

ENGAGED WITH THE WORLD

Managing renewal

College of Business professors teach management skills to help organizations involved in rebuilding post-conflict societies BY JAN GILLIS ('07)

What do you need to build a profitable, thriving business? Experts often point to management skills — the ability to lead and work with others, solve problems, organize and strategize effectively. Yet a group of JMU professors have looked beyond the traditional boundaries of business to find applications for these managerial tools in ways both unexpected and remarkable.

For a decade, College of Business faculty members have collaborated with colleagues in CISR, the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery, to train senior-level managers in organizations that deal with landmines and explosive remnants of war. These organizations are a crucial element in the recovery and rebuilding of post-conflict societies.

Known as the COB International Training Group, their *modus operandi* is straightforward. "What we emphasize is the transferability of what we're teaching," says Paula Daly, professor and head of management at JMU. The ITG is made up of management faculty members: Daly, Robert Eliason, Fariss Mousa, Fernando Pargas, Matthew Rutherford and Marion White. As ITG coordinator, Daly has planned and facilitated the management training for multiple Senior Managers



(L-R): COB faculty members Matt Rutherford, Fernando Pargas and Paula Daly at the SMC in Vietnam.

Courses, which have helped key managerial personnel from more than 40 countries develop and enhance the expertise needed to improve organizational performance. "We're from the business world, but the skills and the knowledge we convey can be used to make any organization more effective and efficient," she says.

CISR Associate Director Suzanne Fiedlerlein says, "The course continues to evolve and remains the leading management training experience for those working

in national clearance programs in ERW [explosive remnants of war] and mine-affected countries."

In 2013, on average nine people a day worldwide became victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war. The vast majority were civilians and almost half of that number were children. Beyond the need to care for the people affected by landmine injuries, countries often suffer the ill effects of conflict for years, even decades, after peace treaties are signed. Successful redevelopment on a national level requires people in key positions who know how to set goals, build an effective organization, manage a workforce, provide leadership and allocate resources wisely.

"They need what we teach in class every day — how to develop a strategic plan, exhibit good leadership and practice team skills," Daly says. The 2015 SMC in Southeast Asia included participants from Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. "There is a wealth of information and practical experience to be shared," says Daly. By demonstrating the commonality that exists among people despite differences in culture, gender, language and religion, the training furthers the acceptance of, and tolerance for, other ways of life, and fosters friendships among diverse participants. It's a model of civil discourse.

While conflict continues to exact a weighty toll on individuals and societies, the efforts of Daly and her COB colleagues, as well as CISR and those they train, offer hope. After all, any solution that allows wounds to heal and human endeavor to flourish bodes well for the future. M

'We get people from different countries and different organizations talking together, sharing their knowledge, sharing ideas, disagreeing, sharing their expertise.'

— PAULA DALY, management professor and ITG coordinator