The India Initiative, founded in November 2015, builds on Georgetown University’s core strengths—academic excellence, location in Washington, D.C., and Jesuit mission of service to the world—to advance research and teaching around India and world affairs and create a platform for high-level dialogue among American and Indian leaders from government, business, civil society, and the academy.

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The Georgetown University India Initiative brings together Georgetown faculty and other experts from across sectors and around the world to advance research, teaching, and intellectual exchange on India, which has emerged as a key player across a range of global challenges in recent years.

—John J. DeGioia, President, Georgetown University

FROM THE INITIATIVE DIRECTOR

The 2016-2017 academic year was a year of growth for the Georgetown University India Initiative. We hosted more than 30 events; awarded five collaborative research seed grants for Georgetown faculty to work on shared projects with their Indian colleagues; launched the India Innovation Studio; and welcomed Ambassador Richard R. Verma, outgoing U.S. ambassador to India, to Georgetown as an SFS Centennial Fellow and advisor to the India Initiative.

We continued our mission to convene high-level conversations between U.S. and Indian thought leaders in business, government, civil society, and the academy this year. In September, we hosted a two-day foreign policy workshop for a delegation of Indian members of parliament visiting Washington as part of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Indo-U.S. Forum of Parliamentarians. We also continued the India Initiative Distinguished Fellows Program, hosting prominent journalists and media personalities Rajdeep Sardesai and Sagarika Ghose for a one-week fellowship in October. We concluded the academic year with our inaugural India Ideas Conference, which brought policymakers and practitioners from the United States and India to campus for a day of plenary talks, keynote lectures, and breakout sessions about India’s contemporary challenges.

The India Initiative also works to strengthen Georgetown’s research and teaching on India and its role in world affairs. In addition to awarding faculty with research seed grants, we also launched the India Innovation Studio, a multidisciplinary, studio-based course that works with government and civil society partners in Maharashtra and focuses on designing policy solutions to a development problem facing India. Through this course, 20 undergraduate students had the opportunity to travel to Mumbai in June 2017 and discuss a development problem facing India. Through this course, 20 undergraduate students had the opportunity to travel to Mumbai in June 2017 and discuss a development problem facing India. Through this course, 20 undergraduate students had the opportunity to travel to Mumbai in June 2017 and discuss a development problem facing India. Through this course, 20 undergraduate students had the opportunity to travel to Mumbai in June 2017 and discuss a development problem facing India.

The Georgetown University India Initiative delivered on its promise to bring India to Georgetown by hosting high-level bilateral conversations and introducing students to the best and brightest thought leaders from government, business, civil society, and the academy. In 2017-2018, with your help and support, we look forward to building on this momentum so that we can continue creating a leading program in Washington, D.C. that advances the study of India and meaningfully supports academic and cultural diplomacy between the world’s oldest and largest democracies.

Sincerely,

Irfan Nooruddin, Ph.D.
Director, Georgetown University India Initiative
Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Professor of Indian Politics
Faculty Chair, Walsh School of Foreign Service
INDIA IDEAS CONFERENCE

Georgetown has long served as an international convening power in Washington, D.C.—drawing leaders from a variety of industries and disciplines for constructive discourse. Building on this strength, the Georgetown University India Initiative launched the inaugural India Ideas Conference in April 2017.

The conference featured topical keynote speakers and expert panels—raising awareness in political and scholarly communities and among the broader public. The India Initiative aims to establish the India Ideas Conference as a collaborative, solutions-oriented platform to communicate India’s complexities, challenges, and opportunities through a gathering of international practitioners and academics engaged across India.

In 2017, the conference hosted in-depth panel discussions on critical topics including urban planning and development, sustainable energy, subnational governance, regional security and diplomacy, and the future of the U.S.-India bilateral partnership.
India’s economy has been on an upward growth trajectory in recent years, helping to reduce poverty and increase standards of living, particularly for workers in the technology sector and other booming industries. Successive governments have eased restrictions on foreign investment, but while this move has benefited Indian business owners and investors, gaps between income classes widen, and investment in basic services such as public health and sanitation infrastructure remains anaemic. India faces challenges to social development at the same moment as it is poised to expand its economic influence on the world stage. In the 2016–2017 academic year, the India Initiative hosted a number of events and awarded two seed grants to promote outreach and research on India’s concurrent economic narratives of growth and poverty.

**ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND INNOVATION**

The resource-rich, strategically located Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is of great commercial importance to many countries in the world, including India. The Tata Group—a multinational conglomerate and holding company headquartered in Mumbai, India—has conducted business in MENA countries for nearly half a century, so its executive leadership understands the diversity of the region. On January 24, 2017, Sunil Sinha, Tata Group’s resident director of the MENA region, visited campus and gave a talk on commercial links between India and the region. He also discussed the political, economic, and social importance of these commercial partnerships and their impact on Indian businesses and civil society.

**MAKING POLITICS WORK FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Facing adverse political incentives, policymakers and leaders in developing countries often fail to adopt or implement policies that are necessary for sustained economic development. Stuti Khemani, a senior economist in the Development Research Group of the World Bank, grapples with this challenge in the World Bank’s provocative policy research report “Making Politics Work for Development,” which she launched at Georgetown University on October 4, 2016. Using India as a case study, she explained how the forces of citizen engagement and transparency in political processes can explain and hold the potential to improve political incentives and can change outcomes by shifting behavioral norms among public-sector decision-makers.

**INDIA’S COMMERCIAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE MENA REGION**

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the India Initiative held a university-wide competition for collaborative grants designed to bring together faculty with Indian colleagues to advance research on U.S. and Indian approaches to global issues, including economic opportunity and innovation in India. During this round, the initiative supported a field study led by Shareen Joshi, an assistant professor in the Walsh School of Foreign Service. Her project, “Can Leadership Training Teach Children Honesty,” examines the link between teaching civic values in schools and the success of modern economic, political, and social systems.

The initiative also awarded a grant to Professor Rajesh Veeraraghavan, an assistant professor of science, technology, and international affairs in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, who will convene a working group of academics, researchers, activists, and state officials in India. His project, “Front-line bureaucrats as potential partners in the fight for transparency of public services,” examines the role that front-line state actors can play in working toward greater public good.

**COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the India Initiative hosted a number of events and awarded two seed grants to promote outreach and research on India’s concurrent economic narratives of growth and poverty.
ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Environmental factors are a main focus of India’s development agenda. Recognizing the critical importance of increasing energy access, reducing pollution, and improving resilience in the face of climate change, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is working with the international community to combat climate change and promote responsible environmental practices. In 2015, Prime Minister Modi remarked that he and former U.S. president Barack Obama “share an uncompromising commitment on climate change without affecting our ability to meet the development aspirations of humanity,” and in April 2016, India signed the historic Paris Agreement on climate change. At the same time, 300 million Indian citizens live without access to power, and accessibility must be balanced with sustainability in the coming decades. During the 2016–2017 academic year, the India Initiative hosted a number of events and programs that highlight this delicate balance in an era of great environmental challenges.

INNOVATIONS IN SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DELIVERY

Energy and environmental issues were a key theme of the 2017 India Ideas Conference. Dr. Mark Giordano, director of the Program in Science, Technology, and International Affairs, moderated a discussion on sustainable energy delivery and investment in renewable energy sources with Griffin Thompson of the U.S. Department of State and Richie Ahuja of the Environmental Defense Fund.

Energy and environmental factors were at the forefront of a discussion on “Building India’s Cities,” moderated by Sunil Madan, associate director of the Steers Center for Global Real Estate in the McDonough School of Business. He led a discussion on building resilient and sustainable infrastructure alongside Robin King of the World Resources Institute Ross Center for Sustainable Cities and Vatsall Bhatt of the U.S. Green Building Council.

LOW CARBON OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Climate change is expected to increase global vulnerability to floods and droughts. This issue assumes critical importance in South Asia, given that economies in this region rely heavily on agriculture, forestry, and fisheries for economic growth, as well as water and food security. Therefore, there is growing emphasis on fostering climate change resilience in agricultural practices, water resource management, and infrastructure development in South Asia.

The India Initiative, in partnership with the South Asia Policy and Research Initiative (SAPRI) at the McCourt School of Public Policy, hosted Richie Ahuja, regional director for Asia at the Environmental Defense Fund, to discuss these issues. Ahuja offered his perspective on low-carbon opportunities for rural development in the South Asian region with a focus on “climate smart” agricultural practices. He also shared his experience implementing such projects at the Environmental Defense Fund with a focus on their scalability over time.
POLITICS AND IDENTITY

The demography of India is one of the most complex in the world. With 22 official languages, more than 2,000 ethnic groups, and every major world religion represented, democratic governance is both enriched and challenged by this diversity. Indian politics often intersect with the many and varied identities of the Indian electorate. The rise of Hindu nationalism, the success of caste-based parties, and the vitality of regional parties all illustrate the phenomenon of identity politics, and in an era of globalization, it is increasingly important to understand the ways in which politics and identity are linked. During the 2016-2017 academic year, the India Initiative convened conversations and working groups with Indian politicians and thought leaders across the political spectrum and engaged questions about the intersection of politics and identity at events and workshops.

THE LONG LIFE AND LINGERING DEATH OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1855 during the British Raj in India, and after independence in 1947, the center-left, socially liberal political party dominated the political landscape in India. In the 2014 general election, the once-dominant Indian National Congress was reduced to a mere 44 seats in Parliament, and questions abound about whether the party has a future. To answer these questions, the initiative hosted acclaimed Indian historian and award-winning author Ramachandra Guha for a conversation on the Congress Party’s successes and shortcomings. Guha analyzed the long term electoral success of the Congress Party, examined the reasons for its decline, and grappled with questions about India’s political future.

FICCI INDO-U.S. FORUM OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

In September 2016, the initiative hosted a delegation of Indian members of parliament for a foreign policy workshop at Georgetown University, in conjunction with FICCI’s annual Indo-U.S. Forum of Parliamentarians. The MPs participated in foreign policy lectures with distinguished Georgetown faculty members on topics including nuclear security, environmental diplomacy, global terrorism, international trade, and the evolution of geopolitical diplomacy. The MPs also had the opportunity to discuss Indo-U.S. relations with then-Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Biswal, and participated in a panel discussion at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

WHEN CRIME PAYS: MONEY AND MUSCLE IN INDIAN POLITICS

In India, the world’s largest democracy, the relationship between crime and politics raises complex questions. Today, nearly a third of state and national legislators in India assume office with pending criminal charges. In March 2017, the initiative hosted Milan Vaishnav of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to discuss his newest book, When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics. He grappled with questions at the nexus of crime and democracy and scrutinized political campaigns, party workers, and voters, in addition to criminal candidates, to offer a comprehensive analysis of the corruption in India’s political system—an issue that has far-reaching implications for the study of democracy within and beyond India’s borders.
SECURITY

Domestically, India grapples with ethnic clashes, caste-based violence, and a Maoist insurgency. India must also confront international security threats such as the Kashmir dispute, a tense relationship with Pakistan, and military and intelligence competition with China. During the 2016–2017 academic year, the India Initiative engaged the most pressing questions of Indian national security and the future of the U.S.–India strategic relationship through research, outreach, and teaching.
TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

India is one of the major technology capitals of the world, with 2.5 million people directly employed in its information technology sector. The government is integrating technology into political and social life through the Digital India campaign, which aims to make government services available to citizens electronically. Initiatives of this type have changed the Indian communications landscape and worked to improve accessibility. Today, India’s telecommunication network is the second largest in the world, and India has the world’s third largest internet user base. In the 2016–2017 academic year, the initiative engaged the intersections of technology and communications through research, teaching, and programming.

KHORANA PROGRAM FOR SCHOLARS

During the summer of 2017, associate professor of physics and member of the India Initiative Faculty Committee Makarand Paranjape participated in the Khorana Program for Scholars, a scientific exchange program that facilitates summer internships for Indian students to work and study in U.S. university laboratories. He hosted a second-year master’s student, Suchintak Dash, who is studying biotechnology at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) School of Biotechnology, in Georgetown’s Nanoscience and Microtechnology Lab. Coming to Georgetown fulfilled one of Suchintak’s dreams, and he expressed his excitement to be in the United States for the first time, and hopes to return upon his graduation from KIIT.

SEED GRANT ON SATELLITE IMAGING

Rajesh Veeraraghavan, a professor in Georgetown’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, received an India Initiative seed grant to fund a project that will use satellite imaging and GIS mapping to identify discrepancies in public service delivery in the neighborhoods of Delhi. Researchers will use this data to render a legible map that depicts clear patterns of access to public services in the city of Delhi. The map will be augmented with field work in order to add crucial dimensions that are invisible to the satellites. By combining visible and invisible sources of data, the map will enable researchers to ask more specific questions about the spatial diversity of access to public services in India’s capital city.

DISTINGUISHED FELLOWS PROGRAM

2016 India Initiative Distinguished Fellows Rajdeep Sardesai and Sagarika Ghose visited Georgetown for a week of guest lectures, public and private roundtables, faculty meetings, and public events. As consulting editors at the India Today Group and the Times of India, these acclaimed journalists have covered India’s political climate for over two decades, and they shared their insights with Georgetown students, faculty, and members of the D.C. policy and journalistic community.

During their visit, Sardesai and Ghose gave guest lectures in classes such as Women in South Asian Film, Media and International Affairs, Visual Culture and the Body, and the India Innovation Studio: Designing for Droughts. Mr. Sardesai moderated a live broadcast on Voice of America and filmed an interview about the November U.S. presidential election with a group of Georgetown undergraduates which aired on India Today. Mrs. Ghose also gave a lecture on the challenges facing female journalists and the role that they can play in shaping the media landscape.
INDIA INNOVATION STUDIO

In the fall 2016 semester, India Initiative Director Irfan Nooruddin and colleague Dr. Mark Giordano, director of the Science, Technology, and International Affairs Program, launched the India Innovation Studio, a multidisciplinary, studio-based course in the Walsh School of Foreign Service. The class operates in partnership with Indian government and civil society stakeholders to design, prototype, and implement a solution to a development problem facing India. Each year, the course examines a different challenge. In 2016-2017, the topic was drought, and students spent the fall 2016 semester exploring the political and hydrological dimensions of drought before diving into the policy, economic, and ethical dimensions of potential solutions in the spring 2017 semester. Students designed policy interventions in close collaborations with experts in the field, industry stakeholders, and the Maharashtra government.

In June 2017, the students travelled to Maharashtra’s major cities Mumbai and Pune to see firsthand the effects of drought in the region and to pitch their policy proposals to Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis. While in Maharashtra, the students sharpened their policy proposals in conversation with public policy students at St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai, and presented their ideas to the chief minister and to senior diplomats at the U.S. consulate in Mumbai. Their proposals, which included remote sensing data collection, indirect lending programs, priority sector lending and catastrophe bonds, and the establishment of communal greenhouses, took a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to water policy reform.

Students also got to meet with farmers and the NGOs supporting them in rural Ahmednagar. Interacting with the people living in rural villages was not only a highlight for the students, but a humbling experience. One participant reflected that “the most challenging [aspect of the trip] was accepting and understanding that our research was limited in the sense that we did not have a perception of the ground reality before producing our proposals.”

Students grappled with the question of how outside experts can best work with on-the-ground stakeholders in order to provide useful guidance and improve the livelihoods of people who face this environmental and political challenge every day.

The India Innovation Studio will continue in the fall 2017 semester, this time focusing on the issue of public health and urban sanitation in Mumbai.
Rajdeep Sardesai, a 2016 India Initiative Distinguished Fellow, filmed an interview with Georgetown undergraduates about the upcoming U.S. presidential election for a special report which aired on India Today.

Delegates from Indian universities visited Georgetown as part of the Fulbright-Nehru Visiting International Education Administrators seminar.

Rupi Kaur, a contemporary feminist poet and spoken word artist from Punjab, performs a poetry reading at Georgetown University, sponsored by the initiative and the Georgetown University Lecture Fund.

As part of the Georgetown Leadership Seminar 2016, BJP politician Madhukeshwar Desai gave a lecture to students in INAF-311.

The India Innovation Studio students examine a drip-irrigation system and discuss best practices with farmers.

Andrea Welsh (SFS’17), a student in the Global Human Development Program, presents her research on gender and education in India at the India Ideas Conference.
FACULTY AND STUDENTS

The Georgetown India Initiative draws on the deep and broad expertise on India from faculty members throughout the university. The faculty advisory committee is comprised of 19 professors from eight of Georgetown’s nine schools. Their diversity of interests and areas of expertise allows the initiative to take a nuanced and interdisciplinary approach when holding events and convening conversations on some of India’s most pressing challenges.

The initiative also promotes dialogue, organizes programming, and engages students across Georgetown’s schools and programs, including through its student fellows program. Fellows are a committed group of undergraduate and graduate students who assist in planning, developing, and implementing India Initiative events and dialogues. Rooted in the India Initiative’s mission to strengthen the U.S.-India relationship through bilateral dialogue and interaction, student fellows work to broaden the discourse on India at Georgetown and in Washington, D.C., by helping the initiative convene multidisciplinary lectures, roundtables, and working groups. In their work with the initiative, they bring politicians, diplomats, business leaders, social entrepreneurs, academics, and civil society leaders to campus. The student fellows are also instrumental in organizing the India Initiative’s annual policy summit, the India Ideas Conference.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: SUNIL MADAN

The Indian government recently passed legislation governing the formation and taxation of real estate investment trusts (REITs) in the country. The Steers Center for Global Real Estate at Georgetown’s McDonough School of Business was awarded a collaborative research seed grant to conduct a study to quantify the impact and benefits of this legislation on economic and social development in India. Sunil Madan traveled to India with Steers Center Director Dr. Matthew Cypher and President of Cohen & Steers Joseph Harvey to hold a workshop and present at a summit. During their visit, the Steers Center team consulted with prominent participants in the Indian real estate market, including investors and government officials, about building the REIT market in India.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: PATRICK DROWN

Patrick Drown (SFS’17) spent his time at Georgetown exploring opportunities to learn more about India. He participated in a GU Impacts program through the Beeck Center which connected him with the NGO Dream A Dream in Bangalore, India. Dream A Dream conducts English and computer skills classes, as well as leadership workshops, for urban youth. During his time there, Patrick began to understand some of the challenges that Indian cities face in providing quality education for its youth population. Upon returning to Georgetown, he further honed his understanding of policymaking and service delivery in the India Innovation Studio course, and after graduation, was awarded a Princeton in Asia Fellowship in Kathmandu, Nepal.