



Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of  
Washington, DC  
[rpcvw.org](http://rpcvw.org)

2011 - 2012 RPCV/W Annual Report  
(August 2011 - July 2012)

**President** - Chris Austin (Kenya, 2003-2005)

**Vice President** - Andrienne Konstas (Cameroon 2006-2008)

**Treasurer** - Chris Polen (Azerbaijan 2008-2010)

**Secretary** - Sarah Sahr (Ethiopia, 1996-1998)

**Community Service** - Jason Smith (Bulgaria, 2007-2009)

**Development Director** - Chris Robinson (Jamaica, 2007-2009)

**Membership Director** - Natacha Vacroux (Romania, 2004- 2006)

**Outreach Director** - Laara Manler (Burkina Faso, 2001-2002 & Paraguay, 2008-2010)

**Professional Development Director** - Brandon Roche (Honduras, 2003-2005)

**Public Relations Director** - Chris Robinson (Jamaica, 2007-2009)

**Social Director** - Liza Cushion (El Salvador, 2001-2003)

**Special Events Director** - Renetta Boyd (Eastern Caribbean, St. Kitts 2004-2006)

**Strategic Partnership Director** - Kristina Owens (Bolivia, 2000-2002)



Dear Friends,

2011-2012 was a banner year for the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C. (RPCV/W). Our community came together to put on a commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps that was fitting and historic. In addition to launching our new Professional Development Initiative, we had a robust calendar of social, community service, outreach and special events. We retooled our communications strategy to enable more information and interaction to flow between our Members. And in recognition of RPCV/W's success in achieving the Third Goal, we won the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) Loret Miller Ruppe Award. It has been a highly successful year, thanks in large part to an active membership and a dedicated, high-performing Board of Directors.

There were many new faces on the Board this year. Six of the 12 Board Members were serving for their first time and the composition of the Executive Board (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary) was entirely new. At the outset of the year, the new Board revised RPCV/W's mission: "By fostering opportunities to share our unique experiences and commitment to service, we create a community that celebrates the diversity of the greater Washington area and world cultures." To achieve this mission, the Board planned a very busy year of programs and events.

One of the many successes that RPCV/W enjoyed this year -and perhaps one of the most memorable in the organization's history – the Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary at Arlington National Cemetery on September 25, 2011. After a year of intense planning, fundraising and promoting, over 4,000 people attended the three events at Arlington, which included a wreath and flower laying at President Kennedy's gravesite for fallen Peace Corps Volunteers, a spoken and musical program at Memorial Amphitheater, and a Walk of Flags from Arlington to the Lincoln Memorial.

RPCV/W launched a new program, the Professional Development Initiative. Six events were held and over one-third of our membership participated in sessions designed to help members gain insight and fellow RPCV contacts in job sectors that attract RPCVs such as government (executive and legislative), education and private international development.

A 2010 survey of RPCV/W members showed that the number one reason people join RPCV/W is for social purposes, and our calendar this past year reflected this. RPCV/W held nine happy hours, a Thanksgiving potluck, a raucous Holiday Party, a Cherry Blossom Picnic, a Virginia wine-tasting tour, a cycling trip to Great Falls, a camping trip in Shenandoah, and a Summer BBQ at the Capitol Yacht Club.

In addition to professional development and social events, RPCV/W facilitated seven community service events, the annual "Peace Corps Town Hall," a wreath laying at the Eternal Flame in honor of President Kennedy's birthday, and a candlelight vigil in remembrance of victims who have succumbed to HIV/AIDS. This year's Partnership for Peace winner was Language, Education and Training Center (Language ETC.), who offer English and literacy training to low-income adult immigrants in the greater Washington area.

Furthermore, RPCV/W boosted communication among members by overhauling the weekly newsletter, increasing content on its website and aggressively using Facebook and Twitter to send information to our members and non-members of our wonderful events.

Led by a new Board of Directors, 2011-2012 was a highly active and successful year for RPCV/W. I am very grateful for the hard work put in by the Board and our members and I look forward to an even more successful year in 2012-2013!

Sincerely,

Chris Austin  
RPCV/W President  
Kenya 2003-2005

### VICE PRESIDENT

#### **Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

One of the first tasks of the RPCV/W Vice President was to help with the transition of the two RPCV/W boards in planning for the Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Vice President planned a mini-retreat where new and old board members meet to transition duties. Discussions of roles and goals of each of the new board members positions discussed. RPCV/W Mission and goals were presented and discussed for future revision.

Through the September 25, 2011 event, the Vice President supported RPCV/W President. The Vice President assisted with VIP and ceremony speakers during the day's events. The Vice President created a SmugMug account which holds a cache of photos and videos from the 50th Anniversary. Additionally, she drafted and distributed waiver documents to various volunteer artists who documented the 50th on behalf of RPCV/W. Through her great efforts, she solicited high profile RPCVs for membership into RPCV/W.

#### **RPCV/W Retreats**

##### *August 20-21, 2011 - Board Transition Retreat*

A "transition retreat" was held at the direction of the Vice President. The transition retreat served as a meet and greet of past and current members as well as discuss responsibilities associated with the 50th Anniversary. This retreat allows for assurances that newly elected Board Members understand their roles and responsibilities, including their part as 50th Anniversary volunteers.

##### *October 21-23 2011 - Annual Operational Retreat*

The RPCV/W Vice President planned and managed the first "full" retreat of the 2011-2012 board in Rehoboth Beach. The Vice President planned a weekend where the new board could get to know each other and plan the entire RPCV/W year. Accomplishments included a calendar for the year; creating subcommittees; understanding RPCV/W financial status and requirements; and its non-profit status. While the VP planned, managed accounts and logistics, and designed activities for the retreat, she was unable to attend due to professional obligations. She solicited the assistance of the Professional Development Director to act in her stead.

##### *February 11, 2012 - Leading RPCV/W beyond the Peace Corps 50th Anniversary*

This semi-annual retreat was held at the Historic Inns of Annapolis and was heavily focused on RPCV/W moving away from the 50th Anniversary. Because the theme of the event centered on the 50th, 50th Anniversary funds were used to make this a productive retreat. The retreat has three main goals 1.) a review of the first draft of the 50th report, 2.) how RPCV/W will move beyond the 50<sup>th</sup> in integrating its efforts toward Peace Corps's 3<sup>rd</sup> Goal, and 3.) a review of RPCV/W's finances and remaining calendar events of the year.

#### **Partnership for Peace**

Traditionally, the roll of the Vice President is to manage RPCV/W's Partnership for Peace program (P4P). Its third year of operation, this year's P4P was truncated to a nine month commitment as opposed to the customary twelve month period. Language Education Training Center (LETC) was selected among the seven applicants and four finalists as RPCV/W's P4P partner. This year's annual "Silent Auction" fundraising efforts allowed RPCV/W to provide the largest funding support to its P4P partner, with an initial grant of US\$2,000.

Along with supporting the fundraising and selection process for P4P, the VP planned the selection expo, organized monthly review meetings with LETC, and participated in volunteer efforts at LETC facilities. Three events were held to highlight LETC and the RPCV/W relationship: an open house on March 10, 2012, a second open house on April 7, 2012, and a language expo on April 22, 2012. Due to these efforts, LETC reported a steady increase in RPCV/W members applying to service as language teachers and tutors in their community.

Recommendation: For future P4P efforts, it is recommended that a "Partnership for Peace Committee" be established to make sure the program runs more effectively.

### **Loret Miller Ruppe Award**

In an effort to highlight the outstanding contribution of RPCV/W members to the greater community of Washington D.C. Metro area, the Vice President applied for the Loret Miller Ruppe Award. The application was successful and the award was presented to RPCV/W (Laara Manler as organization representative) at the "Peace Corps Connect: Minneapolis 2012" Conference. In addition to recognition from the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), RPCV/W received a cash reward with the award. (All reward monies were given to LETC)

### **RPCV/W Operational support**

The Vice President acted for the President of RPCV/W throughout the year. She spoke for RPCV/W at the 2012 Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony and conducted monthly meetings when needed.

### **TREASURER**

The state of RPCV/W's finances is strong. Membership is up, events such as the holiday party are no longer operating at a loss, and the Board has acted with fiscal restraint. However we must continue to be vigilant in maintaining a policy of strict fiscal responsibility. Last year's Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary Event was a major strain on our accounting systems but, as our FY 2011 Financial Reports show, RPCV/W closed the Event stronger than ever.

Over the last year the treasurer has worked to strengthen RPCV/W's systems through a variety of projects. We have consolidated accounts to increase ease of use and security. We took steps to modernize net-based banking and payment systems. We invested in directors and officers insurance to protect RPCV/W's future against unforeseen circumstances. The treasurer reexamined tax law for 501(c)3 organizations and found ways to decrease our tax liability and the number of hours required to file while simultaneously increasing our compliance with the law.

However, there are still issues that the Treasurer must continue working to rectify. We must continue to work with DC government to ensure proper certification as a tax-exempt organization in the District. The Treasurer must work closely with the new Board to pass and maintain adherence to a budget that implements RPCV/W's mission to serve our members and stakeholders while strengthening its long-term financial future. Finally, in the next financial year the Treasurer and Board must work to develop automated accounting systems which will improve our financial record keeping and transparency to our members.

FY 2011 Financial Reports have been filed. Oversight and active participation by our members can only strengthen our organization.

### **SECRETARY**

With the dissolve of RPCV/W's Communication Director, the RPCV/W Secretary took on the responsibility of the weekly newsletter. In doing so, the weekly newsletter has transformed from a weekly PDF document to an embedded email serviced by Mail Chimp, a free online newsletter provider.

Great strides were made to make RPCV/W a more paperless organization. Procedures were established for all Board Members to use Dropbox as an archiving system for all RPCV/W related documents, PowerPoint, pictures and the like. Recommendation: Dropbox will also help developing transparencies between board officers. In creating a robust Dropbox account, RPCV/W success and challenges can be documented for future board review.

As in years past, minutes of each Board meeting, RPCV/W retreats, impromptu discussions when a forum was present, and this annual report have been meticulously kept. All documents that fall under the Secretary's jurisdiction can be found in RPCV/W's Dropbox.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

RPCV/W's Community Service Director was a pivotal role in organizing the Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event as the co-chair of the Arlington Program committee. Upon culmination of this banner event, the Community Service Director was able to organize 8 community outreach events:

1. Capital Area Food Bank  
Saturday, November 19, 2011, from 10am to 2pm  
Volunteers passed out fliers and helped collect canned goods at three Safeway locations, collected 50 bags of groceries for delivery to CAFB.
2. Food & Friends  
Wednesday, December 7, 2011, from 6pm to 8pm  
Volunteers helped with kitchen prep at their Fort Totten facility.
3. Matha's Table: Toy Collection at the RPCV/W Holiday Party  
Friday, December 9, 2011, 6pm to 10pm  
Toys were collected for children ages 3 months to 10 years and given to Martha's Table for distribution.
4. A Wider Circle  
Thursday, January 14, 2012, from 10am to 1pm  
Redistributed furniture to families that are transitioning out of homeless-ness and shelters by helping move furniture from the warehouse onto personal vehicles.
5. Food & Friends  
Wednesday, February 1, 2012, from 6pm to 8pm  
Volunteers helped with kitchen prep at their Fort Totten facility.
6. A Wider Circle  
Saturday, March 10, 2012, from 10am to 1pm  
Volunteer helped move mattresses from a local hotel to A Wider Circle for distribution, 200 mattresses were donated and moved to the Wider Circle warehouse.

7. Food for All DC

Saturday, April 14, 2012, from 9am to 12pm

Volunteers helped deliver food to people in situations of emergency and temporary need, food was supplied by Capital Area Food Bank.

8. Language ETC

Saturday, May 12, 2012, from 10am to 12pm

Volunteers from RPCV/W taught foreign languages to teachers at Language ETC to simulate the environment for new students.

### DEVELOPMENT

- Coordinated successful fundraising campaign for 50th Anniversary Event and ensured that funds were used in accordance with Board-approved budget.
- Redesigned donors and sponsors sections. Renamed and refined "Friend of RPCV/W" special membership level. For \$100 a "Friend of RPCV/W" can post a custom message and picture on our Sponsors page. Provided detailed instructions on setting up account in registration emails and suspended unpaid accounts.
- Sold 263 2012 International Calendars out of 300.
- Raised \$3,471.00 from Holiday Party Silent Auction.

### MEMBERSHIP

As of June 2012, membership in RPCV/W stood at 636 active members, an increase of approximately 200 over the last two years. Of our active members, 90 live in Maryland, 109 live in Virginia, 217 live in the District of Columbia, and 220 live outside the immediate area.

Over 50% of our active members (351) joined in the last year. A review of past Annual Reports indicates that it is not unusual, as many members join immediately upon returning from their country of service and then let their membership lapse. However the events surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps have likely contributed to the large number of new members over the last year. Retaining these new members, whose joining coincided with 50th Anniversary activities, will be challenge in the coming year.

A few issues continue to exist with our membership database, and the timeliness of renewals forwarded by NPCA. A moderate amount of manual work still needs to be performed when renewals are delayed. For the most part, membership renewals are now largely performed online, either directly through the RPCVW website or through NPCA, with few members renewing by mail or at events.

### OUTREACH

This year's Outreach Director found new ways to engage our membership and add to the ranks. The relationship between RPCV/W and NPCA's Mentoring Program was formalized and the Outreach Coordinator continued in the

role of Mentoring Coordinator. In that role, Outreach was able to bring many mentees and mentors from the program into the RPCV/W family as members. In addition, RPCV/W's relationship grew exponentially with Peace Corps. Working closely with the Office of Returned Volunteer Services (RVS), the Outreach Director led two successful speed-networking events. Outreach was also able to work with Peace Corps' Med-Evac Coordinator on a new PCV/RPCV initiative to welcome and support med-evac'd volunteers to the DC-area. We continued the work with Peace Corps with the Office of Global Health and HIV, to coordinate the evening-version of Peace Corps' International AIDS Candlelight Memorial.

In addition to working with NPCA on the mentoring program and Peace Corps on various initiatives, the Outreach Director worked with fellow Board Members on a host of events. Together with the Social Director, Outreach helped coordinate and organize the annual Thanksgiving potluck in the fall. Working closely with Professional Development Director, the new series on professional development was launched and the second annual Peace Corps Town Hall Meeting was coordinated with RPCV/W's Strategic Partnership Director.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The inaugural Professional Development Director launched RPCV/W's Professional Development Initiative this past year. The RPCV/W Professional Development Initiative is based on the idea that RPCVs are one of the strongest yet most underutilized alumni networks in the DC area; this program was aimed at changing that. The Initiative consisted of a series of panel-style talks, each for a different industry in the D.C. area, aimed at newly returned and mid-career RPCVs. These events were free and were attended by many RPCV/W members as well as non-member RPCVs in the area.

Starting in October of 2011, the first panel consisted of RPCVs from the private consulting industry discussing their backgrounds and career objectives; it included employees of Booz Allen Hamilton and Deloitte. The November event focused on U.S. Government agencies and panelists were employees or former employees of HUD, USDA, and the EPA. In January of 2012, we turned our focus to the education industry and had representatives from KIPP D.C. Charter Schools, D.C. Public Schools, and Teach for America. March and April looked at private and public international development, respectively, and panelists included employees of DAI, Chemonics, and IREX as well as the State Dept., USAID, and Peace Corps itself. Finally, we concluded the year by focusing on legislative jobs on Capitol Hill speaking with RPCVs currently working in various positions, on both sides of the aisle, in the House and Senate.

In all, over 250 RPCVs heard from 35 different panelists about working in some of the most popular career tracks in the D.C. area. We could not have done it without the cooperation of our generous panelists who volunteered their time and advice, as well as the Peace Corps' Office of Returned Volunteer Services who were able to provide the physical space for the events and logistical support. Additionally, an article was published in the Spring 2012 Worldview magazine issue regarding RPCV/W's Professional Development Initiative and encouraging other regional groups to launch similar efforts. Our hope is that the guidance offered by our superb panelists will help our Peace Corps community further their professional careers and, in turn, place more RPCVs in the upper echelons of area industries.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

#### Website:

- Started recording website usage and analytics on November 29, 2011



- Redesigned layout of website, normalizing fonts, putting text into stylized callout boxes and streamlining heavily trafficked pages.
- Created navigation boxes with icons for popular services and put them on home, about, and events sections.
- Embedded Twitter feed in news
- Embedded Facebook feed in listserve
- Created Professional Development page
- Created Partnership for Peace page
- Created History page and began a history project

**Facebook**

- Created new strategies for using the Facebook Page (as the front page and public face of the organization) and the Facebook Group (as a forum for members to chat, network, advertise local events, find housing, etc)
- Facilitated more posts on the Facebook Group and used the page to highlight upcoming events, share news, and connect with partner groups.
- Provided steady stream of new content with at least one new post a day.

**Twitter**

- Reduced non-dc follows and encouraged increased activity and sharing by following and re-tweeting local organizations and individuals in RPCV/W's demographic.
- Ensures steady stream of content, 1 - 5 tweets and re-tweets per day.

**Linkedin**

- Relaunched RPCV/W LinkedIn Group and integrated it into Professional Development page.
- Wrote new rules for group to encourage sharing and networking.
- Created special jobs feed, splicing several local rss feeds together to provide real-time postings of mostly local jobs that appeal to RPCV/W's target demographic.
- Installed LinkedIn social plugins at Profdev page to encourage users to sign up

**Blogs**

- Created RPCV/W blogs on Wordpress and Blogger which display event, news, and job feeds on an interactive platform.
- Goal is to attract Peace Corps bloggers to contribute stories about their time in the field and their work in DC.
- Synced blog posts to automatically share on Facebook and Twitter
- Synced event calendar with blogs

**Other**

- Added section on RPCV/W dropbox account for public documents
- Wrote statements for Language ETC and AIDS Memorial.
- Encouraged more photo documentation and sharing in the group.
- Took over RPCV/W Idealist account and updated information.
- Added social sharing icons to RPCVW Newsletter.
- Created nomination form for 2012-2013 Board of Directors election using Google Docs
- Created Google+ page, exploring applications.

### SOCIAL EVENTS

The Social Director organized several types of social events during the 2011-2012 year; including 9 happy hours in the Washington DC area (the number of attendees is approximate):

- Date: October 12, 2012  
Location: Bourbon (2321 18th Street NW)  
Attendees: 35
- Date: November 10, 2011  
Location: Hamilton's Bar and Grill (233 2nd Street NW)  
Attendees: 40
- Date: January 18, 2012  
Location: Rocket Bar (714 7th Street NW)  
Attendees: 18
- Date: February 8, 2012  
Location: Continental Pool Lounge Rosslyn (1911 Fort Myer Drive)  
Attendees: 10
- Date: March 14, 2012  
Location: Recessions (1823 L Street NW)  
Attendees: 25
- Date: April 12, 2012  
Location: Meridian Pint (3400 11th Street NW)  
Attendees: 40
- Date: May 10, 2012  
Location: Russia House (1800 Connecticut Avenue NW)  
Attendees: 25
- Date: May 19, 2012  
Location: Café Asia, Rosslyn (1550 Wilson Boulevard)  
Attendees: 15
- Date: June 13, 2012  
Location: Black's Bar and Kitchen, Bethesda (7750 Woodmont Avenue)  
Attendees: 13

In addition to organizing happy hours, the Social Director held 7 additional events to engage the Washington RPCV community, including:

- Date: September 23, 2011  
Event: RPCV/W participation in "Peace Corps Night" at Nationals Ballpark, including the parade of nations before opening pitch  
Attendees: 25

- Date: October 16, 2011  
Event: Fall foliage hike to Duncan Knob, an 8.8 mile hike in the George Washington National Forest  
Attendees: 10
- Date: November 20, 2011  
Event: RPCV/W Thanksgiving potluck dinner  
Attendees: 15
- Date: January 29, 2012  
Event: Ice skating at the National Gallery Sculpture Garden  
Attendees: 3
- Date: March 31, 2012  
Event: Annual cherry blossom potluck picnic  
Attendees: 40
- Date: April 28, 2012  
Event: 2nd annual Virginia wine tour (Winery at La Grange, Permud Cellars, Paradise Springs)  
Attendees: 16
- Date: June 8-10, 2012  
Event: 3rd annual RPCV/W summer camping trip (Seneca Shadows group campsite, Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia)  
Attendees: 12

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Four fabulous events were planned and implemented in 2012 under the superb leadership of the Special Events Director: 1.) 50th Anniversary Volunteer Appreciation, 2.) RPCV/W Annual Holiday Party, 3.) Wreath Laying Ceremony, and 4.) Annual Membership elections and Summer BBQ.

Two events were held at the Embassy Suite Convention Center: 50th Anniversary Volunteer Appreciation and Annual Holiday party. More than 300 members and guest registered online and attended both events. RPCV/W thanked the hundreds of volunteers with a reception. The Annual Holiday Party ballroom was beautifully decorated with red linen, candle votive, poinsettias, holiday lights and trees. Members enjoyed food, drinks music and networking. Many members described the Holiday Party as one of the best hosted by RPCV/W.

The Wreath Laying Ceremony, honoring President John F. Kennedy was held at Arlington National Cemetery on Saturday, May 19, 2012. More than 10 RPCV members and guests attended including Tony Barclay, Board President of NPCA, RPCV members and Embassy officials (invited). A brief program was held at the 101st Airborne Memorial followed by the Wreath Laying Ceremony. A Hope and Honor Wreath and 13 white roses were placed at the gravesite of President Kennedy.

The year will end with the RPCV/W elections and BBQ and the Capital City Yacht Club. The BBQ will be catered by Rockland's Barbeque and Grilling Company. One-hundred members are expected to attend.

The Special Events Director's dedication and hard work was evident as every detail was meticulously executed from contract/menu planning to red linen decorations and flower selections. What a fabulous and productive year.

### **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

In June 2011, the RPCV/W board created the position of Strategic Partnership Director to ensure sustainability of work being done by the board pertaining to Peace Corps 50th Anniversary efforts. In July 2011, RPCV/W's Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Liaison/Event Manager was successfully elected for the position.

#### **50th Anniversary Activities**

Between July 2011-September 25, 2011, the Strategic Partnership Director continued to ensure the success of RPCV/W's 50th Anniversary events by coordinating with the new board members, RPCV/W's Honorary Directors and over 100 RPCV/W member Volunteers.

#### **50th Anniversary follow-up**

##### *50th Report*

From October 2011-March 14th 2012, the Strategic Partnership Director worked with RPCV/W President to ensure a proper follow-up to these memorable events by providing a comprehensive report. This report can be found at RPCV/W website: <http://www.rpcvw.org/Report>

##### *Volunteer Appreciation Night*

On November 4, 2011 RPCV/W, with remaining 50th Anniversary funds, planned a night at the Embassy Suites for its Volunteers. It was a night to reminisce on a job well done. The attendees were volunteers who served throughout the year at RPCV/W monthly social events, and the planning of the Walk of Flags, and the Arlington Program. The night included a display of photos, gifts (Frames, photos) for the key volunteers and brief remarks by the President and the Strategic Partnership Director.

#### **RPCV/W activities**

In addition to wrapping up the 50th Anniversary events, the Strategic Partnership Director continued to strengthen the relationships RPCV/W had developed due to the 50th Anniversary. The Strategic Partnership Director supported various board members by providing contacts for RPCV/W Professional Development initiative, ensuring new contacts were specifically invited to RPCV/W key events, and continue to be a key contact for RPCV/W with NPCA and Peace Corps.

#### **Peace Corps Town Hall**

The Strategic Partnership Director began working with the Deputy Director, her staff, the 3rd goal office and the Director's staff as early as January 2012 to plan this event. RPCV/W Outreach Director supported the Strategic Partnership Director in this effort. In preparation of the event, RPCV/W reached out to its members to find out what they wanted to hear from Peace Corps Leadership.

On March 14th 2012, RPCV/W led a Town Hall meeting at Peace Corps HQ. Over 100 RPCVs and RPCV/W members attended this event. With RPCV/W Strategic Partnership Director facilitating, RPCVs listened to RPCV/W President, NPCA President, Peace Corps Deputy Director and Director on many of the initiatives. Afterwards, the audience of RPCVs was able to ask questions to the panelists.

