USINDO
THE UNITED STATES–INDONESIA SOCIETY

2026

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

ON PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

THE UNITED STATES - INDONESIA SOCIETY

December 2025 - May 2026

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USINDO Special Events

USINDO's Business Summit and Gala with President Prabowo - February 18, 2026

USINDO, in partnership with the US-ASEAN Business Council and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, held a Gala Dinner February 18 in honor of His Excellency President Prabowo. President Prabowo was accompanied by key cabinet members, including Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto, Cabinet Secretary Teddy Indra Wijaya, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Bahlil Lahadalia, Minister of Investment and Downstream Development Rosan Perkasa Roeslani, CIO of Danantara Pandu Sjahrir, and Indonesian Ambassador to the United States Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo. Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Rick Switzer and his team spoke on behalf of the U.S. government.

The Gala was preceded by a Business Summit roundtable meeting attended by leaders from Indonesian and American businesses, including KADIN Chairman Anindya Novyan Bakrie, Pertamina President Director Simon Aloysius Mantiri, PT Freeport Indonesia President Director Tony Wenas, and Freeport-McMoRan Inc. Chairman Richard C. Adkerson, as well as senior representatives from Freeport, ExxonMobil, Adelphi Capital, BP, Cargill, Caterpillar, PepsiCo, and S&P Global. USINDO's Co-Chair Ambassador

Robert Blake and USINDO President Ambassador David Merrill, and Treasurer Edward Wanandi attended the Business Summit roundtable. USINDO President Merrill gave closing remarks.

At the Gala, President Prabowo spoke about his long connection to USINDO, and his father's role as a co-chair of the organization. President Prabowo witnessed the signing of 10 Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between U.S. and Indonesian companies across multiple sectors, totaling billions of dollars.

Deputy U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Rick Switzer highlighted the mutual benefits of the partnership, noting that the United States seeks to support American companies operating in Indonesia, and encourage Indonesian firms to expand their presence in the United States—growing together as partners. Ambassador Merrill gave closing remarks at the Gala.

On February 19, Indonesia and the United States entered into the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, signed by Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto and U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer. USINDO provides technical assistance to the Government of Indonesia in support of certain specialized aspects of trade that are part of the Trade Agreement.

USINDO Open Forums

USINDO's Open Forums serve as an important platform for dialogue on issues shaping Indonesia, the United States, and the broader global landscape. Bringing together policymakers, academics, practitioners, and subject matter experts, these discussions encourage informed exchange and provide audiences with opportunities to engage directly with leading voices on political, economic, and security-related developments relevant to the U.S.-Indonesia relationship.

Our new USINDO Vice President, Chris Wyrod, leads our enhanced Open Forum Series. Five programs – one a month - have now be held up to May. They are:

Open Forum on Developments in U.S.-Indonesia Education Exchanges: Opportunities and Challenges - January 30, 2026

At a time of significant change in the global education landscape, USINDO convened an Open Forum in January 2026 examining the future of U.S.-Indonesia educational exchange programs and student mobility. The discussion addressed growing questions surrounding shifting education policies, funding priorities, and international enrollment. Opportunities for bilateral educational collaboration remain strong, despite changes in the environment for educational exchanges.

Dr. Sandra Hamid, Executive Director of AMINEF, shared the status of the Fulbright Indonesia program and scholarship opportunities available to Indonesian and American students.

Jonah Kokodyniak, Executive Vice President of the Institute of International Education (IIE), presented recent findings on trends affecting Indonesian enrollment at U.S. universities and broader patterns in student exchange.

The forum also highlighted the continued importance of exchange and fellowship programs in strengthening long-term U.S.-Indonesia people-to-people ties and preparing future leaders in both countries.

The recording of this event can be watched here.

Open Forum: A Tale of Two Cities: Environmental Governance in Jakarta and Nusantara – February 26, 2026

USINDO convened a discussion on February 26, 2026 on the future of Indonesia's current and next capital cities amid mounting pressures from rapid urbanization, climate change, flooding, pollution, and infrastructure strain. As now the world's largest urban center, Jakarta's long-term livability has become an increasingly urgent national and global issue. At the same time, the development of Nusantara, designed to alleviate pressure in Jakarta, has introduced new opportunities and challenges surrounding sustainable urban planning and environmental governance.

The forum explored (1) whether Indonesia's ongoing mitigation efforts can effectively address Jakarta's environmental vulnerabilities and (2) how the transition to Nusantara can be managed responsibly from both ecological and development perspectives.

The discussion highlighted broader trends in urban resilience, green city planning, and environmental management.

Dr. Yus Budiyono of the Indonesian government agency BRIN discussed the environmental risks facing Jakarta and current mitigation measures. Dr. Andreas Sevtsuk of MIT shared perspectives from his work on sustainable urban environments and MIT's Indonesian City Planning Lab initiative

Dr. Mia Amalia from the Nusantara National Capital Authority provided insights on the spatial planning and land governance shaping Indonesia's future capital, and Dr. Agus Sari, CEO of Landscape Indonesia, discussed environmental risk management and green urban design in Nusantara's development.

Moderated by USINDO Co-Chairman Ambassador Robert Blake, the forum underscored the importance of long-term, sustainable approaches to urban governance as Indonesia navigates the future of its rapidly evolving cities.

The recording of this event can be watched here.

Open Forum on Managing Uncertainty: Assessing U.S. - Indonesia Trade Developments – March 19, 2026

As trade relations between the United States and Indonesia entered a period of heightened uncertainty and rapid policy change, USINDO hosted an Open Forum on March 19 to discuss the implications of recent tariff developments, shifting trade frameworks, and broader economic dynamics affecting both countries.

The discussion came amid ongoing debates surrounding the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART), evolving U.S. tariff policies, and growing questions about the future direction of bilateral trade and investment relations.

The forum featured a diverse panel of experts from government, business, policy, and legal sectors.

Dr. Edi Prio Pambudi, Deputy Minister for Coordinating International Economic Cooperation at the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs and a member of Indonesia's ART negotiating team, shared perspectives on Indonesia's trade negotiations and economic priorities.

William Reinsch of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) discussed the broader strategic implications of evolving U.S.-Indonesia trade relations, and Ambassador Brian D. McFeeters (Ret.), Interim CEO and President of the US-ASEAN Business Council, highlighted concerns from American businesses operating in Indonesia.

Edmund Sim, Partner at Appleton Luff International Law Firm, provided insights into the legal dimensions of recent tariff developments and the implications of the U.S. Supreme Court decision related to tariff authority.

Moderated by USINDO President Ambassador David Merrill, the forum provided audiences with a multidimensional perspective on one of the most dynamic areas of the bilateral relationship.

The recording of this event can be watched here.

Special Open Forum on Indonesia's Response to the Global Energy Crisis – April 23, 2026

Against the backdrop of increasing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East causing rising global energy prices, USINDO hosted a Special Open Forum on April 23, 2026, discussing Indonesia's response to the global energy crisis and the broader implications for energy security, economic stability, and national resilience.

The discussion came as disruptions in global energy markets and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz created new pressures on fuel prices, government subsidies, and supply chains across Asia, including Indonesia.

This forum brought together experts from the energy, economic, and policy sectors to assess Indonesia's strategies for navigating the volatile global energy environment.

Clayton Seigle of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) discussed the wider geopolitical and economic implications of the global energy crisis.

Satya Widya Yudha of Indonesia's National Energy Council shared perspectives on Indonesia's energy security policies and supply management efforts.

Heriyanto Irawan of the National Economic Council addressed the economic impact of rising energy prices and government mitigation measures, and

Randi Bachtiar of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) examined Indonesia's options for diversifying energy sources and strengthening long-term resilience.

Moderated by USINDO President Ambassador David Merrill, the discussion highlighted the increasingly important connection between energy security, economic policy, and Indonesia's long-term development planning.

The recording of this event can be watched here.

Open Forum on Indonesia and the State of Southeast Asia

May 21, 2026

In collaboration with the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore, USINDO held an Open Forum to discuss recent insights into Indonesian public opinion on key national, regional, and global issues. ISEAS experts presented the Indonesia-specific findings from its 2026 State of Southeast Asia poll.

Melinda Martinus, a Fellow and Acting Co-coordinator of the ASEAN Studies Centre at the ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, presented the survey data on Indonesia and provided insights on longitudinal trends in Indonesia and comparative data from Indonesia's neighbors in ASEAN.

Julia Lau, a political scientist and coordinator of the Indonesia Studies Programme at ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, and Dr. Siwage Dharma Negara, an economist and coordinator of the APEC Studies Center, discussed the survey findings' implications for evolving public opinion in Indonesia.

Discussants analyzed the survey respondents' top concerns and priorities, including Indonesians' perceptions of major power rivalries, especially between the U.S. and China.

The panelists also discussed how Indonesians' priorities compare to those of other ASEAN countries and how Indonesians' views of key political, social, and economic issues have shifted over time.

Indonesian public opinion is evolving in response to significant political, social, and economic change in Southeast Asia and the broader world. This Open Forum helped the audience understand shifts in Indonesian perceptions about what they see as the greatest threats to and opportunities for their country, its role as a middle power, current perceptions of China compared with perceptions of the U.S., and why climate change has climbed to the top of the public's concerns this year.

The recording of this event can be watched here.

Education, Capacity Building Programs, and Grants

Summer Studies Program

The USINDO Summer Studies Program provides young Americans with an immersive introduction to Indonesia, combining intensive language study with cultural experiences that foster long-term understanding and meaningful people-to-people connections. Since its establishment in 1994, the program has introduced more than 260 American participants to Indonesia through homestays, community engagement, experiential classrooms, and cultural workshops, helping build a strong foundation for future engagement with the country.

The 2026 program is taking place now, from June 2 to August 3 in Yogyakarta. It concludes with the Discover Jakarta program from August 4–7. This year's program continues USINDO's longstanding collaboration with the Indonesian Language and Culture Intensive Course (ILCIC) at Sanata Dharma University and Purna Caraka Muda Indonesia (PCMI) Yogyakarta.

The 2026 cohort consists of a full class of twelve fellows, ages 18 to 29, representing universities across the United States and a wide range of academic backgrounds connected to global affairs, including Political Science, Anthropology, and Global Health. Some fellows arrived with prior exposure to Indonesia or Southeast Asia, but for many this will be their first experience in the region. Despite their diverse backgrounds, the cohort shares a strong interest in international engagement and cross-cultural understanding.

The 2026 program will be the last in the 25-year series of annual support from the Freeman Foundation, one of its longest running programs. It has been highly successful, with many students continuing on to careers involving Indonesia. USINDO is deeply grateful for the Foundation's extraordinary partnership and support over the past two and a half decades.

As this specific program comes to a close, USINDO has an opportunity to explore new approaches to creating a U.S. experience in Indonesia for Americans. We are currently developing ideas for a program model that would build on the strengths and legacy of Summer Studies, responding to current interest areas and opportunities for engagement. USINDO plans to formulate a fresh program concept in 2027, and seek foundation or other funding, with the goal of launching a redesigned program in 2028.

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MEET OUR USINDO 2026
SUMMER STUDIES FELLOWS
Jovian Pham
Macalester College
Ilya Lev Brunner
University of Utah
Mia Tschan
University of
Nevada, Las Vegas
Megan Guerrero
Los Angeles
Mission College
Italia Ortega
California State
University, Northridge
Clio Barrett
Smith College
Bethzy Jaime
Wesleyan University
Naomi Frim-Abrams
Boston University
Verabelle Pakasi
New York University
Amy Li
Rutgers University,
New Brunswick
River Pugh
American University
Benjamin Clark
North Carolina
State University

Edward E. Masters Fellows Program

The Edward E. Masters Fellowship reflects USINDO's broader commitment to advancing educational exchange and supporting emerging mid-career or junior Indonesian diplomats at pivotal stages of their professional development. Through a jointly funded scholarship initiative between USINDO and the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Fellowship provides recipients with the opportunity to pursue a Master's degree at a leading graduate school in the United States, with the goal of strengthening future leadership in international affairs.

For the 2025–2026 academic year, the Fellowship was awarded to Ms. Nadine Utomo, whose professional background spans journalism, public communication, and diplomacy. Prior to joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nadine spent more than six years as a journalist covering political and human-interest issues, experience that shaped her interest in international affairs and strategic communication. During her studies at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, concentrated on leadership, negotiation, conflict resolution, and public diplomacy.

Nadine graduated from Fletcher in May 2026 with a Master's degree in International Relations. USINDO congratulates her on this achievement and looks forward to her continued contributions to Indonesia's diplomacy and the advancement of U.S.-Indonesia relations.

For the 2026-2027 academic year, we gave emphasis to selecting a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (KEMLU) fellow to study economics, the stated priority field of study for KEMLU. However, the KEMLU budget this year is not sufficient to fund its 50-50 cost-share. We will therefore retain the USINDO share of costs and carry it over to next year. For next year we will seek to place a talented KEMLU economics officer, and resolve the cost-share issue in a way that produces a Fellow.

Strategic Trade Management

Effective systems of Strategic Trade Management ("STM") are a requirement for U.S. Trade Agreements, including the recently-signed US-Indonesia Agreement on Reciprocal Trade. They are also strongly encouraged by United Nations resolutions voted for by both Indonesia and the U.S.

An effective STM system permits a country to monitor the use of certain potentially harmful goods, and greatly increases a country's potential for receiving large, sophisticated investments and its capacity for high tech in-country industry.

USINDO has been supporting Indonesia's work to develop an STM system that draws on global best practices. We do this through ongoing collaboration with the Government of Indonesia, furnishing technical assistance to Indonesia in STM global best practices through expert consultants.

A major milestone this year was the February 2026 Legal-Regulatory Exchange and Consultations in Jakarta, which brought together 75 participants from 15 ministries and government agencies to discuss the development of a comprehensive STM legal framework aligned with international best practices. The workshop reflected growing interagency awareness and momentum surrounding STM development, particularly as Indonesia further develops its role in regional and global trade governance.

Indonesia is also hosting an important Asian conference on STM this Fall.

Participants from Indonesian ministries and government agencies during the February 2026 STM workshop in Jakarta

Upcoming High-Tech Workforce Development Project

The United States and Indonesia both have unmet critical needs in building a highly skilled workforce in High-Tech and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. Both countries need further technical capacity in these areas to compete effectively internationally.

The U.S.- Indonesia High-Tech Workforce Fellows Program was developed in response to a request from the Government of Indonesia to USINDO, for USINDO to have a program under which top Indonesian M.S. STEM graduates of US universities could work with U.S. multinational corporations for two years, with a third year if agreed, prior to their return to Indonesia.

Permitting U.S. temporary work for Indonesian M.S. graduates is a new policy by Indonesia that recognized that a U.S. work experience following completion of a U.S. M.S. degree would benefit both the graduate and the U.S. multinational company seeking high skilled tech workers in the U.S. It would also benefit Indonesian workforce critical skills requirements, whether for employment in the Indonesian side of the U.S. multinational company or in other Indonesian companies.

USINDO agreed to design such a program. The design has progressed well.

The program will cooperate with the Indonesian government, Indonesian student groups in the United States, and U.S.- and Indonesian-based companies needing high tech employees.

USINDO, in liaison with the Indonesian student associations in the US, and in cooperation with the Government of Indonesia, will contact the top Indonesian High-Tech/M.S. second year graduate students in the U.S. who wish to have post-graduate work in the U.S., vet and screen them, and each year match up to 75 of the very best with skilled workforce needs identified jointly with U.S. and Indonesian corporations.

The initial High-Tech and STEM areas being concentrated on include Engineering, Machine Learning, A.I., Computer Science, Software Development, Mining, Petroleum Engineering, Biotechnology, Robotics, Semiconductors, Materials Science, and Aeronautical Engineering.

These fields are currently eligible for U.S. STEM Optional Practical Training visas and are critical skills areas in which U.S. companies often are unable to hire sufficient talent for their own requirements. Other fields are open for consideration provided they fit USG STEM Optional Practical Training guidelines

<u>Current Status</u>:

Several months ago, USINDO requested the Government of Indonesia to review our proposed way to respond to its request, and consider making Government of Indonesia funding available for this program.

Recently USINDO received a response from the GOI that it was interested in pursuing this program. We have been asked to proceed to discussing final design, funding

requirements from all sources, refining how the program would operate, and proceeding to an agreement. USINDO will be meeting this month with senior Government of Indonesia officials to refine the program's design and overall funding requirements.

The first full year of this program will not take place until agreements are in place, which will likely be in the Fall of this year, resulting in placing Indonesian students graduating with M.S. or M.A. degrees in May 2027. There is a possibility some December 2026 M.S. or M.A. graduates could be placed if agreements are signed in sufficient time.

Online Presence

USINDO continued to strengthen its digital outreach efforts this year through active engagement across Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter/X, using these platforms not only to share program updates and event highlights, but also to broaden conversations around U.S.-Indonesia relations and people-to-people exchange. Through consistent content and community engagement, USINDO's combined social media following has grown to more than 18,000 across platforms.

In addition to social media, USINDO also utilized its website and mailing lists to keep members and partners informed about organizational activities, upcoming programs, opportunities from partner institutions, and developments related to the U.S.-Indonesia relationship. These platforms continue to serve as important channels for maintaining engagement with USINDO's broader network in both countries.

Visit USINDO's Instagram Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Website,

YouTube

USINDO Open Forum: A Tale of Two Cities: Environmental Governance in Jakarta and Nusantara

Instagram

Sample of Instagram post

Facebook

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THE UNITED STATES-INDONESIA SOCIETY
In Washington, D.C., Prabowo Recalls His Father's Legacy as USINDO's First Co-Chair
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SLIDE FOR MORE

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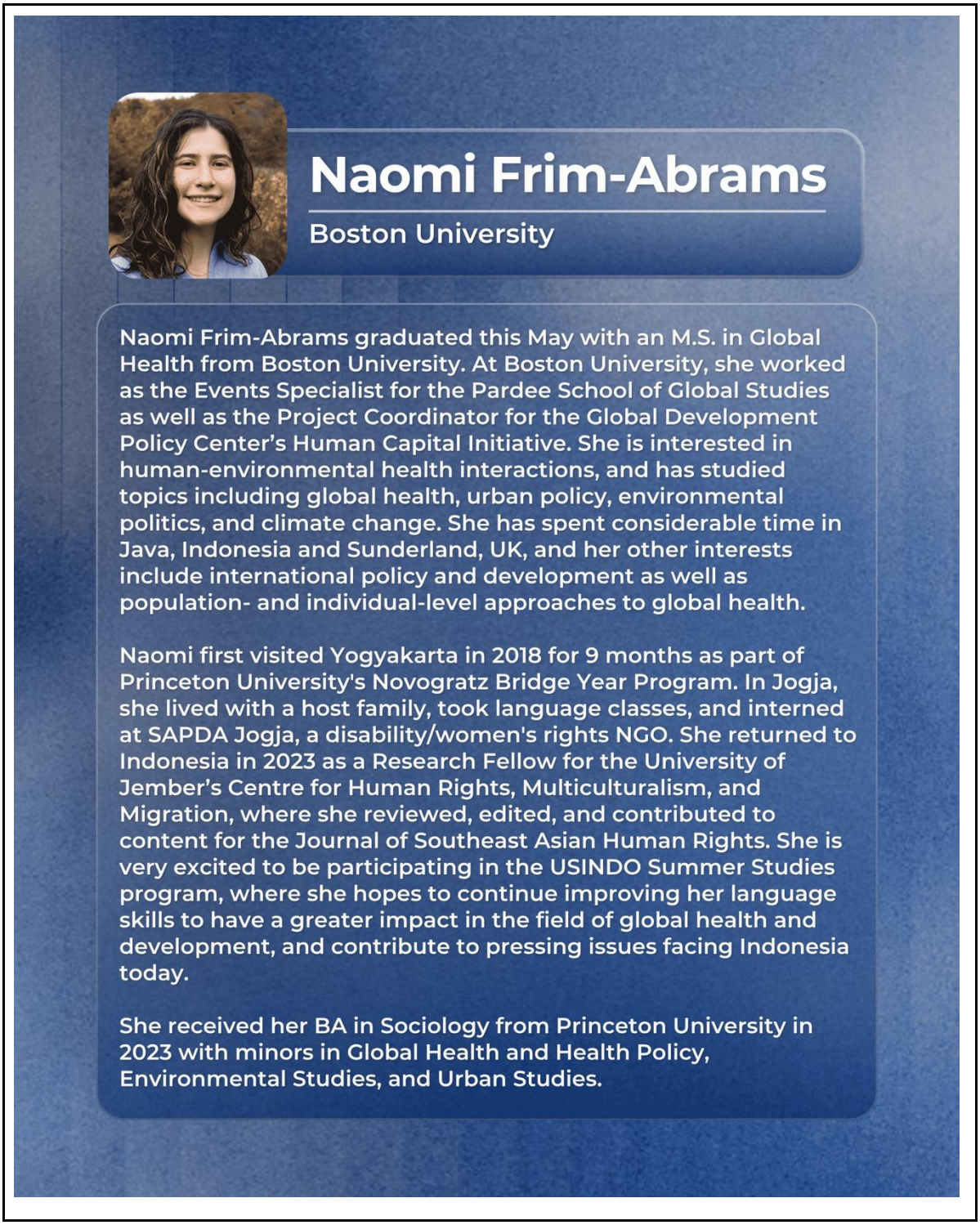
Naomi Frim-Abrams
Boston University
Naomi Frim-Abrams graduated this May with an M.S. in Global Health from Boston University. At Boston University, she worked as the Events Specialist for the Pardee School of Global Studies as well as the Project Coordinator for the Global Development Policy Center's Human Capital Initiative. She is interested in human-environmental health interactions, and has studied topics including global health, urban policy, environmental politics, and climate change. She has spent considerable time in Java, Indonesia and Sunderland, UK, and her other interests include international policy and development as well as population- and individual-level approaches to global health.
Naomi first visited Yogyakarta in 2018 for 9 months as part of Princeton University's Novogratz Bridge Year Program. In Jogja, she lived with a host family, took language classes, and interned at SAPDA Jogja, a disability/women's rights NGO. She returned to Indonesia in 2023 as a Research Fellow for the University of Jember's Centre for Human Rights, Multiculturalism, and Migration, where she reviewed, edited, and contributed to content for the Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights. She is very excited to be participating in the USINDO Summer Studies program, where she hopes to continue improving her language skills to have a greater impact in the field of global health and development, and contribute to pressing issues facing Indonesia today.
She received her BA in Sociology from Princeton University in 2023 with minors in Global Health and Health Policy, Environmental Studies, and Urban Studies.

LinkedIn

USINDO
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SPECIAL OPEN FORUM
Indonesia's Response to the Global Energy Crisis
FEATURED SPEAKER
Clayton Seigle
Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
FEATURED SPEAKER
Satya Widya Yudha
Member of the National Energy Council of the Republic of Indonesia
FEATURED SPEAKER
Heriyanto Irawan
Member of National Economic Council of the Republic of Indonesia
FEATURED SPEAKER
Randi Bachtiar
Energy Finance Specialist for Indonesia, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IIEFA)
MODERATED BY:
Ambassador David Merrill, USINDO President
Thursday
23 April 2026
9:30 AM EDT
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ONLINE VIA ZOOM

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