



10-27-2010

## Letter - The Role for Universities in Creating New Connections in the Pacific Basin

Pamela Eibeck  
*University of the Pacific*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/presidential-communications>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Eibeck, Pamela, "Letter - The Role for Universities in Creating New Connections in the Pacific Basin" (2010). *Presidential Communications*. 45.

<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/presidential-communications/45>

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Communications by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [mgibney@pacific.edu](mailto:mgibney@pacific.edu).



## The Role for Universities in Creating New Connections in the Pacific Basin

The Ecuadoran Council of Chambers of Commerce and Industrial Associations

Oct. 27, 2010

Buenos días. I am delighted to be with you this morning. I'd like to introduce my husband, Bill Jeffery. Not only are we having the wonderful experience of getting to know a new country, but in meeting with you we are getting to learn about a whole new category of socio-economic organization. They tell me that is a "national peak organization" because you bring together a whole series of chambers, associations and organizations that cover far more terrain than just commerce and industry.

I appreciate this opportunity to engage in dialogue with you; I want to give a special word of thanks to our Ecuador alumni organizing committee, Gerardo Borrero, Ciro Santamaria and Kurt Freund. These gentlemen studied at University of the Pacific during the 1960s...I understand that Ciro and Kurt were especially good soccer players and Gerardo was a brilliant economics student!

And I am also pleased by the opportunity to address such an important topic. You see, creating new connections is the core of building community, and the concept of building community has particular meaning for me.

When I started my work at Pacific a little more than a year ago, I participated in a student life exercise where the students tried to figure out the single word that best described their ideal self. The One Word that encapsulates what I want to accomplish as the President of University of the Pacific is "community." Thus "Community" became my One Word. So you see, the idea of creating connections and building community means a lot to me.

### Defining our Pacific Basin community

For more than 20 years now, folks have been talking about the 21<sup>st</sup> century as being the "Pacific Century" because of the expectation that the center of global commerce would pass from the North Atlantic to the Pacific Basin, or as most people call it in the US, the Pacific Rim.

And so while this is not a new idea, I am going to put my own twist on things. For instance, I am going to insist that it is not just commerce and trade that we should think about when it comes to the Pacific Century, but also technology, education and humanistic achievement. Its obvious why I include technology and education: I am a mechanical engineer and an educator, so naturally I care a lot about technology. But the humanistic ingredient is also very important. Indeed, it is something that Latin America reminded me of just recently when your Peruvian neighbor Mario Vargas Llosa won the Nobel Prize and set a new standard for humanistic achievement in literature...and maybe also the value of an ironic sense of humor when it comes to politics. I should know; I live in a state led by a "Governator"!

You will also notice that I am putting my own spin on defining the Pacific Basin neighborhood. There is a major international organization in the U.S., the Council on Foreign Relations, that has a special program on the Pacific Rim, but according to their definition this includes only the nations of the East Coast of Asia, Australia and New Zealand. I don't know about you, but from California, we see the Pacific Basin in a totally different fashion, and we always have.

First, for us in California, our conception of the Pacific starts with our connection to Latin America. Of course, this is partly because of our heritage: we have been both a Spanish Colony and a Mexican territory. Most of the beautiful and noteworthy places in California have wonderful Spanish names, such as La Jolla and el Presidio. But this isn't just a matter of ancient history for us either. After all, Chilean, Peruvian and Mexican miners were the first foreigners to reach California at the very start of the gold rush (yes, even before the famous '49ers). Latin American immigrants are, in fact, more important than ever. They now make up about 40% of our state's population and almost 1 in 6 people in our state is actually a Latin American immigrant. The importance role Latinos play in California will only continue to grow: more than 50% of babies born in California today are born to Latino families.

Second, our version of the Pacific Basin also incorporates the islands and includes all of east and Southeast Asia. Our University was founded by Methodist ministers in 1851 as the first institution of higher education in California. The Methodist ministers who had gone to California were not concerned only with taming the wild west of the gold rush days, they were also involved from the start in sending missionaries to Hawaii, China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines. Indeed, throughout most of our University's history, Hawaii has sent more students to Pacific than any state other than California and still does. The connections to Asia have always been so important to Pacific. Just as I was surprised to learn how important the Lebanese and others have been as immigrants to Ecuador, I think you might be surprised at the extent to which the Asian people have formed an integral part of our community at Pacific.

For instance, we have a special room in our library that is named after a Japanese student named Sanji Muto who came to study at Pacific in 1885 and later went on to become one of his country's most prominent early labor organizers and advocates of workers' rights. In the 1880s, a Chinese graduate of Pacific returned to his country and helped persuade the Empress of China to condemn the inhumane practice of binding the feet of Chinese girls. Yet while Pacific was welcoming and

educating Asian students in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, I am sad to acknowledge that much of the rest of the U.S. was abusing, discriminating against, and even lynching Asians.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pacific continued to embrace diversity. We were one of the first universities to welcome Filipinos. After the Philippines became a U.S. territory, Pacific had a constant Filipino presence. And despite segregation laws that required that Filipinos be treated (or rather mistreated) just like Black Americans, that was not what happened at Pacific. Our Filipino students were fully integrated into campus life. This is probably one of the reasons that our Little Manila in Stockton came to be the city with the second largest Filipino population in the world. Pacific is proud of our history of openly contradicting the way the rest of the US looked at Asia. We have always had a close connection to these Pacific Rim neighbors.

### **Conventional and unconventional educational connections in the Pacific Basin**

So now that it is clear how inclusive and comprehensive my conception of Pacific basin geography is, I want to talk about how University of the Pacific, as an institution of higher education, creates connections within the Pacific basin. Even though Pacific is a relatively small university, we have and are making both conventional and unconventional connections within the Pacific Basin.

By conventional connections, I mean the traditional university connections that occur through student/faculty exchange and professors who engage in research projects overseas or bring foreigner partners to their labs and research centers.

Pacific has made these conventional connections, but because we are a lot smaller than a large research university and have only a handful of advanced graduate programs, we have far fewer of these conventional connections than a school like Stanford, where I was a student, or the University of California, Berkeley, where I was a professor.

Regardless, the number and prominence of these conventional connections between Latin American and US universities are without doubt one of the major factors that will make the Pacific century so dynamic. California leads the US by far in our number of foreign students, visiting faculty, and students studying overseas.

For me it's the *unconventional* connections that more exciting, precisely because we think these are the kind of connections that more universities should be building throughout the Pacific Basin. In some ways there's a parallel here to the role that Ecuador plays in world affairs. The size of the population and territory make Ecuador one of Latin America's smaller nations, but it is still highly unique:

- You are doing more than anyone to preserve your small but incredibly important part of the Amazon.

- Mexico and other countries have many more volcanoes, but no one else has an *avenue* of volcanoes.
- Ecuadorian consciousness of its Pacific Ocean heritage & the Galapagos Islands led your nation to expand the protection of ocean resources. You blazed the trail that led the international community to modernize the global law of the sea.

We must always remember that small packages can still produce tremendous value. We also believe that these unconventional connections may be more likely to drive change and help shape the patterns that the conventional connections may eventually take.

So, you ask, *what are* these unconventional mechanisms that University of the Pacific is pursuing? I will describe **five** of them.

First: **personal connections**. Imagine: even as we are about to achieve a global population of seven billion, Pacific still insists that education is student-centered and personal. Our classes are small and our students get to know their professors and even their President on a personal basis. My family lives on campus, and my husband was chatting with our first two Ecuadorian students, two fine young men from the Cotopaxi Academy, just before we left on this trip. We have a Spanish language residence on campus and a global learning community. On our Stockton campus, about 80% of our students live on campus and we have a true living and learning community.

One of the great tributes to the virtue of living & learning communities came from the Colombian essayist and historian German Arciniegas. He spent several days on the Pacific campus visiting our pioneering Elbert Covell College; I think he stayed in the dormitory where Ciro and Gerardo lived. What he saw was an experience that created a real spirit of inter-American understanding. After Arciniegas left Pacific, he went to London where he was interviewed by the BBC. I'd like to quote what he said:

"The impression which a gathering of these university students gives is that of a large family of young people, who speak a common language, who humanly are intertwined together. It is an America united, not divided. A house well composed, not broken into pieces. Everything achieved without force, by natural means, without hiding initial disagreements, without working with the conventional atmosphere of official things. The edges continue to be polished, just as in families, just as among brothers. Friendships are affirmed through the simple circumstances of sharing the same house."

Having met the alumni of Covell College, I have no doubt that that spirit of inter-Americanism has lasted all these years. That sense of brotherhood is one reason why these alumni have worked so hard to organize my visit here today.

A second unconventional way we connect with our Pacific basin neighbors is through **innovation and technology**. Pacific is making important technological advances. Recently, the Silicon Valley came to Pacific in the form of our new \$10 million John T. Chambers Technology Center, named for its major benefactor, the CEO of Cisco Systems. And our Pacific Resources Research Center (PRRC) is having a significant impact on the global construction and materials industry. Rapid industrialization across the globe has raised standards of living, but also led to resource depletion and pollution. International cement production has been identified as a major culprit in global climate change. Researchers at Pacific have pioneered a sustainable cement technology (sialite technology) that greatly reduces or eliminates emissions and cuts down on energy consumption. This technology promises to be invaluable for our Asian neighbors experiencing rapid industrialization.

A third unconventional way we connect abroad is to **involve our local community**. Stockton is in the heart of one of the richest agricultural regions in the world. We are especially famous for our asparagus and grapes, and those Blue Diamond almonds that are consumed all over the planet. That means Stockton is also a magnet for farm workers who usually arrive with little or no education. Consequently, our population is among the most undereducated in the U.S. So one of the major goals of our Inter-American Program is to reach out and involve this largely Hispanic population in our global educational enterprise. This is a fascinating case of connecting the local to the global, but also the global to...the intergalactic!

Let me tell you the story of José Hernandez, University of the Pacific Class of 1985. Born in California to a Mexican family of migrant farmworkers, José spent every spring and summer on the "California Circuit," picking fruits and vegetables up and down the Central Valley, moving in and out of schools. After a teacher implored his parents to stay in one place for the school year, the Hernándezes made the brave decision to give up their way of life for their children's education. José seized that chance. Over the years he excelled in science and math, all the while nursing a dream to fly into space.

José entered Pacific's School of Engineering and Computer Science on a grant from our Community Involvement Program. While at Pacific, he won a coveted co-op position at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He graduated with a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering and a full ride to graduate school.

In August 2009, José fulfilled his lifelong dream by launching into space aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery. As our entire Pacific community watched, José traveled 5.7 million miles in space and orbited the earth 217 times. No doubt his flight inspired countless other childhood dreams all over the world. José Hernandez has become a symbol for the future of Latinos in the United States, and for the union between the US & Latin America. And of course, he also embodies the key role Pacific can play in that relationship.

A fourth unconventional way Pacific pursues interconnectivity: we have decided that **international competence** is something that all our students need. Of course, international competence is

important for our students who study abroad. At Pacific, before students go abroad, they are required to undergo cross-cultural training. And perhaps even more importantly, they go through a required cultural reentry program upon their return to the US. As our School of International Studies has demonstrated, it's upon return to the US that the greatest development of intercultural sensitivity actually occurs.

But international competence is important for all students, not just those who study abroad. I have made increasing the international competence of all our students one of Pacific's seven institutional priorities. My being here today, my recent trip to China and a whole new University self-study project on international involvement are just the beginnings of this effort.

And where could it be more important to build international competence than with our neighbors here in the Americas? We share part of the same space and many of the same resources. It is no coincidence that the commerce of both our countries depends so much on the use of the Panama Canal. And almost 60% of US energy imports come from hemispheric countries, far more than from the Persian Gulf -- as I am sure our host, Dr Rene Ortiz, can tell you!

### **Concluding Thoughts**

It may seem strange to talk about inter-Americanism today when some of the governments in our region seem to have such a hard time getting along, but I want to make clear that I am not talking about inter-governmental relations. I am talking about the inter-American spirit, the human bonds, that come from cooperation and interaction and sharing. (A heartwarming example: the joy felt recently across the US when the miners were pulled from the earth in Chile.)

When we restarted our Inter-American Program just over two years ago, the former Secretary General and Colombian President Cesar Gaviria was the keynote speaker. And one of the things he said our hemisphere badly needed was the kind of idealism that German Arciniegas saw in our students.

So **rebuilding our Inter-American Program** and spreading this spirit of private cooperation between us, as neighboring peoples in the Americas, is the fifth and final of these unconventional connections that we are trying to build in this Pacific Basin.

And we hope that many Ecuadorians will want to help us with the job. Many thanks for your invitation. Muchas gracias.