

UC San Diego Launches Center for Immigration Studies

May 27, 1999

Media Contacts: Dolores Davies, (619) 534-5994 or ddavies@ucsd.edu Anne Middleton, (619) 534-2777 or amiddleton@ucsd.edu

UC SAN DIEGO LAUNCHES CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES

An academic center for the study of worldwide immigration patterns, the first of its kind on the West Coast, is being launched at the University of California, San Diego.

The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies (CCIS) will be directed by internationally-known immigration expert Wayne Cornelius, a political scientist at UCSD and former director of the University's Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies. More than 30 UCSD faculty members - political scientists, economists, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists, as well as literature and health care specialists - are involved in research and teaching that is immigration-related and will be affiliates of the Center. Immigration specialists at UCLA, UC Irvine, UC-Davis, the University of Southern California, the University of Texas, Princeton, and other universities will also be involved.

The Center will be based at UCSD's Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IR/PS).

"IR/PS is excited about housing this new Center, since the issue of immigration is of vital concern to our Pacific Rim experts," said IR/PS Dean C. Peter Timmer. "Adding the immigration dimension - namely, the study of labor flows and their impacts on political and economic situations in the countries we study, will add a new depth to our course offerings and in turn, strengthen the IR/PS curriculum."

According to Cornelius, CCIS will distinguish itself from other immigration studies programs in the United States by maintaining a cross-regional rather than a U.S.-centered perspective. The main intellectual agenda of CCIS will be to systematically compare the U.S. immigration experience both historical and contemporary with that of other labor-importing countries, especially in the Asia-Pacific and West European regions. This will be the first immigration studies program in the United States to address the Asian immigrant-sending and receiving countries.

Within the United States, the Center will focus on Mexican, Central American, and Asian immigration to California. CCIS will sponsor research and instructional activities dealing with the following issues:

^ The causes and changing characteristics of international migration to California, with special attention to previously underrepresented demographic components (for example, among Mexican migrants: women and children, higher-skill workers).

^ The consequences of rural-to-urban migration and urbanization in developing countries for international migration to California, especially in countries like Mexico and China where migration originating in rural areas often leads to movement across international borders.

^ The role of immigrant labor (both low-skilled and high-skilled/professional workers) in the California economy, including the determinants of employer demand for immigrant labor, job creation by immigrant entrepreneurs, and

the impacts of immigration on employment opportunities for Latinos, African-Americans, and other segments of the native- born population.

^ Documenting and explaining the outcomes of federal and state laws and policies that seek to regulate immigration flows and promote the socioeconomic integration of immigrants and refugees.

^ Patterns of socioeconomic mobility within and between immigrant generations, with special attention to the educational needs of immigrant children, as well as adult, first- generation immigrants.

^ Economic, social, cultural, and political linkages between California's immigrant and refugee communities and their places of origin.

In each of these issue areas, the California experience will be compared with that of major immigrant-receiving regions in other countries.

"A great deal can be learned from such comparative studies," Cornelius said. "For example, there are some striking similarities in the way that foreign labor is being used in the agricultural sectors of California and southern Spain, the increasingly structural character of the demand for foreign workers to fill low-skilled jobs in both California and Japan, and the utilization of social services by immigrants and refugees in California and Germany."

CCIS will also train UCSD students to gather data on immigrant populations and potential emigrants in sending countries, taking maximum advantage of San Diego's "natural laboratory" and its proximity to Mexico. The new Center will give students practical fieldwork experience in various parts of the state, especially San Diego, Imperial, Orange, and Los Angeles counties, and the San Joaquin Valley.

"We believe that faculty-supervised team fieldwork in immigrant and refugee communities can motivate and channel students into immigration-related internships and other community service projects," Cornelius said.

CCIS will bring important new resources to UCSD for the study of an issue of critical importance to San Diego, the state of California, and the nation. Poised just 20 miles from the busiest international port of entry in the United States, San Diego is a prime area for studying nearly every facet of contemporary U S immigration, from Latin America as well as the Asia- Pacific region. It attracts both low-skilled and highly skilled, professional migrants from abroad to fill jobs in many sectors of the local economy.

According to Cornelius, CCIS will provide a regular, high-visibility forum for discussion of the latest immigration-related research, featuring presentations by UCSD faculty and graduate students, California and Tijuana-based immigration specialists, and guest scholars from the East Coast and abroad.

Cornelius has been a leading specialist on Mexican immigration to the United States for more than 25 years. Since 1990, he has also conducted research on Third World migration to Japan, Spain, and Germany. He is the co-author/editor of *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective* (Stanford University Press, 1995) and has authored more than 180 other publications on immigration patterns, immigration policies, and the role of immigrant labor in the economies of industrialized countries.

(May 27, 1999)