

A conversation with Todd Moss and Kathy Smith, December 15, 2015

Participants

- Dr. Todd Moss – Chief Operating Officer and Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development (CGD)
- Kathy Smith – Director, Institutional Advancement, CGD
- Alexander Berger – Program Officer, U.S. Policy, Open Philanthropy Project

Note: These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Moss and Ms. Smith.

Summary

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke with Dr. Moss and Ms. Smith to discuss CGD's plans for 2016. Conversation topics included staffing plans and priority areas for 2016.

Staffing plans for 2016

Search for new president

CGD founding president Nancy Birdsall recently announced her plans to step down as president in 2016, and the search for the next president has begun. The executive committee formed a search committee, which is being chaired by CGD Board Chair Dr. Lawrence Summers. External committee members include Ruth Levine and Thomas Gibian, a former CGD board member. The staff representative is Ellen Mackenzie, CGD's Chief Financial Officer.

CGD hired an executive search firm to manage an open and international search process. Dr. Summers and Ms. Mackenzie received recommendations and interviewed several candidates. Ultimately, Russell Reynolds Associates, a highly recommended firm, was chosen. Ideally, the new president would be hired in early spring of 2016, and begin working in early fall of 2016.

Dr. Birdsall's departure from the president role is long-planned. After a leave of absence, she will resume working with CGD as a senior fellow.

As an organization, CGD functions quite well. Dr. Moss and Ms. Smith do not anticipate that the incoming president would radically change the way CGD operates.

Capacity of non-research staff teams

CGD's staff numbers are skewed towards its research side, which include roughly 40 people. In contrast, CGD's institutional side includes 4 people working on fundraising, 6 on communications, and 2 on policy outreach. The institutional team plays an integral role in implementing CGD's work, but is beginning to face capacity constraints. This is an important concern for CGD's executive committee, and the

organization plans to make efforts to address this problem, in part using unrestricted funds from the Open Philanthropy Project.

Europe office

Currently, there are 10 staff working in CGD's Europe office. The office is in the process of hiring a new senior fellow, but is not likely to expand much beyond that in the near term. Despite being based in the United Kingdom (U.K.), CGD wants the office to retain a broader, European identity, so the next senior fellow hired will likely hail from elsewhere in Europe.

The Europe office raised dedicated funding to cover its full costs for the first time in 2015, and its financial outlook for 2016 is promising.

For CGD, the differences between the American and European operating environments have been greater than initially expected.

Priority areas for 2016

Much of CGD's work is ongoing across years, but a few priorities are particularly salient for 2016.

Gender and Development program

CGD is in the process of launching a new Gender and Development program. The ExxonMobil Foundation provided a large grant to initiate the program, and the first major event was successful. While the importance of addressing the unique needs of women and girls is recognized throughout the development field, CGD is hoping that the new program will produce cutting edge research to add depth to discussions of the topic.

2016 U.S. election campaign

Given the U.S. election campaign this year, CGD will focus a portion of its research on U.S. government development policy. CGD began to lay the foundations for this work with the publication of its July 2015 briefing book entitled "The White House and the World: Practical Proposals on Global Development for the Next US President".

During the campaign itself, CGD aims to share its research across campaigns and candidates. They hope that doing so on an educational, equal and bipartisan basis will provide background for some discussions and proposals. White House transition periods are also opportune moments for impact, as they are when initial priorities are set and staffing decisions are made. CGD staff sometimes participate in these processes by joining transition teams (in their capacities as individuals rather than CGD staff). Finally, a new administration brings in a fresh wave of policymakers, who are often receptive to new ideas.

In generating policy recommendations, CGD's fellows tend to look for proposals that are "shovel-ready" (i.e. can occur in the current environment), do not require major budget appropriations, and can garner bipartisan support. Examples include encouraging smart investments to address global poverty (rather than cutting

foreign aid), and the recommendation of Dr. Moss and Ben Leo to establish a U.S. Development Finance Corporation.

Evaluating CGD's work

CGD has worked with outside evaluators twice before: Arabella Advisers in 2006 and Redstone Strategy Group in 2012.

In 2016 or early 2017, CGD plans to commission another outside evaluation of its work. This process will likely be shaped by the incoming president.

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