

## ***WRAPPING UP YEAR '75; OFF TO YEAR '76 !!!***

Concluding another very successful year for the World Affairs Council of Albuquerque leads us into a new program year of exciting – if not contentious -- potential just ahead. The fourth quarter began with many questions about new directions and “transformational initiatives”. Since then, we have seen profound discontinuities in both the domestic and foreign policy domains impacting America’s posture in the world today. Whether on geostrategic issues in Eastern Europe or the Middle East or East Asia, topics on global trade and supply chains or the rights and privileges of those in our country legally or illegally, the current environment almost overwhelms with significant issues that need to be addressed. As always WACABQ will bring to our membership and the broader Albuquerque community insightful and balanced perspectives on these profound changes.

Change, of course, is a core aspect of any organization and WACABQ certainly fits. The Council is disappointed by the loss this year of three key members of our Board of Directors. Long time board member Bob St. John passed away and Professor Jami Nelson Nunez and Aaron Velasquez left given their vastly increased professional responsibilities as chair of UNM’s Department of Political Science and the CEO of Theta Plate, Inc., respectively. We thank all three for the extremely significant contributions they made to the Council and offer our most sincere best wishes to Jami and Aaron for continued success.

On the other hand, we are delighted to add four very distinguished New Mexicans to our board. David Campbell is a former Foreign Service officer with extensive additional experience in local legal and governmental affairs. Randy Martin is a teacher at La Cueva High School and was the first recipient of our Global Educator of the Year Award. Celeste Nunez is the director for International Business Resources at the New Mexico Trade Alliance and the leader of the Albuquerque chapter of Global Shapers, a worldwide young professionals’ civic organization sponsored by the Davos World Economic Forum. Celeste was the first recipient of the Council’s Young Professionals scholarship. Professor Mark Peceny is the former dean of UNM’s College of Arts and Sciences and a former WACABQ president. We welcome all of them and look forward to the profound contributions they will make as WACABQ continues its mission of bringing to town insight on critical foreign policy topics.

## ***WHERE WE WERE***

Over the last three months, we continued our timely evening dinner programs on contemporary foreign policy issues confronting our country. In fact, the June dinner lecture on the “Arab Street” was so well timed that, as salads were being served, President Trump started bombing nuclear sites in Iran. In cooperation with the ABQ Engage Coalition -- a group of local NGO’s, businesses, governmental organizations and UNM -- the Council helped coordinate an October conference on the evolving international order hosted by the University’s Global Studies Department. And of course, our enduring programs kept moving ahead: high school and UNM student participation at Council events, expanded cooperation with Albuquerque Public Schools and the Oasis Continuing Education Center, and announcement of the 2024-2025 recipient of our Global Educator of the Year program, Mr. Claudio Perez, a teacher at Sandia Prep.

## ***RECENT MEETINGS***

The fourth quarter began with a look at one of our country’s most revered organizations, the United States Peace Corps, as its current structure changed markedly and its future seemed in doubt. Our guest on 9 April could not have been more appropriate than Ms. Josephine (Jody) Olsen, the former Peace Corps director. A graduate of the University of Utah with a doctorate from the University of Maryland, Jody began as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tunisia in 1966 and grew to be the that agency’s director from 2018 to 2021. She shared how that institution, through service and volunteering, built trust, partnerships, and respect across communities, states and nations worldwide and created enduring relationships around the world that, when needed, successfully managed crises and emergencies.



Dr. Jody Olsen

India, the world's most populous state and largest democracy has taken on ever broader political, diplomatic and economic roles globally over the past two decades while, simultaneously, assuming greater significance for the United States, both regionally and globally. Increasing ethno-religious dysfunction within its boundaries has raised some concerns, a reality emphasized dramatically by the violent Indo-Pakistan military conflict in the spring (for which the president of the United States claims credit resolving and, reportedly, Pakistan has nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize). On 22 May, Vangala Ram, a retired US foreign service officer currently with the Institute of World Politics outlined the internal policies around the New Delhi government and the ascending geopolitical role that India has assumed despite its ongoing contentions with neighboring Pakistan and China.



Dr. Vangala Ram

The Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network that provides insight into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world. Conducting public opinion surveys in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since 2006, it is the largest repository of publicly available data on the views on the “Arab Street”. On 12 June, Dr. Michael Robbins, the director and co-principal investigator from that organization, explained the “Arab Street” in the context of the multiple crosscutting influences in reaction to current Israeli behavior in the region and the impact on Moslem government leaderships in the region.



Dr. Michael Robbins

### ***EVENTS ON TAP***

Looking forward to the fall and the beginning of Program Year '76, the Council will present on August 26 a discussion focused on “Reimagining US Grand Strategy”. Our speaker will be Evan Cooper from the Stimson Center in Washington DC. Evan holds degrees from Georgetown and Chapman Universities in International Relations.



Evan Cooper

The Council program committee is working on the schedule for the remainder of the fall semester. Among topics to be considered are the role and impact of media on foreign policy outcomes, Turkey’s developing role on the regional and global stage, adapting the international order to contemporary multipolar realities, international trade in the era of Donald Trump and Cold War-like geopolitical dynamics in the Balkans, among others. We look forward to having a definitive schedule in the next several weeks.

## *ANCILLARY EFFORTS*

### **The High School Level**

The Council continues its focus on Albuquerque area high school students and teachers -- public, private and charter -- including our mainstay program that, at Council expense, brings a teacher and up to five students to each of the dinner programs at Tanoan Golf Club. With great appreciation, high school access to our meetings is funded by member donations directed to this program over and above annual membership dues during the annual membership renewal period. At the next renewal, please consider a tax-free donation in any amount to this meaningful initiative.



Dr. Jody Olsen with students and faculty from Albuquerque High

In the fall of each year Council members have supported the state-wide Model UN forum at the Roundhouse in which high school student teams play the role of individual countries advocating their agendas in simulated international fora such as the General Assembly, Security Council and other UN functional agencies. Then, in the spring of each year, the World Affairs Councils of America – the 90+

council organization to which WACABQ belongs – implements a program called “Academic World Quest” (AWQ). Here, 4-member teams of high school students vie in a “quiz show-like” competition on ten global issues based on readings provided by the National Council. Local winners are then eligible to compete for scholarship money in a national level competition in Washington DC. New Mexico has not, heretofore, offered this opportunity to its high school students. WACABQ is exploring the potential to start an AWQ program in the spring of 2026.

The Council concluded the 2025 Albuquerque Area Global Educator of the Year award that we initiated for 2024. This year we offered access to the program to nearby communities including Rio Rancho, Los Lunas, Moriarty, Santa Fe and Los Alamos. The nomination period closed on 7 April with four remarkably impressive nominations – including two from public and two from independent high school programs. The winner – Mr. Claudio Perez of Sandia Prep -- was announced on 21 April.

### **The University Level**

At the university level, the Council continued to host students from the UNM ROTC departments and the Global National Security Policy Institute. We continued to cooperate with the University’s International Studies Institute and Department of Political Science, in both cases mutually proliferating announcements of each entity’s events. And WACABQ hosted a delegation from the UNM World Affairs Delegation, the university-level Model UN team.

In 2023 and 2024, WACABQ nominated undergraduate UNM students for the World Affairs Councils of America scholarship program to attend the WACA national conference in Washington in November of those years. Our Council nominees in both cases were among the scholarship winners selected by the national board – and our 2023 nominee was selected to deliver the student address at that year’s national conference plenary session. The council will again this year nominate a UNM undergraduate for the 2025 competition.

### ***BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN ALBUQUERQUE & SANTA FE***

Several members of the Council have been core participants in the ABQ Engage Consortium of local NGO, commercial, government and academic organizations that are coordinating a conference on the evolving multilateral international order. Hosted by the UNM Global Studies Department on 3 October, Council participants

acquired the conference keynote speaker, Dr. Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute, the most prominent think tank arguing for more “soft power” interactions globally and substantially reduced militarism in American foreign policy.

Between 3-5 June, WACABQ supported our sister council, Global Santa Fe, as the latter hosted the World Affairs Councils of America annual leadership meeting. President Greg Vuksich and President-elect Will Itoh represented our organization and Greg moderated a breakout roundtable on small council fund raising.



Greg Vuksich and other World Affairs Council leaders at the annual World Affairs Councils of America leadership conference in Santa Fe

On 18 June, two Council board members, Celeste Nunez and Greg Vuksich, supported a Global Ties Albuquerque International Visitor Leadership Program delegation of mid-level media, academic and governmental leaders from 16 East European countries. Celeste and Greg provided perspectives on US international trade and geopolitical policy toward the region.

### ***WACABQ IN THE MEDIA***

During the fourth quarter, the Council was represented by an opinion piece in the Albuquerque Journal. Our May speaker, Vengala Ram, published an insightful piece in the Journal on the contemporary domestic and foreign policies emanating from New Delhi.

### ***SOME REMINDERS***

WACABQ is just now starting our membership renewal process for the upcoming program year. Anticipate an email on it shortly. We hope that everyone receiving this newsletter will continue their membership, renew it if it has lapsed or sign up as a new member as appropriate. When signing up for Program Year '76 we encourage everyone to consider making an additional 501c3 tax-exempt donation above and beyond the dues, either designated specifically to support the participation of Albuquerque area high school students and teachers at our monthly dinner lectures or, even better, a donation to the Council's general fund.

As the Council goes forward, we encourage everyone to spread the word about WACABQ membership among others – friends, colleagues and acquaintances -- who might enjoy and benefit from what it has to offer.

The Board of Directors now aspires to continue to grow the breadth of what we offer to the Albuquerque community. Currently, our financial footing is sufficient to manage our ongoing endeavors but, in order to achieve these broader aims, strengthening our finances is a must. Several board members have submitted applications for – and in at least one case received – financial support from the local community. The board asks for your help with any insights or introductions that you may have as WACABQ creates a body of sponsors – commercial enterprises, financial institutions, professional organizations, fraternal societies and others -- that have interests in global affairs.

Please remember when you meet with friends and colleagues that the Council has updated its web page, Facebook and Instagram sites to assist in growing awareness of the Council among the Albuquerque community. Our Facebook site, “World Affairs Council of ABQ” is: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551637121498&mibextid=LQQJ4d>. The link to our Instagram site is: [https://instagram.com/worldaffairsabq?igshid=OGQ5ZDc2ODk2ZA%3D%3D&utm\\_source=qr](https://instagram.com/worldaffairsabq?igshid=OGQ5ZDc2ODk2ZA%3D%3D&utm_source=qr)

### ***A LAST THOUGHT***

It has been a great honor and a most fulfilling experience for me to have served as the president of our Council over the past two years. The continuing support of the Board of Directors and all of our members has been extremely gratifying. I look forward to actively supporting our incoming (and former) president, Ambassador Will Itoh, and staying engaged on all of WACABQ’s ongoing programs, especially those with students, both high school and university.

Best wishes to all, especially as we as Americans reflect on and celebrate our real “Independence Day”.

Greg

### ***UPCOMING PARTNER EVENTS***



## THE TRINITY TEST... 80 YEARS LATER

### A Community Conversation

Wednesday, July 16 | 5:00 p.m. | FREE & open to all

GLOBAL SANTA FE WELCOMES:

**CHRISTOPHER PREBLE, SENIOR FELLOW AND DIRECTOR**  
**REIMAGINING U.S. GRAND STRATEGY,**  
**THE HENRY L. STIMSON CENTER**

On July 16, 1945, the first atomic bomb was tested in New Mexico—marking the beginning of the nuclear age. Eight decades later, as the United States prepares to spend over \$1.7 trillion on nuclear weapons modernization and global arms agreements hang in the balance, the questions remain: What have we learned since that day? What have we forgotten and why does it matter?

Join Global Santa Fe and the New Mexico Military Museum for a community conversation featuring Christopher Preble, Senior Fellow at the Stimson Center and co-author of *Gambling on Armageddon*. Preble will examine the U.S. nuclear strategy, the logic driving modernization, and how we might chart a more secure path forward.

**Wednesday, July 16, 2025**

**5:00 p.m.** Enjoy Refreshments and Explore Museum

**6:00 p.m.** Presentation with Q&A

**New Mexico Military Museum**

1050 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe

**Bring a friend and your questions.**

This event is **FREE** and **OPEN** to anyone interested in how New Mexico's nuclear history intersects with today's global security challenges.

Seating is limited - RSVP's required at [globalsantafe.org](https://globalsantafe.org)

Generously Sponsored by  
Sarah & James Stimson Karis



This event is presented in partnership with the New Mexico Military Museum.

This event is **FREE** and open to all. [CLICK HERE TO RSVP](#)