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**SPECIAL TO PUBLIC RELATIONS TRADE PRESS:  
Don Bates Speaks in Spain on Public Relations**

**WASHINGTON** – As part of the “new” Europe, Spain’s economy and culture are changing dramatically and professional public relations is a beneficiary.

Don Bates, Director of the Strategic Public Relations Program in The George Washington University’s Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM), said public relations, especially its role in politics and government, is a hot topic in the nation of 40 million.

Bates and GSPM colleagues were in Spain April 14-18, where they lectured and conducted case study simulations in Bilbao and Valencia for some 150 mayors and public officials from cities and towns in the surrounding regions. The two-day sessions were organized by GSPM’s Governance Program for Latin America, headed by Luis Raul Matos and Roberto Izurieta.

GSPM faculty and staff explained how to use campaign management, legislative affairs, grassroots advocacy, and public relations to court voters, build alliances, win elections, and govern more successfully. Bates told participants that the best PR is derived from socially responsible performance supported by socially minded policies and procedures that emphasize strategic thinking, transparency, two-way symmetrical communication, and ethics.

Bates said PR is an important tool for helping public officials to be seen, heard, and understood. “Too many people in politics and government communicate like crazy to win their seats or jobs, but promptly forget to get back in touch—and stay in touch—with the people who assisted them.” As a result, “They often lose their positions later on for no other reason than they failed to keep communicating after they took power.”

Although Bates referred largely to the American PR model, GSPM faculty from South and Central America provided local and national perspectives that addressed Spain’s party system. Bates said many Spanish officials suffer a credibility gap similar to that experienced by their American counterparts “With globalization comes homogenization and, never more clearly than in politics, especially in advanced democracies,” he explained. “Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill’s assertion that ‘All politics is local’ can be comfortably restated as ‘All politics is local throughout the world.’” Bates said GSPM faculty would conduct similar programs in South America this summer and fall.

Last September, Bates, former managing director for Media Distribution Services (MDS) in New York City and PR instructor at Columbia University, helped to launch GW’s first master’s degree in strategic public relations, along with Rick Sullivan, retired president of international operations for Fleishman-Hillard. The program is both on campus and online.

GW’s Graduate School of Political Management offers graduate programs in political management, legislative affairs, public relations, and PAC management, as well as international programs in Latin America and Europe. The school seeks to improve politics by educating students and professionals about the tools, principles, and values of participatory democracy.

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