

From the Executive Director



In last spring's issue of *The ASIANetwork EXCHANGE*, I took the opportunity to recognize and thank a small group of talented individuals who have served and now serve as a Council of Advisors to ASIANetwork. In this fall's issue, I wish to recognize nine stalwart men and women who have served, and one additional person who now serves, as the board chair for the consortium. I have been blessed to know them all, and to work with them in one capacity or another, on a range of ASIANetwork initiatives. My interaction with each of them on a personal basis has been one of the great joys I have experienced while serving on the board or as the executive director of our consortium. They are all quite incredible people, and their commitment to ASIANetwork was and is unwavering. All have sought in their year of service to leave the consortium just a bit stronger than when they accepted their chairpersonship, and all have succeeded, most far beyond their expectations.

Past and current board chairs, their institutional affiliations, and their year(s) of service as board chair are as follows:

Paul Watt	DePauw University	2003-04
Jim Leavell	Furman University	2002-03
Joel Smith	Skidmore University	2001-02
Jim Lochtefeld	Carthage College	2000-01
Stan Mickel	Wittenberg University	1999-00
Suzanne Barnett	University of Puget Sound	1998-99
Van J. Symons	Augustana College	1997-98
Madeline Chu	Kalamazoo College	1996-97
Greg Guldin	Pacific Lutheran University	1995-96
Tom Benson	St. Andrews Presbyterian College & Green Mt. College	1993-1995

Any past board chair will tell you that their year of service was perhaps the most challenging of their academic career. However, they hang on, knowing that they have but twelve months to leave their mark on ASIANetwork, and that there is a capable vice-chair ready to accept the chairpersonship after their departure. Sometimes, but not always, these individuals have managed to secure a course release time, not funded by the consortium, from their college administrators to free up time to direct ASIANetwork. However, this release time is not nearly enough.

Board chairs quickly discover that they are responsible for not only helping run the day-to-day affairs of the consortium, but also with: 1) planning and conducting two board meetings, 2) fostering oversight of development activities, 3) monitoring the selection of student and faculty participants in foundation-financed ASIANetwork-administered summer programs, 4) working with the publicity and membership committees to sustain ASIANetwork membership, 5) assuring that new postings are made in a timely manner on our web site and that the web site is being effectively managed, 6) encouraging the editorial staff of our newsletter to see that three issues of *The ASIANetwork EXCHANGE* are produced in timely fashion, 7) monitoring ASIANetwork finances, and 8) most daunting of all, planning and running our annual spring conference.

Fortunately, from the time of ASIANetwork's inception, its members and especially those serving on the board have shown an incredible willingness to volunteer their services. As a consequence, board chairs seem always to have a ready group of colleagues eager to undertake challenging tasks. Lately, I have witnessed, as I do every summer and early fall, colleagues working with great earnestness to assist our current board chair, Paul Watt, identify and invite two keynote speakers for next spring's conference. At the same time, they are organizing a pre-conference field trip for those wishing to see Asian sites in the Chicago area, two plenary

sessions, a fine arts interlude performance for the late Saturday afternoon, and sixteen panel sessions for our four breakout periods. It is simply amazing to watch all this occur as ASIANetwork prepares to host its 12th annual conference for the approximately 200 associates who annually attend.

One thing that has quite amazed me as I have worked with ASIANetwork board chairs has been their ability to leave their particular mark on the consortium in the face of their ongoing crushing responsibilities. One developed the idea of creating a "Cache of Lore" for the board, which is an ongoing record of board decisions about important financial, development, membership, and other issues that can subsequently be accessed. Knowing that institutional memories tend to be short-lived, the "Cache of Lore" serves, along with board minutes and our by-laws, to provide the historical memory of important board decisions to help shape future discussion.

When time and circumstances demanded such, two consecutive board chairs helped create a development sub-committee and asked two former board members, Cathy Benton (Lake Forest College) and Stan Mickel (Wittenberg University) to serve on it. Cathy and Stan have worked to help rationalize our development process, from generating grant ideas, to formulating board and non-board committees to write the grants, to producing an impressive portfolio document to accompany proposals at the time they are presented to foundations, and most importantly, to discovering foundations that have an interest in funding the initiatives that we create.

More recently a board chair took the initiative to create two sub-committees to begin the process of ascertaining what the needs of ASIANetwork might be as it transitions to a new headquarters following the selection of a new executive director is after my five to six year term expires. Suzanne Barnett (the University of Puget Sound) chaired one committee which has already completed its work and developed impressive documents that help define both the current strengths of ASIANetwork and the challenges facing the organization in future years. Working with these documents, the other committee is already generating a list of candidates to become the next executive director.

The opportunity to work for ASIANetwork, and through the consortium with the above mentioned board chairs, not to mention well over two dozen other board members, has enabled me to interact with truly exceptional persons who exhibit both a passion for Asia and minds disciplined by study in a broad range of other fields in the humanities and social sciences. Board meetings, though demanding on all participants, are incredibly productive and fulfilling, and the time spent by board members working one-on-one with others is deeply satisfying. I believe that all who serve ASIANetwork come away from three years of service to the consortium not only grateful for the chance to strengthen the consortium and thereby the study of Asia on our campuses, but perhaps equally appreciative of the

opportunity to interact in such a meaningful way with board associates.

I, more than anyone else, have been given the opportunity to work one-on-one with a different board chair each of the past several years. The experience has been simply wonderful. Each of these persons has skillfully discharged her/his responsibilities, but more than that, each has been wonderful to work with. Each has, of course, brought her/his own personality to the chairpersonship, and that has been what has made working with various chairs so engaging. Be it the wisdom of Paul Watt, the good humor of Joel Smith, the grace and gentle spirits of Jim Leavell and Jim Lochtefeld, the sheer energy of Stan Mickel and Suzanne Barnett, or the vision of Tom Benson, Greg Guldin, and Madeline Chi, I have come to deeply admire each and cherish the time spent with all of them. ASIANetwork has been blessed to have such leadership.

Van Symons



Paul Watt, current board chair, and Suzanne Barnett, 1998-99 board chair, at the registration area 2003 ASIANetwork Conference