EXPERIENCING ASIA
THE 1998 COLLEGE IN ASIA SUMMER INSTITUTE

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Now that I am back on American soil, I can view, in perspective, my experience in the 1998 College in Asia Summer Institute. Please bear with me as I begin my reflections before that time.

My knowledge of Asian economics and politics has been fairly good, for in my own professional development, I have tried to be current. I maintain my knowledge of events in Asia by accessing electronic and print media: the internet, weekly business magazines, and television news reports. I obtain scholarly views by perusing articles in journals.

Pearl S. Buck

The culture, though, was another matter. I had read the Pearl S. Buck books as a youngster; I knew about geishas and binding of feet; I was familiar with the western versions of Japanese, Chinese, and Thai food. On the other hand, I had no knowledge of any Asian languages, and often pondered about matters such as what games Asian children played.

Here I was, an African Caribbean economics professor, at a predominantly black, women's college. I had some knowledge of the economic and political development of Asia with a limited understanding of its culture, and I was being asked to develop a course for the college's Japan Studies Program. I accepted the challenge, for that is what it was.

Pilot economics course

Over a period of two semesters and one summer, I read, did research, watched videos and movies, and attended seminars, conferences, and workshops that focused on Asia. By the fall of 1997, my course, "Japanese Economic Development" (Economics 350) was approved as a pilot by the curriculum committee. In the spring 1998 semester, I taught the course for the first time to a group of thirteen juniors and seniors. The enrollment was good, as that number is normal for an economics elective at our small liberal arts college.

My evaluation of students included class presentations, quizzes, two exams, and a term paper. I used videos extensively. Student evaluations indicated that the course was rigorous and interesting. Nonetheless I realized that even as I engaged the students, something was missing.

Not until after my participation in the 1998 College in Asia Summer Institute did I make the connection with what was missing. There is no better way to prepare to teach international courses than to be there. I was fortunate that on the trip I gained exposure to Japan and China, including Hong Kong. However, that was not the purpose of the College in Asia Institute.

Housing facilities

While the personal and professional development benefits should not be marginalized, the Institute is designed to provide more widespread benefits to colleges. The visit to Asia allowed two representatives from each college the opportunity to witness firsthand the logistics of planning and implementing a Semester-in-Asia Program. In so doing, colleges would have the necessary information as faculty and administrators considered launching study abroad programs for their students. The institute included, inter alia, examining housing facilities, developing relationships with individuals and organizations, and getting a sense of what student and faculty life would be in a new and different environment.

The Institute experience began in Chicago with details of transportation costs and schedules and visa requirements presented to the group by relevant agencies. When we arrived in Asia, the unique characteristics of each city and country were evident. At group meetings or conferences with hotel managers and people in other areas directly related to the support of a Semester-in-Asia Program, practical questions were raised. For example, did a hotel or hostel have classroom facilities? Would the cost of extracurricular activities be out of the reach of student budgets? What
should a professor do when a student falls ill or
someone's passport is lost or stolen? Is discipline an
additional burden on faculty with a group so far from
home? Fortunately, the group leaders have had
extensive experience in organizing and implementing
programs in Asia. They not only allayed fears, but also
raised issues that had not been addressed by partici-
pants.

When the trip ended, I had the mixed feelings of
someone who had enjoyed the sojourn and would
return to Asia. I also felt a sense of joy and accomplish-
ment for I had had an unbelievable experience. It is an
experience I would like my students to have, with me in
tow, of course.

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AUGUSTANA COLLEGE BECOMES THE INSTITUTIONAL
HEADQUARTERS OF THE ASIANetwork

Van Symons, an historian of China, a member of
the History Department of Augustana College, and a
former Chair of the Board of Directors of the
ASIANetwork, will assume the position of Executive
Director of the ASIANetwork on September 1, 1999. At
its April 1999 meeting, the Board of Directors of the
ASIANetwork accepted the invitation of Thomas
Tredway, President of Augustana College, made on
behalf of the college, to host the organization.
Augustana College will become the institutional
headquarters.

Augustana College is the third liberal arts institution
to host the ASIANetwork. St. Andrews Presbyterian
College was the first institutional headquarters from
1993-1994, under the executive directorship of Thomas
Benson, then Provost of St. Andrews who is now
President of Green Mountain College. Upon the
invitation of its Asian Studies Program and of President
Kathryn Mohrman, Colorado College became the
second host institution, under the executive director-
ship, from 1994-1999, of Marianna Presler McJimsey, a
member of the Education Department of Colorado
College.

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TEN ASIANetwork FREEMAN
STUDENT-FACULTY FELLOW TEAMS
CONDUCT RESEARCH IN ASIA IN SUMMER 1999

As students begin to develop an interest in Asia,
they and those who teach them realize that the most
effective means to develop a deeper awareness of the
region is to spend some time there. One way to
cultivate their interests and intellectual commitments to
Asia is through scholarly research on-site. Even a
short period of time can be used for intense and
productive research, particularly if there is good
cooperation with and supervision by a faculty member
knowledgeable about the region. Such intense, in-
depth research experiences may promote further
investigations and publication opportunities and will
also enrich the home campuses in the United States
when the students and faculty members return.

In 1999, ten Student-Faculty Fellows teams from
ASIANetwork institutions undertook collaborative
research in Asia, for at least three weeks. The Freeman
Foundation grant supported ten research projects in
1998, and will support ten pairs each year for yet
another two years (2000, 2001).

The 1999 research sites included India, Japan,
Peoples Republic of China, Thailand, Taiwan, and
Vietnam. The ASIANetwork congratulates the 1999
ASIANetwork Freeman Student/Faculty Fellows, whose
projects are listed here.

Carthage College, Heidi Jugenitz, '00, English/
Spanish, and Micheline R. Lessard, History.
Site: Vietnam