

**Pacific Economic Cooperation Council**  
**Official Observer of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation**

**Internship Reflection**

**My six-week interning at PECC International Secretariat in  
Singapore**

*19 July 2014 to 30 August 2014*

**Matthew Ho-ching Lee**  
**Bachelor of Business Administration (Law)**  
**University of Hong Kong**

In Summer 2014, I was honoured to be sponsored by the Hong Kong Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation (HKCPEC) to participate in the internship programme at the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) International Secretariat in Singapore. As a business and law student, this proved to be a valuable opportunity for me to see how these two disciplines interact on a global perspective and to be exposed to less familiar subjects such as international relations, governmental administration and information technology. I was assigned many interesting and challenging tasks during the internship, attended an external conference and was given a lot of social, networking and intellectual exchange opportunities.

### **Working experience**

At the beginning of the internship, Betty, my supervisor, asked me about my areas of interest, expertise and experience. She then provided me with a brief introduction of PECC. I was given the opportunity to read through the State of the Regions report of the past few years and the Survey of Asia-Pacific Opinion-Leaders to get familiar with the work of PECC.

#### ***Task 1: Database Tags Design***

I worked with another intern, Vivienne, in the database design for the Survey of Asia-Pacific Opinion-Leaders. My job was to design the tags for the search engine and write a detailed proposal on how to balance the accuracy and number of matches for the database.

#### ***Task 2: Global Innovation Index***

The importance of innovation to sustain the growth of APEC economies under the challenges and opportunities of the rapidly changing economic environment has been the focus of APEC leaders. In the 2010 APEC Leaders' Growth Strategy, five growth attributes were identified, namely 'Balanced Growth', 'Inclusive Growth', 'Sustainable Growth', 'Innovative Growth' and 'Secure Growth', and they were all interconnected. Since then, APEC leaders have been striving to create an economic environment that promotes innovation and accelerates emergence of economic sectors. To these ends, they have been adopting policies that promote smart socioeconomic activity, digital property, cooperation on standards and innovation in life science, through deploying information and

communication technologies, developing a skilled, adaptable and professional APEC work-force, enhancing dialogues and information sharing on innovation policy, and implementing effective, comprehensive and balanced intellectual property systems,.

However, innovation is an abstract concept that has never been defined by the APEC leaders. While they have agreed on a number of goals to be achieved by innovative growth, there is no consensus on how innovation should be quantified, measured, reported and compared between countries. Without a standardised measurement system or framework for comparison, it is believed that no clear directions can be provided to APEC Economies for strategic implementation, prioritisation of actions and mutual learning.

I was therefore given a task to study the reports of Global Innovation Index from 2008-2014, organise the data of the different pillars and sub-pillars of Global Innovation Index into spreadsheets and write an essay on Innovation in the Asia-Pacific Region, including research on what Asia-Pacific countries have done to improve on innovation in recent years, analyse the trends and advocate for utilising the Global Innovation Index as a benchmark of assessment.

I also learned the important skill of how to unravel the implications between numbers and trends.

### ***Task 3: Input data for Survey of Asia-Pacific Opinion-Leaders 2014***

Every year, PECC invites Asia-Pacific leaders from various fields, including business, government, academic, media and civil society, to complete a survey on their views regarding the global economy and priorities of APEC. I learned about how leaders of different PECC economies (developing versus developed countries) and of different professions view the economic situation differently.

### ***Task 4: Symposium on Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific: Current and Future Developments***

I also had the privilege to participate in the Symposium on Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific: Current and Future Developments. The symposium covered a lot of topics that I had limited knowledge before, for example the opportunities, challenges and difficulties of TPP, RCEP, AEC, CJK, TTIP, and Pacific Alliance.

## **Integration in the team**

Interns at PECC are expected to fully integrate themselves into the international team which is comprised of staff of different nationalities - Hong Kong Chinese, Malaysian, Korean and Filipino. I attended meetings of the team to discuss various issues such as the cover design of 2014 State of the Regions report. Moreover, I participated in the Happy Hour of APEC in which I had a nice networking experience with APEC staff.

## **Learning experience**

Two things interest me the most during the internship: First, how leaders of different fields view the global economy, priorities of APEC and issues like whether India should be a member. Second, how abstract concepts such as innovation are quantified.

My research skills, data organisation skills and problem-solving skills have been enhanced through the administration work and the aforementioned tasks.

## **Final remarks**

I would like to thank the whole team of PECC, including Betty (my supervisor), Zakiah (who helped me a lot with the Training Employment Pass), Ed, Nor and Jessica.

I would also like to thank HKCPEC for choosing me to attend this programme, in particular May and Nancy for all the logistics arrangements. I would say the interview itself is a great learning experience for applicants.