

Roger Williams University's **Recent Middle East Program Initiatives**

The upcoming forum continues the efforts Roger Williams University began seven years ago, taking on the role as a “convener,” a facilitator, to promote discussion of various points of view on critical Middle East issues. Listed below are some of the outstanding recent efforts that have brought Roger Williams University national and international media attention:

- The 2003 *Initiative to Educate Afghan Women* was founded by Paula Nirschel, wife of Roger Williams University President Roy Nirschel. It has awarded 52 Afghan women four-year college scholarships to study in the United States. Their education prepares them to return home to rebuild Afghanistan.
- In 2004, the *New Land For Peace* symposium. The University hosted a two-day forum involving over 100 scholars, investors, professionals and students. They proposed various economic development projects to bring greater prosperity to the Middle East.
- In February 2005, Roger Williams University hosted the first Iraqi student group to visit the United States in 35 years. Over 10 days, the students visited a number of universities.
- In 2006, under the auspices of the *State Department Plus* Program, 14 students, mostly from the Middle East and North Africa, spent their junior and senior years here. Some will graduate this May.
- After many months of working behind the scenes, in September 2007, the University assisted in rescuing Qussay Al-Attabi, an Iraqi educator and translator. He fled Iraq following a death threat from the Mahdi militia. He will be one of the colloquium's panelists.
- In the summer 2008, 18 exemplary student leaders mostly from the Middle East, will come to Roger Williams University for six weeks as part of the *Middle East Partnership Initiative*. The participants will develop leadership and problem-solving skills.

Recent Speakers Targeting Middle East, Global and Governmental Issues

Roger Williams University has built a reputation as a university that celebrates civil discourse, offering students differing points of view and a global perspective through civility, reason and respect.

- Daniel Ayalon: Former Israeli ambassador to the US
- Lou Dobbs: National TV news commentator - CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*
- Qussay Al-Attabi: Former Iraqi scholar who fled Iraq following a death threat
- Chelsea Clinton: Conducted student forum
- Sam Harris: Atheist evangelist, author of *Letter to a Christian Nation*

- Senator Jack Reed: Student forum: *Prospects for Peace in the Middle East*
- David Trimble: Nobel Peace Prize Winner
- Dr. Judea Pearl: Father of Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter murdered by terrorists
- Laura Bush: Commencement speaker/honorary degree recipient
- Khaled Hosseini: Author of *The Kite Runner*
- Salman Rushdie: Author of *The Satanic Verses*
- Gary Bauer: Public policy advisor to President Ronald Reagan; evangelical Christian activist
- David Gergen: TV commentator; author; advisor to Presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton
- Kevin Phillips: Strategic advisor to President Nixon and author of *American Dynasty*
- Dame Margaret Anstee: Former Undersecretary General of United Nations
- Milton Viorst: Author; former Middle East correspondent for the New Yorker
- Charles W. Freeman: Former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia
- Ann Coulter: Syndicated columnist and attorney
- Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia: Day-long series of events at the Roger Williams University School of Law

###