine L. Hansvick and Ian M. Harris, "Peace and Conflict Programs within Higher Education: Changes Observed Since the Year 2000," *Proceedings of the International Education for Peace Conference* (Nov. 2007): 276–88.
3. Brian D. Polkinghorn et al., "Constructing a Baseline Understanding of Development Trends in Graduate Conflict Resolution Programs in the United States," *Research in Social Movements,* Conflicts and Change 29 (2008): 233–65.
4. ACT also carried out previous research on careers in international peace and conflict resolution in a 2005 study, in which fifty-five employers in the field were surveyed: "Skills, Networks, and Knowledge: Careers in International Peace and Conflict" by Craig Zelizer and Linda Johnston. See http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/alliance-for-conflict.
5. Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation. *USAID-PVO Dialogue on Working in Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, January 23–24, 2003), www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usaid/working_in_conflict.pdf.
6. Adapted from Jonathan Goodhand, "Working 'In' and 'On' Conflict," in *Civil Wars, Civil Peace,* eds. J. Hanlon and H. Yanacopulos (Milton Keynes: Open University, 2006).
7. The notion of conflict sensitivity builds on the notion of "do no harm" developed by Mary Anderson in *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999). Conflict sensitivity tries that in all phases (planning, logistics, and implementation) that organizations examine the potential impact of the project on the conflict context and the conflict on the project. Efforts should be made to help ensure that programs do not exacerbate the conflict at a minimum and ideally should seek to contribute to a reduction of conflict. See www.conflictsensitivity.org.
8. The academic programs ranged from concentrations in broader majors to certificate programs to full graduate degrees.
9. The organizations included U.S. government agencies, intergovernmental agencies, and U.S.-based nonprofit and for-profit entities in the fields of conflict resolution, humanitarian operations, development, and consulting that work worldwide.
10. Conflict mainstreaming is based on the concept of integrating conflict resolution approaches across sectoral-based programming such as agriculture, governance, education, and economic development projects as opposed to stand-alone conflict resolution programs. See www.conflictsensitivity.org.
11. Members of the Alliance for Peacebuilding worked to develop a report on core competencies for individuals working in conflict and coexistence. Mari Fitzduff of Brandeis University led this effort and published a short article, "Core Competencies for Graduate Programs in Coexistence and Conflict Work—Can We Agree?" *Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity* 1 (September 2006), www.brandeis.edu/ethics/Core_Competencies.pdf (accessed July 2, 2010).
12. For a discussion of organizational peacebuilding, see Maria Lange, "Building Institutional Capacity for Conflict-Sensitive Practice: The Case for International NGOs," *International Alert* (May 2004) www.international-alert.org/pdf/institutional_capacity_ngos.pdf (accessed July 2, 2010).
13. For a discussion of one graduate program's assessment of KSAs and the need for further defining the field, see John Windmueller et al., "Core Competencies: The Challenge for Graduate Peace and Conflict Studies Education," *International Review of Education* 55, nos. 2–3 (May 2009): 285–301.

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