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Introduction to Theme 4: Scientific Essentials and Sustainable Environments

Alison R. Holmes

Cal Poly Humboldt, alison.holmes@humboldt.edu

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THEME 4 - *Scientific Essentials & Sustainable Environments*

James Gregory, much like fellow historian Dora Polk, notes the importance of the perception of California as a place apart, but more from the geographer's perspective. "...home was essentially an island, surrounded by sea on one side, barely passable mountains and deserts on the others. For a thousand years, they had been safe from the kinds of warfare and invasions that remade tribal boundaries in other parts of the continent...In truth is it not geography per se but geography in an ever changing historical context that has shaped California's patterns of use since that first European Contact" (Gregory, 2).

Thus, we come to the point at which the socially constructed world meets the physical and scientific world. California's abundance, almost embarrassment, of riches in terms of resources has created a space in which there is both profligacy and stewardship of the natural world. California has become a leader on the local, national and international stage on nearly every environmental issue of concern from the algae to the eagle California is protecting those assets – while at the same time the state is also leading the way in the development of technologies, industries and business models that require ever more of those same resources while producing ever increasing amounts of waste.

The pandemic has highlighted many sharp turns and precarious bottlenecks in the modern world. Yet we can look to at least one silver lining of its impact in the way the world's research community was spurred to action to create vaccines on a timetable that would have seemed unheard of only twelve months prior. On the less positive side, the gulf between pure science and public debate has widened. Climate Change was once considered the low point of mutual misunderstanding, but today there seems little doubt that the toxic point/counter point of the COVID debate has done deep damage. According to Pew Research, only 29% of U.S. adults say they have a great deal of confidence in medical scientists to act in the best interests of the public (down from 40% who said this in November 2020). At the same time, the share of the population with a great deal of confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interests is

also down - from 39% to 29% - and both below levels prior to the pandemic.

Given the impact of the pandemic and the ongoing struggle to return to normalcy, **csuglobal** is honored that Wenli Jen (Dominguez Hills) will help lead this section as she brings not only an expertise in Public Health and Health Services, but in Asian-Pacific Studies. This dual focus can be clearly seen in her offering to this issue as she outlines her own community-based work with Asian youth in the area of mental/public health as she makes her call for this section.

However, our plan includes a 'second set of eyes' for each area and so we are therefore looking for another Associate Editor for this theme. As rich in natural resources as California may be, we are keenly aware that the CSU is equally rich in scholars who make this area their life work, but we have not been able to find someone interested, willing and able. If you are interested in engaging with your CSU colleagues and the wider California community not only in the area of science but its impact and interactions across all these themes and fields – we would love to hear from you.