

UC SANTA BARBARA

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International Debate

UC Santa Barbara's Confucius Institute couldn't have better timing, even if it was unintentional. The institute this week is hosting its "International Conference on Future US-China Economic Relations" — a business liaison that has been a frequent focus of President Donald Trump.

Organized by the Confucius Institute and co-sponsored by the UCSB Department of Political Science, the conference aims to bring together leading scholars to exchange ideas on U.S.-China economic relations and diplomacy. It was planned long before the presidential election, said Mayfair Yang, the institute's director.

The conference will begin with a private reception Friday, Feb. 10, and keynote talks by Susan Shirk, a UC San Diego professor and former deputy assistant secretary of state, and Jinyan Hu, vice president and professor of finance at Shandong University in China.

Shirk, a China specialist, chair of UCSD's 21st Century China Program and a research professor at the campus's School of Global Policy and Strategy, also is chairwoman of a bipartisan task force behind the recently released report, "U.S. Policy Toward China: Recommendations for a New Administration."

The event will continue Saturday, Feb. 11, when top scholars from the United States and China participate in a series of panel discussions on topics related to monetary and financial issues, U.S.-China trade policy and global and regional economic institutions. The first panel will begin at 9 a.m. at UCSB's Loma Pelona Center. The

discussions are free and open to the public.

Benjamin J. Cohen, the Louis G. Lancaster Professor of International Political Economy in UCSB's Department of Political Science, noted the conference's timeliness, given the new president's comments about China. "But the broader significance lies in the fact that between them, the U.S. and China account for nearly half of the world economy," he said. "What happens between our two countries will have major implications for the rest of the world.

"It also matters that China is emerging as America's greatest strategic adversary in global politics," he added.

While the conference will not generate a written product, Cohen said, the hope is to gain a better understanding of what some key figures from both countries are thinking. "This should be a learning experience for both the participants and for the students and faculty who choose to attend," he added. Cohen is a featured panelist on monetary and financial issues. His topic, "RMB Internationalization: A Conflict of Statecrafts," focuses on China's official currency.

According to Yang, also a professor of East Asian languages and cultural studies and of religious studies the two countries are increasingly tied to each other in several ways: investments in goods and finances; trade, including Hollywood and tech companies selling to China; immigration; capital outflow from China; and the increasing numbers of Chinese students studying at American universities.

"The U.S. and China are now the world's greatest economic and political global powers, and what they do or do not do, and how they work with each other, will have impact around the world," Yang said. "So it's very important that their scholars talk with each other directly and understand better the societies which have produced them, the concerns and issues they are working on, new trends and schools of thought, and the attitudes and concerns with the state policies of each side."

She added that because of their global influence, the two nations have a responsibility to tackle some of the world's problems, including environmental degradation and climate change; ethnic, religious and national conflicts; and poverty and disease. "So good relations between their scholarly communities is important," Yang said.

In addition to Cohen, panel chairs include Aashish Mehta, an associate professor of global and international studies at UCSB, and Lijuan Zhang, a UCSB visiting professor from the School of Economics at Shandong University.

Among other participating panelists are Rufus Yerxa, president of the National Foreign Trade Council and former deputy director general of the World Trade Organization; and Xinguan Tu, professor and dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at China's University of International Business and Economics; Robert Rogowsky of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies and former chief economist of the U.S. International Trade Commission; and Barry Naughton, Sokowalok Chair of Chinese International Affairs at UC San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy.

About UC Santa Barbara

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