

East Meets West

Center facilitates U.S.-Pacific understanding /// By Leslie Tsou

When Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton early this year chose the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, as the venue for her policy speech on U.S. multilateral engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, her visit coincided with the start of the Center's 50th anniversary year as a national public diplomacy institution.

"During the five decades since the Center opened, no region has undergone a more dramatic transformation," the Secretary said. "The East-West Center has been part of this sea change, helping to shape ideas and train experts. I thank all of you for bringing greater awareness and understanding to the economic, political and security issues that dominate the region and the world today."

Fostering Understanding

Founded by Congress in 1960, the EWC has a 21-acre campus in Honolulu and recently established an office in Washington,

D.C. The Center aims to foster better U.S.-Asian/Pacific understanding and focuses on cooperative study, research and dialogue—with the key word being cooperative. Americans do not teach Asians and Pacific Islanders. Instead, colleagues from throughout the region work as partners with Americans to address critical issues of mutual concern.

At the Center's 1961 groundbreaking, then-Vice President Lyndon Johnson, one of the main advocates of the Center's creation, said, "We shall hope that many generations of young scholars will learn the wisdom of the two worlds united here and use that wisdom for the purposes and the ends of mankind's highest aspirations for peace and justice and freedom."

The Center enjoys a close and complementary relationship with the State Department. The Secretary of State selects a third of the EWC's 18-member Board of Governors, and

the assistant secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs is an ex-officio member of the board.

Over the past half-century, nearly 60,000 people have participated in EWC educational, research and exchange programs, including President Barack Obama's mother and stepfather, who both pursued graduate degrees on Center scholarships. Former participants maintain close to 50 alumni chapters throughout the region.

Multilateral Focus

The Center is decidedly multilateral, with an international governing board and a multinational research staff. Of the roughly 500 students who reside at the EWC each year, around one-third are from the United States and two-thirds from abroad.

Most of the Center's fellows are graduate students, who receive their advanced degrees from the adjacent University of Hawaii at



A small pond meanders through the center's grounds.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks in January at the Center in honor of its 50th anniversary. Below: East-West Center Fellow Jeff Fox conducts a site visit.

Manoa. Shorter-term Center programs focus on leaders and communicators, including journalists, teachers and political and civil leaders. In all, about 4,000 people participate in EWC programs each year.

Each year, the Center partners with about 700 other institutions to address issues as diverse as infectious diseases, human rights law, resource conservation, climate change policies, economic growth strategies, election monitoring and demographic change.

The EWC is one of the few U.S. institutions with a Pacific Islands focus, which includes organizing the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders that brings together heads of governments from the Pacific Island countries. U.S. presidents attended two of these meetings.

Among the variety of university scholarships that the EWC administers are two directly funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs: the U.S.-South Pacific Scholarship Program and the U.S.-Timor Leste Scholarship Program. The Center also hosts a yearlong Diplomat in Residence through the Department's Senior Training Program, and U.S. diplomats headed for posts in the Asia-Pacific region regularly visit the Center for briefings.

Ambassador Ray Burghardt directs the Center's seminar programs. He said

the EWC has the flexibility to conduct public diplomacy activities that strongly support the Department's goals but are better pursued outside the formal diplomatic process.

"The Center brings together Americans and their foreign counterparts around sensitive issues in a cooperative research and educational context, rather than a negotiating context," said Burghardt, who is also chair of the American Institute in Taiwan. "As a result, we are able to conduct activities that are very difficult for governmental organizations to do effectively, such as involving Chinese and Taiwan officials in the same program."

Conference Planned

Finally, the Center facilitated Hawaii's successful bid to host the 2011 meeting of the leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group, which promotes economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region. The Center will be the site for the conference's agenda-setting meeting, which will launch the U.S. year of hosting APEC.



"In many ways, the U.S. year of APEC will reflect what our Center has always been about—the peoples of the vast Asia-Pacific region working together on important public policy issues," said EWC President Dr. Charles E. Morrison. "It's a wonderful opportunity to embrace America's role as a Pacific nation and an engaged partner in the region's struggles and successes." ■

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