Our lives are intertwined with others' throughout the world. We are reminded of this daily by a barrage of information on international issues. Information, however, does not always imply insight and understanding. How do we distill the plethora of information without losing richness and complexity?

In our own backyard is a remarkable resource for making sense out of the international realm, the School of International Studies at University of the Pacific.

I have the honor of serving as the school's interim dean over the coming year and of working with the talented faculty whose passion is to sort through these complicated issues critically, thoughtfully and in a unique, interdisciplinary way. Beginning in August, Record readers will have the opportunity each month to hear from these teacher-scholars in a new column, SIS World Forum. This initial contribution introduces the column, the SIS approach and some of the contemporary global topics they will share. We hope the monthly articles will encourage the community to join us on campus at our various public events in which international understanding is fostered.

The approach taken at SIS recognizes that insight into the global realm emerges at the interfaces of countries and regions as well as disciplines. Faculty members who teach within SIS typically have depth in a particular geographic area and are educated in a specific discipline such as political science, economics, history, geography or anthropology. However, they realize that countries and regions are not islands but are part of a dynamic, global ecology.

Moreover, international issues seldom fit neatly into traditional academic categories; they demand an interdisciplinary approach. Finally, the international milieu is ever-changing and therefore demands humility: the recognition that a twist of the kaleidoscope implies that issues must be continually reframed.

The topics that will be covered over the next several months hint at the spectrum of expertise the faculty members represent: nuclear capabilities in Iran and U.S. policy; the bicentennial of Mexican independence; the role of pessimism in approaching global challenges; immigration issues; food politics and Latin America; current events in Africa; and how Europe's government debt crisis relates to California's problems. A single column of 600 words admittedly cannot provide depth but will at least spark the process of conversation.

Readers who choose to become a more integral part of this process can join us at events at the university, including the Tuesday World Forum and the Gerber Lecture Series. The Tuesday World Forum
is offered monthly by our own faculty and invited distinguished scholars at noon in George Wilson Hall. The specific dates for these talks will be provided in the column.

The Gerber Lecture Series showcases prominent global leaders. Past speakers have included Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu and Gro Brundtland, the first female prime minister of Norway. Planning is under way for the next Gerber Lecture, which likely will occur in March.

I end this initial column with a nod to the former dean of SIS, Margee Ensign, who recently left Pacific to take the helm as president of the American University of Nigeria. Ensign is largely responsible for building the team of scholars from whom you will hear each month, and she was relentless in her belief in the importance of international education and of taking an interdisciplinary approach to issues.

The conversation has begun. I'll now turn it over to the voices of the SIS faculty.

Each month they will offer their own viewpoints, they will enlighten us, perhaps provoke us and always provide insight and understanding.

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