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## The Pacific Century

The Pacific Rim—that vast stretch of nation-states along the eastern and western boundaries of the Pacific Ocean—makes up one of the most dynamic regions of the globe. Asia alone buys a third of our grain exports, a quarter of our chemical exports, almost a third of our civilian aircraft exports, and more than half of the lumber we send abroad. The Port of Los Angeles now exceeds the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey in terms of net income; in a few years, the annual tonnage shipped through Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors is expected to outstrip New York's as well.

But the potential is not just economic. As Professor Robert Scalapino of the University of California Berkeley's Institute of East Asian Studies put it, "More than one-half of the world's people live in the Asia-Pacific region. This vast area, moreover, contains a sizeable share of the world's natural resources. . . . Politically and strategically the world's major nations come into intimate contact in Asia, and here issues of global significance will be decided. In cultural and scientific exchanges as well, the center of gravity has unmistakably shifted to Asia. . . . As far as the United States is concerned, the 21st Century is its Pacific Century."

Another indicator that our Pacific Century has begun is our immigration statistics. The United States is experiencing a wave of immigration that rivals that of the turn of the century. But this time, most of the newcomers arrive from Pacific Rim countries: Mexico, Central and South America, and Asia.

These trends are influencing the United States in fundamental ways, and our colleges and universities need to play their parts in helping the country respond. Thus, it is reasonable to ask: What programs do our colleges and universities offer to prepare students for a world in which the influence of the Pacific nations will be an increasingly dominant force? What are we doing to give our students a more complete understanding of the nations to our south, to our west, and to our north?

The answer is, not much, at least compared with the scope and scale of our possibilities and the region of the world we seek to comprehend. And this is true even in the ethnically diverse San Francisco Bay area, for example, where one study found that only half the local colleges and universities surveyed require their students to study a foreign language or to take courses in international education. The result, the study concluded, is that it is entirely possible for undergraduates to complete their education with "no significant preparation for working in the international marketplace," or, for that matter, for comprehending the interdependency of nations.

In contrast to our spotty record in learning about different peoples and cultures, other countries are making an effort to learn about us. For example, there are some 10,000 persons representing Japanese business interests in the United States, most of whom speak fluent English, many of whom have studied at American universities. Compare their ability to function in a foreign society with that of their 600 American counterparts in Japan, most of whom speak little or no Japanese and are often unfamiliar with Japanese customs. In 1985–86 approximately 344,000 foreign students enrolled in American universities, compared with an estimated 50,000 U.S. students studying abroad. This is a real imbalance in trade.

What should we do to get ready for the Pacific Century? First, we should do more to acquaint the interested and the motivated with the wealth of scholarly resources related to the Pacific Rim that are already available. Second, our universities should expand their teaching, research, and public service programs concerned with the Pacific Rim. Third, we need to increase the number of professionals in business, government, and education who understand the languages, the cultures, and the social, political, and economic structures of that region. In sum, the United States must better prepare itself to play a pivotal role in what will surely be one of the greatest centers of trade, migration, commerce, and cultural exchange the world has ever known.—DAVID P. GARDNER, *President, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720*