Introduction

This paper presents a model for teaching international marketing using a unique method for increasing student involvement in learning by teaching the subject around a "consultancy" core where students prepare project reports and make presentations to client companies in "Host" countries; in this case, the People's Republic of China. A Pacific Rim Marketing course was designed and offered during the Spring Quarter, 1989, at California State University, Hayward, School of Business and Economics.

The course was structured as one where classroom instruction, case analysis and project report preparation on Host country companies would be completed during the course of the regular academic quarter with a field visit to the Host country during the break between quarters to present the research findings and project reports. While the academic objectives were achieved, the travel portion of the course had to be suspended because of the political crisis that developed in Beijing just prior to departure; and the uncertain conditions in southern China. The experiential learning component was a complete success with the exception of travel to China for presentation of findings. All team projects were completed and videotaped for use at a later time.

This paper outlines the model developed for introducing a new approach for teaching international marketing and summarizes the modus operandi and implementational experience of the new method in the specific case of China.

Determining the Need for the Course

A. The Pace of Pacific Rim Economic Development:

The widely recognized current upward spiral of economic growth and political change in most Pacific Rim countries has captured the attention of the general public, business, and academic circles. Response to the need in those countries during the coming "Pacific Century," as it has been called, for trained business and professional people is growing as well. North American and European business circles have recognized the need for well-trained business students familiar with Pacific Rim cultures, business practices and
environments. Consequently, there appears to be a requirement for specialized courses on the Pacific Rim Marketing to meet this growing need which is fueled by the pace of Pacific Rim development.

B. Survey of University Offerings:
The author, having spent many years in international business and university teaching, believed that there was a need for hands-on academic and experiential learning by North American students of the intricacies of doing business across international borders and through the maze of cultural differences, trade barriers and customs regulations that constitute the matrix of such trade. A judgment sample and telephone survey of universities in California and other parts of the country failed to reveal any institution that offered such a course.

C. The Need for a New Methodology:
It was felt that existing teaching programs and methods were inadequate to properly address the challenges raised by the pace of development in the Pacific Rim. To the extent that most college and university programs with active/proactive stances typically involved semesters abroad with no experiential interaction with Host country businesses, the learning experience was felt to be inadequate as discussed above. For the few programs that did incorporate experiential, real-time interaction with Host country businesses, it appeared that the costs involved were excessive and could only be borne by the best-endowed institutions. For the majority of business programs in the U.S. or Canada, a more cost-effective but high involvement/interaction method was needed. It is this gap that Pacific Rim Marketing (PRM) was designed to fill.

Course Design and Construction: The Trek Through the Bureaucratic Jungle
U.S.A. vs. China
I. Concept Approvals at C.S.U.H.
A. School of Business and Economics
Following the telephone survey of universities to determine whether a PRM-type program was being given, and armed with the negative finding that no school was offering such a learning experience, a course outline and syllabus was designed which highlighted the benefits to students and to company sponsors in the Host
Country (see Appendix I).

The unique design feature of the new PRM course was its construction around a Host Country organizational consultancy core where students would be provided extensive information on the Host Country business’s organization and the products with which it wanted to enter the U.S. market. Students organized in teams of five, twenty-five in all, with the aid of the course instructor would prepare consultant’s project reports for presentation to each Host country business based on their theoretical learning, library research and field research during the course. The approach adopted was paradigmatic of the general Strategic Management Research Paradigm (see Kamath, Rosson, Patton and Brooks, 1987, for a discussion).

The Dean of the School of Business and Economics, a very strong supporter of the concept, and the Provost of the University met with the author to review the pros and cons of such an undertaking. The result was a most enthusiastic endorsement of the PRM program. What followed was a marathon series of meetings with all of the administrative units with responsibility for student Extended Education, (foreign travel component) insurance, health, financial guarantees in the event of trip cancellation and selection of certified medical facilities in Mainland China, where accidental injury or illness could be treated in cooperation with U.S. medical consultation. These meetings were accomplished in just over four weeks. Overall, the process was rigorous but positive. Those concerned were most cooperative in what all considered to be an exciting project.

B. Chinese Authorities Contacted
Initial contact was made with the Consulate of the People’s Republic of China in San Francisco, California. A meeting was held with the Commercial Counsel, then the Counsel General, to present the PRM concepts, its benefits
to Chinese companies and the period of travel contemplated. When it was explained to these individuals that the cooperating Chinese company would be the recipient of a marketing research report equivalent to $35,000 to $40,000 U.S.D., the concept was enthusiastically endorsed.

III. Client Company Information Requirements
Our proposal contained a list of the information necessary for us to receive from the Chinese company wishing to enter the U.S. market. This list included such data as: number of employees, age of company, financial strength, principal facilities, detailed list of contents if a food product with accompanying independent test lab reports and all other pertinent information needed to fully understand the product and the structure of the company. Further we asked to be advised whether the company was a joint venture with another foreign national company, or a state owned company.

The obligation of the cooperating Chinese company would be to assume responsibility for all costs for the visiting C.S.U.H. PRM team members for transportation within the P.R.C., all meals and first class hotel accommodations, with translation services as required. This obligation extended to each company for which a research report would be undertaken. The Chinese Counsel agreed to this, promising to send our proposal to Beijing for review.

After a very brief ten-day period, we received an official invitation from Beijing to contact the Guangdong Province Enterprise Management Association in Guangzhou (Canton) China, to proceed with arrangements for a visit and to make arrangements for the program as proposed. We immediately initiated contact and began making arrangements for a rush planning trip in December of 1988.

IV. Negotiations and Seminar in Guangzhou
During the 14 days prior to Christmas, the author at the invitation of Guangdong Province authorities presented a six-day seminar on How To Do Business in the U.S. Market, to members and guests of the Guangdong Province Enterprise Management Association in Guangzhou. At the same time, negotiations
were conducted with trade associations and companies which resulted in three, five-year agreements to cooperate in the C.S.U.H. Pacific Rim Marketing model. Information exchange began immediately and upon return to the U.S., student applications were taken and a class was formed to enable initiation of research during the Spring Quarter, 1989.

V. Marketing Research; Special Facilities at C.S.U.H.

The School of Business and Economics at C.S.U.H. has an interactive learning classroom containing a computer network, telephone banks and other research-enabling facilities which made possible highly efficient use of student time in conducting research. MBA and upper level students utilized primary and secondary data gathering techniques, a variety of statistical analysis tools and eventually several types of printing and publishing equipment to produce research reports of the highest quality. Findings included both positive and negative determinations with regard to the potential for entry of the Chinese products into the U.S. market. At the completion of the course these findings were presented orally to a faculty audience by each team. Extensive use was made by these teams of 35mm slides, overhead transparencies and other visual aids. Videotapes were made to be used in future teaching and perhaps in meetings with the Chinese client companies in China. Unfortunately, just as the class completed its work and was packing for travel to China, political unrest broke out in Beijing forcing us to postpone our meetings with our Chinese clients until some time in the future.

CONCLUSION

This paper sets out the conceptual framework and model and the design features and construction experience for a course in Pacific Rim International Marketing developed at California State University, Hayward. It is considered to be a low-to-medium cost avenue for active/pro-active student learning with high involvement and experiential learning. This new method of instruction involves a unique development of an organizational consultancy approach where students provide Host country client firms with high quality research reports on U.S. market entry feasibility strategies based on
project information provided by those firms and the integrated study of international marketing theory and practice, and immersion-learning focused on the target Host country.

Such a Host Country-centered approach is predicated on the objective of enhanced student learning through proactive, participative, real-time involvement so highly favored by research in education and the social sciences.

A significant advantage of the approach adopted by the new PRM course is its cost effectiveness making it a viable proposition for most business programs in contrast to more expensive semester-abroad programs. In fact, the course can be made self-financing as was almost achieved the first time it was offered at C.S.U.H. Future refinement of course content and operation are expected to streamline the course logistics with consequent beneficial effects on student learning.

The bridging of the gap between student learning and reality seems to have been accomplished in large measure with the PRM course in its present form. It is hoped that the approach will become a basic module of the offerings of other programs in international business education.