

Meet the New Senior Director of International Outreach

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In recent years, UCLA has begun accepting more out-of-state and international students than ever before. UCLA admitted students from nearly every state and 74 countries for its fall 2013 freshman class. As reported by UCLA Newsroom, “Collectively, these students make up UCLA’s most diverse class to date in terms of their geographic, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.”

In supporting this growth in acceptance rates there has been a concerted effort to recruit a diverse group of high-achieving international students. As a result of all of these factors UCLA’s global community of alumni is going to continue to grow at an increasing rate for years to come.



Lily Tsau, the senior director of international outreach for UCLA Alumni Affairs, will be leading the efforts to engage this growing community of international alumni, and enhance their connections with UCLA and their fellow Bruins. Tsau is herself, a transplant from Taipei, Taiwan, and therefore offers a valuable and unique perspective on the engagement of the international UCLA community.

INTERVIEW

What is the biggest difference from your previous role working mostly with the various domestic alumni networks to this focused role working with international networks?

L.T.: The main things are the broad cultural differences. While there may be some cultural differences between the east coast, the west coast and the Midwest, they are not going to be as huge as they are from Asia to Europe to South America. The other is just time. Within the United States there might be a three hour difference max, but when we are talking internationally it’s 10, 12 or 16 hours difference. Trying to be aware, all the time, of who you are talking to and what time it is in their region of the world, and what time you need to talk to the international groups or hold events – that has presented an interesting challenge. Those are probably the more significant differences.

Can you expand on the cultural challenges of working with alumni abroad?

L.T.: There are cultural differences or nuances in different regions. They can be business-related or social. For example, I, along with a UCLA delegation, will be traveling to India in early December and we’ll be holding UCLA receptions in Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai. It is my understanding that in India they do not shake hands but rather they do what resembles a prayer pose and say “Namaste,” which is a traditional greeting. In Asia, you exchange business cards with both hands – if you were to hand someone your business card with one hand it

would be considered disrespectful. In some Asian countries you wouldn't write on somebody's business card. In the United States we tend to do that, we make little notes about people so that we can remember whom we have met, but in some areas that would be considered disrespectful, and defacing who they are. These are some examples of nuances or cultural differences that stand out.

What are some ways that alumni can stay engaged with UCLA internationally?

L.T.: I think the best way is to create meaningful opportunities to engage with each other. That's the best way to stay connected to UCLA, because you are then exchanging what your UCLA experience is and where it has brought you. Another way is to get engaged with students and parents. One great way to engage with students is mentoring – helping them on that path from student to alumni and on to their career. That is one of the most impactful ways that students have said they interact with alumni.

How do you capture the information of alumni living abroad? How can they update their address?

L.T.: This is a colossal challenge and we know that it is a challenge for every institution in higher education. When an alumnus or an alumna graduates and they are going all over the world, their first thought is not necessarily to update their alma mater with their contact information. Further, as it is self reported, we find that it is a challenge to make sure that alumni update the database. Therefore, we are constantly reminding alumni at our events and in our communications to update their information so we know where they are. That way we don't lose touch with them, they don't lose touch with us and they don't lose touch with each other. If we don't know where they are, we can't communicate with them. Primarily we update the database through the "Update Your Profile" link, which is on our homepage at alumni.ucla.edu, and the other way is through sign-in sheets that we have at every event.

Where are the largest concentrations of alumni in foreign countries?

L.T.: Currently the largest concentrations are in Asia and specifically in Japan, Korea and Hong Kong. However, since we are currently increasing our recruitment of out-of-state and international students we are going to see those numbers rise across the world.

Are there any countries where you think alumni from the United States would be surprised to find fellow Bruins when traveling abroad?

L.T.: Interestingly, I don't think so. There are Bruins literally all over the world – anywhere you go you'll be able to find a fellow Bruin!

For questions on how you can get involved with UCLA internationally, contact Lily Tsau at ltsau@support.ucla.edu or 310-206-0609.