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For Immediate Release
Photo: Hongxia (Mary) Ma attends the White House’s Asia Pacific Economic Forum

**International Trade Center director attends Asia Pacific Economic Forum at the White House**

University Park, Ill., June 19, 2014 – Hongxia (Mary) Ma, director of the Illinois International Trade Center at Governors State University, was invited to participate in the Asia Pacific Economic Forum May 29 at the White House in Washington D.C. She was among 100 Asian-American business leaders from around the country invited to the all-day event.

The forum was meant to discover ways to deepen trade and U.S. investment in the Asia Pacific region. It was hosted by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

In a letter from President Barack Obama to the forum’s participants, he wrote that the region is home to half of the world’s population and economic output and has an emerging middle class that is eager for American products and services.

The letter also stated that Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) business leaders and entrepreneurs have long been the best ambassadors to the region. They have engaged in exporting and investing across the Asia Pacific, as well as attracting new ideas and investment into American market.

The Obama administration says AAPI businesses have created 2.8 million jobs and
generated over $507 billion in sales. Leveraging their economic power will contribute to positive economic gains for the United States that will be mutually beneficial for business partners in the Asia-Pacific, the administration said.

“I was excited to be invited to the Asian Pacific Economic Forum at the White House for a second time,” Ma said. “The forum provided many programs and resources from the federal government which involved capital, financing and government contracting. Our ITC center supports local small businesses and helps them take advantage of federal government resources so they can expand to the Asia Pacific region and create jobs in the U.S.”

Priscilla Cordero, director of the Illinois Small Business Development Center at GSU, praised Ma for her work at the International Trade Center. “It is a great honor for the ITC at Governors State University to participate in this event and a tribute to all of the great work the ITC has done in expanding exports from Illinois.”

During the forum, Ma explained that the International Trade Center at GSU helps clients throughout the Chicago area increase their trade opportunities with China and other Asian nations. Three of ITC clients – CJS Trading Co., PARC Corp, and CRS International Co. – had also been invited to attend the White House forum.

Federal government representatives, such as the U.S. Export-Import Bank, the Department of Commerce and the State Department presented at the panel session. They described how agencies are working together to help U.S. exporters expand to international markets through advocacy, programs and use of market information that connect U.S. companies with resources in the Asia Pacific region.

Ma visited the U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) office on May 30. The ITC will work with MBDA to share more and promote the AAPI Initiative. The two will host the annual Asian American Business Expo together in September, 2014.

The Illinois SBDC International Trade Center is funded by U.S. Small Business Administration and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The
mission is to provide services to new and existing export business to promote U.S. exports, through one-on-one counselling, export market research, trade financing, and other export services.

Governors State University is located at 1 University Parkway in University Park.