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DAVID JOHNSTON

Crucial Experience

The Keck Center for International
and Strategic Studies provides unique
access to world politics in real time.

BY NICHOLAS OWCHAR '90

Minxin Pei, the Tom and Margot
Pritzker '72 Professor of Government,
Roberts Fellow, and specialist on
U.S.-China relations, is the new
director of the Keck Center for
International and Strategic Studies.

Kathryn Oi '10 remembers the cherry blossoms.

In the heart of Tokyo, in a garden behind high walls, Oi counted four different kinds of blossoms on trees planted by Satsuki Eda, then and now president of Japan's House of Councillors (a governmental institution akin to the U.S. Senate).

Why did Eda insist on so many kinds?

So that "there would never be a season without blooms," he explained to Oi and her classmates.

"And what do you think of my roses?" he wanted to know.

This was no ordinary visit. Oi was among a small group of students accompanied by C.J. Lee, the BankAmerica Professor of Pacific Basin Studies, during a 2008 trip sponsored by the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies under its summer field research program. Designed by Professor Lee, the program was intended to give students an intensive, in-depth, international experience. Similar trips included Associate Professor of East Asian History Arthur Rosenbaum's to China and Associate Professor of Government Hilary Appel's to the Czech Republic.

The private visit with Eda was one of many highlights during the whirlwind, two-week-long visit to Japan. Other stops included the Foreign Ministry, the U.S. and Korean embassies, the Imperial Palace, and Meiji Shrine.

But it was there, seated beneath elegant chandeliers in Eda's home, sipping green tea or coffee as he described his work in Japan's bicameral legislature, that Oi said she realized something: Anyone studying international relations needs this sort of experience in the course of his or her study.

"Professor Lee's connections are amazing," says Oi, a native of Washington State. "Seriously, this was a once-in-a-lifetime meeting!"

Such rare opportunities for access to key players on the world scene are possible thanks to the College's established

international profile: a satisfying end result that has been many years in the making.

Never content to rest on its proverbial laurels, the Keck Center continues to offer a prime venue for appearances by high-profile figures—recent visitors include former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry and former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak—and to maintain a multitude of cutting-edge studies available to every student. The international relations (IR) program also is expanding with faculty who bring new areas of global expertise into the classroom, including Minxin Pei P'11, the Tom and Margot Pritzker '72 Professor of Government, Roberts Fellow, and specialist on U.S.-China relations, who has succeeded Professor Lee as the Center's director.

THE RISE OF IR

The Keck Center's and IR program's enhancements come as more CMC students are declaring themselves as IR majors than at any other time in the College's history. It is a good time to make such a choice: Students have at their fingertips a range of resources, in-house experts, and unique

Ronald F. Lehman II '68's journey to CMC began with a book.

One of America's foremost experts on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation first learned about CMC when he was a freshman at the University of New Hampshire. Lehman had a revelation: He wanted to return to the West Coast, not only to be closer to his home in the Napa Valley, but also to find an academic experience different from the one he was having.

"There were many good professors, but there were also classes full of hundreds of students," he says. "I wanted more passionate engagement and more contact with my instructors."

That's when a book on U.S. higher education fell into his hands. In a chapter titled "California's Five-College Experiment," he read about CMC's focus on government and world affairs in an intimate environment. His response was immediate.

"I knew it was the place where I needed to be," he says.

From New Hampshire, Lehman's next destination was North Quad, which is where he stayed, a faithful dweller of Appleby Hall, until graduation. The teachers who inspired him were many; among them William Rood, Harry Jaffa, and Martin Diamond. Also inspiring, he says, was the level of intellectual expectation that he experienced from the first time he entered a CMC classroom.

"The bar was so high from the beginning," Lehman says, "I found myself engaged in thinking and working at levels that have certainly helped me in the years since."

Since then, Lehman's career has been extremely wide-ranging. From CMC, he went on to earn a doctorate from Claremont Graduate School in 1975. He also began his diplomatic career that year, when he moved to Washington, D.C., as a fellow of Stanford's Hoover Institution. In the decades that followed, Lehman served in numerous high-ranking U.S. government positions including Assistant Secretary for International Security Policy (in the Defense Department) and Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (in the White House). His most senior post was as director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency from 1989 to 1993.

When he thinks about career highlights, however, Lehman goes back to the days of the Cold War and his work in the State Department as Ambassador and U.S. Chief Negotiator on Strategic Offensive Arms (START I). That treaty on nuclear arms limitations and reductions between the United States and the Soviet Union dates to the earliest years of the Reagan Administration.

"The work was very satisfying to me," he says. "There were several negotiators, of course, but the numbers and provisions were done on my watch. I'm proud of that."

Lehman today is director of the Center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He also sits on numerous committees and advisory boards including the Keck Center's board of governors, which he chairs. Lehman says the Center has one primary concentration: student development.

"The priority has to be them," he says. "What they need is as much support in understanding the international sphere as we can give them."

Lehman advises today's IR students to embrace new technologies, but to avoid getting overwhelmed by them, and not to substitute other people's judgments for their own.

"They have to get beneath things that are fashionable and trendy, to see situations as they really are," he explains. "It was true when I was a student. It's still true today."

travel fellowships—whether that means working for an NGO in Central America or, like Oi, visiting with a high-level politician—all focused on providing a greater sense of world politics in real time.

The demand for international relations curriculum is climbing nationally, as well. A reliable bellwether of this trend is the Foreign Service exam, the necessary entry point for all career U.S. diplomats. According to the U.S. State Department, this spring's pool of applicants for the exam numbered more than 5,000 (as compared with about 3,000 applicants at the same time last year.) That's a single-year leap of 70 percent.

At CMC, the number of IR majors has grown steadily, by about 10 percent, over the past decade. Today, according to Edward Haley, the W.M. Keck Foundation Professor of International Strategic Studies and chair of the international relations program, international relations is the third-largest major at the College with a total of 147 declared majors in fall 2008.

In 2007, it was the single largest area of interest chosen by entering freshman.

What was the other most popular area for those freshmen? "Undecided." That suggests to Haley, as well as Lee, just how thoroughly students have absorbed the lesson that countries are interconnected in fundamental ways—economically, culturally—that require the sort of nuanced understanding provided by CMC's IR training.

"Our students are very motivated," Lee says. "They recognize the importance of IR training, and they want us to give them more focus and direction."

Haley also thinks this growing group of majors is due to another factor that is entirely out of the College's control.

"Look at the headlines," he says. "There's a salience of military, political, and international events that is impossible to avoid."

Events such as the election protests in Iran, a new U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, the ouster of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, and more activity by North Korea to develop long-range missiles, Haley says, "have been our best recruiters." He adds, "Students know that their lives are profoundly affected by events such as 9/11 or genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia. They want to be involved. They want to be in on major developments from the beginning, when it's possible to make a difference."

Other influential IR recruiters are those members of the CMC family who have become involved, in highly visible ways, with international politics. These include Ronald F. Lehman II '68, whose roles have ranged from a key U.S. government negotiator in nuclear disarmament to chairman of the Keck Center's board of governors, and Surin Pitsuwan

'72, a Thai diplomat who serves as secretary-general of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Many CMC students report that their decisions to become involved in IR are based on a more local element: their classroom experience.

Take Akta Jantrania '09, who arrived in 2005 as an economics major.

"Very typical CMC, I know," she says with a laugh. Then, the 21-year-old native of Springfield, Ill., decided to broaden her scope and become a PPE major. Then, she says, she took introductory courses in international relations and comparative government—with Assistant Professor of Government Jennifer Taw and William Ascher, the Donald C. McKenna Professor of Government and Economics, respectively—and that made all the difference.

"I was interested in foreign cultures when I came to CMC," Akta says. She found Taw and Ascher's introductions so provocative and interesting that she found herself looking into the entire IR curriculum. "Getting credit to discuss, analyze, and learn about international events? Honestly, it felt like cheating!"

That doesn't surprise Haley, who is proud of the program's faculty, which includes specialists on Latin America, the United States, and Japan, as well as Soviet and Russian studies. In the past two years, the program has welcomed Taw and Assistant Professor of Government M.K. Kang, who bolster the program's coverage of U.S. security issues and political economy in Korean and Chinese politics. This year's acquisition of Pei, formerly of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C., adds a highly sought-after authority on Chinese politics and U.S.-China relations to the core faculty.

Eventually, Haley says, he hopes to add specialists on South Asia and the Middle East. Last year, CMC welcomed its first Professor of Arabic, Bassam Frangieh. Staffing will continue to expand, Haley says, to cover developments in every corner of the globe.

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A WORLD-CLASS RESOURCE

When Simon Shogry '09 found himself in the Netherlands The Hague, it was not as a casualty of European wanderlust but instead as CMC's head delegate to the World Model United Nations team.

Shogry led a group of eight students to a 10-day Model United Nations conference in the Dutch city that is the seat of the International Court of Justice (the court, in fact, was



I-Place

This spring, CMC students interested in international relations could sample a variety of cultural delights at the 32nd International Festival, the flagship event of International Place, which filled North Quad with the sounds of West African drumming, classical Indian dance, French songs, and Brazilian rock 'n' roll—not to mention the aromas and tastes of cuisines from around the world.

Though I-Place originally was intended as a support network for the scholars and students from about 70 countries who attend The Claremont Colleges, its long-running, broad-based events, like I-Festival, also demonstrate that opportunities for diverse cultural encounters are extremely popular.

just across the street from their conference). More than 1,500 students from around the world were there to participate in diplomatic simulations on a variety of international situations.

Shogry was assigned to a legal committee tasked with creating a resolution to the conflict between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty found, for instance, in a famine-hit country like Sudan. Hammering out an agreement was far from simple, Shogry discovered. Committee members split into blocks: some favoring the humanitarians, others favoring national sovereignty, still others fence-sitters.

"You have to be not only charming and charismatic but also aggressive. You really have to know your stuff," says Shogry, now a political consultant in the Bay Area. "It's one of the most 'CMC' events I can think of."

It was also a dramatic lesson for the New Mexico native on the nature of power.

"You see what really goes into negotiation, and how power works and flows," Shogry says. "The terms 'compromise deal' and 'intense negotiation' took on a more significant meaning once I had to negotiate for myself."

Such student experiences are a part of the dream that President Emeritus Jack Stark '57 GP'11 and Trustee Robert Day '65 P'12 shared many years ago. Haley says it was Day's admiration for Professor William Rood that led to the creation, in the early '80s, of an endowed chair in strategic studies. This was the first step in a process that shortly led to the opening of the doors of the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies in 1983.

After Haley was appointed its first director, he studied the work of other research institutes—including New York's Council on Foreign Relations, Japan's Research Institute for Peace and Security, and London's International Institute for Strategic Studies—to come up with a winning formula for the

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Keck Center.

“The challenge was to find something unique that would set us apart,” Haley says, “and have students take part in a real, substantial way.”

Today, a student entering the Keck Center’s doors finds an enormous support system that sponsors student attendance at key conferences (West Point, for example, as well as the Naval Academy and Model United Nations) and provides an influential lecture series and a variety of research stipends to aid students in their work.

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Crucial to the lecture series, Lee notes, has been a multi-year Freeman Foundation grant that has enabled the Keck Center to invite an increasingly prominent cast of speakers to campus. Other programming elements—summer field research, for instance—are on hold, however, as the staff seeks new funding to continue them.

When Lee took the director’s reins from Haley, the Center continued to develop its focus on Europe, Asia, and Cold War tensions. In the subsequent 20 years, the Center became a repository for global analyses to enhance student studies. A review of the series of publications published since 1991 reveals a list mirroring the most significant global events of the past two decades, such as “The Korean War: 40-Year Perspectives,” studies of the United States’ relationship with Japan, and perspectives on German reunification in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Later publications have considered the U.N. in the new world order, the most recent being “The Expansion of NATO and the European Union.” Certainly, more key studies are in process.

Incoming director Pei says he plans to continue the

Center’s focus on Asia. Although there are many hotspots in the world, he says, Asia is extremely important, not only because of the College’s location on the Pacific Rim but also because of the vast nations looming on the other side of Pacific.

“China remains a significant topic,” Pei says, “one that we certainly can’t ignore.”

GO THERE

For IR students, what’s next, after graduation? Graduate school? Work abroad for an international nonprofit?

Haley recommends that his students work internationally first. Study, he suggests, should come later, “not to make them more well-traveled but to broaden their views and calibrate their judgments,” he explains. “If students lock-step it from graduation straight into grad school, law school, or the Foreign Service exam, they’ll know how to succeed in school, and little else. They need time to watch others succeed and fail, and to make critically important moral judgments. All of this will enrich their experiences.”

The IR program and the Keck Center sponsor a number of fellowships and programs, such as the prestigious McKenna International scholarship, to facilitate such trips, often working with the College’s Career Services Center.

Earlier this year, Jantrania returned to the rural region of Gujarat, India, which she first visited in 2007 thanks to a McKenna International scholarship. The second trip, made possible with Keck Center funding, enabled her to conduct interviews for her senior thesis project on the Adivasis, the country’s tribal peoples, and the impact of development on their culture.



“It was immeasurably fascinating,” she says, “and it wouldn’t have been possible without the Keck Center, the Kravis Leadership Institute, or the amazing guidance of Professor Ascher.”

Not all trips, however, need begin at an airport. Some begin with a keyboard or in the palm of your hand.

Lehman’s advice to IR students is to begin by having a better understanding of new technologies.

“The international architecture is changing rapidly, and new technologies are a factor in this change,” he explains. Any career with an international dimension, he says, has a significant technological aspect.

“Whether or not students pursue a technical education as a career, I’d say they very much need to be scientifically literate on all the new technology,” Lehman says. “That’s what I would tell them to start with. What I find is that governments and societies are having difficulty keeping up with and understanding these changes.”

Eventually, however, students must see other countries for themselves. And when they do, Haley advises them to live and work there at the grassroots level.

“When they’re out there, experiencing how other cultures live, their moral compass comes into play in a special new way,” Haley says. “It’s crucial experience. Whatever they decide to do in the future, they need to first develop stories of their own.”

For Minxin Pei P’II, politics is many things. Fascinating. Always in flux. Personal. Terrifying.

Born in Shanghai in the darkest days of Mao’s cultural revolution, the new director of the Keck Center paints a picture of his childhood as a source for his lifelong fascination with world affairs.

“The Red Guards ransacked our home. Our parents were even dragged away. What was happening to the country also was happening to my family,” Pei, 51, recalls.

During the terror and upheaval in Mao’s China, Pei says only one place—the rural countryside—was thought to be safer (relatively, of course) than life in the city.

“Our parents sent my siblings and me to live with our grandfather in a small village,” he says. “Such experiences of course make lasting impressions. Certainly my interest in politics stems from this.”

When the BBC, CNN, or NPR need an expert’s response to a developing story on China, they contact Pei, who comes to CMC after serving 10 years as the senior associate in the China program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. For instance, when a bloody ethnic riot erupted in Western China in early summer, PBS’ “The Newshour” turned to Pei for his insight on why this happened. In addition to his frequent appearances, Pei keeps up a steady output of op-ed pieces and other articles—an average of 20 per year—in a variety of venues that range from the Italian publication *L’Espresso* to the *Financial Times* to a Web site on Middle Eastern affairs.

“Circumstances are developing all the time, so one must continue writing to keep up with that dialogue,” he explains. “It also helps that I’m a very fast writer.”

Pei thanks the University of Pittsburgh for that skill. When he first came to the United States in 1984, he enrolled there to study creative writing in nonfiction. This helped him develop his writerly chops—and in the course of his CMC classes, Pei says, he plans to have his students develop their own chops as well. “I will have them reading *The Economist*, *NYT*, *WSJ*, and *FT*, and writing mock op-eds of their own,” he says. “I want them to treat issues not as assignments with ends but as part of an ongoing situation.”

Pei brings a contrarian view of China that may surprise many. While, for example, last year’s Summer Olympics in Beijing was touted by pundits as a heartening sign of China’s progress toward the West, Pei remains unpersuaded.

“I say it’s more complex than that. Yes, China’s young people are very capitalistic, but those same young people are also very nationalistic, and that complicates matters. They may want to embrace democracy, but there’s also this gigantic monster: the Communist Party.”

Pei hopes his students will come to see international relations as he does: as a living, unpredictable subject.

“I want them to become as excited as I am,” he explains, “for it’s a subject that is always changing.”