



**Concept paper for an
Association of Pacific Rim Universities
Joint Marine Conservation Programme**

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Above all else, the APRU is bound together by a single ocean. All member universities sit on the rim of the greatest marine environment on Earth, each drawing on it for environmental, economic and socio-cultural strength. Yet the ecosystems and resources of the Pacific Ocean are heavily threatened by such factors as excessive or misjudged exploitation, physical and chemical alteration, and climate change. Luckily, the APRU also has the capacity to make a significant difference to the future of the Pacific Ocean. In so doing, it would fulfil its mandate of contributing to the advancement of the Pacific Rim community for this and future generations.

This paper outlines an exciting opportunity for APRU to develop a very interdisciplinary and novel training programme in marine conservation. Marine conservation is not just about fish or invertebrates or sea turtles or tiny plankton, although marine life is certainly central to such considerations. It is also about the people who extract those resources, the needs of their families, the society in which they live, the constraints and opportunities which they encounter, the demands placed by (often distant) consumers, the global systems in which their society operates, and basic human philosophies and ethics. In short, marine conservation is about our entire world, and how we inhabit it.

An APRU programme in marine conservation would have a single goal, to improve the prospects for Pacific Rim resources and the people who depend on them. It would make measurable progress towards this goal by pursuing a range of objectives, including these:

- To train future resource managers, scientists, development specialists, economic planners, teachers and professors, social workers, and a great many other professionals allied with the use of marine resources;
- To unite nationals of many different regions and cultures in a sense of shared purpose, emphasising commonalities and fostering co-operation;
- To undertake research that could demonstrably lead to solutions to marine conservation challenges;
- To develop an international network of alumni who support each other's career ambitions and professional endeavours, thus creating lifelong friendships and linkages for problem solving;
- To build capacity in member universities for disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and learning related to the allocation and use of marine resources;
- To produce graduates who can strengthen other regional research and management institutions and organisations, outside APRU ... and so much more.

The proposed programme would be developed as a long-term plan with a strong vision and mission. It might be initiated with one or more short courses, held in different regions of the Pacific Rim but attracting students from many and diverse economies and institutions. As such courses proved their worth, the programme could expand in scope, adding courses that were either conceptually broader or more specialised. It could also expand in time, initially to a full term and eventually to a full year programme. It could further expand in location, providing students with a chance to work in polar, temperate and tropical clines, and in countries across the whole range of economic wealth. Eventually, this programme could be tailored to meet specific emerging regional needs.

In its structure, the new programme could be modelled in part on the successful Tropical Biology Association (TBA), which has effectively trained students from Europe and Africa in terrestrial ecology and conservation (www.tropical-biology.org). It would be particularly worth emulating TBA's internationalism, with students from 14 to 18 nations on each three week course. The Association has welcomed over 700 biologists, many of them now employed in allied academic, government, and non-governmental work.

The APRU programme would diverge from the TBA in important ways: (i) it would be conceptually unified by focusing on a resource of value to all member institutions; (ii) it would take an inter- and multidisciplinary approach to conservation education; (iii) it would accept a responsibility to find marine conservation solutions, through innovative problem-based learning, and (iv) its faculty would be as international as its students.

In developing the proposed programme, APRU might wish to form a strategic alliance with the Pacific Institutes of Marine Science (www.pims.ust.hk), a group that is tightly connected with many APRU universities. PIMS would be likely to welcome such an initiative, which is so closely allied with PIMS' own objectives and mission.

Were the APRU eventually to adopt a marine conservation programme, it would need to develop a bursary / scholarship scheme (for travel, living, personal equipment and fees) to ensure equality of opportunity for bright students from around the region. It would also need to obtain funding to hire co-ordinating staff and faculty, and to provide high quality facilities and equipment, although the latter could be improved over time.

Should the APRU Steering Committee be interested in pursuing these ideas, I would be eager to work with the Secretariat and member universities to develop a mature proposal for APRU consideration. I have lived, worked, or travelled in most Pacific Rim economies, from Chile and Australia to the Philippines and China. I also have colleagues working in many APRU member institutions, and know the academic leadership and staff of TBA. All colleagues to whom I have mentioned this possible marine conservation programme are keen to develop the concept, should APRU invite us to do so.

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