

CENTER FOR POLITICS

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

April 23, 2010

Dear Student,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the University of Virginia. It is here that Thomas Jefferson, America's third president and our University's founder realized his vision of a community of learning committed to the essential democratic principles of social deliberation and citizen participation in government. We feel there is no better place to learn about the fundamentals of United States politics, history and the changing faces of the media. I hope your visit with us will result in a similar admiration of both the ascetic and symbolic beauty of this historic location.

In an 1823 letter to the Marquis de Lafayette Jefferson wrote, "The only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted freely to be expressed." He was a strong advocate of the free press but even Mr. Jefferson could not have imagined the technological advances that the world has seen in recent years. New communications technologies have advanced the public's access far beyond what it was in Mr. Jefferson's lifetime. While most people welcome these innovations as a means of increasing the opportunities for civic engagement, exercise of free speech, free press and enhancing public access to information; still there are a multitude of concerns about how these new technologies will impact other matters such as personal privacy, data security, reliability of reporting sources and accountability of information, among others.

During your visit we will explore these and many other issues. I am confident that the scheduled speakers, readings, case studies and other activities will spark thoughtful and interesting debate, and enable all of us to realize similar comparisons with practices in your home country. We expect that the internships and community service activities that we've planned will provide you valuable insight into American culture and U.S. policies that you may take with you in your future pursuits. You may read about what you will experience during this academic residency at centerforpolitics.org/gpdnewmedia.html. Remember, you are not only the students during this conference but also the teachers. We look forward to learning from you. As globalization increasingly impacts every inch of our small planet, this mutual exchange of knowledge and varying perspectives are important for building and sustaining a healthy and productive future.

On behalf of the University of Virginia Center for Politics, I hope you will find your time with us to be among the most memorable, impactful and thought-provoking weeks of your life. We are eagerly awaiting your arrival on Grounds, and look forward to sharing this time with you. A word of advice from the start: In the United States, free speech means exactly that. So, do not be afraid to offer your candid opinions and even disagree with opinions that you hear. After all, sharing different opinions is the primary purpose of the program! Success depends on your input and intellectual curiosity. I look forward to meeting you. Welcome to the University of Virginia and the Center for Politics' *Global Perspectives on Democracy – New Media* program.

Sincerely yours,



Larry J. Sabato, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Politics
Robert Kent Gooch and University Professor of Politics
University of Virginia