I recall that one of the first things I did when asked to join the board of ASIANetwork was to open up a dictionary and look up the word “consortium.” The definition given that most appealed to me simply stated that a consortium is “any association for a common end,” and for ASIANetwork, the common end clearly was to promote Asian studies at liberal arts colleges. The goal is a lofty one, and I relished the chance to participate, still wondering exactly how this consortium would work, especially given the sometimes contentious nature of academics.

It did not take long for me to realize that ASIANetwork is an academic association unlike any other I have ever participated in or even heard about. This was especially manifested to me when I became chair of the board. A perfect example of the collegial way members of the board and other individuals work to promote a “common end” occurred early on in my chairpersonship.

At the spring board meeting in 1997, concern was expressed that despite the fact that almost 100 colleges were currently affiliated with ASIANetwork (up from 45 in 1992) that number needed to be increased in order to secure a portion of the revenue needed to run the consortium. Moreover, additional members were desired to insure that a strong pool of applicants would be available to take advantage of the newly-established programs being funded by the Luce, Ford, and Freeman Foundations. Consequently, a number of individuals volunteered to create a first-time-ever mailing to presidents of liberal arts colleges to encourage them to enroll their institutions in ASIANetwork. The mailing was to be prepared during the summer, when most faculty are involved in wide-ranging activities not always on their own college campuses, and sent out by the first week of September. It was to include a number of enclosures each prepared independently that would be sent to me for inclusion in the final packet.

What better test of the effectiveness of a consortium and the commitment of board and non-board members to support it might there be? Let me explain what happened. The first task was to locate liberal arts colleges that might have an interest in ASIANetwork and to identify their college presidents. We were determined to cast a big net because the ASIANetwork board is committed to create an inclusive liberal arts consortium and not a small elitist organization. Tom Coburn (Vice-President and Academic Dean at St. Lawrence University) seemed well positioned to undertake such a task. He volunteered to do this, turning the responsibility over to his staff. By summer’s end, they were ready to provide the names and addresses of 750 college presidents. These were sent to me at Augustana College via computer in a form that could be downloaded to produce mailing labels.

This done, the enclosures for the mailing needed to be generated. I was charged to write the cover letter and also work with Dorothy Borei (Guilford College), the coordinator of the Luce Foundation-supported ASIANetwork Consultancy Program, to create an announcement detailing a new ASIANetwork Consultancy Program and have 750 copies of it printed at Augustana College for inclusion in the mailing. A new ASIANetwork brochure was crafted, no small task, by Cathy Benton (Lake Forest College) with the able assistance of Marianna McJimsey (The Colorado College). It was printed by the print shop at Lake Forest and 750 copies were forwarded. Announcements of the Freeman Programs were prepared by its directors: Norm Moline (Augustana College) drafted copy of The College in Asia Summer Institute program while Teddy Amoloza (Illinois Wesleyan University) did the same for the Student-Faculty Fellows Program. Madeline Chu (Kalamazoo College), the overall director of Freeman programs, proofed copy and published announcements of both programs at Kalamazoo for mailing to me. Greg Guldin (Pacific Lutheran University) sent them to me.

As the mailing was sent out on schedule the first week of September, I wished I had been able to convey to the college presidents who opened it what it truly represented for clearly, in and of itself, it was an embodiment of what our consortium is all about. Thirteen individuals, often assisted by secretaries and other colleagues, gave up part of a precious summer to contribute to this endeavor and for no compensation whatsoever. Moreover, they came from a dozen different institutions that represent a true cross sec-
The 2000 College in Asia Institute is the last one funded in the current Freeman grant. If you don’t know about this terrific opportunity, turn to page 6 for all the details. You won’t want to miss this!