

Drs. Maldonado and Feng hold a discussion over lunch with the Pilgrim Place community in Claremont. There, Feng delivers a presentation based on a paper he co-authored with Bob Zeng (Pomona College, 2019) regarding the public image of China in Latin America and China's economic relations with Latin America. During the 45-minute presentation, Feng discusses the impact on China's image in Latin America of China's trade, FDI and contracts in the region as well as a case study of the Coca Codo Sinclair Hydro Power project. Using economic and public opinion data from 17 Latin American countries from 2001 to 2016, this investigation relates variations in cross-national time series of China's image to changes in the economic ties (trade, FDI, and contracts) between perceiving countries and China. Controlling for population and size of the economy, the statistical analysis indicates that in Latin America, the volume of imports from China has a negative effect on China's perceived image in the region, while the size of trade surplus with China has a positive effect on the public opinion of China in Latin America. In addition, Chinese FDI outflows to Latin America lead to a negative effect on the favorable opinion of China, while the effect of Chinese contractual projects is not statistically significant. Those results offer policy implications for China's relations with Latin American countries for sustainable development in both the region of Latin America and China. Particularly, Feng notes that it is important that Chinese business understand culture in Latin America, including political culture; maintain quality control, particularly given the competitive bids; adhere to transparency and comply with the laws of the hosting country; and practice corporate responsibility keeping in mind sustainable development in the region.