

From the Board Chair



Dear ASIANetwork Colleagues,

At each spring and fall ASIANetwork board meeting, much time is devoted to discussions about the programs and services we offer member institutions. Individuals on the executive committee, the development team and various other committees of the Board continue these discussions throughout the year.

As a result of these conversations, there is broad agreement within the board about past programs and services that we believe we ought to do our best to sustain and about new initiatives we judge worthy of serious exploration. In the former category fall such programs as the faculty development program, supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation, that combined preparatory study in the U.S. with travel and study in one of several Asian countries, and the Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows program, which supports collaborative research in Asia for a faculty mentor and up to five students. We continue to believe that the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, which is published three times a year, functions well to inform members of ASIANetwork activities. Our website, www.ASIANetwork.org, will play an increasingly important role in getting word out to the public as well as members about ASIANetwork programs and, through our new on-line member directory, in enabling members to locate and stay in contact with one another. We will continue our ASIANetwork Consultancy Advisory Program, first funded by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, which brings consultants from long-established Asian Studies programs together with member institutions seeking to strengthen Asian Studies on their campuses. Finally, we believe that the Annual Conference, held each spring, is an invaluable forum for highlighting new devel-

opments in Asian Studies, for discussing the development of Asian Studies on our campuses, and for enabling members to renew and deepen personal contacts. The collegial atmosphere of our Annual Conferences is something we especially prize.

As we have looked to the future, members of the board have continued to seek out innovative and effective ways to aid faculty in enriching and enlivening the Asian Studies courses we teach, and we have often taken note of the new global context in which not just Asian Studies, but all of the academic programs offered at our schools, now exist. These discussions have led us to consider the development of new programs in two areas. Let me touch on them only briefly here.

The first deals with the development of resources in the field of Asian art for use beyond the art history classroom. After more than two years of discussion, the board believes that the preparation of learning modules involving richly contextualized, high-quality treatments of Asian art could be brought into the history, literature or religion classroom on CDs or via the web. Further, we have the sense that many of our colleges have fine collections of Asian art—some small, some large—that are largely unknown to the world and that could serve as the basis for developing this resource. If your school has significant Asian art, we would like very much to learn more about it.

The second program under consideration explores the links between Asian Studies and the field of Asian American Studies. Members of the Board have noted that faculty and students at our schools encounter Asia not only in the countries that have been included under that rubric but in Asian communities that have grown up in the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries. For many of us travel and the media have diminished the cultural meaning of political

boundaries, and individuals and communities have taken on transnational identities. Consequently the board is considering ways in which a faculty development program might enable colleagues at our institutions to explore both the Asian roots of immigrant communities in the U.S. as well as the U.S. communities themselves.

The spring 2004 ASIANetwork Conference, which will take place from Friday, April 2 through lunch on Sunday, April 4 at the Hickory Ridge Conference Center outside of Chicago, will give us an opportunity to consider these possibilities together. You can find a more complete description of the program in this issue of the *Exchange*, but let me note briefly the major sessions. Laurel Kendall, Curator, Division of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, will be our keynote speaker on Friday night. An expert on Korean society, Laurel also served as curator at the Museum's recent exhibit on Vietnam. Her presentation will focus on contemporary Vietnam as viewed through the artifacts that she and her colleagues in Vietnam selected for this exhibit. On Saturday morning, Roberta Martin, Director of the Asia for Educators Program at Columbia University will lead a session on "Museum Resources for Teaching about Asia." On Saturday night, the focus shifts from Asian art and artifacts as a window on Asian cultures to the topic of the Asian diaspora in the U.S. Vasudha Narayanan of the University of Florida and a past president of the American Academy of Religion will give a slide presentation on the Hindu diaspora in the United States. Finally, let me note that, while not related to the themes discussed above, the Sunday morning plenary session will focus on the crisis on the Korean peninsula; we are delighted that the well-known Korea expert Bruce Cumings of the University of Chicago will join us for that session. There will, of course, also be the full-range of panels by ASIANetwork colleagues, some of which will relate to the sessions mentioned above.

I hope that you will plan on joining us for the spring conference. I also hope that you will communicate with ASIANetwork Board members about the program initiatives currently under consideration or about other programs and services that you would find valuable. You can find the e-mail addresses of all current Board members elsewhere in this issue.

Paul B. Watt

Announcing a New Program: Understanding Contemporary Islam

The American University of Beirut (AUB), in partnership with the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, announces a new program, **Understanding Contemporary Islam**. The program aims to increase the understanding between Americans and people from Islamic countries by sending scholars from the Muslim world to U.S. universities and colleges that lack extensive academic programs on Islam and Muslim society but that wish to introduce or expand such offerings. For periods ranging from six weeks to an academic year, these eminent scholars, selected from a variety of fields in the humanities and social sciences, will teach, interact with the wider community, and serve as resources on Islam.

U.S. colleges and universities are invited to submit proposals to host a scholar under the Understanding Contemporary Islam program of the American University in Beirut. In making selections, AUB will give priority to institutions that do not have extensive academic programs or courses on Islam or Muslim societies. Undergraduate liberal arts colleges, minority-serving institutions, community colleges, and other state or private institutions are encouraged to apply.

Application deadlines:

September 15, 2003 for short-term programs in the January to March of 2004 period and for one-semester programs beginning in January, 2004

November 1, 2003 for programs beginning April 1, 2004 or later.

Application materials and further information can be found at www.cies.org/uci or by e-mailing uci@cies.iie.org.

*Plan to attend the Spring 2004
ASIANetwork Conference which will
be held at Hickory Ridge Conference
Center, Lisle, IL
April 2 - April 4*