

# SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

**A Pacific Rim  
Campus Finds  
the World at Its  
Front Door**

SAN DIEGO, California — As if 20 miles weren't close enough, San Diego State University will soon be even closer to the border with Mexico, at least in travel time. Last fall miners finished burrowing a 1,400-foot tunnel wider than the Chunnel through this 283-acre campus on the Montezuma Mesa off Interstate 8. In two years the cheerful, red San Diego Trolley will be picking up and dropping off 4,300 students, faculty, and staff every day, ferrying some from the light rail line's terminus in San Ysidro, a few hundred yards from Tijuana. The \$431 million Mission Valley East extension will complete the trolley's 50-mile loop around San Diego and perhaps alleviate the university's chronic parking problems. After enduring five years of "life in a construction pit," as Provost Nancy A. Marlin put it, the campus community can hardly wait.

It is tempting to say that the reason San Diego State has emerged as a leader in international education is the same as the answer to the old saw about what gives

real estate its value: location, location, and location. It does not hurt to be in the middle of one of the most dramatic, diverse, and desirable cities in the United States, 12 miles from Pacific beaches and a short drive from the world's busiest border crossing. "We're urban, we're diverse, we're high tech, we're Pacific Rim, and we're Latin American. I submit those are the ingredients of the 21st century, and they are here. You couldn't have a better sandbox to play in as a university," said President Stephen L. Weber.

However, location is far from the whole story at San Diego State. When Weber became president in 1996, his first step was to launch a community-wide "Shared Vision" strategic planning process to redefine this large public institution's mission. One of the top goals that emerged was establishing San Diego State as "a genuinely global university." In 1998 the position of assistant vice president for international programs was created with a new, \$275,000-a-year budget for faculty travel and initiatives overseas. In short order, the number of San Diego State students who study abroad climbed from 200 to 740. The number of international students, long stuck around 500, climbed past 1,400. San Diego State recently opened an international house, housing U.S. and international undergraduates together in the tradition that John D. Rockefeller started at Columbia, Berkeley, and

**San Diego State  
international  
students and  
advisers.**



SDSU's  
James Gerber,  
director, Center  
for Latin American  
Studies.

Chicago back in the 1920s. Only five universities have received more grants from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) than San Diego State; most of its seven grants were for innovative international efforts, including a celebrated dual-degree program with Mexican universities and a new triple-degree program with both Mexico and Canada.

Almost everyone at San Diego State—an institution with 34,000 students, 1,900 faculty, and a staff of 1,500—remarks on the personal force and leadership that Weber, a philosopher by training, and Marlin, a psychologist, have put behind the internationalization efforts. The provost, with a formidable command of Spanish and a relentless drive to encourage students and faculty alike to think globally, has made it her signature. The president, however, says that what they really are doing is responding to demands, not creating them.

"This is not about San Diego, and it's not about leadership. In fact, it's almost the opposite: it's running as fast as you can to keep up with your school and your students," said Weber. "This is about the appetites and needs of students of the 21st century. Internationalization may be more evident at a place like San Diego than in the heartland of the country—but it's on the way."

Marlin said, "I profoundly believe there is nothing more powerful we can do educationally for our students than get them abroad. No matter how wonderful

the quality of the educational experience here, there is just no substitute." When San Diego State's Institute on World Affairs—a forum where international visitors talk about world events—celebrated its 60th anniversary,

last spring, the institute's leaders framed Marlin's words as the centerpiece of a display in the library.

At some campuses, the principal challenge of internationalization is figuring out how to engage the faculty to bring the world more fully into their courses. That was not the case at San Diego State. The border has always been "an unending source of academic interest here," said economics professor James B. Gerber, an authority on the economy of the San Diego-Tijuana region. San Diego State's international business major, created in 1989 and now enrolling upwards of 700 students, is the largest undergraduate program in the country. Students vie for acceptance and normally take five years to complete the degree. They must spend a semester either studying or doing an internship outside the United States. Weber said the international business major attracts "wonderful, adventurous students." The campus is also home to a federally funded



President  
Stephen L. Weber  
says universities  
must 'run fast' just  
to keep up with  
student demand  
for international  
education.



## SE HABLA ESPANOL?

**SAN DIEGO, California** — To Nancy A. Marlin's self-critical ear, describing her Spanish as fluent is "an overstatement."

But to San Diego State University colleagues, the provost's elegant command of the language is widely noted and admired. "She's been a great, great asset to our university because of that," President Stephen L. Weber said.

Marlin learned most of her Spanish in mid-life, long after completing her Ph.D. in psychology and while working as provost of the University of Northern Iowa. Marlin picks up the story this way: "I took Spanish in high school, then French in college, which left me unable to speak either. Much later, despite my Ph.D. and work as a faculty member and subsequently academic administrator, I felt I was not well educated because I could not function in another language."

Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER). When it began in 1989 in conjunction with UCLA, San Diego State's CIBER was one of the first five; now there are 30.

Gerber, the new director of San Diego State's Center for Latin American Studies—which in cooperation with the University of California, San Diego, receives Title VI funding from the U.S. Department of Education—said of the campus-wide push to internationalize, “The students are very excited. It’s really a very sexy thing. The international business major is big not because accounting is so interesting; it’s because students see global education as the wave of the future. They see opportunities for themselves.” The Center for Latin American Studies recently began a summer program in Oaxaca, Mexico, at the Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez Oaxaca offering instruction in the Indian Mixtec language—a tongue that is the sole language spoken by some of the migrants now working in southern California.

For Marlin, the challenge was not to convince San Diego State faculty of the need to internationalize, but to highlight the extensive work already going on and to help them connect with one another and outside partners. “The real strength we have in so many areas, particularly border issues, wasn’t something that was created by any plan. This was already in existence,” she said. “Faculty members were doing incredible work



Provost Nancy Marlin has led a successful push to boost the number of San Diego State students who study abroad.

out of their own strong, personal commitment, without institutional infrastructure and support.”

Paul Ganster, director of San Diego State's Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias, is an authority not just on California's neighbor to the south, but on border regions around the world, from South Africa and Ecuador to Central and East Europe. “Border regions tend to share similar problems,” said Ganster, who is also associate director of the Office of International Programs.

Despite the demands of her job, Marlin worked her way through the university's Spanish courses.

“I began taking the sequence of courses in the Spanish major. At first faculty appeared apprehensive about the provost sitting in on their class—it seemed like some weird type of teaching evaluation—but when I couldn't use the subjunctive any better than the others, I quickly became one of the students.”

The Spanish was a definite plus in landing the San Diego State job in 1998.

She still sits in on an occasional Spanish class “when possible” at San Diego State. “I can now ‘function’ in Spanish-speaking countries, and am able to give formal academic presentations (with lots of prior preparation),” Marlin said.

President Weber's Spanish is more rudimentary. “I can write speeches in English and then deliver them in Spanish. If it's a simple speech, I can do the translation myself, but I can't do it on my feet,” Weber said. “My Spanish is really good in the car—but I sing well in the shower, too. I joke with Spanish-language audiences sometimes that if I have a steering wheel in my hand, it's perfect.”

“The need for Spanish is real. The fact that I have not mastered it is my shortcoming,” said Weber.

“It had been possible in the 20th century for folks like me to pursue a fruitful life and career without linguistic abilities. That's not so in the 21st century.” ■

A Ford Foundation teaching fellowship in Chile helped turn physicist Al Sweedler into a passionate advocate for study abroad. He now serves as assistant vice president for international programs.



Internationalization is on the radar screen of every university these days. To write San Diego State's global vision larger, Marlin knew that she needed "zealots." Laughing at her choice of words, the provost explained, "You need people really willing to work because inevitably these programs are fraught with problems. You need people who are going to work with the students, who have the personal contacts, who've been there and know who to call" to untangle the snags.

A band of zealots already was at work in the International Student Center, a mission-style building that houses the offices of Ron Moffatt and his widely traveled staff. Moffatt, who once taught school in Kenya, has been San Diego State's director of international student services since 1984. The center—now being enlarged—was already a home away from home for the growing contingent of international students at San Diego State, welcoming them to campus, helping with visas and legal issues, finding tutors, and in turn dispatching them as ambassadors to local public schools.

Marlin found another zealot in physics professor Al Sweedler, her choice to be assistant vice president for international programs. Sweedler spent two years teaching in Chile in the early 1970s as a Ford Foundation fellow—and returned right after the 1973 military coup that toppled Salvador Allende to give a public lecture at the request of Chilean colleagues who thought that if he mentioned by name two students then being held with Allende supporters in a soccer stadium, it might help win their release. Sweedler did—and they were. Sweedler never lost his interest

and passion for international education. He became Marlin's emissary to the deans of San Diego State's eight academic colleges to nudge more students to get their passports and get packing.

"Maybe 'disarray' is too extreme a word, but there was no organized place for students to go if they wanted to study abroad," said Marlin. That became the responsibility of the International Student Center, which saw both its staff and budget doubled as San Diego State moved quickly to attract more international students and to send more undergraduates to study in other lands. Both numbers soon grew threefold or more.

Twelve percent of San Diego State students now spend a summer, a semester, or a year studying outside the United States. Some 639 undergraduates studied abroad in 2000–2001 and 731 the following year. Robert Carolin, the assistant director for education abroad, expected this year's figures to top that number.

Sweedler wants to boost the participation rate to 30 percent in five years. A few majors—principally international business, as well as international security and conflict resolution, which has 100 students—already mandate study abroad. "This is not a luxury or an add-on," said the physicist. "We see it as an integral part of the university's existence, that students spend time in another country as part of their regular education. We're trying to make it a part of what it means to be an educated person and get a degree from SDSU."

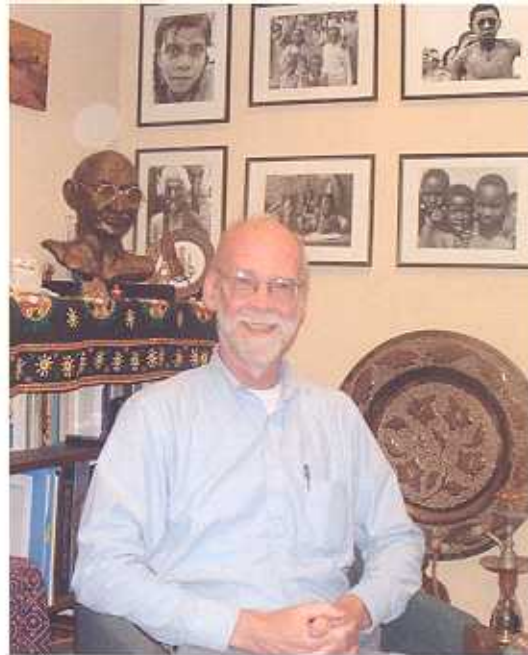
More undergraduates may find this a requirement in the future. "I don't think we can any longer just say this is an interesting option. We have many options. You can do community service learning or research in a lab or many things that are very valuable. But that's why we have all these boring curricular committee meetings to argue about what is most essential in the curriculum for this degree. I'm very much advocating that we make this a degree requirement," said Marlin. How, she asked, can someone major in a foreign language or area studies "if you've never been to that area or been where there are native speakers of that language?"

That battle is not yet won. Even some committed internationalists on the San Diego State faculty are worried about imposing a study abroad requirement across the board on students who may be juggling work, school, and family. The average undergraduate is almost 23 years old and takes 12.8 credits a semester. Many students transfer in after completing two years at Southwestern College or another community college. San Diego State is part of the 23-campus California State University system, which concentrates on undergraduate and master's level education. It is the only one of those 23 campuses in the Carnegie Foundation's "doctoral/research university-intensive" category. Forty-two of the record 9,165 degrees that San Diego State awarded in May 2002 were Ph.D.s. All Ph.D.s in California's public universities are granted through the University of California (UC) system. San Diego State must partner with other institutions to award its doctorates. It now has 13 joint doctoral degree programs and 59 of its own master's programs.

San Diego State is outgrowing its label in other ways, too. Its faculty pulled in \$140 million in research and educational grants and contracts in 2001-2002, more than three of the nine UC campuses. The university received 40,000 applications for the 7,100 spaces in this year's freshman class. Weber chafes at some of the restrictions his university operates under. The master plan "tried to make educational decisions based on the label that you wear. What we call that normally is prejudice." However, Weber added, "Switching labels wouldn't change the issues. We're the institution that makes sense, that blooms where it's planted."

One advantage that proximity to the border affords is that students can experience another culture without venturing far from home. Most freshmen are 18-year-olds straight from high school who typically "don't come with kids and jobs," said Marlin. "For those who are truly place-bound, we can work on programs that involve doing things in Mexico. They can drive. They can take the trolley. They can live in San Diego and still have an international experience."

When Marlin arrived here in 1998 from the University of Northern Iowa, she discovered what she called a paradox about the region: the closeness of the



Ron Moffatt, director of international student services since 1984, with a bust of Gandhi over his shoulder and pictures he shot in East Africa and South Asia in the 1970s.

border actually made it harder to sell study abroad to some students. "They'd tell me, 'Well, I don't need to go abroad. San Diego is a very international community. I go down to Tijuana.'" It was an easier sell in Cedar Falls, Iowa, or Columbia, Missouri, her previous academic stops. "Everybody in the Midwest realized there was a big world out there and they'd better understand it if they were going to live and work in it," she said. "I didn't have to sell the idea as much as I did here initially."

Five years into this crusade, Marlin believes that San Diego State is approaching "the tipping point. Study abroad is no longer viewed as an exotic thing to do. The students say that themselves and hear it from their friends. To a person what you hear is, 'Not only was this the best thing for me educationally, it's the best thing in my life to date.'"

San Diego State relies primarily on faculty to build the bridges to institutions overseas. The Office of International Programs seeds these efforts with faculty travel grants. In the first four years, 278 faculty shared more than \$1.1 million. "In other words, we were going from the tradition that the president goes and has a nice signing ceremony and not much ever happens, to programs that are initiated at the faculty level where there would be real follow-up," said Marlin.

International  
Student Center's  
Jane Kalionzes,  
Dawn Renze  
Wood, Ron  
Moffatt, Emily  
Maxon and Robert  
Carolin.



Sometimes a little goes a long way. Political scientist Brian Loveman has attracted support from major foundations for his work on human rights and military rule in Latin America. "It's amazing how little money it takes to make a difference. A program that we started four years ago with \$15,000 on the history of political reconciliation in Chile now receives \$1 million in grants," said Loveman, who holds the Fred J. Hansen Institute for World Peace Endowed Chair. He has cajoled numerous colleagues to work with him in Chile, from the public health department to political science to the International Security and Conflict Resolution program. He instigated an essay contest in which three Chilean schoolteachers won trips to San Diego for developing classroom materials on human rights; three San Diego high school teachers will head the other way this summer. On a larger scale, San Diego State's Title VI-funded Language Acquisition Research Center (LARC)—one of just 14 national language resource centers—has posted on its Web site extensive materials about human rights, including video interviews with Argentine survivors of that country's "dirty war." "We asked LARC, 'Can you combine language acquisition with content that we're interested in?'" said Loveman. "They're using authentic materials to teach higher level language skills, and students are learning about human rights at the same time."

"You can't turn nothing into something. It's not possible if you don't have faculty interest," said Loveman. But attention from the top "has made a huge difference. The administration is making all this stuff possible, and encouraging more of it."

San Diego State has other resources that embellish its international reputation. Its College of Extended Studies operates one of the largest, university-based English as a second language programs, drawing 2,000 students a year from 70 countries. It provides distance learning for more than 40,000 adults worldwide, including teachers in the Department of Defense and international schools overseas. William Byxbee, who became dean of extended studies in 2001, said, "What I see at San Diego State is a commitment across the board. It's not just coming from the president or the provost's office. Every dean is committed to having some portion of their programming offered overseas and to increasing the number of people from overseas coming here. We're opening ourselves up to the outside world."

San Diego State also helps local teachers open their classrooms to the world. The International Studies Education Project of San Diego (ISTEP), another joint effort with UC San Diego, holds workshops and furnishes curriculum guides to 43 school districts across San Diego County. It ran the human rights curriculum contest for teachers from San Diego and their counterparts in Chile. Director Elsie Begler said, "Teachers will come to us and say, 'Oh, my gosh. We just got a bunch of kids from Eritrea and we don't even know where Eritrea is on the map much less what they speak.'" ISTEP tries to furnish not only materials but also give teachers ideas about what to ask to understand a new student's culture. "You never know who's going to show up in your classroom," Begler said.

The International Student Center began sending international students as "intercultural ambassadors" to public schools in 1986. While students on nonimmigrant visas generally cannot work off-campus for pay in the United States, the program also places a dozen or more international students as interns each year at nonprofit groups, including the United Nations Association, the International Visitors Council, and the World Trade Association. Instead of a paycheck, they get a scholarship in the form of a one-course tuition waiver. "They love it," said Emily M. Maxon, program coordinator for the International Student Center and a walking advertisement for study abroad.

She went to Kazakhstan and Costa Rica as an exchange student in high school, taught English in Japan after getting a summa cum laude B.A. in Russian studies at UC San Diego in 1995, and, as a Yale graduate student, did internships at the U.S. embassy in Moscow and in Buenos Aires. "We really try to cultivate a spirit of volunteerism here, too, to get the international students to realize they should give back—not only to help the new people along, but also to help with the Peace Village and be part of the internationalization of the campus." The week-long Peace Village is San Diego State's version of an international festival, where students share cuisine, music, dance, and more.

Dawn Renze Wood, assistant director of the International Student Center, who grew up on an Iowa farm, was bit by the travel bug at the University of Northern Iowa after spending a semester as an exchange student at New Mexico State University. After getting her degree, Wood studied in Denmark, taught English in the Czech Republic, and got a master's degree at The School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. Wood used her technical and database skills to make San Diego State's Web site friendlier for international students, and to help the university better track them. "What's easy about it is marketing San Diego. People want to come to San Diego," she said.

Robert Carolin, the assistant director for education abroad, and colleagues made 67 classroom presentations on study abroad to freshmen and others this fall, on top of the regular, twice-a-week information sessions at the International Student Center. Carolin, too, can draw on personal experience to convince students to study abroad. An international studies graduate from American University with a master's from The School for International Training, Carolin also taught in Japan and spent a year in Montevideo, Uruguay, on a U.S. State Department internship. During college he also took a Spanish immersion course in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and still remembers his astonishment at the airport saying goodbye to his host family "when my Mexican mom confessed—in perfect English—that she'd lived in Chicago for 12 years and been a deejay on the radio there. She used to chase me around the



**Teresa Cisneros-Donahue, a native of Mexico City, is an honors graduate of San Diego State's International Business program who now directs its celebrated International Business Exchanges and Multiple Degree Programs.**

house with a piggy bank making me put in a coin any time I said a word in English." Carolin said. "My two big selling points for study abroad are: One, it's the economy, stupid. They're going to be more marketable with an international experience. And two, it's often less expensive to study abroad than if they stay here on campus."

For most, the only sticking points are the cost and whether they can fit it into already crowded schedules. Doing internships, as most international business majors do, makes study abroad even more attractive. "We're very aggressive about international internships," said Sweedler. "Quite a few programs—nursing, education, business, public administration—require students to do a practicum. Well, students can do that in another country. They can work at a hospital in Mexico, or in an engineering company in Switzerland, at a school in Argentina, or at a *maquiladora* just over the border. Students are finding that those with experience outside the United States are getting better jobs."

The international program that has stirred the most excitement and drawn the most national attention at San Diego State is the bilingual, dual-degree program with Mexican universities known as MexUS. Michael Hergert, who cofounded the international business program, has said MexUS's aim was to produce "truly international managers." It was launched in 1993 with the help of a FIPSE grant and the cooperation of four institutions in two countries within a 15-mile radius: San Diego State, Southwestern College, the Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior and the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California. Students signed up to spend two years on the U.S. campuses and two at the



Steven Loughrin-Sacco, chair of SDSU International Business program; Beatriz Schultz, associate director, study abroad programs, SDSU International Business program; Catherine-Ann Blackburn, professor from the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi; Rector Michel Belley, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi; Stephen Weber, president, San Diego State University; Teresa Cisneros-Donahue, director of study abroad programs, SDSU International Business program; former rector Victor Everardo Bertran of the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California; and Marianna Berrelleza, coordinator at Universidad Autónoma de Baja California

Mexican universities. Seventy students—mostly Hispanics who already spoke Spanish—now have received dual bachelor degrees, and the program has been hailed by leaders of the United States and Mexico as a model of bilateral cooperation. In October 2002, Weber and deans from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in Tijuana, Mexico, and the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi in Canada signed a compact formalizing the first transnational, triple degree called CaMexUS for business students who achieve fluency in English, Spanish, and French. The program requires a year of study in Tijuana and a year in Quebec after two years or more in San Diego. One international business major has already completed the requirements and several more are signed up. San Diego State has built on the MexUS experience to develop dual-degree business programs with universities in Brazil, Chile, and elsewhere; more are on the drawing boards.

Ten years ago, MexUS "was a brand-new concept in education. It was scary, but we did it," said Teresa Cisneros-Donahue, director of international business exchanges and multiple-degree programs. Cisneros-Donahue was born in Mexico City to a Cuban mother and a Tarascan Indian father from Morelia, Michoacán. She emigrated to California as an adult and wound up graduating with honors from San Diego State's international business program.

"Education changed my life so much, that's the reason I am so passionate. Many of our students are first generation going to college," she said.

Marua B. Hernandez, 24, who once picked fruit with her family, got her dual MexUS degrees in 2002. It took an extra year, "but it's worth it because you are worth double," said the Tijuana-born Hernandez. "The lingua franca for business may be English, but if you're going international, you must know the culture." MexUS taught her "the know-how of doing business" on both sides of the border, she said. "You could be the best company here in the United States, but if you don't have excellent representation abroad, you won't have any business at all."

Jessie Rich-Greer, 20, a junior from Fremont, California, is one of the first entrants into the CaMexUS program. He already studied in Spain for a semester while attending Southwestern College, and spent last summer in French immersion studies in Chicoutimi in Quebec. Rich-Greer, who also works at Costco, the warehouse chain that was started here by a San Diego State alumnus, has taken four years to get to this point of his education (including two-and-a-half years in community college) and figures it will take him three more—one in Mexico, one in Canada, and a final year back here.

How does Rich-Greer manage a job and a demanding academic schedule? "Basically you have no life," he said, laughing. "I love to travel and experience new things. This program is just perfect for that. It offers everything that I want." Once he gets his three bachelor degrees and follows that with a master's, Rich-Greer envisions working for an international corporation and then starting his own company. "One day I want to be head of something," he said.

Not every student can devote as long to an undergraduate education as Rich-Greer. Weber predicted that the CaMexUS program would grow, just as MexUS did. MexUS "has not been a boutique program. It's a solid, real option," the president said. "Given [the North American Free Trade Agreement], given the regionalization of the world economy, [CaMexUS] is going to be an equally attractive credential, worth the time it will take to get it.... It takes a different perspective. It takes a longer range, more sophisticated economic perspective to understand the opportunities that this will open up."

Like campuses elsewhere, San Diego State is stepping up efforts to offer courses in commercial Spanish and other practical uses of foreign languages. Weber applauds this. "I'm all for it," said the former philosophy professor. "You just have to handle the ability to communicate in another place and another culture. If you acquire it because of the commercial emphasis and you work that vocabulary more than anything else, I don't care at all.... It's not inherently superior or inferior. It's a window into the language. If that's what you're interested in, open up the window and go on in."

The winds of change have led longtime theatre professor Anne-Charlotte Harvey to change the way she thinks about the soft, charming trace of a Swedish accent still left in her vowels. "For a long time the accent embarrassed me," she confessed. Harvey, who received a medal from the king of Sweden, Carl XVI Gustav, in 1998 for introducing Swedish culture to

American audiences (filmmaker Ingmar Bergman was a fellow honoree), said, "On this campus you find many people who come from varied backgrounds—many more than we realized. For so long we were all trying to look American, sound American, be American. Now we try to celebrate the diversity of our background and to bring it into our teaching."

Of the internationalization of San Diego State, Harvey said, "It's about time. It is great. The excitement on the faculty level has never been higher."

The Brooklyn-born Sweedler said San Diego State is a testing ground for America's future. "Here we have a very international and eclectic community, people from all over the world. We have this international boundary, but it is very complicated and fluid," the physicist said. "How do we work it out so that we can provide a decent life and opportunities for people of different languages and backgrounds and cultures? That's the future of this country."

The International Student Center has clocks set to time zones around the world. Large, laminated maps of different continents and countries line the hallways. However, there is no more vivid display of globalization inside the center than all the tchotchkes on the shelves of Associate Director Jane Kalionzes—



**Pathbreakers:**  
Jessie Rich-Greer '05, who is pursuing a CaMexUS triple degree, and Maria B. Hernandez '02, a graduate of the MexUS dual degree program.

pyramids, fans, dragon masks, snow globes, and other foreign souvenirs accumulated during 15 years of advising thousands of international students.

"They keep bringing me new ones," she said. "They say, 'There's nothing from my country here.' They are intent on having their country respected."

Jane Kalionzes,  
associate director  
for international  
student services,  
holding a dragon  
mask. International  
students 'intent on  
having their country  
respected' often  
bring her memento-  
toes from their  
homelands.

