

WANG CENTER FOUNDERS RECEIVE AWARD

By Campus Voice, Pacific Lutheran University

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The founders of the Wang Center for International Programs, Peter '60 and Grace Wang, celebrated the center's fifth anniversary and received the Peace Builder Award at a luncheon last Friday.

The award recognizes "global bridge builders who exemplify hope for humanity, whose lives are centered on a vision of the just and good, who have demonstrated that they will not be defeated by difficult circumstances, and who affirm the resilience of the human spirit."

"No one is more deserving of recognition for their efforts to foster global peace than the Wangs," said President Loren Anderson. "In their own way, they have made a critical impact in the area of global understanding."

The Wangs decided to establish the center after the horrific events of September 11. For months before the attacks, the couple had been thinking about the deep rifts developing in the world and what they could do to help, and they had been talking with PLU development officers, administrators and faculty about the subject.

When the morning of September 11 dawned, the actions of ruthless terrorists brought these global tensions into sharp relief for the rest of the world. Within days, it became clear to Peter and Grace that they would give \$4 million to endow a center for international programs at PLU.

The center opened for business at the start of the 2002-03 academic year. Born of tragedy, the center now serves as a major force for positive change on campus and around the world.

"I feel global understanding is even more important today than five years ago," Peter Wang said. "Our most significant accomplishment as a group, as PLU and the Wang Center, was that we somehow expressed ourselves very well to the rest of the world: 'We are concerned. We want to find answers.'"

The center has proven to be a catalyst for both expanding and improving PLU's international programs. Today, the center is manned

by an executive director and a staff of five, who in the last two years have placed students on all seven continents at the same time.

While the national rate of overseas study is 3 percent annually, PLU's rate is 36 percent with a goal to reach 50 percent by 2010. And many students are venturing far beyond the traditional countries for American students to study in - away from Western Europe and English-speaking nations to Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia.

In addition to reaching students, the Wang Center serves a crucial role in faculty development, providing funds for the development of J-Term and semester-abroad programs, research trips and course development. It also works to bring global perspectives to PLU through a series of public symposia on issues of global concern, such as last week's two-day "World Conversations: Voices from Around the Globe" event.

"Showing students the world contributes to a new generation of leaders with perhaps a bit more understanding of and appreciation for cultural differences," Anderson said.

Peter Wang graduated from PLU with degrees in math and physics, and went on to earn his doctorate in probability theory from Wayne State University. He ended up teaching mathematics and national security affairs at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, Calif., and devoted a great deal of time to research for national security. His wife, Grace, holds a doctorate in chemistry.

The Wang Center's Peace Builder Award was first given to Sidney Rittenberg, visiting professor of Chinese studies, at the inaugural symposium, "China: Bridges for a New Century," held in 2003. At the second annual symposium, "Norway: Pathways to Peace," held in 2005, award recipients included Tom Eric Vraalsen, Norwegian special envoy to the war-torn African nation of Sudan; polar explorers Liv Arnesen and Ann Bancroft, who use their expeditions to promote understanding; and the Namibia Association of Norway, which responds to poverty and injustice by helping people in the African republic build skills.

To learn more, visit www.plu.edu/wangcenter