

From: Vice Chancellor & Dean, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan
Sent: Monday, June 09, 2008 6:30 PM
Subject: Director of Asian American Studies Center Will Retire



Administrative Officers, Deans, Department Chairs, Directors, Vice Chancellors and Asian American Studies Faculty

Dear Colleagues:

It is with mixed emotions that I inform you that after more than 18 years of distinguished leadership of the Asian American Studies Center (AASC), Professor Don T. Nakanishi will conclude his service as director, effective July 1, 2009. After a 35-year career at UCLA, Don will retire in September 2009 to begin work for the advancement of East Los Angeles, where he was born and raised, while continuing to write and to be engaged in political and educational issues.

I want to personally thank Don for his outstanding leadership of the AASC, which is widely acknowledged to be the nation's premier research center in the field of Asian American Studies. During Don's tenure as director, the AASC has become an established leader in scholarship, public policy, academic programs, archival development, community-campus partnerships and publications. The AASC Press publishes *Amerasia Journal*, the leading scholarly journal in Asian American Studies, which Don co-founded as a Yale undergraduate in 1970, the policy journal *AAPI Nexus*, and other books and pamphlets. Don has been the driving force behind these remarkable achievements for almost two decades. His collegial and consultative leadership style is highly praised by his colleagues and his personal attributes of compassion, dignity and integrity are prized by all who know him.

Don assumed the directorship of the AASC in 1990 and holds faculty appointments in the Department of Education and the Department of Asian American Studies. He is a world renowned authority on Asian American politics whose expertise is sought by mainstream journalists as well as fellow scholars. During his stewardship of the Center, the number of campus specialists in Asian American Studies has grown significantly, from six professors to over forty in 25 departments including the newly established Department of Asian American Studies. Don has also been instrumental in the growth of the Center's endowment which now exceeds \$6 million, and includes three endowed chairs, research funds, graduate fellowships, undergraduate scholarships, and academic prizes.

Don has been extraordinarily effective in building bridges from UCLA to the surrounding community and to national organizations and groups. During his tenure as Director, AASC collaborated with Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics to develop the Asian Pacific American Public Policy Program, the nation's first think tank on Asian American issues. He is a founder of Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education, served as president of the Association of Asian American Studies, and chaired the Asian American Politics Caucus of the American Political Science Association. Don has also played an active role in developing Southern California's infrastructure of social service agencies, civil rights organizations, museums, historical societies, media and cultural groups, and business associations that serve and represent the Asian American and Pacific Islander population.

A. Magazine identified Don as one of the *100 Most Influential Asian Americans* in the United States during the decade of the 1990s and the Smithsonian Institution appointed him to a 25-member national Blue Ribbon Commission to plan for the future of the Smithsonian during the 21st century. President Bill Clinton appointed him to the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund Board of Directors, which administered the

nation-wide public education and research program that was established under the 1988 Civil Liberties Act that provided a national apology and reparations for the 120,000 Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in concentration camps during World War II. In 2004, he received the Academic Senate's Fair and Open Academic Environment Award. In November 2008, he will receive the prestigious Yale Medal from his alma mater.

As we continue our work with Don throughout the upcoming academic year, please join me in thanking him for his outstanding leadership and commitment to UCLA. As one of his colleagues recently noted, Don has been a high impact leader who combines a powerful and clear vision with an extraordinary ability to bring out the best in others. We are truly privileged to have been the beneficiaries of his leadership and his exceptional dedication.

Professor Paul M. Ong, of Asian American Studies and the School of Public Affairs, will chair the search committee for a new director.

Sincerely,

Claudia Mitchell-Kernan
Vice Chancellor Graduate Studies
Dean Graduate Division