



Critical Language
Scholarship
Alumni Society

2025 CLSAS Annual Conference

June 13, 2025

<p>1:00 - 3:00 pm</p>	<p>Welcome Activity <i>Stay tuned!</i></p>
<p>6:30 - 8:30 pm</p>	<p>Welcome Reception <i>Hook Hall 3400 Georgia Ave NW Washington, DC 20010</i></p> <p>We welcome you to D.C. and invite you to join us in the garden to reconnect with old friends and meet other alumni in town!</p>

June 14, 2025

George Mason University
Mason Square Campus

3351 Fairfax Dr, Arlington, VA 22201

**Please note that conference programming features concurrent sessions*

<p>8:30 am</p>	<p>Registration & Coffee <i>Registration Desk</i></p>
<p>9:00 - 9:30 am</p>	<p>Welcome Session <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p> <p>Representatives from the U.S. Department of State, American Councils for International Education, and the Critical Language Scholarship Alumni Society come together to discuss our shared commitment to investing in the continued personal, professional, and linguistic development of global emerging leaders. Learn about our ongoing efforts to increase the competitiveness of our alumni across career fields and around the world.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Lingeman, Foreign Service Officer, U.S. Department of State (CLS Persian 2012) • Jeanette Owen, Senior Director, Critical Language Scholarship Program, American Councils for International Education • Leadership Board, Critical Language Scholarship Alumni Society
<p>9:35 - 10:20 am</p>	<p>Spotlight on GMU: Department of Modern & Classical Languages <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 111</i></p> <p>Interested in taking the next step in your language learning journey? Join the Department of Modern & Classical Languages at George Mason University and learn about the opportunities available to you at GMU. Hear about the community-based and service-learning opportunities available to graduate and undergraduate students across their multiple language concentrations.</p> <p>Speaker:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Ellen J. Serafini, Associate Professor, Spanish Applied Linguistics; Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Modern & Classical Languages, George Mason University
<p>9:35 - 10:20 am</p>	<p>Alumni Panel <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p> <p>An accomplished and diverse group of alumni convene to reflect on life after CLS. Learn tips and strategies for bridging the gap between the exchange experience and professional careers as they discuss their linguistic, professional, and personal journeys.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Samantha Creel, Researcher, Verilogue (CLS Arabic 2017; Fulbright U.S. Student Program, English Teaching Assistant, Bahrain 2017-2018) • Dr. Nathaniel Greenberg, Associate Professor of Arabic, George Mason University (CLS Arabic 2010; Fulbright Scholar, Spain, 2024) • Ben Lingeman, Foreign Service Officer, U.S. Department of State (CLS Persian 2012) • Farhaj Murshed, Senior Consultant, Accenture (CLS Bangla 2018) <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaine Johnson, At-Large Board Member, CLSAS (CLS Chinese 2012)
<p>10:25 - 10:55 am</p>	<p>Spotlight on Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 111</i></p> <p>Discover how Middlebury Institute of International Studies can support your next steps in higher education, language advancement, and international careers. Learn how CLS alumni can take advantage of a guaranteed 20% scholarship, and current or former employees of the U.S. government are guaranteed a 40% scholarship.</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samantha Quintell-Lenzi, Assistant Director of Global Recruiting, Middlebury Institute of International Studies
<p>10:25 - 10:55 am</p>	<p>Fellowship Spotlight: McCain Institute <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 113</i></p> <p>Join us for an informational session by the McCain Institute, a nonpartisan organization committed to advancing leadership, democracy, human rights, and national security. Explore the Institute's premier professional development opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Security and Counterterrorism Fellowship, a yearlong part-time leadership development program for mid-career professionals in the fields of national security and counterterrorism. <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicholas Rasmussen, Senior Advisor for National Security and Leadership Programs, McCain Institute



<p>11:15 am - 12:00 pm</p>	<p>Going Global - Pathways to Higher Education Abroad <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p> <p>Considering graduate study outside the U.S.? Gain insights from our esteemed panelists who pursued advanced degrees abroad. Make an informed decision as you hear firsthand insights into the opportunities and challenges of international study. From selecting programs, navigating cultural and academic differences, to funding and post-degree pathways, take the first step to taking your academic journey global.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bailey Galicia, Project Assistant, Atlantic Council; Master's Degree in Security, Intelligence, and Strategic Studies, University of Glasgow, Dublin City University, and Charles University• Mai Anna Pressley, Public Programming Lead, National Association for Black Engagement with Asia (NABEA); Master's Degree in International Studies, Korea University, 2017• Samantha Quintell-Lenzi, Assistant Director of Global Recruiting, Middlebury Institute of International Studies <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blaine Johnson, At-Large Board Member, CLSAS; Master's Degree in Public Administration, Fudan University's School of International Relations and Public Affairs (CLS Chinese 2012)
<p>11:15 am - 12:00 pm</p>	<p>Spotlight on American Mandarin Society (AMS) <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 111</i></p> <p>The American Mandarin Society (AMS) is a nonpartisan nonprofit committed to strengthening American capacity in Mandarin language and U.S.-China policy. AMS empowers its members who have returned from study and work in Chinese-speaking societies to stay deeply in touch with the Asia region, maintain and develop their Mandarin Chinese language skills, and build the professional networks that will allow them to engage in the vital work of strengthening the United States' ties with Asia. Learn more about the fellowship, Chinese language course, and other meaningful opportunities for engagement with China that await you!</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nathaniel Ahrens, Executive Director, American Mandarin Society
<p>12:00 - 1:00 pm</p>	<p>Lunch <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p> <p>Welcome all to join "Language Tables" for lunch over conversation in your target language, hosted by fellow participants!</p>
<p>12:00 - 5:00 pm</p>	<p>Exhibitor Expo <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125/126, Multipurpose Hallway</i></p> <p>Stop by throughout the day to connect with local businesses, companies, and organizations and learn more about the opportunities and resources available to you. We recommend bringing along copies of your resume.</p>



<p>1:00 - 1:45 pm</p>	<p>Call To Action: Developing An Advocacy Toolkit <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 111</i></p> <p>The Alliance for International Exchange has been the collective public policy voice for the educational and cultural exchange community in the United States since 1993. The Alliance works to promote the value and protect the value of international exchange programs and language education. We invite you to join this special workshop on advocating for exchanges and the issues that matter to you most in your communities. Learn how best to amplify your voice today!</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Andrea Bodine, Senior Manager for Policy and Government Relations, Alliance for International Exchange• Gabrielle Cascio, External Affairs Manager, Alliance for International Exchange
<p>1:25 - 1:55 pm</p>	<p>Spotlight: U.S. Exchange Alumni Fellowship <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 113</i></p> <p>Global Ties U.S., in partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Office of Alumni Affairs, launched the U.S. Exchange Alumni Fellowship, a nine-month professional development and networking program for alumni. Current fellow, Eloah Makassi, shares her experience and spotlights how alumni can become regional advocates and champions of international exchanges and citizen diplomacy across the country.</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eloah Makassi, U.S. Exchange Alumni Fellow, Washington D.C. Metro Region (Kennedy-Lugar YES Abroad—Ghana, 2019-2020)
<p>2:00 - 2:45 pm</p>	<p>When Language Meets Art: Reflections on Life, Language, Culture, and the Arts <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p> <p>Renowned global performers, artists, and storytellers share their perspectives and experiences on creative careers and the intersection of language, culture, and the arts. This panel will explore the non-traditional career pathways in the arts and humanities space. Join us as we reflect on art as diplomacy and its transformative potential.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tracie Ching, Illustrator, Mentor, Consultant• Gaisu Yari, Storyteller and Gender Expert from Afghanistan <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• María Fernanda Chamorro, Poet
<p>2:00 - 2:45 pm</p>	<p>Piedmont Global Language Solutions <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 111</i></p> <p>Piedmont Global Language Solutions (PGLS) is a leading provider of global language and business solutions. Explore pathways to pursuing linguist careers and continuing language training. Visit www.pgls.com and apply to open contract, freelance, part-time, temporary, and full-time positions today!</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alina Moore, Lead Recruiter, Language Instruction Programs, Piedmont Global Language Solutions• Sean Smith, Program Manager, Foreign Service Institute, Piedmont Global Language Solutions



<p>3:00 – 3:45 pm</p>	<p>From Thought to Incorporation: Ideas Roundtable <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p> <p>Do you have the next big idea? Are you considering the ways to start or take your idea to the next level? Join us in this exploration of international exchange alumni-led organizations and initiatives. Learn from the distinguished members of our community as they share what it takes to create a roadmap to bring your own ideas and projects to fruition.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ayanna Dawkins, Executive Director & Co-Founder, Diplomatic Perspective • Jonathan Keenan, Founder & Executive Director, RPCVnexus (RPCV Cameroon, 2014 - 2016) • Wolf Pamphile, Founder & Executive Director, Haiti Policy House • Gizem Salciqil White, Founder & CEO, Turkish Coffee Lady <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naika Pierre, President, CLSAS (CLS Chinese 2014)
<p>3:00 – 3:45 pm</p>	<p>The HR Hotline (Live!) <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 111</i></p> <p>Join us for an engaging and informative session with Chasity Cook, MBA, SHRM-CP, a seasoned HR professional, where you have the opportunity to ask all of your burning questions. Whether you're navigating job applications, career challenges, workplace dynamics, or negotiating a salary, demystify HR and gain insights that will help empower your professional journey.</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chasity Cook, MBA, SHRM-CP, People and Culture Generalist, Institute for Women's Policy Research
<p>4:00 – 4:45 pm</p>	<p>Career Transitions <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p> <p>Navigating a career path rarely follows a straight line. In this panel, speakers who have made career pivots—across sectors, roles, or disciplines—will share how they recognized it was time for change, the challenges they faced, and how they leveraged their language and regional expertise in new professional contexts. Whether you're exploring your next move or rethinking your long-term goals, this conversation will offer candid insights and actionable guidance.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Clark, Research Associate for China Policy, Center for American Progress • Drake Long, Department of Defense • Cynthia Gill, Founder and Mission-Driven Executive and Transition Coach, Focus Coaching <p>Moderator:</p> <p>Blaine Johnson, At-Large Board Member, CLSAS (CLS Chinese 2012)</p>
<p>4:00 – 4:45 pm</p>	<p>Meet. Share. Connect. - CLSAS Spotlight <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 111</i></p>



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	<p>Stop by and say hello to the CLSAS Leadership Board. Share your ideas for alumni engagement and discover how to get involved with the board.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jack Anderson, CLSAS Vice President (CLS Azeri 2013, 2014)• Blaine Johnson, At-Large Board Member, CLSAS (CLS Chinese 2012)• Naika Pierre, President, CLSAS (CLS Chinese 2014)
4:45 - 5:00 pm	<p>Closing Remarks <i>Van Metre Hall, Room 125</i></p>
5:45 – 7:45 pm	<p>Networking Happy Hour WHINO (*Parking information is available via this link) <i>4238 Wilson Blvd, Second Floor, Arlington, VA 22203</i></p> <p>Join us as we close out another memorable convening. Grab a drink and connect with CLS alumni from near and far.</p>