HISTORY AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT

The State Department known originally as the Department of Foreign Affairs, was approved by Congress and President George Washington in July 1789. In that same year its name was changed to the Department of State and its duties expanded to include a variety of Domestic duties. The nation’s first secretary of state was Thomas Jefferson, appointed by president George Washington. As US foreign Policy developed there were many disagreements and tension surrounding the proposed foreign affairs philosophies. It was not, however, until the end of the Civil War that the US began to seriously engage itself overseas. In the beginning of the 20th century, the US took its involvement overseas even further and began to act as an international power and took steps to protect American territories and expand its international commercial interests.

The State Department has addressed many challenges in our nation throughout the years such as newly independent states after the Cold War, the global economy, terrorism, and the security of Americans overseas. After the attacks on our nation September 11, 2001, the State Department turned its focus to the issue of terrorism.

The State Department now consists of diplomats and Foreign Service Officers who carry out American Foreign Policy throughout the world.

The responsibilities of the State Department are extensive and require many unique individuals to ensure everything is handled efficiently. The State Department handles issue such as: regional issues, fighting HIV/AIDS, diplomats, embassies, and travel, fighting crimes, culture, information, and propaganda, as well as other various tasks.

DIPLOMAT IN RESIDENCE

Diplomats in Residence (DIRs) are Foreign Service Officers located throughout the United States at different colleges and universities. They are responsible for interacting with students, professionals, and the surrounding community and providing guidance in regards to potential careers in the State Department. They also answer any questions they might receive and share insight with those interested in Foreign and Civil Service careers, internships and fellowships.

These Diplomats in Residence are essentially networkers and recruiters working to find the most talented, passionate, and hard working individuals to join our State Department and assist the U.S. in its Foreign and Civil Affairs. They also are responsible for communicating and educating individuals on the challenges and impacts of meeting diplomatic strategic goals as well as why diplomacy matters. Diplomats in Residence are mentors, educators, story-tellers, diplomats, and leaders.
There are only a select few universities which host a U.S. Diplomat in Residence. Those universities are: University of Houston, University of Texas at Austin, University of California-Berkeley, UCLA, University of New Mexico, University of Denver, University of Oklahoma, University of Illinois at Chicago, Tulane University, University of Michigan, Morehouse-Spelman, FAMU – Tallahassee, FIU & Miami Dade College, Duke University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, DC Metro, City College of New York, and Tufts University.

Think about it…
- Why do you think this position was created?
- What is so important about being positioned specifically on college campuses?
- What makes these Foreign Service workers unique from their peers?