

Honorary Consul to Zambia Explores the Nation's Potential and Opportunity at "Diplomats" Series



The Office of International Affairs held the third installment of its "Diplomats on Global Health Disparities" Series on February 14 in the Cobb Lounge, featuring the Hon. Robert Sichinga, Jr., MBA, MsHCA, who serves as the Honorary Consul and Chief of Post of the Republic of Zambia in California.

Hon. Consul Sichinga's presentation included an overview of Zambia, which is often characterized as one of the most promising nations on the African continent. The nation, which has seen exponential population growth over the years, is abundant in physical resources and economic opportunities; its government officials and representatives often encourage professionals across all sectors to explore the region.

As Zambia's population continues to increase, officials such as Hon. Consul Sichinga are tireless in their efforts to ensure that the country's infrastructure, and especially its healthcare system, can support sustained growth. The country still faces a high prevalence of preventable diseases such as HIV, malaria, tuberculosis and other sexually-transmitted infections. The nation also still experiences a high occurrence of non-communicable health issues such as diabetes, hypertension and cancer.

He mentioned the importance of the ecosystems in healthcare: access, support systems, financial cost, tradition and values, advancement of care, consistency of care, research and quality of healthcare education. He noted that these ecosystems exist in every nation, but at varying levels – for example, the quality of the ecosystems that exist in the

United States are vastly different from those in Zambia. Understanding this fact, Sichinga argued, is essential for health providers looking to adequately serve communities other than their own. "If CDU plans to help third world countries, they have to understand that the conditions [they] are accustomed to might not be present," he said.

Following the discussion, Hon. Consul Sichinga Jr. met with members of the International Affairs Committee at CDU to discuss ways to collaborate with the Republic of Zambia in order to address health disparities in Zambia, as well as increase the knowledge of Western practitioners on "unconventional" ways of practicing medicine.

