

From the Executive Director



I have been encouraged by the board of directors of ASIANetwork and the co-editors of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* to submit remarks for inclusion in each of the thrice-annually published newsletters that are produced while I serve as Executive Director. I am grateful for this opportunity and plan to use it as a forum to inform colleagues of the latest news about the consortium, reflect upon the completion of major undertakings, thank colleagues who have worked tirelessly for ASIANetwork, solicit council and advice from members, and address a range of other matters.

In this issue, I wish to write about one of the board's primary preoccupations, the continued search for foundation support to help meet the administrative costs of running the organization, and equally important, to create a broad array of faculty, student, and institutional development programs for ASIANetwork members.

From the moment ASIANetwork was incorporated in 1993, the consortium has been wonderfully supported by gifts from major foundations including The Henry Luce Foundation, The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, The Ford Foundation, The Freeman Foundation, and most recently The Japan Foundation. Most of these resources, totaling well over 1.75 million dollars during the last six years, have been funneled directly to consortium colleges and their faculties to strengthen Asian studies programs through consultancies, and faculty and student enrichment initiatives. Foundation funds have also helped support our spring conferences, the creation and maintenance of our website, the production of our newsletter, and the publication of a soon-to-be-released book on *Asia in the Undergraduate Curriculum*.

As the consortium has grown, board commitment to develop appealing programs for member colleges and their faculties, which can strengthen the development of Asian studies on our campuses, has grown as well. As you might

well imagine, we are faced with a constant challenge to seek foundation support, and have adopted what we believe is a sound strategy to do this. Our strategy includes the following:

- 1) Carefully managing foundation funds, with due attention given to accurate reporting to the foundations that support us;

- 2) Keeping administrative overhead to an absolute minimum;
- 3) Publicizing foundation-sponsored programs as widely as possible to assure that a strong pool of applicants from faculty and institutions can be drawn into the programs based on rigorous merit evaluation;

- 4) Encouraging broad-based faculty and institutional involvement in running these programs [For example, summer seminars for the recently completed Ford Faculty Curricular Development Grant were held at Earlham College (for Japan), St. Olaf College (for China), Kenyon College, with help from Drew University (for Southeast Asia), and Davidson College (for South Asia).];

- 5) Giving well-deserved recognition to the foundations that support us; and finally,

- 6) Accepting the principal that good ideas lead to appealing grant proposals.

Though the board has sometimes crafted grant proposals in response to specific needs suggested by foundations for the development of Asian studies, for the most part the board seeks to first craft a proposal based on its perception of the needs of colleges and colleagues involved in studying Asia, and then seeks to discover a foundation that might be interested in providing support to implement it. Consultants have told us that this might be considered "putting the cart before the horse." In other words, most grant writers carefully analyze a few foundations in order to discover what areas they are particularly interested in funding. They then produce a grant in response to their discoveries.

I suspect that the board of ASIANetwork will do both, but must confess that there is great joy in generating an idea, then an innovative proposal that fits a specific need of colleagues engaged in the study and teaching of Asia, and finally searching for a benefactor. Currently, three such ideas have been formulated and grant proposals are now being crafted by current and past board members to be shared with foundations who might wish to fund them.

This said, I write to encourage all of you to convey to any current board members your ideas about how to strengthen the study of Asia on our campuses so that they can be considered for program development and hopefully ultimately be presented to a foundation for funding.

Van Symons