

Samantha Custer

Director of Policy Analysis, AidData



Samantha Custer is the Director of Policy Analysis at AidData—a research lab at William & Mary’s Global Research Institute. Ms. Custer’s research examines how great powers deploy economic and soft power tools to advance their interests. Her Policy Analysis Unit has pioneered new methodologies to track the influence of external money and ideas in the Global South. Ms. Custer teaches courses for the Whole of Government Center of Excellence at William & Mary on how to measure and monitor the influence playbooks of China and Russia. She has published numerous studies on China’s growing global influence in partnership with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Asia Society Policy Institute, the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Bureau of Asian Research, among other institutions.

Prior to AidData, Ms. Custer researched open data movements and citizen feedback initiatives with the World Bank, co-taught a class on U.S. national security with former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, directed multilingual education programs in Southeast Asia with SIL International, and conducted performance monitoring for Save the Children U.S. to ensure sponsored children were benefiting from its community development programs. She holds a Master of Science in Foreign Service and a Master of Public Policy from Georgetown University. Ms. Custer has a 20-year track record of leading teams and supporting evidence-based decision-making as an international relations scholar-practitioner.

Ms. Custer has not previously testified before the Commission.