

WILLIAM PEREZ

Featured Alumnus

Current location: Arlington, VA

Dialogue Role: China – Latin America Program, Intern, 2013



What is your occupation or most recent work experience?

I led Trimble's business development and go-to-market in Latin America and the Caribbean for projects that required the provision of technology solutions that leveraged geospatial technologies and location-based data to improve productivity, reduce costs, increase safety, and decrease environmental impact. My focus was on projects and initiatives funded by the World Bank, United Nations, Inter-American Development Bank, Organization of American States, and other donor agencies. A few examples of the application of these technologies are using geographic information systems and GNSS/GPS technologies to create maps, update cadastral systems, and issue land titles. This is relevant in the context of prevention of land-related conflict, facilitating social mobility, urban planning, and taxation. Another use case was monitoring seismic activity by building networks and alarm systems of critical infrastructure to prevent disasters such as the collapse of dams or the government's critical infrastructure. Location-based data was used for a wide set of projects from tallying illicit drug eradication efforts to smart agriculture techniques that control water usage, autonomously guide tractors, and vehicles.

I recently joined Amazon Web Services in Arlington, VA. I will work within the World Wide Public Sector's Federal Financials Team as Global Account Manager for International Financial Institutions. I will focus on increasing the adoption of cloud solutions and facilitating success in their cloud journey.

What has surprised you most about your career?

The dependencies and reinforcing dynamic of business, government, and international development. This may sound a bit academic, but I had the chance to have a front-line view both academically and professionally of these interactions. I have worked in and with actors in all these sectors and I have witnessed how these interdependencies operate. Particularly, when it comes to technology adoption and how it directly benefits people's lives. You need the confluence of innovation and risk-taking by the private sector, knowledge exchange, and funding from development partners, and the institutional leadership from governments to accept innovation and modernize policies to realize the potential of a project. When the three come together, you can achieve impact at speed and scale: from improving water access, increasing agricultural yields, increasing infrastructure ROI, driving economic productivity among many others. It has been interesting to see all these dynamics in action and very rewarding to be a part of these processes.

What advice would you give to a young professional?

Learn and be curious! You may have an interest in policy, economics, international affairs or regional studies. You will most likely find that you have shared interests with people that gravitate towards those same interests. It is far more enlightening to learn about topics outside of your comfort zone. This will help you approach issues from a different vantage point and will allow you to better understand people that come from different backgrounds. Once you expand your intellectual curiosity, you will find yourself with a broader mindset and a larger toolkit to address the issues that you originally wanted to focus on.

What was your most impactful Dialogue moment/experience?

As an intern, it was illuminating to learn the vast level of scholarship in China and Latin America. I am Colombian and I had lived in China. I was knowledgeable of the bilateral relationship between both countries. At the Dialogue, the perspective broadened at a hemispheric and global level. Interning at the Dialogue provided a more holistic perspective in understanding the big picture not only in the Americas but also globally.

Equally important was the continuous engagement with Dialogue activities as an alumnus. I found particularly insightful reading the Latin American Advisor and some of the conferences organized by the Dialogue. These helped me greatly in my professional career to understanding the economic and political dynamics in different countries where I was doing business. This information allowed me to recalibrate and refocus different business development activities that I was working on in the region.