Ford Foundation Faculty Curricular Development on Asia for the 21st Century Program: Faculty Grants Strengthen Asian Curriculum

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Ford Grant Administrator

It’s not easy building Asian Studies programs at small liberal arts colleges. “We can’t afford such a narrow specialty when we hire!” “Our current faculty don’t have the background!” Which of us hasn’t heard such objections to our plans to heighten the awareness and level of curricular offerings regarding Asia on our campuses?

A few years ago, ASIANetwork set its sights squarely on this problem. Why not, reasoned ASIANetwork co-founder Tom Benson, take non-Asianist faculty and retool them as faculty able to infuse Asian content into the curriculum? The Ford Foundation graciously agreed to the idea, and so in 1995 this innovative Faculty Curricular Development on Asia for the 21st Century Program was launched with nearly half a million dollars in backing.

A series of two-year seminars began at Earlham College in 1996 and focused on Japan under the leadership of Steve Nussbaum. Year I for all seminars took place at the US host institution and Year II was spent in Asia during a three-week study tour. The next country seminar was the China Seminar at St.Olaf which began in 1997 under Dick Bodman’s stewardship, and this was followed by the South and Southeast Asia Seminars, both of which began in 1998.

This past year was Year II for both of the latter seminars. Drs. Rita Kipp and Leedom Lefferts were the co-directors of the Southeast Asia Seminar. For three weeks in June 1999, nine ASIANetwork faculty members visited Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Indonesia, the area of Dr. Kipp’s special knowledge, was unfortunately off the itinerary due to political turbulence surrounding the national elections. However this enabled participants to savor in greater depth the subtleties of peninsular Southeast Asia.

Dr. Job Thomas of Davidson College was the Director for the South Asia Seminar. In June, Dr. Thomas shepherded ten ASIANetwork faculty throughout South and Central India. Nine of the participants also opted to take a one-week extension of the tour to visit North India. From religion to architecture to foreign policy, they were enmeshed in the dynamics of the subcontinent for the greater part of June.

Since completing their seminar experiences, the faculty have returned to their campuses enthused, inspired, and aware. New courses in Asian theater, philosophy, and sociology have sprouted, while old, Eurocentric courses in art, political science and literature have been broadened by new modules on the peoples and cultures of Asia. Spurred by their contact with the Asian majority of humankind and the richness of their cultures, these ASIANetwork faculty have joined their long-standing Asianist colleagues to raise high the banner of Asian awareness and understanding on their campuses.

Now that the twenty-first century has begun, these faculty will contribute to preparing students to appreciate the significant role Asia and Asians will play in this new millennium. ASIANetwork members not fortunate to have participated in this now-concluded initiative are urged to consider participating in the other Asian studies-enhancing opportunities our association provides. They will find excellent opportunities for self-enrichment and intellectual service to their schools and communities.
Ford Foundation Grant Participants

JAPAN
Barbara Bowman, Illinois Wesleyan University
Annie Dandavati, Hope College
Lawry Finsen, University of Redlands
Bill Guinee, Westminster College
Sandra Harris, Eckerd College
Dick Olufs, Pacific Lutheran University
Luke Reinsma, Seattle Pacific University
Linda Seward, John Carroll University
Dennis Storer, Hastings College
Fred White, Goucher College

CHINA
Charles Almy, Guilford College
Kaushik Bagchi, Goucher College
Richard Bodman, St. Olaf College
Susan Swyer-Shick, Pacific Lutheran University
David Goldblatt, Denison University
Charles Hill, Whittier College
Guru Rattan Kaur Khalsa, Thiel College
David Pasto, Oklahoma City University
Linda Pickle, Westminster College
Peter Scholl, Luther College
Robert Tallitsch, Augustana College

SOUTHEAST ASIA
Andrew Chittick, Eckerd College
Pamela Smiley, Carthage College
Nancy Keiser, Mount St. Clare College
Richard Johnson, Oklahoma City University
Michael Leming, St. Olaf College
Robert Stockton, Hastings College
Tazim Kassam, The Colorado College
Naomi Standen, University of Wisconsin-Superior
Mark Lincicome, The College of the Holy Cross

SOUTH ASIA
Michael Bartanen, Pacific Lutheran University
Beverly Bennett, Goucher College
Ann Burlein, Meredith College
Timothy Cheek, The Colorado College
Demerie Faitler, Furman University
Charles Keller, Marietta College
Carla Oleska, Elms College
Daniel Rosebury, Earlham College
William Young, Westminster College

Editors’ note: Institutional affiliations are those at the time of participation and may not be the participant’s current affiliation.

“The Ugly American at the Taj”
South Asia Ford Foundation Participant Charles Keller, summer 1999