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## **Expert Panel on Academia and Advocacy: Building Better Links between Research and Action**

Academic research and advocacy are mutually dependent areas of work yet these two sets of activities are not always harmonized. While activists benefit from the research produced by scholars, the questions asked and answers sought are not always the most relevant to a particular advocacy agenda.

This discussion will explore ways to build bridges between academia and activism in the area of drug policy reform. It will promote a discussion about current research gaps in ongoing advocacy and address a number of questions, including:

- How might the identified research gaps be applied in advocacy if they were addressed?
- How has research supported advocacy in the past?
- Types of research that have been particularly persuasive in advocacy efforts.
- How researchers engage affected communities and advocates in their research.
- How research topics are chosen and whether advocacy-relevant topics can have higher priority.
- How scholars use and publicize their work and how they cultivate relationships with both policy-makers and advocates.
- Whether academic institutions help create platforms for public debate?

This discussion is not limited to any particular disciplines. Researchers and policy advocates working on drug policy issues related to economics, public health, law, public opinion, and any other topics are encouraged to join.

Four experienced policy analysts will initiate the discussion with a presentation on how research and advocacy have interacted in their own policy or academic work.

**When:** May 17, 2 pm-5 pm

**Where: Room: ML-617**

**Panelists:**

**Brazil: Rubem César Fernandes**, Executive Director and Founder, Viva Rio

- In recent months Viva Rio and partners have led a campaign to amend the drug law in Brazil in order to promote health and reduce the crisis of mass incarceration in the country. This campaign has relied on extensive research and partnerships outside of the drug policy sector.

**Mexico: Alejandro Madrazo Lajous**, Professor of Legal History and Comparative Law at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM

- As Mexico moves toward a new paradigm for judging its success in drug control, Dr. Madrazo has been one of the world's leading analysts on the political and cultural facets of this debate.

**Uruguay: Sebastián Aguiar**, Founding Member ProDerechos/Prolegal and Member of the Faculty of Social Sciences Universidad de la República, Uruguay

- The Uruguayan public is currently debating a proposal that would make it the first country in the world to introduce a legally regulated commercial cannabis market. Prolegal has been at the forefront of reform in Uruguay, organizing much of the public-facing work as well as advocacy against repressive policies.

**Bolivia and Regional Policies on Proportionality: Coletta Youngers**, Latin America regional associate with the International Drug Policy Consortium and a senior fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America

- Ms. Youngers has been a leading researcher on a creative regulatory policy introduced in Bolivia on licit coca cultivation as well as on disproportionate penalties for drug offenses in Latin America. Both issues are getting coming to the fore as the region leads on discussions about alternative approaches.