

Carrie Hessler-Radelet
Acting Director, Peace Corps
Boston University
Master's International Program 25th Anniversary
Boston, Massachusetts
November 16, 2012

Thank you, Robert, for that wonderful introduction and for all the work you do. It is an honor to be here at my alma mater today. Let me start by acknowledging some of the people who made this event possible: Thank you to Joe Anzalone (pronounced: AN za loan), who coordinates the Master's International program here at BU.

And thank you to an old friend, Dr. John Simon, who couldn't be here today but who chairs the International Health Department. I would also like to recognize the late Bill Bicknell, the founding Chair of the International Health Department who also played an important role in establishing the Master's International program at this school. The video we just saw was a wonderful tribute to the man and his work.

Let me say that I am very proud of my alma mater and its relationship with the Peace Corps. Boston University ranks number sixteen in the nation among large universities to produce Peace Corps Volunteers. And in the Northeast region, it ranks number one. Since the agency was founded in 1961, a total of **1,326 alumni** have served in the Peace Corps, and right at this moment, there are **70 undergraduate BU alumni** in the field serving as Peace Corps Volunteers.

I would like to recognize any Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who may be present today. Those of you here at this event—as well as your colleagues at this university and in this community—are a testament to the fact that the value of service runs strong in Boston and runs strong in the United States.

All of you are a wonderful reminder of what makes the Peace Corps and the Peace Corps family so special—the diversity of our backgrounds... the intensity of our commitment... and the bonds of great friendship that endure, across the boundaries of geography and time.

I can't think of a better time to be here than during International Education Week. International Education Week is an initiative of our fellow federal agencies—the Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education—that celebrates the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. It would be hard to think of a more meaningful exchange program than our Master's International partnership which prepares graduate students to serve overseas and then places them in the field in developing countries for 27 months.

I'd like to share with you a little bit about our roots. The Peace Corps' Master's International program was founded at Rutgers University in Camden, New Jersey in 1987 with their department of Public Policy and Administration. The idea was to dovetail two complementary needs—the needs of the Peace Corps for skilled men and women and the needs of universities to provide their students with practical learning experiences.

The idea that the Peace Corps and universities could partner together to provide first-class educational and first-class service opportunities quickly caught on. Today, our Master's International program has grown to 84 universities across the country, fielding over 400 Master's International Peace Corps Volunteers in many of the 75 countries where the Peace Corps has a presence. From 2011 to 2012, the number of MI students serving in the field increased by 87%.

In partnering with universities, we are very proud of the role that we are playing to meet our agency's first goal as outlined in our mission: Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women. This goal has served as our guiding principle for over 50 years now.

I would like to point out that the Peace Corps partnership with Boston University's School of Public Health is one of our oldest Master's International programs dating back 25 years to 1987 - the year, as I mentioned, that this initiative was founded. Boston University has prepared 45 public health students to serve in the Peace Corps and four of these students are overseas serving at this very moment.

These Master's International students return to the United States and graduate from Boston University's School of Public Health as true global citizens—who have grappled with meaningful issues in developing nations, developed leadership skills under demanding circumstances, and now have much to offer to the United States as well as the global community upon their graduation.

I have a very special interest in public health, as it is a field I have worked in for two decades. When I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Western Samoa from 1981 to 1983, I helped design a national public awareness campaign on disaster preparedness.

A seminal experience for me in Western Samoa was when one of my neighbors, a woman I grew to love named Losa, told me with tears in her eyes that she was pregnant with her ninth child. Her husband would not consider family planning, even though she strongly wished to stop having children.

From that moment, I knew what I wanted to do with my life. I went on to study public health and to specialize in managing international programs in maternal and child health as well as HIV/AIDS .

So, that's a bit about my story, and now I am very pleased to be able to report on one of BU's Master's International students currently serving in the field, Nik Karr. Nik is in the island nation of Vanuatu where he has worked on WASH projects, sexual reproductive health education, and gender and development. Nik says, "BU gave me the confidence and the background knowledge to understand the theory and concepts behind development techniques used in the field by Peace Corps Volunteers. This knowledge and understanding has helped me adapt and manipulate materials and resources to better fit my community and strengthen my development work."

- A Master's International degree, I think Nik's example shows us, is not just an end in itself, but it is also a beginning. It is a segue into public sector jobs, private sector jobs, nonprofit jobs, and ultimately into a career of continuing public service. I commend the School of Public Health for the exemplary job you do in preparing students not only for Peace Corps service but also as future leaders in the field of public health..

YOU present the plaque.

- And now, I have two very special things that I would like to do today. First, I have something for Joe Anzalone (pronounced: AN za loan) as the official representative of the BU Master's International program in public health. Joe, this is a plaque recognizing the 25 wonderful years of our partnership together. Thank you—to you, your colleagues and your predecessors who have all made this quarter-century partnership so successful.

YOU present the invitation letter:

- I also have something special for Katharine Collet. Katherine are you here today? What I have for you is your official invitation to serve in the Peace Corps. Congratulations on joining the ranks of more than 200,000 Americans who have been called to service. I have no doubt that with the preparation you've received from this great university you will be an exemplary Volunteer, and I wish you all the best as you embark on your new adventure.