

Growing the UC San Diego ‘House’ of Korean Studies

Five-year, \$600,000 grant from the Academy of Korean Studies aims to build interdisciplinary, comparative scholarship of Korea



Todd Henry, assistant professor of history, is principal investigator on

A grant for nearly \$600,000 will boost Korean studies at UC San Diego for the next five years. The 2013-18 grant – awarded by the Academy of Korean Studies’ Korean Studies Promotion Service, an organization supported by the South Korean Ministry of Education – both recognizes UC San Diego as an “overseas leading university for Korean studies” and will build future capacity in a novel way.

Todd Henry, an assistant professor of history in the Division of Arts and Humanities and author of the forthcoming book “Assimilating Seoul,” will direct the project. Stephan Haggard, a senior Koreanist in the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IRPS) at UC San Diego, is serving as deputy director.

The vision, Henry said, is that UC San Diego will become a leader in a “unique transnational” approach. By this he means that the scholarship and teaching here will not follow the common “area studies” model for studying the Korean peninsula, popular on college campuses since WWII, but will situate Korea in a global context. The new effort, he explained, aims to “study Korea’s role on the world stage, in the context of its relationship with other countries and regions, with respect to important, contemporary topics of concern.”

The funds will support a number of activities, Henry said, including establishing summer research internships in Korea for students; building, in partnership with Geisel Library, the university’s collection of Korean books, films and multimedia materials; and increasing the number of visiting scholars.

Current projects also include the recruitment of an annual post-doctoral position and the development of 11 new courses by UC San Diego faculty.

Henry and colleagues are also working to develop a new undergraduate minor in Korean Studies.

UC San Diego has long-standing strength in Korean studies through the graduate programs of the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IRPS), Henry said. The new grant will help develop the burgeoning field in the Division of Arts and Humanities as well.

“We are trying to be two pillars of one house rather than two houses,” Henry said. “About 75 percent of the grant is going toward strengthening the arts and humanities’ pillar. The other quarter is aimed toward integration with IRPS.”

In addition to Henry and Haggard, five other faculty members form the scholarly core of the effort and include representatives from the departments of literature, music and visual arts, as well as IRPS.



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“A transnational approach is rare,” Henry said, “but looking to have equal strengths in arts, humanities and social sciences is even more rare. There are very few universities in the U.S. who do all of this well, plus study North as well as South Korea.”

In 2018, the project will be eligible for another five-year grant, through 2023.

On Thursday, Jan. 16, Henry and colleagues will celebrate and publicly launch the grant with a reception and film screening at the Robinson Building Complex, Room 3201. The reception begins at 5 p.m. with free food and drinks. It will be followed at 6:30 p.m. by a movie screening from Geisel Library’s collection of Korean films. Please RSVP to koreanstudies@ucsd.edu.

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