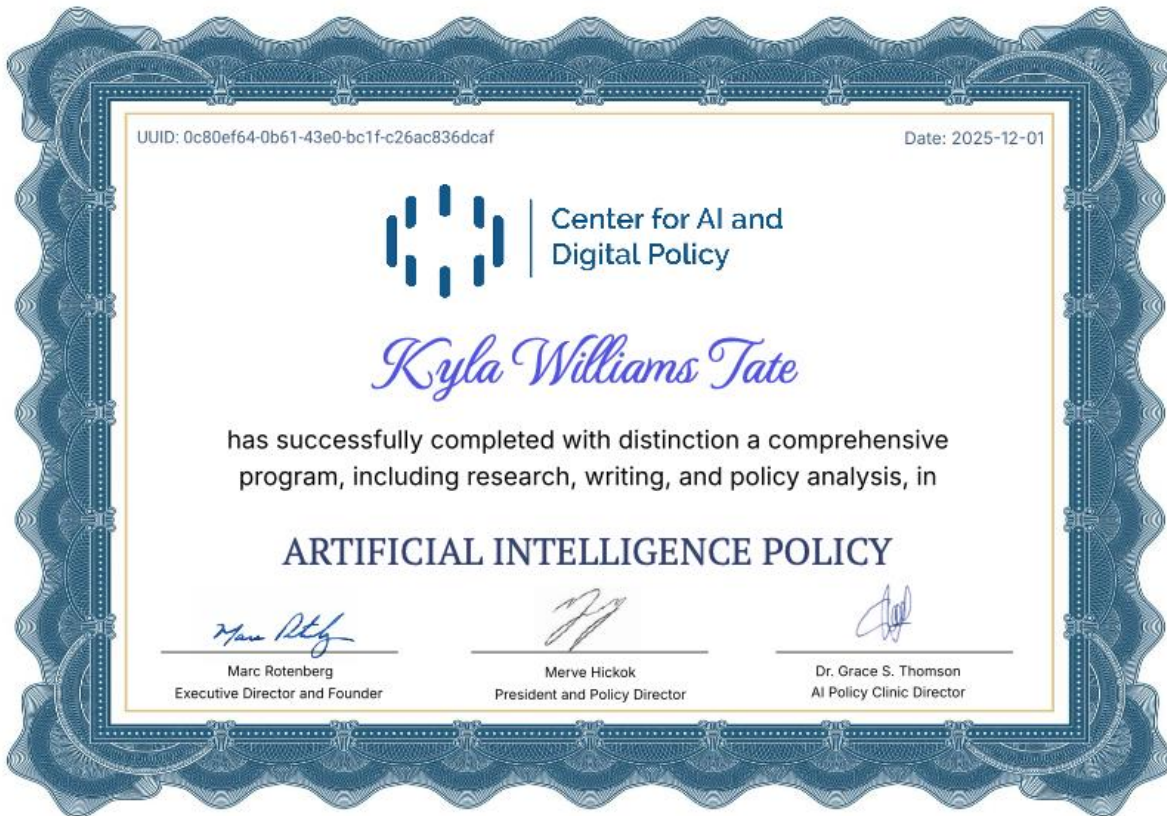


Finding Community in Global AI Policy Work with CAIDP

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If you have ever looked at an opportunity and thought, “That sounds incredible, but the scale of it feels enormous,” this story is for you.

Last year, I came across the AI Policy Clinic opportunity at the [Center for AI and Digital Policy](#) (CAIDP), an organization globally recognized for its work on democratic values in AI governance and for publishing the Artificial Intelligence and Democratic Values (AIDV) 2025 Index.

What stood out immediately was how the work is done. CAIDP relies on public, credible sources from public institutions. No proprietary data. No speculation. Just rigorous, transparent, digital policy analysis. Since launching the Global Academic Network in 2021, CAIDP has built a global community of researchers, practitioners, and policy professionals contributing to this work together.

Before I Clicked Submit

I work in digital equity and spend much of my time thinking, presenting, and teaching about AI literacy, responsible use, and ethical policy. I have contributed to AI conversations in global forums, helped design and participate in AI pilots, and stayed connected to international frameworks such as OECD and UNESCO. I also consider myself a Citizen Diplomat, working across civic and international spaces.

Still, global AI policy at that scale raised real questions. The work would be rigorous, the standards exacting, and the time commitment significant. I knew this would have to happen outside of my day job, and I was realistic about what it would demand.

I leaned on an adage in my household, “what’s for me is for me.” So, I applied. And soon after, my capacity was tested in ways I did not anticipate.

When Life Collides with Opportunity

While waiting to hear back, life became complicated quickly. I caught COVID and it was a difficult recovery. The brain fog and fatigue took about three months to subside. Stepping into a caregiver role for my mother. Major professional initiatives launching at the same time, including the largest Digital Inclusion Week to date at Cook County Digital Equity. I am deeply grateful to my colleague Mauricio Jimenez for standing in the gap during that period.

I was also wrapping up my fellowship with the Benton Institute, recording podcast episodes, writing blog posts, and considering another leadership opportunity. Then, in early August, CAIDP reached out to let me know I had been accepted.

Saying Yes with Intention

After a lot of reflection and meditation, calendar math, prayer, and conversations with my husband, I said yes. In September, I joined a cohort that reaffirmed both why this work matters and why my role in it does too.

The Fall 2025 cohort reflected the global nature of the work. More than 1,200 people applied from 115 countries. Three hundred fifty-eight were selected from 83 countries, with fewer than 40 participants from the United States. Learning took place across time zones, political systems, cultures, and professional contexts.

Inside the CAIDP Methodology

What left an impression on me was not a single assignment, but the way the CAIDP process taught me how to research policy differently. I learned to move quickly, to center public, credible sources in every analysis and to work within a structured methodology that left little room for assumption. I also built new muscles around brevity and succinctness. One moment that stands out was being introduced to the Freedom House database as part of the key metric criteria. Before this experience, I had never used it. Now it is a core reference in how I assess democratic conditions, institutional trust, and policy readiness in AI contexts.

Some of the most meaningful work involved applying the CAIDP methodology across different national contexts. I analyzed judicial responses to AI misuse in the United States through a case in Washoe County, Nevada, and assessed national identification systems in Jamaica through a democratic values lens. I worked across three different groups, including one that identified Public Voice opportunities in the Middle East and Oceania, another that mapped AI Policy Maker Individuals and Institutions for Vietnam, and a final group that conducted country level policy research for Uruguay as part of the program's culminating deliverable.

New to the CAIDP country reports is an AI literacy section, and I drafted the AI literacy narrative for Uruguay. That work drew directly on my background in digital equity and public education, connecting national AI policy frameworks to real world learning needs and access considerations.

What mattered most was not that I got it right immediately. It was learning how to think differently, how to slow down claims, verify sources, and see AI policy not as abstract theory but as something that directly affects people, rights, and institutions.

Yes, it was hard. It was also deeply affirming to realize that uncertainty was not a weakness, but part of the learning.

If You Are Thinking About Applying

If you are considering a future CAIDP Research Group cohort, or any rigorous learning experience in AI policy, here is what I wish someone had told me.

You do not need to know everything before you start, but you do need curiosity, discipline, and a willingness to be stretched. The pace is fast, the expectations are high, and this is not a program you can coast through. You will need time outside of your day to keep up, especially as assignments build toward the final weeks.

The structure matters. Pay attention in sessions, review the toolkits, and learn the citation style early. The methodology is precise for a reason, and the work becomes more manageable when you lean into it.

Group work is a core part of the experience, and it is truly global. Time zones, language differences, internet access, and working styles will all show up. Patience, communication, and early outreach to your fellow learners and program leaders make a real difference.

Most importantly, if you feel drawn to this work, that instinct is worth paying attention to.

What Comes Next

This experience strengthened my work as a subject matter expert by sharpening how I research, assess, and apply AI policy in practice.

I am grateful for the experience, and I will be returning as a Team Leader for a Spring 2026 CAIDP Research Group cohort. It felt like the right way to give back to a process that asked a lot and gave even more.

If you find yourself in a future cohort that I am supporting, I look forward to working with you and continuing to learn together. I am deeply thankful to the CAIDP leadership and program team for the rigor, structure, and guidance they brought to this experience. My sincere thanks to [Marc Rotenberg](#) , [Merve Hickok](#) , and [Grace S. Thomson](#) for their leadership and vision, and to Teaching Fellows [Tamiko Eto](#) , [Dr.Varsha Sewlal,LLD](#) , [Clea Strydom](#) , and [Jason Raymond](#) for guiding us through an intense and meaningful learning process.

With Gratitude

I am especially grateful to my Cohort 15 Team Leaders, [Andrea E. Thomas, Ed.D.](#) , [Darleen Langen](#) , and [Marcela Campos Jabôr](#). Dr. Andrea's steady encouragement helped me see a pathway forward into this next chapter, and I appreciate the clarity, accountability, and support that each of our Team Leaders brought to the work.

I also want to acknowledge my fellow Research Group members who collaborated with me across country assignments. For the Middle East and Oceania Public Voice work and the Vietnam AIPIL research, thank you to [Sebastian F. Winter, MD PhD](#) and [Yihwan Cho](#) for the thoughtful collaboration and shared commitment to getting the details right. For the Uruguay country research and final deliverable, I am grateful to [Lynn Monzer, PhD](#) ,

[Kyle Gracey](#) , and [Priscila Chaves](#) for the rigor, persistence, and teamwork that carried us across the finish line.

If you have ever wondered whether you belong in AI policy spaces, especially if your path is not traditional, I hope this story helps you see yourself here too.

Sometimes the most important step is not feeling ready. It is applying anyway.

Kyla Williams Tate – Policy Strategist & Storyteller at the Intersections of AI, Art, and Digital Equity