

EMBARGOED UNTIL 2:30PM (PACIFIC) ON NOVEMBER 8, 2022

USC Awards State Department Officer with First-of-its-kind Innovation Prize

Diplomat Recognized for Growing U.S. Digital Reach in China

LOS ANGELES—A U.S. Department of State diplomat has received the Ameri Prize for Innovation in Public Diplomacy from the USC Center on Public Diplomacy (CPD) at the University of Southern California's (USC) Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

The annual Ameri Prize is a first-of-its-kind award to recognize U.S. public diplomacy professionals who devise innovative and scalable strategies for advancing foreign policy and international cooperation. The program was launched by CPD in collaboration with the State Department in 2021. It has been endowed by Goli Ameri, entrepreneur and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. The inaugural prize honored two U.S. diplomats for exceptional innovation and creativity in countering disinformation in Poland.

2022 Ameri Prize recipient Alys Spensley, a mid-career member of the U.S. Foreign Service, was selected by a distinguished committee of leaders in public diplomacy, technology, the arts and academia who identified her innovative use of data, social media analytics and teamwork at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing to radically reinvent and expand engagement with Chinese audiences.

"U.S. Foreign Service officers do so much with limited resources to engage local audiences, promote democratic values, and in this day and age fight disinformation," said Ameri. "Alys represents the best in the Foreign Service corps. At CPD, the Advisory Board and I feel privileged to honor those who give it their all to effectively and innovatively engage in public diplomacy."

"I think there is a great value in strategically planning and thinking about how we engage with foreign publics, tell America's story, and listen to the questions and feedback from audiences," said Spensley. "It is exciting and challenging to learn and to use new technology and tools—but so essential to public diplomacy work."

In addition to a cash prize, Spensley will join CPD during the week of November 7, 2022 for a series of events and engagement opportunities with students, scholars and the broader community in Los Angeles.

"The Ameri Prize is a response to today's rapidly evolving global needs, as digital agility, adaptability and innovation prove to be the way forward," said Dr. Jay Wang, CPD director. "Recognizing public diplomats like Alys Spensley reinforce the essential value of modern public diplomacy to advance a nation's key priorities and data-driven decision making."

The Ameri Prize for Innovation in Public Diplomacy is designed to promote public diplomacy as a critical tool for foreign policy and international relations within the U.S. Department of State and beyond. These innovations not only demonstrate public diplomacy leadership on behalf of the United States, but they serve to further build the field at a moment when public diplomacy is needed more than ever. As the leading academic center dedicated to the study and practice of public diplomacy, CPD is well-positioned to promote and share these successes with a global audience of practitioners and scholars in the field.

About the Center on Public Diplomacy

Established in 2003 at the University of Southern California (USC), the USC Center on Public Diplomacy (CPD) is a research, analysis and professional training organization dedicated to furthering the study and practice of global public diplomacy. Since its inception, CPD has become an ambitious and productive leader in the public diplomacy research and scholarship community and plays host to robust discussions about the future of public diplomacy. To learn more about CPD, please visit USCPublicDiplomacy.org.

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